

Elements of the Short Story

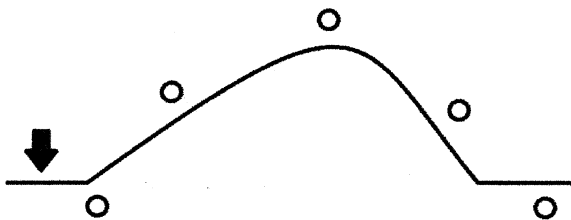
1. Plot:

The sequence of events in a short story.



2. Exposition:

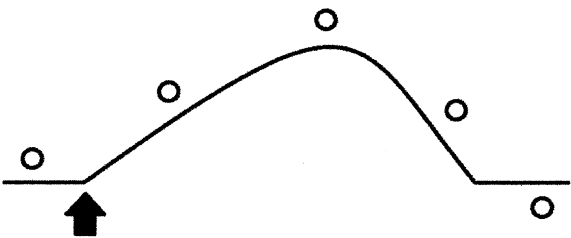
The background information of a story: characters, setting, & the story's set-up



3. Conflict:

The problem or situation that the main character (*protagonist*) has to deal with in a short story.

**Every short story MUST have a conflict—it's the whole reason the story exists! If there's no conflict, then there's no story!



4. Types of Conflict:

a. Internal: The problem or situation is entirely in the main character's mind.

1) man vs. SELF

b. External: The problem or situation is NOT just in the main character's mind—some other force, character, or event is causing the problem.

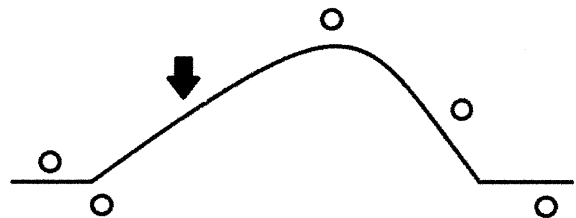
2) man vs. man: The main character (*protagonist*) has to deal with another character (*antagonist*).

**Simplistically, we might say that this is a "good guy" vs. a "bad guy," but that's not really accurate. The antagonist *could be* the character's mother or boyfriend or friend. Those are not "bad" people—just *other* people.

3) man vs. nature: The main character (*protagonist*) is up against the environment—a storm or lost in the wilderness. He has to overcome the odds to survive!

4) man vs. society: The main character (*protagonist*) has to overcome the belief system of the world in which he lives. Racism, sexism, etc.

5. Rising Action: The details of the plot that develop the situation for the main character (*protagonist*). The tension keeps building and building as it nears its boiling point!

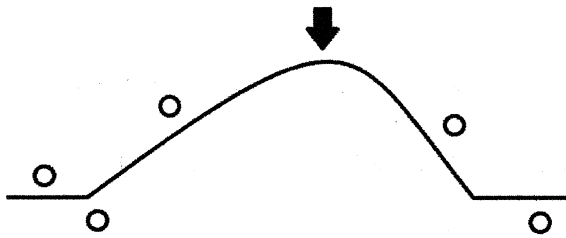


6. Climax (Turning Point): BOOM!

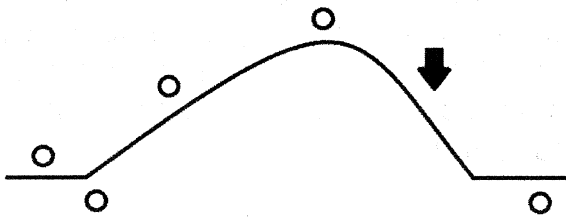
The event that happens that STOPS the situation in its tracks! The main character (*protagonist*) has something happen or realizes something or makes a choice that causes him to get off the path he has been on so far. The story literally takes a turn and heads a new way—the story starts to wrap up.

BINDER
Q1-A2

(Climax cont.)



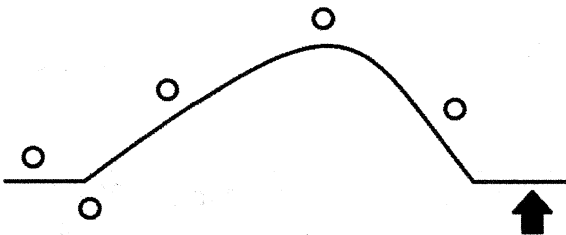
7. Falling Action: The aftermath of the *climax*. Any details that lead us to the story's end. Typically, the falling action is extremely brief—especially in comparison to the *rising action*, which developed the story's tension.



8. Resolution: Ta-DAH! Whatever the problem was for the main character (*protagonist*) is NOW OVER.

**The story may or may NOT have a "happy ending." :*(

The *resolution* should **directly** relate back to the *conflict*. If it *doesn't*, then you have either mis-identified the *conflict* OR the *resolution*. You have to re-do one of them!



9. Point of View:

Through whose eyes is the story told?
--the main character's (*protagonist*)?

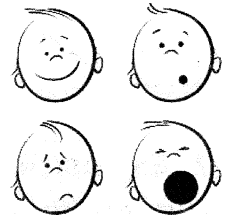
OR

--some person who seems to be *watching* events unfold (a narrator)?

10. First (1st) Person Point of View:

The story is told to you by the main character (*protagonist*) and all events are tainted by his perception of them.

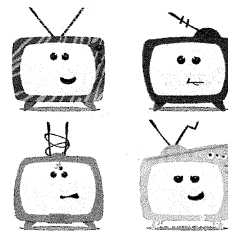
This point of view (POV) is nice for the reader because the reader not only sees *what* is happening, but the character also reveals his thoughts and feelings to the reader.



**Memory trick: "1st" makes me think that I'm *closest* to the action—right inside the character's head.

11. Third (3rd) Person POV:

The story is told to you by some other character NOT in the story. The *narrator* in this case is just *watching* the events unfold—the same way *you* watch events unfold on a TV show.



Depending on how the author approaches the story, the narrator has different levels of access to the characters' thoughts and feelings.

a. 3rd Person POV Omniscient:

The narrator knows ALL the characters' thoughts and feelings—*everyone's*!

"Omni" = all

"-scient" = knowledge

b. 3rd Person POV Limited:

The narrator has a limited access pass to SOME of the characters' thoughts and feelings. Usually, the narrator is limited to only knowing the thoughts and feelings of the main character.

c. 3rd Person POV Objective:

DENIED! The narrator is stuck just knowing what can be observed—only what can be seen and heard as if watching events on TV. Any other insights about the characters' thoughts or feelings are based on speculation and life experience—How would *you* feel if *you* were the protagonist in this situation?

12. theme: What is the point of this story? What experience does the main character (*protagonist*) have that ALL people have at some point or another in their lives? That is the story's *theme*—love, friendship, growing up, surviving, etc.

13. setting: Where and when a story takes place.

**Sometimes the setting is really important to the plot and characters' perspective. The plots of futuristic and historical fiction rely heavily on setting.

14. symbol: Symbols are cool because they do double duty. The object IS what it IS in the story, but it has some greater significance, too. Sometimes the symbol might be a rainy day—the main character feels like crying inside. Sometimes the symbol might be a dove—the universal symbol for peace, man. Don't be so shallow—look for symbols in literature. They're mind-blowing and cool!

15. protagonist: the *main character* of the story.

16. antagonist: the character in the story who is causing angst for our *protagonist*. Sometimes the *antagonist* is the typical "bad guy," but lots of times it's just the *protagonist's* friend, lover, or mother! Whoever the

antagonist is, he or she is the character that the main character is trying to work things out with.

17. imagery: Think of the words "image" or "imagine." *Imagery* is awesome writing that is so rich, it paints a picture in your mind. The author's word choices appeal to your 5 senses—sight, touch, hearing, taste, and smell.

18. personification: "PERSON"—that's the key word here. *Personification* is when human qualities (thoughts, feelings, behaviors) are given to non-human things.

19. alliteration: A sound device in which the author repeats a consonant sound at the beginning of words: bouncing baby boy.

20. tone: This is the author's attitude toward the subject he is writing about. He may be tackling a serious topic or making fun of a subject using humor or sarcasm.

Memory trick: Think of your mom saying to you: "Don't you dare take that **tone with me! I don't like your **at-ti-tude!**"

21. hyperbole: (hi- per- bowl- lee): This is HUGE exaggeration.

22. simile: Comparing two things with the word "like" or "as." EX. Busy as a bee.

23. Methods of Characterization:

Key word here: *character*

Characterization is HOW the author decides to tell the reader about his characters.

a. First (1st) Method of

Characterization: No mystery here—the author DIRECTLY TELLS the reader what he wants the reader to know about the character. He straight out says how the character feels and thinks.

**1st makes me think of being close to something—so it offers the most information.

b. Second (2nd) Method of

Characterization: We take a step back from the action with this method. The author expects the reader to figure out how the character feels and thinks based on the character's words and actions. The reader doesn't get to directly see inside the character's mind, but that's okay because life experience allows us to understand how other people are feeling.

c. Third (3rd) Method of

Characterization: This method of understanding a character wouldn't hold up in court—it's nothing but hearsay! In this method, the author leaves the reader out in the cold; and the reader has to figure out what is going on with the main character based on how OTHER characters react to him.

24. irony: Irony is when the reader says to himself: "Hmm. I didn't expect *that*."

Irony is the "contrast between reality and what is expected."

a. situational irony: The TWIST in a story. The SURPRISE turn of events. The reader expects *one* thing to happen and instead the OPPOSITE thing happens.

**Memory trick: the *situation* was different than you expected it to be.

b. dramatic irony: The poor character doesn't have all the facts, but the reader DOES. *Dramatic irony* is when the reader (or audience) knows something that the character does NOT know; and if the character DID know it, it would definitely CHANGE the way the character sees things.

**Memory trick: The word "drama" makes me think of sitting in a theater watching a play. I am the *audience*—which reminds me that the *audience knows something that the character does NOT know*.

c. verbal irony: A lot of people think of this as "sarcasm"—saying the opposite of what you mean—but it's more subtle and clever than that.

Verbal irony is saying one thing but meaning the opposite—but it doesn't drip with the nastiness that sarcasm drips with. The character to whom the statement is being said believes the other character who is saying it. That poor sap is in the dark, though, and the other character is pulling the wool over his eyes.

**NOTE: The three forms of irony often overlap each other. One ironic situation can have aspects of more than one type of irony.