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## Auszug aus: *Camille Acker: Cicada*

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### Camille Acker: *Cicada* – Analysing a short story

Carsten Mützenberg



Camille Acker's short story collection, *Training School for Negro Girls* bietet Schülerinnen und Schülern beeindruckende Leseerlebnisse, die alle Merkmale einer Kurzgeschichte erfüllen. Ihr Fokus auf Diskriminierung behandelt gegenwärtige gesellschaftliche und politische Themen, was die Aktualität ihres Buches unterstreicht. In der Kurzgeschichte „Cicada“ geht es um Elery, die an einem Klavierwettbewerb teilnimmt und mit Themen wie *identity* und *fitting in* konfrontiert ist. Die Unterrichtsmaterialien umfassen pre-, while- und postreading Aufgaben, die das Verständnis fördern und die Lernenden zur Reflexion anregen.

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# Camille Acker: *Cicada* – Analysing a short story

Carmen Müntzenberg



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## Competences and skills:

When working with the short story, the focus is initially on strengthening students' **reading competence**. This is demonstrated, among other things, through the insights they gain from **analytical skills**. Part of this competency involves enhancing the **intercultural competence**. Furthermore, students optimise their **listening and visual comprehension skills** when they deal with videos. Through the completion of tasks based on the information acquired, students practice their **speaking and social abilities**.

**Overview:**

List of abbreviations:

**A** Analysis**D** Discussion/debate**LVC** Listening/viewing comprehension**R** Research**T** Working with a text**CT** Creative Task**G** Group work**PR** Presentation**RC** Reading comprehension**W** Writing

Topic	Material	Methods/Skills
Camille Acker: <i>Cicada</i>	M1–M3	A, CT, D, G, LVC, PR, R, RC, T, W

**Edition of the short story used for this unit:**

Camille Acker: *Training School for Negro Girls*. Feminist Press at the City University of New York. New York 2018. ISBN: 978-1-936932-37-5.

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## Facts

Today's teenagers often struggle with reading long texts. Consequently, short stories may offer a way of capturing their attention and making reading more attractive to them. Especially the conflict the protagonists must deal with may evoke a strong emotional reaction and, thus, help to develop one's opinion in a discussion. Camille Acker's collection of short stories *Training School for Negro Girls* offers great reading experiences that meet all the criteria of a short story. Her focus on discrimination addresses current social and political issues as well as challenges faced by many young people, which highlights the up-to-dateness of her book.

## Notes on the material

**The Topic** consists of three materials. The pre-reading material (M1) for *Cicada* begins with a focus on competitions in general. Students discuss personal experiences in a two-minute speech and also explore the consequences of defeat. In the next step, students watch a video about a musical competition. M1 also provides background information on the literary genre of realism through online research that leads to a placemat activity. Additionally, symbolism as a stylistic device is introduced through a reading comprehension section. The while-reading activities (M2) primarily centre on understanding the text. Students are tasked with creating a flowchart depicting the plot and crafting avatars for the main characters. Afterwards, they do a character analysis through group work, examining various aspects of the short story and applying their findings to *Cicada*. Using a jigsaw puzzle-like approach, they further explore the language of the text (including grammar and stylistic devices), the type of narrator, point of view, and the style chosen by Camille Acker. With the assistance of the after-reading activities (M3), students gain insight into methods of financing college education in the United States. The material also includes a group discussion that explores the topic of fairness in competition, and a creative reading assignment prompts them to compose a letter from the perspective of one of the main characters.

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