

The Secret Life of Walter Mitty

Ben Stiller to play Walter in movie coming out in 2013 Read more here:

<http://nymag.com/movies/features/ben-stiller-on-set-2012-5>

Vocabulary:

Distraught (troubled, anxious)

Haggard (having a very exhausted appearance)

Duct (a tubular structure in the body through which substances pass)

Craven (very fearful, cowardly)

Vault (an underground room or cave with an arched ceiling)

Insolent (bold in a reckless way)

Insinuating (arousing doubts and suspicions)

Pandemonium (wild noise and disorder)

Derisive (mocking)

Inscrutable (mysterious)

QUIZLET.com Use This Free Flashcard site with a list of 14 words already created for *Walter Mitty* story.

<http://quizlet.com/7813707/the-secret-life-of-walter-mitty-vocab-flash-cards>

Before Reading

Ask students about how often they daydream. Is there a benefit to daydreaming? What triggers them to daydream? (boredom, environment,) Discuss.

Read story

Read through the story once.

Then, highlight parts that are reality vs. fantasy

Questions while reading:

1. What does Walter's wife ask him to do while she's at the hairdresser?
2. How does Walter feel about these errands?
3. Describe Walter's daydreams. What is ironic about the daydreams?
4. Aside from his wife, what other characters scold Walter and why?
5. Why does Walter think the parking attendant is cocky? What does that tell us about him?
6. How does his wife greet him at the hotel? What does their conversation tell us about their relationship?
7. What is Walter doing at the end of the story, and why?
8. Did you find any parts of the story especially funny? Or sad?
9. Would you like being married to someone like Walter Mitty? What about Mrs. Mitty? Discuss.
10. What is the conflict in this story? How does Walter resolve the conflict (or does he?)

Complete Graphic Organizers (attached)

To determine "triggers" between reality and fantasy

Discussion questions /short essay topics

Why did Walter Mitty imagine himself facing a firing squad? Evaluate what he was saying about his life with such a statement.

How would you describe Mrs. Mitty? Does she love Walter? Is she a nag? How are we supposed to feel about her?

Show Movie (if applicable)

Compare and contrast the movie and short story. Which did you prefer?

Write/Deliver biographical or autobiographical narratives

Students write a similar story using their own life with 2-3 daydream episodes.

Have “triggers” just as Thurber used.

Emulate Thurber style.

Or

Students brainstorm and share creative ideas for another Walter Mitty daydream.

Write that next daydream he would have. Perhaps when they are back home.

Name _____ Class _____ Date _____

The Secret Life of Walter Mitty

The events in James Thurber's story "The Secret Life of Walter Mitty" follow a pattern. Something triggers Mitty's daydream and becomes part of it. The daydream proceeds until something interrupts it. Use the graphic organizer below to find the details that create the story's pattern.

Cause	Daydream	Interruption
The sound of car engine reminds him of a ship's engine.	Navy hydroplane	
	surgery/anesthetizer	
	courtroom scene	
	Air Force pilot	
	firing squad	None

When Mrs. Mitty says, "It's one of your days," she tells the reader that Mitty daydreams often. If you were to write another daydream for him, one that takes place the next day, what might be the trigger? What would the resulting daydream be about? What might interrupt it? Jot down some ideas here:

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Cause	Daydream	Interruption
Sound of car engine reminds him of a ship's engine.	Navy hydroplane	Mrs. Mitty complains that he is driving too fast.
Mitty puts on his gloves, just as a doctor would. He also drives past a hospital.	surgery/anesthetizer	The parking lot attendant tells him to back up his car.
Mitty imagines his right arm in a sling as an excuse to have someone else take the chains off his tires. He also hears a newsboy shouting about a trial.	courtroom scene	When the person in his daydream calls Mitty a "cur," he remembers that he needs to buy puppy biscuit.
Mitty looks through an old copy of a military magazine and sees pictures of bombers and bombed cities.	Air Force pilot	Mrs. Mitty finds him in the hotel lobby.
Mitty smokes a cigarette and stands against a wall to stay out of the rain.	firing squad	None

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