

«up the down staircase»

[Profession](#), [Teacher](#)



« Up the Down Staircase» The text under analysis is a fragment from the novel « Up the Down Staircase», written by Bel Kaufman, an outstanding American writer. She worked as a teacher of the English language and literature in a New York high school for many years. She is best-known for her novel « Up the Down Staircase», which was published in 1965. The book deals with the experience of a young high school teacher. So, it's rather obvious that the novel comprises some autobiographical episodes. The novel was adapted to film and in 1967 appeared on the screens. The story under discussion tells us about the work and impressions about the job of a young school teacher Sylvia Barrett. She is disappointed with the system of education. She is " to teach not the subject but the whole child", but she finds out that it is easier said than done and she acts her own way. She tells us about her two most prominent achievements in the class: she has aspired the children to talk during the lesson and, later, to be quiet. Having read the short piece of the letter we can find out what type of a teacher Sylvia Barrett is. This effect is attained thanks to the author's talent to represent the main character. So, the fragment from the novel is represented in the form of letter. It is started with the greeting Ellen, a friend of Sylvia's. Then the congratulations on the baby's new tooth follow. I can say that this is a piece of the exposition, where the writer supplies some information on the profession of the main character. Gradually it involves us in the atmosphere of teaching. The complication covers the episode when Sylvia Barrett tries to explain to her friend what she is teaching and her methods. She admits that it's not her first consideration to follow the advice of Professor Winters, Dr. Bester and the English Syllabus. Moreover, she reveals the drawbacks of her

pupils and the books which she is imposed to teach. In my opinion, this fragment contains two climaxes. There are two intensive moments. One of them deals with the episode when Sylvia Barrett manages to create a constructive discussion in the class on a curtailed topic, Robert Browning's quotation: " A man's reach should exceed his grasp, or what's a heaven for? " And the other crucial moment refers to episode when Mr. McHabe appears in the classroom and complains about the noise thereby criticizing Silvia's way of teaching. I'm apt to think this fragment has no denouement. By leaving it out the author achieves a certain effect — he invites the reader to imagine the further events himself, because Sylvia is still a teacher at school and of course it's difficult to cover all the aspects in the only one letter. The external conflict takes place in this story. The conflict is a man against a man and a man against the society. Sylvia tries to resist the methods of teaching which have been imposed on her by other teachers and supervisors. She finds some of their aspects wrong. Thereto Sylvia Barrett opposes the system of education in common. It is one more conflict in the text — the man against society. This young teacher stands up against the established order, she is against the way many teachers work at school and foster children. So, the main character of the story is Sylvia Barrett, a protagonist. There is also her antagonist, Mr. McHabe. Minor characters can be found, too. They are Paul Barringer, a writer who teaches English, an Dr. /bester, /chairman of the English Department. The form of the author's speech is entrusted narrative. The writer himself hides behind the figure of the narrator, presents all the events of the story from the latter's viewpoint. Entrusted narrative is carried in the 1st person. The narrator proceeds with the story openly, from her own

name. A dialogue, another type of narration is observed in the story. The characters express their minds in the form of uttered speech. In the exchange of remarks the characters, while, discussing, expose themselves, too. So, just a short dialogue between Sylvia and McHabe can describe Mr. McHabe a short-minded man with the stupid questions, such as " What is the meaning of the noise? " The noise itself cannot possess any meaning and it was ridiculous of him to ask such a question. And Sylvia, in her turn, replies in an unfriendly way, with sarcasm that it is " the sound of thinking" (this is the example of hyperbole). It goes without saying that the administrative assistant expects to hear some excuses, but Sylvia dares to show her impudence and witticism. This is a good example of irony. The main character Sylvia is a round character. She tells us her story, speaks about her experience at school, and all the things are presented through her perception. The author places herself in the position of Sylvia and tells us about the things that only the main character sees and feels. Sylvia is depicted in an indirect way. She is characterized through her actions as an aspiring teacher. She tries to find out the best way to teach pupils. And she is not apt to think that all her efforts are doomed to failure. When speaking with pupils she uses colloquial words and phrases. It is easily seen in the episode with Browning's quotation on the blackboard, when all the pupils are divided into two groups: those who are aspiring, optimistic and they believe in ambition and progress. The other opinion is more skeptical that means that the pupils are practical and materialistic. Through Sylvia's actions the readers figure out how she has managed to arouse excitement of the pupils and has involved all of them in the dispute. The author uses vivid epithets to

portray this importance of the moment: the epithet " a heady moment" means " a crucial moments" supposes an energetic, vigorous dispute. The metaphoric epithet " clichés seem freshly minted" stands for " a new involvement"/ I'd like to admit that the author resorts to the inversion in the sentence: " To the young, clichés seem freshly minted...", so that to draw the readers' attention that this quotation will not arouse so many feelings for elderly people. To produce the atmosphere of active dispute the author employs question-in-the-narrative, a lot of remarks, repetitions (" What about hope? What about despair? "; " No, no, that's ambition! No, no, that's frustration). All these means show the opposition in the class. The tone is constantly changing in the story. At first it is exciting when Sylvia congratulates her friend, then it becomes quite puzzled when Sylvia speaks about theory of education and practice. The author sympathizes with the narrator, with her first achievement at school and the tone has changed to the elated one. The story is on the theme of education and its positive and negative points. So, the problem discussed in the extract lies in contradictions between teaching in theory and in practice. Of course, it is not easy to correspond to them, but teachers are not to give it up, even though they think all their efforts are doomed to failure. A teacher should inspire pupils and he will be given his due for it. A true teacher ought to make pupils be involved and motivated, so that they could enlarge their scope.