

Worksheet 1. Focus on “The Book of the Grotesque”

Student Name _____ Date _____

Teacher: _____ Class: _____

The opening section, “The Book of the Grotesque” serves as a kind of introduction to *Winesburg, Ohio*. Complete the following questions as you consider what this section portends about what is to come in the rest of the story cycle.

1. What people are mentioned in the first section? What do we learn about them?

2. Use the following graphic organizer to unlock the meaning of the word *grotesque*.

part of speech	
synonyms	
antonyms	
word origins	
example in art	
example in life	
original sentence	

Lesson 1. Introducing *Winesburg, Ohio*

3. Examine closely the following passage to tell what the author is saying about people and truth.

Passage from “The Book of the Grotesque”:

That in the beginning when the world was young there were a great many thoughts but no such thing as a truth. Man made the truths himself and each truth was a composite of a great many vague thoughts. All about in the world were the truths and they were all beautiful.

The old man had listed hundreds of the truths in his book. I will not try to tell you of all of them. There was the truth of virginity and the truth of passion, the truth of wealth and of poverty, of thrift and of profligacy, of carelessness and abandon. Hundreds and hundreds were the truths and they were all beautiful.

And then the people came along. Each as he appeared snatched up one of the truths and some who were quite strong snatched up a dozen of them.

It was the truths that made the people grotesques. The old man had quite an elaborate theory concerning the matter. It was his notion that the moment one of the people took one of the truths to himself, called it his truth, and tried to live his life by it, he became a grotesque and the truth he embraced became a falsehood.

4. Write a paragraph in which you discuss the extent to which things that are grotesque are not necessarily ugly or repulsive.