Short Story / Novel

The Elements of Fiction

There are four main parts to every work of fiction.

* Character
* Setting
* Theme
* Plot

Characters are the people (and sometimes personified animals) in a story. We break them down into three divisions

1. **By what their role or function is in the story**
2. The **protagonist** is the main character in the story. All the action revolves around this character.
3. The **antagonist** is the major character (or sometimes force) that opposes the protagonist.
4. **Minor characters** are all the characters who play less important roles in the story but are still necessary to the story.
5. **By how much we know about them**
6. A **round** character is one that we know many details about. We can describe them in a way that allows us to feel we know them.
7. A **flat** character is one that we know very little about.
8. **By their movement or momentum in the story.**
9. A **dynamic** character changes slowly over the course of the story. They are somehow different people at the end of the story than they were in the beginning.
10. A **static** character makes no change and remains the same.
11. **By any particular or interesting qualities they may have.**
12. A character **foil** is one who, in his or her characteristics, shows us contrast with the protagonist and therefore helps us to understand the protagonist better.
13. A **realistic** character is one who, to us, seems to be normal or believable. They are multidimensional and have complex relationships and motivations.
14. A **stereotyped** or **stock** character is one dimensional, totally predictable and recognizable to the reader as a “type” of person.

**Characterization** is the process through which we learn the **characteristics** or qualities of a character. We can learn these characteristics in a number of direct or indirect ways.

*Characteristics* can be shown by:

* What the author says about the character
* What a character says about him/herself
* What other characters say about him/her
* What the character does

A **character sketch** is a short description and analysis of a character that includes adjectives, specific examples and quotations from the story. When writing a character sketch we do not normally include the physical appearance or dress of the character unless we feel that it somehow symbolically shows other characteristics.

A character’s **motivation** is what causes the character to do what they do as well as the aim or goal in taking that action.

**Setting**

* Includes **the time** of the story (year, hour etc.)
* Includes **the place** of the story (country, city, street, etc.)
* Includes **the atmosphere** of the beginning of the story (use adjectives)

Setting can be only a minimal part of the story or it can have a greater effect on other elements of the story such as character, plot, conflict or theme. When considering setting we need to not only describe what we know or understand about the time and place, but also how this may affect any other element. *The atmosphere is often used to foreshadow events in the story*.

**Theme**

Theme is the central thought or **main idea** behind the story. It is usually a reflection of some important or significant aspect of life.

It should never be confused with **moral** which is the lesson of a story.

A **thematic statement** is a one-sentence general statement about life or human nature that can be derived by interpreting the story’s overall message. It generalizes the story’s main meaning.

**The Plot**

Plot is what happens in the story. It is the framework for the story.

3.

2. 4.

1. A Plot Diagram .5
2. Introduction

* Meet the *characters*
* Learn about the *setting and atmosphere*
* Identify the *main conflict* and type and therefore the activating circumstance or event that gets the story going

1. Rising Action

* Events pile on events
* Conflicts intensify

1. Climax

* The turning point of the story
* (Sometimes the most interesting or exciting part of the story. You can also look at where the main conflict you identified in #1 changes or “shifts” )

1. Falling Action

* Find out how the protagonist wins or loses the conflict
* Loose ends are tied up
* The *suspens*e of the story decreases
* Can vary in length

1. Conclusion

* May state a *moral* or give an explanation
* May be a surprise
* May be an unresolved ending

**Literary Terms and +Devices**

**Allusion** – A short reference to a famous person, place or event.

**Atmosphere** – The feeling or mood of the story.

**Audience** – The intended reader.

**Conflict** – A clash of opposing ideas, emotions, forces or persons.

Person vs. Self (Internal Conflict)

Person vs. Person (External Conflict)

Person vs. Environment (External Conflict)

Person vs. Supernatural (External Conflict)

**Connotation** - of a word is the associated meanings of it. These are implied or suggested.

**Contrast** – Placing two very different people, objects, ideas or feelings very close together.

**Emphasis** – A part that is made more significant or important.

**Epiphany** - is a sudden moment of realization or clarity.

**Euphemism** - the use of mild or indirect expression in lieu of something much harsher or direct.

**Foreshadowing** – A hint of what is to come. It is used to create suspense.

**Flashback -** a sudden switch from the present to the past.

**Hyperbole** - a purposeful exaggeration to create the effect of emphasis.

**Oxymoron** - when two contradictory words or phrases are placed side by side.

**Imagery** - helps the reader form vivid impressions of the subject.

**Irony** –

**Dramatic** - A difference between what the audience knows and what a character knows to be true. Ex. Romeo and Juliet

**Situational** – A difference between what happens and what would be expected to happen. Ex. Straight A student gets a failing grade.

**Verbal** – Difference between what is said and what is meant. Ex. Wow! I’m so excited about doing all this homework for Cristina’s class!

**Metaphor** – a comparison between two unlike things using “is”

**Mood** – see atmosphere

**Moral** – the intended message or lesson

**Narrator** – the character telling the story

**Paradox** - a statement that upon first reading appears to be contradictory or impossible, but upon further examination reveals itself to be true.

**Point of View** - the perspective from which a story is seen or told. It establishes the relationship between author, readers and characters.

1. First person narrative uses “I.” In this point of view we know what this person thinks and feels from the vantage point inside the story.
2. A limited Omniscient or Third-Person narrative is when a story is told from outside the characters but in the perspective of one character. The characters are referred to as “he” or “she” and the narrator is limited to knowing only the thoughts and feeling of that one character.
3. On Omniscient narrative tells the thoughts of emotions of more than one or all of the characters.
4. In the objective narrative the narrator has no special knowledge and the facts are presented in an unemotional or factual way.

**Satire** - the use of irony to ridicule an idea, a person or a thing, often with the aim of provoking change. It often targets human vices.

**Simile** – a comparison between two things using like or as

**Suspense** – something that keeps the reader wondering what will happen next

**Symbol** – a person, object or act that suggests something deeper. Ex. A dove = peace

**Tone** – the writer’s feeling towards their subject

**Title** – Gives a hint or clue about the story