

## Elements of a short story

The major elements of a short story are plot, characterization, setting, point of view, and theme. When analyzing a story, we can examine each element separately, but in a good story these elements interact to form one total effect, the impact on the reader.

- I. **Plot**-A course of action taken by the characters.
  - A. **Conflict**-The struggle between opposing forces; the situation or set up at or near the beginning of the narrative; the problem
    1. Conflict between characters
    2. Conflict within a single character
    3. Conflict between a character and society
    4. Conflict between a character and nature or destiny
  - B. **Rising Action**-the narration that goes from the conflict up to the climax
  - C. **Climax**-The point of highest interest and emotional involvement in the story; the point at which we know how the conflict will be resolved.
  - D. **Falling Action**-A situation in which the characters find themselves after the climax.
  - E. **Resolution**-When a series of interrelated events reaches some identifiable conclusion.
  - F. **Epiphany or Revelation**-When one of the central characters comes to a knowledge about themselves or the world around them.
  
- II. **Characterization**-The part of the narration that provides information about the background of the characters and their actions so that the reader can understand them.
  - protagonist**: A story's main character
  - antagonist**: The character or force in conflict with the protagonist
  - round character**: A complex, fully developed character, often prone to change
  - flat character**: A one-dimensional character, typically not central to the story
  - A **static character** is one that does not undergo important change in the course of the story, remaining essentially the same at the end as he or she was at the beginning.
  - A **dynamic character**, in contrast, is one that does undergo an important change in the course of the story.

- III. **Setting**-The place and time in which a story happens. Setting can contribute to plot and to the reader's understanding of the characters.
- A. **Tone**-A mood that the writer creates or an attitude that the author expresses about his or her subject.
- III. **Point of View**-The relationship between the storyteller to the story. An author's choice of narrator can sometimes reveal his or her opinion of events and characters in a story.
- A. **Omniscient**-The story is narrated by the author who reveals the thoughts and feelings of all the characters. The omniscient narrator uses the third person-he or she-and stands completely outside the story. Because the narrator is detached, he or she can always be trusted.
- B. **First Person**-The story is narrated by a character in the story. A first person narrator relates personal experience, using "I." Because we are reading a personal account, we sympathize with the narrator and become emotionally involved in the story.
- C. **Limited Third Person**-The story is narrated by the author but from the limited viewpoint of only one character. The narrator is detached from the action and uses the pronoun he or she. Because we read the thoughts of only one character, we sympathize with him or her. The character, however, may not completely understand a situation, and therefore we too are denied full information.
- V. **Theme**-A story's main idea. A theme usually extends beyond the confines of a story to form a general statement about life. A story's theme is usually implied through changes in character or setting, or through the author's choice of point of view. A short story may include several interconnected themes.