

Excerpt from
**More
5[^] Shorts**



*Five Really
Short Stories*

*Five Really
Cool Reading Guides*

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5 More Shorts

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The narrator learns a life lesson through an experience at her grandmother's corner store.

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Reading Guide - "Dylan's Fault"

Before Reading

- Preview vocabulary (suggestions - mourners, apparently, banking, complicated, badgering, disposition, verb tense of bear). The Longman Dictionary provides student-friendly definitions for the words you choose to preview (<http://www.ldoceonline.com/>).
- Discuss the topic of depression/suicide using information to help guide the discussion. Possible websites:
<http://www.webmd.com/depression/guide/detecting-depression>
http://helpguide.org/mental/depression_teen.htm

During Reading

As students read, have them see if they can:

- Fill in the Advanced Character Maps for Dylan and/or Megan. (Maps on pages 6 and 7 can be used for almost any fictional work.) For a video on how to use the maps, visit www.WeGottaRead.com/snappystrategies.html.
- Identify the symptoms of depression in Megan's behavior.

After Reading

- Finish the bottom portion of the character map, providing an answer to an overall comprehension question.
- Possible questions for writing response or further discussion:
Do you think that Dylan is in any way responsible for Megan's downward spiral?
Should he have tried to go to the funeral?
How can you help someone who is depressed?
Is it possible to lose yourself in a relationship?
Do you think Dylan did the right thing by protecting Megan's reputation?
What is your opinion of Dylan?
If you had to change the title of this story, what would you change it to?
- Let students know that help is available through the 24-hour [National Suicide Prevention Lifeline](http://www.national suicide prevention lifeline.org), 1-800-273-TALK.

Name _____ Date _____ Period _____

Advanced Character Map

(Character's Name)

What does he say?	What can you infer?



What does he do?	What can you infer?

How does he feel?	What can you infer?

What does he look like?	What can you infer?

Question(s): _____

Name _____ Date _____ Period _____

Advanced Character Map

(Character's Name)

What does she say?	What can you infer?

What does she do?	What can you infer?



How does she feel?	What can you infer?

What does she look like?	What can you infer?

Question(s): _____

Dylan's Fault

1 Everybody said it was Dylan's fault. After all, he's the one who broke up with Megan, causing her to slip into depression and kill herself.

2 As **mourners** filed into the church, an usher stopped Dylan in the vestibule. "I'm sorry, Dylan, but Megan's family really doesn't want you here."

3 "But...we've known each other for years," Dylan pleaded as other classmates glared him down.

4 "Just leave, Dylan," one of the kids said, easing past the usher. "You've done enough damage already."

5 Dylan and Megan had been everybody's favorite couple. She was a beautiful blonde-haired, blue-eyed cheerleader; he was a football player from the wrong side of the tracks who'd managed to fit in with the popular crowd thanks to his athletic promise and good looks. Dylan and Megan had been friends since middle school, started going out in tenth grade, and made it all the way to the second semester of their senior year before Dylan called it quits.

6 "I just don't want to be together anymore," he had told her as they sat alone in his car.

7 "What? Are you gay or something?"

8 Dylan raised an eyebrow.

9 Megan cried desperately, "Is there somebody else? Dylan, what did I do wrong?"

10 Dylan didn't quite have a reasonable response. He didn't have any other girl on his list. He wasn't thinking about going off to some other state for college and leaving Megan's memory behind, he was just tired of being "Dylan and Megan." Sure, their names had a nice little rhyme, but they weren't joined at the hip. He was sick of people treating them like they were married or something.

11 Even Megan's parents planned family vacations with Dylan in mind. Everyone in the Houston area knew that Dylan was destined for a division one college. **Apparently**, Megan's parents were **banking** on his success, hoping Dylan would someday make their only daughter a very rich woman.

12 Dylan remembered the look in Megan's eyes when he broke up with her; like her whole life had ended. Her face went white; tears came streaming down her cheeks. "How can you do this after all we've been through?"

13 Maybe that was the real problem. All they'd been through. Things were fine until last fall, when Megan got pregnant. Suddenly, their happy-go-lucky high school romance became **complicated**. Megan's parents quickly, quietly swept Megan to a clinic and made her terminate the pregnancy.

14 Dylan never had a vote.

15 “Is it because of the baby?” Megan wanted to know. She rested her arms on his shoulders. “I mean, if you want another baby, that’s fine with me. Just...I can’t live without you.”

16 “No, Megan.” Dylan pushed her arms down. “I don’t want to be a father. And you shouldn’t want to be a mom right now, either. You have your whole life ahead of you. Don’t get so caught up in me that you lose yourself.”

17 In that moment, Dylan knew he’d hit stone. He’d arrived at the core of their problem—Megan didn’t know who she was without him. He *had* to break up with her now, for her sake. “I love you, Megan, but I have to let you find out how to be you.”

18 For the first few weeks after their breakup, Dylan tried to just be friends with Megan, but she’d forgotten how to be just friends. She’d assumed they would still spend weekends together and go see movies every Saturday. When Dylan told her he was going to see the new *Twilight* movie with some other friends, Megan cried for two days. Dylan quickly realized that he couldn’t be friends with Megan. It was all or nothing with her, so he decided on nothing.

19 Thankfully, their high school was big enough that he didn’t see her much throughout the school day. She sent plenty of messages through mutual friends, though. So many messages, in fact, people started **badgering** Dylan. “Megan is miserable. She’s losing weight, failing all her classes. She can’t cheer anymore, and it’s like she doesn’t even care. Can’t you just get back with her until we graduate?”

20 Somebody even threatened to beat him up if he showed up at the prom with another girl. Didn’t matter, anyway. All the girls thought he was a jerk for breaking up with Megan without obvious reason.

21 None of them on the outside looking in knew the extent of Megan’s unhealthy attachment to him. None of them knew about the baby, either. All they knew was, since Dylan had broken up with Megan, she wasn’t the same. Her usual bright, sunny **disposition** had been replaced with gloom.

22 And now she was dead from an overdose of sleeping pills and cough syrup.

23 Dylan had done a lot of research online and discovered that having suicidal thoughts after abortion is a common occurrence. He’d talked to his parents about the statistics, and sometimes he wanted to scream to the world that Megan’s problem was bigger than him, bigger than the break-up because she had other issues.

24 But he’d meant what he said to Megan when he ended their relationship. He *did* love her. And rather than ruin Megan’s good reputation, Dylan made the conscious decision to **bear** the blame. If it made her family feel better, their friends feel better, and if it made people remember Megan in a positive light, he would take the fall.

25 Slowly, Dylan walked away from the church.

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