



Short Stories

A short glossary of literary terms



The Short Story

The short story is a short work of fiction that is short enough to be read in one sitting but long enough to develop a plot and characters.

- There are six basic elements that go into creating a short story: theme, plot, conflict, setting, symbolism, and characterization.

Theme

Theme is an observation of life which serves as the **controlling idea** in a literary work.

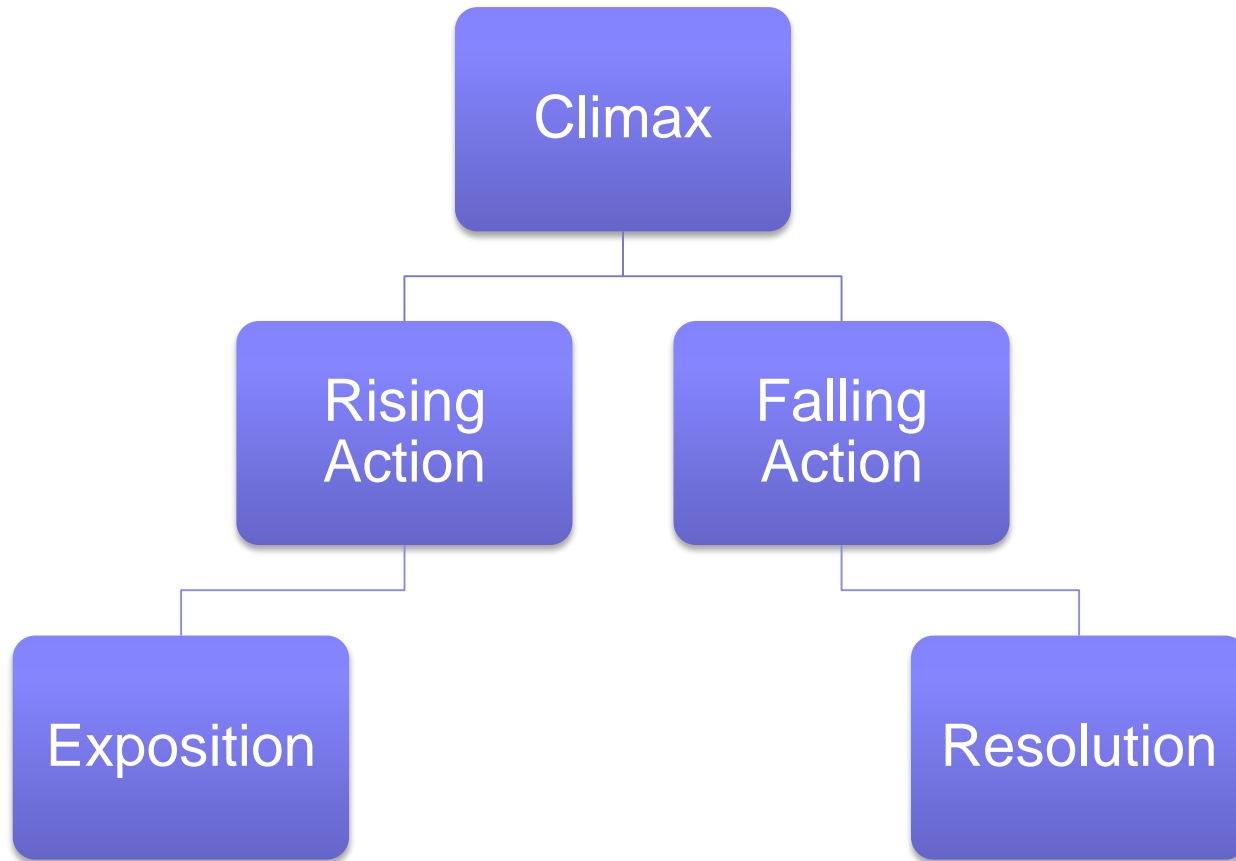
- A theme is seldom presented word-for-word but is more often found as **an abstract idea**, surfacing through the **actions and dialogues** of characters, the use of **symbols and recurring images**, or the manipulation of **other literary devices**.
- A theme should be expressed in a phrase, not merely one word. **A topic is one word. A theme is what the author has to say about that topic.**

Plot

Plot is the progression of events in a literary work.

- Each part of the plot is so essential that if one part were removed, the whole structure would be disturbed.
- Plot basically consists of the following:
 - Exposition (setting and characters introduced)
 - Initial incident (conflict begins)
 - Rising Action (problem worsens)
 - Climax (point where a decision must be made by hero/heroine)
 - Falling Action (the consequences of the decision)
 - Resolution & Denouement (problem is resolved and loose ends are tied up)

Plot Diagram:



Frame Story



Conflict

Conflict results from the struggle of two opposing forces.

- One of the forces is usually a person who confronts one or more of five basic kinds of opposition:

- Man v. Self
- Man v. Man
- Man v. Society
- Man v. Nature
- Man v. Fate (Higher powers, i.e. gods, etc.)

Setting

Setting is the **time and place** of a narrative.

- The physical aspects of setting include **time of day** or other particulars of the environment, such as **location**, topography, and the **placement of objects**.
- The intangibles of setting include lifestyle and the predominant spiritual or moral **atmosphere**.

Symbolism

Symbolism is an economic method for exploring the unknown through the known. A familiar object is used to represent the unfamiliar.

- The substitution demands that the reader transfer the relevant characteristics of the known to the unknown.
- Example: Color symbolism – White usually symbolizes what?
- Example: Animal symbolism – What does a dove usually represent?

Characterization

Characterization is the creation of believable fictitious personalities. The basic methods of characterization include:

- 1. an explicit statement by the author
- 2. the character's appearance
- 3. the character's thoughts
- 4. the character's actions, including mannerisms
- 5. what the character says
- 6. what others say about the character
- 7. the aspects of setting which reflect influence of the character
- 8. reactions of and to the character



Protagonist v. Antagonist

- A protagonist is the central character of a novel, drama, short story, or narrative poem.
- An antagonist is the adversary or rival of the protagonist.



Round v. Flat Characters

- Dynamic (or round) characters undergo a change in personality or character due to a series of events.
- Static (or flat) characters do not change much over the course of the novel
 - They are used mainly to emphasize an important trait or two.



Explanation of Irony

- **Verbal Irony:** Saying one thing but meaning another, usually the opposite (sarcasm)
- **Dramatic Irony:** Occurs when the reader/audience knows something that the character(s) does/do not know
- **Situational Irony:** Occurs when the opposite of what is expected happens.

Point of View

- The perspective from which a narrative is told.
 - First person: uses first person pronouns
 - Third person omniscient: author can enter the minds of many or all characters
 - Third person limited: author limits his omniscience to the minds of one or two characters
 - Third person objective: the author does not enter a single mind but instead records what can be seen and heard.
 - Stream of consciousness: narrator has no filter on his thoughts.

Pun

- A pun is a play on words that are either identical or similar in sound, but have sharply diverse meanings.
- Mercutio, after being stabbed, says, “Ask for me tomorrow and you shall find me a ***grave*** man.”
- John Deere advertises: “Nothing runs like a Deere.”



Imagery

- What is it?
- It consists of the words or phrases a writer uses to represent persons, objects, actions, feelings, and ideas by appealing to one or all of the five senses: seeing, hearing, tasting, smelling, feeling.
- Can you think of any examples?



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Tone

- What is *tone*?
- *Tone* is the writer's or speaker's attitude toward a subject character, or audience, and it is conveyed through the author's choice of words (diction) and detail.
- Tone can be serious, humorous, sarcastic, indignant, objective, etc.
- What kinds of tone were there in *OFK*?