



Elements of a Short Story

Short Story Elements

- Setting
- Characters
- Conflict
- Plot
- Theme

What is a short story??

- A brief work of fiction
- Takes a reader on a quick, focused journey
- No two stories are identical (the same), but they all share some common elements

SETTING



- The time and place of action in a story
- The setting can create a mood, or atmosphere of the story
- Setting can include:
 1. historical period
 2. physical location
 3. season of year and time of day
 4. climate and weather
 5. culture and social systems or traditions

Examples of Setting

- Historical Period – colonial period, Civil Rights Movement, WWII Era
- Physical Location – school, Hazleton, Mars, supermarket, Japan
- Season/Time of day – winter, spring, summer, autumn, afternoon, morning, 3:00 PM, lunchtime, at night
- Climate/Weather – tropical, desert, cloudy/rainy day, warm/hot
- Culture/Social Systems or Traditions – Native American, Asian culture, holiday traditions

Characters

- The people or animals in a story



Protagonist

- The main character in a literary work
- Often a person, but sometimes it can be an animal

Antagonist

- A character or force in conflict with a main character (protagonist).

Two Types of Characterization

- Direct Characterization – when an author describes a character
- Indirect Characterization – when the author reveals a character through speech and actions

Direct Characterization

Some words that authors use to describe characters directly are:

- | | | |
|----------------|---------|--------|
| • bossy | helpful | scared |
| • brave | honest | happy |
| • careful | kind | neat |
| • friendly | proud | mean |
| • hard-working | shy | nice |
| • funny | wise | angry |

Examples: Steven was scared to go to middle school.

Luz is a proud and hard-working student.

Indirect Characterization

- Example:

Ben helped his mother in the store. He put boxes on the shelf. He didn't drop any boxes. Mr. Kirk left some money at the store. Ben followed him outside to give him the money.

What words would you use to tell about Ben?

Helpful

kind

careful

honest

hard-working

Indirect Characterization

- Example:

Tippy had a bone. A bigger dog wanted it. Tippy was afraid. She stood over her bone and barked. The big dog ran away. Tippy was glad she hadn't lost her bone.

What words would you use to tell about Tippy?

proud

brave

shy

Characterization

Example:

Amy kept her library books together on a shelf. She put away all her toys carefully.

Amy was very...

upset

neat

mean

Answer: neat

Characterization

Example:

Joe's friend Tom laughed a lot. He always had a smile on his face.
Tom was a _____ person.

surprised

naughty

happy

Answer: happy

Characterization

Example:

Lisa's little brother hid her skates under the bed. He hid her favorite book. He was being _____.

calm

naughty

nice

Answer: naughty

Characterization

Example:

David read all the books about the forest that he could find.
He also talked with the forest rangers to learn more.

David was _____.

gentle

curious

scared

Answer: curious

Conflict

- The central problem or struggle that the characters face



Two Types of Conflict

- External Conflict – is a struggle between a character and an outside force

Person versus Person (two character struggle with one another)

Person versus Nature (floods, fires, storms, etc.)

Person versus Society (government, religion)

Person versus Technology (enemy with machines)

Person versus Animal (can be mythical like dragons, evil beasts or ordinary animals)

Two Types of Conflict

- Internal Conflict – takes place within a character's mind

Person versus Self

Examples:

1. The character struggles with his/her own fears....
2. The character faces a difficult decision.....



Plot

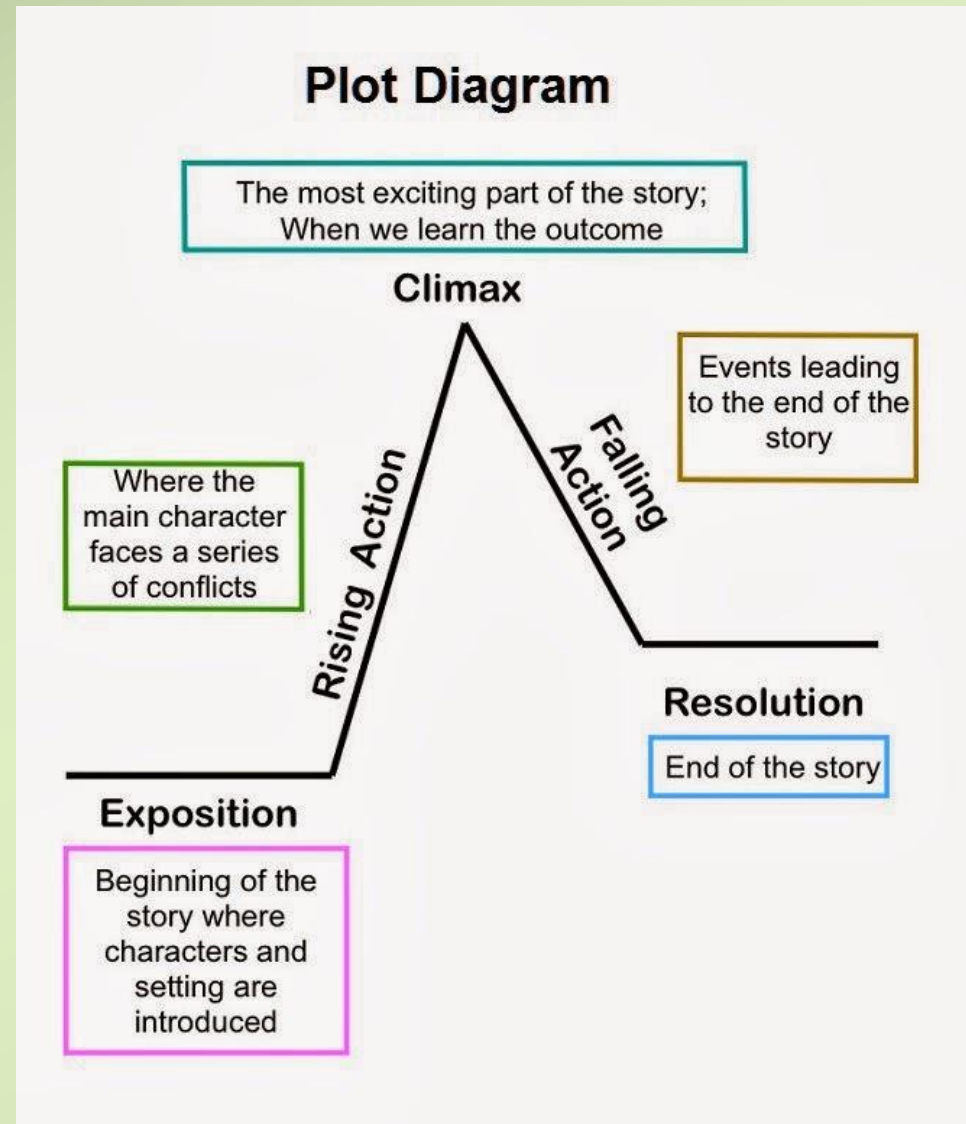
The sequence of events in a story

Plot consists of the following:

1. Exposition – introduces the situation
2. Rising Action – introduces the conflict
3. Climax – is the turning point
4. Falling Action – is when the conflict eases
5. Resolution – is the conclusion

Plot Diagram

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TpfbSJjOQxc>



Theme

A central or main idea, message or insight

Stated themes – are expressed directly

Implied themes – are suggested by the author

Universal themes – recur in different cultures and time periods

Point of View

- The perspective from which a short story is told, or narrated



Point of View

- First-person
 - the narrator is a character in the story
 - Readers only learn what that character knows, thinks, or feels
 - will see the use of first person pronouns such as: ***I, me, we***

Point of View

- Third-person

- The narrator is not a character, but a voice outside the story

Third-Person Omniscient – the narrator is able to relate the inner thoughts and feeling of ALL the character

Third-Person Limited – the narrator reveals the thoughts and feelings of only one character

Irony

- Is a contradiction between what happens and what is expected

Examples:

- A traffic cop gets his license suspended for unpaid parking tickets
- Two people want a divorce, but during the proceedings they discover they still love each other and get back together.

3 Types of Irony

1. Situational Irony – occurs when something happens that directly contradicts the expectations of the characters of the audience
2. Verbal Irony – is when a person says something the opposite of what they mean (often being sarcastic)
3. Dramatic Irony – the audience is aware of something that the character or speaker is not

Tone

- The writer's attitude toward his or her audience and subject.
- The tone can often be described by a single adjective, such as *formal* or *informal*, *serious* or *playful*, *bitter* or *ironic*.
- Factors that contribute to the tone are word choice, sentence structure, line length, rhyme, rhythm, and repetition.