

## Elements of Short Stories

**1. SETTING** -- The time and location in which a story takes place is called the setting. For some stories the setting is very important, while for others it is not. There are several aspects of a story's setting to consider when examining how setting contributes to a story (some, or all, may be present in a story):

- a) **place** - geographical location. Where is the action of the story taking place?
- b) **time** - When is the story taking place? (historical period, time of day, year, etc)
- c) **weather conditions** - Is it rainy, sunny, stormy, etc?
- d) **social conditions** - What is the daily life of the characters like? Does the story contain local colour (writing that focuses on the speech, dress, mannerisms, customs, etc. of a particular place)?
- e) **mood or atmosphere** - What feeling is created at the beginning of the story? Is it bright and cheerful or dark and frightening?

**2. THEME** -- The theme in a piece of fiction is its controlling idea or its central insight. It is the author's underlying meaning or main idea that he is trying to convey. The theme may be the author's thoughts about a topic or view of human nature. The title of the short story usually points to what the writer is saying and he may use various figures of speech to emphasize his theme, such as: symbol, allusion, simile, metaphor, hyperbole, or irony.

Some simple examples of common themes from literature, TV, and film are:

- things are not always as they appear to be
- Love is blind
- Believe in yourself
- People are afraid of change
- Don't judge a book by its cover

**3. Plot**- sequence of events or incidents that make up a story.

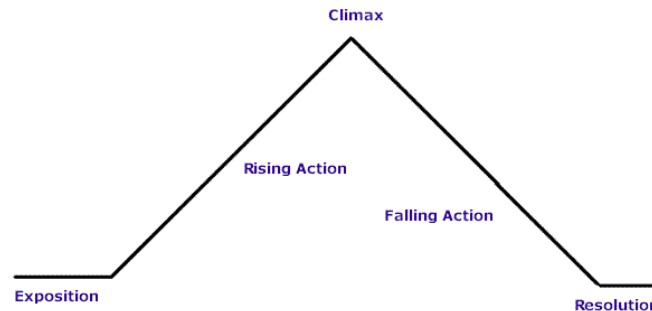
**Rising Action** -complication or development of the conflict.

**Climax** - turning point of the story; point of most intense interest.

**Falling action** --(denouement) events that lead to resolution.

**Resolution** - outcome of the conflict.

## PLOT DIAGRAM:



4. **Conflict** - struggle between opposing forces (protagonist vs antagonist):

A. There are two types of conflict:

- 1) **External** - A struggle with a force outside one's self.
- 2) **Internal** - A struggle within one's self; a person must make some decision, overcome pain, quiet their temper, resist an urge, etc.

B. There are four kinds of conflict:

- 1) **Man versus Man** (physical) - The leading character struggles with his physical strength against other men, forces of nature, or animals.
- 2) **Man versus Self** - The leading character struggles internally with emotions and decisions.
- 3) **Man versus Society** (social) - The leading character struggles against ideas, practices, or customs of other people.
- 4) **Man versus Nature** - *external* struggle between person and an element of nature or the environment.

5. **Character**- is generally the central or focal element in a story.

### ***Persons in a work of fiction - Antagonist and Protagonist***

Short stories use few characters. One character is clearly central to the story with all major events having some importance to this character - he/she is the **PROTAGONIST**. The opposer of the main character is called the **ANTAGONIST**.

**Four types of characterization**- techniques the writer uses to develop character.

1. Physical description.
2. Speech and actions of the character.
3. Direct comment from the narrator.
4. Speech and actions of other characters.

### Four types of characters-

1. Round: complex or presented in detail.
2. Dynamic: developing and learning in the course of the story.
3. Flat: characterized by one or two traits.
4. Static: unchanged from the story's beginning to end.

6. **Atmosphere**- the mood or feeling which pervades a story.

### 7. Point of view-

- A. **Omniscient**- the author tells the story using the third person. Author knows all of what is done, said, felt, and thought by the characters.
- B. **Limited omniscient**- Author tells the story from the third person but limits observations of thoughts and feelings to one character, the author presents the story from this character's eyes.
- C. **First person**- one character tells the story in the first person. The reader sees and knows only as much as the narrator.
- D. **Objective**- the author is like a movie camera that moves around freely recording events. However, the author offers no comments on the characters or their actions. Readers are not told the thoughts or feelings of the characters.