

Unit 1: Narrative Elements

“A Few Words” by Mary Oliver Study Guide
adapted from Holt McDougal Literature: Grade 9, p. 862

Directions: Answer the following questions as we read the text.

1. In lines 1-15, Oliver’s tone can be described as direct, brisk, and forceful. How does she create this tone? (Consider her use of repetition, imagery, and sentence structure; give specific examples.)

2. According to Oliver, what is the problem with using the word *cute*?

3. Use the following passage to help you answer the next few questions.

governors. The notion facilitates a view of the world as playground and laboratory, which is a meager view surely. And it is disingenuous, for it seems so harmless, so responsible. But it is neither. **B**

- 1) For it makes impossible the other view of nature, which is of a realm both sacred and intricate, as well as powerful, of which we are no more than a single part. Nature, the total of all of us, is the wheel that drives our world; those who ride it willingly might yet catch a glimpse of a dazzling, even a spiritual restfulness, while those who are unwilling simply to hang on, who insist that the world must be piloted by man for his own benefit, will be dragged around and around all the same, gathering dust but no joy. **C**

- a. What two views of nature does Oliver describe in this passage?

- b. Which view is Oliver’s? How do you know?

- c. According to Oliver, what is the place of humans in nature?

4. According to Oliver, why shouldn’t anything in nature be labeled “cute”?