

# Short Story Terms

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## The Major Elements of the Short Story

### Setting

- WHEN and WHERE a story takes place; usually includes:
  - Place
  - Time
  - Weather conditions
  - Social conditions
  - Mood or atmosphere

The atmosphere of a story is the *mood* or feeling that the reader feels when reading the story. The atmosphere of the story can be sad, gloomy, suspenseful, happy, etc. The atmosphere is created through the author's creation of setting, characters and point of view in the story. The author creates specific events and uses specific language and scenes in the story to create an impression.

### Conflict

- Is the opposition of forces – it is any goal or problem that the main character is faced with.
- There are usually (but not always) multiple conflicts, but only one main one.
- There are two types of conflict:
  - 1) External - A struggle with a force from the outside.
  - 2) Internal - A struggle within (the character must make some decision, overcome pain, resist an urge, etc.)
- There are four kinds of conflict:
  - 1) Human vs. Human: leading character struggles against other humans or animals
  - 2) Human vs. Society: leading character struggles against beliefs or customs of other people.
  - 3) Human vs. Nature: leading character struggles against nature or fate
  - 4) Human vs. Self: leading character struggles with ideas of right or wrong, choices, physical limitations, etc.

## Characters

Protagonist is the main character of the story (the hero): all major events have some importance to this character

Antagonist is whatever causes the conflict with the protagonist (the villain, etc.): can also be nature, society, etc.

The three A's: Appearance, Action and Attitude.

Appearance - the characters body structure (height, weight, proportioning), facial features (hair, eyes, complexion, notable features), and clothing.

Actions - what the character does. For every attitude there will be an action that proves it.

Attitude - how a character thinks. The character may be intelligent, determined, curious, talented, brave, stubborn, humorous, pessimistic, etc.

A dynamic character is one who changes during the course of the story. Most protagonists are dynamic. A static character doesn't change during the story. Characters in the story who are static often help to develop the main character to provide them with the opportunity to change.

## Theme

- is the author's main idea or moral
- usually is what the main character learns about life from overcoming the conflict
- Some simple examples of common themes in literature, TV, and film:
  - “don't judge a book by its cover”
  - “things are not always as they appear to be”
  - “people are afraid of change”
  - “love is blind”
  - “believe in yourself”

## Plot

- The sequence of events in a story
  - Has a beginning, middle, and end
  - Short stories usually have one plot so it can be read in one sitting
  - There are five essential parts of plot

## Plot Components

**Climax:** the turning point, the most intense moment—either mentally or in action

**Rising Action:** the series of conflicts and crisis in the story that lead to the climax

**Falling Action:** all of the action which follows the climax

**Exposition:** the start of the story, the situation before the action starts

**Resolution:** the conclusion, the tying together of all of the threads

## Point of View

First Person Narrative – the narrator uses “I” and participates in the action.

Third Person Narrative – the narrator uses “he” and “she” and is an outside observer.

## **Irony**

Irony – contrast or contradiction of what is expected and what results.

Verbal irony – occurs when a character or narrator says one thing but means the opposite.

Dramatic irony – occurs when the reader knows more than the character.

Situational irony – occurs when the contrast between what appears to be and what actually exists.

*Also...*

Mood is the general atmosphere created by the author's words. It is the feeling the reader gets from reading those words. It may be the same, or it may change from situation to situation. Examples of mood: melancholy, frightening, mysterious, romantic, gloomy, happy, sorrowful, joyful, suspenseful.

Suspense - A state or feeling of excited or anxious uncertainty about what may happen.

Foreshadowing - Often, an author will use this technique to give the reader clues as to what will happen later in the story.

Flashback - is an episode in which a writer or narrator describes an earlier time. Writers use flashbacks to explain something that will help the reader understand the plot.