

Short Stories Notes



Short Story

A fictional tale of a length that is too short to publish in a single volume like a novel. Stories are usually between five and sixty pages; they can be read in a single sitting. Usually, short stories concentrate on relatively few characters and events.

Plot

The events of a story or the series of actions that take place in the story are referred to as plot. The plot is the storyline or organization of incidents in a story. Plot is traditionally divided into seven parts:

- 1) Introduction – The reader meets the characters and discovers the setting. The interest of the reader is aroused here.
- 2) Inciting Incident – Something happens to begin the action. A single event usually signals the beginning of the main conflict. The inciting incident is sometimes called 'the complication' (initial conflict, starting problem).
- 3) Rising Action – This builds up the story, it is the longest part of the story and is a series of steps that lead to the climax.
- 4) Climax – Here, the reader finds out what happens to the conflict, or how the conflict is resolved. It may not yet be finished, but the reader now has a good understanding of what way it is going to go now. This is the moment of greatest tension in the story.
- 5) Falling Action – The plot begins to wrap up in this section of the story, which is usually brief and the main character solves the main problem/conflict or someone solves it for him or her.
- 6) Conclusion – There are four types of conclusions:
 - I. Happy - all loose ends are tied up and explained and the ending is happy
 - II. Sad - all loose ends are tied up and explained but the ending is sad
 - III. Surprise - something happens that the reader does not expect at all
 - IV. Unresolved (cliffhanger) - the reader is left with questions and has to, in part, supply the ending him or herself

Conflict

A struggle that occurs between opposing forces or characters. Conflicts are either:

- A. External – when a character struggles against an outside force
- B. Internal – when a character struggles against him/herself.

4 Main Types:

1. Man Vs Self
2. Man Vs Nature
(Environment)
3. Man Vs Man
4. Man Vs Society



Character

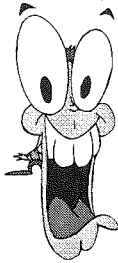
The fictional persons who carry out the action of the story. There are several types of characters in each story:

- 1) Protagonist – The main character in the story, is usually, but not always, a “good guy”
- 2) Antagonist - The force against the protagonist. Is usually another character, but not always, especially if the conflict is “person against self.” The antagonist is usually described as the “bad guy”, although this description does not work if the conflict is person against self or person against the environment.
- 3) Round – Characters are realistic and complex who have several sides to their personality. They are lifelike and behave like real people.



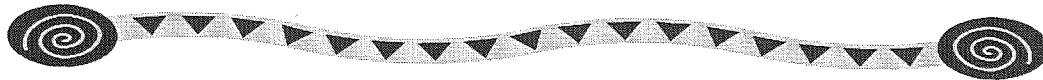
- 4) Flat – Characters are usually minor characters who have one or two sides to their personality. They do not seem very real or realistic because not much is revealed about them.

- 5) **Stereotypical** – Characters that are easily recognized as “types”. They do not change from story to story because they have “familiar” personality traits. Examples of these characters include the witch-like old woman, dumb blonde, mad scientist etc.



- 6) **Dynamic** – Characters that undergo an important change because of what happened in the story. Their personality becomes different. For example, the cruel old man might see the errors of his ways and become generous.

- 7) **Static** – Characters are opposite of dynamic characters. These characters do not change during the course of the story. They have the same personality throughout the story.



Character Analysis – Character traits reveal a character’s personality and physical appearance. The author may choose to reveal a character’s personality and physical appearance to the reader in the following ways:

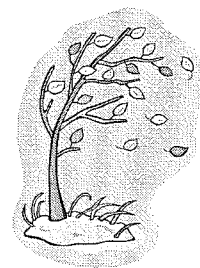
- 1) Author’s description
- 2) Character’s comments
- 3) Character’s actions
- 4) Character’s thoughts
- 5) Other characters’ comments
- 6) Character’s appearance, belongings, surroundings



Motivation is what causes a character to do what he or she does. Circumstances and personality usually determines the action of a character.

Setting – The author may choose to state the setting clearly or leave it to the reader to infer from textual clues (such as weather). There are two parts to a complete setting:

- 1) Emotional Setting (mood - humour, seriousness, terror, suspense, frustration, etc.)
- 2) Physical Setting (time, place, season, etc.)



Literary Devices



Theme – The theme is the central message or moral of the story. It is usually implied (suggested) rather than directly stated.

Moral – The implied or stated lesson of a story. Not to be confused with the theme.

Point of View – The point of view is the perspective (view) from which the story is told which best suits the author's intentions. The story may be told from the following perspectives:

- 1) First person: The central or main character tells his/her own story using the pronoun "I". The character tells the reader what he/she thinks and feels.
- 2) Third Person: The characters are referred to as "he/she" and the reader knows what the characters think and feel (we get inside their heads). All characters thoughts are made clear in the text.

Flashback – A device showing events that happened from an earlier time

Foreshadow – This device gives a hint of what is to happen later in the story

Irony – A device by which the author expresses a meaning opposite to the stated one. A result that is the opposite of what is expected.

Narration – The act or process of telling a story.

Suspense – The feeling of anxiety (worry) and uncertainty experienced by the reader about the outcome of events in the story.

Symbol – A symbol is something which stands for or represents something else. Characters, objects, events, and settings, can all be symbolic.

Style – The individual manner in which an author expresses his/her thoughts and feelings.

Tone – The author's attitude towards the audience as expressed through his/her writing style.