KEY ELEMENTS OF A SHORT STORY

**Theme**

* The underlying or central meaning or idea of a story
* Author’s attitude towards some universal truth
* Stated in general – rather than specific terms (e.g. Crime does not pay. Not an example – Billy should not have stolen Farmer Brown’s apples)
* A story may have more that one theme
* Best statement of theme takes in the entire story

**Plot**: the series of events or episodes that make up the action

**Setting**: the time, place and circumstances in which the events of a story occur; the total environment for the action in a novel/play

**Characters**: a person in a work of fiction; sometimes an animal or object

* **Dynamic character:** a character who changes and develops during the course of a work of fiction
* **Static character:** a character who does not change or develop during the course of a work of fiction

**Characterization:** indicates how you can tell what a character is like:

* + - * **Direct Characterization –** The author tells the information to the reader
      * **Indirect Characterization –** The author shows the character in action and lets the reader make their own interpretations
      * **Author Characterization Tools**
      * What he/she says
      * What he/she does
      * His/Her appearance
      * What he/she thinks
      * What others say about him/her
      * How others react to him/her
      * What the author reveals directly or through a narrator

**Point of View:** the perspective from which the story is told

* + **First person:** the narration of a story by the main character or possibly, a minor character. As the narrator, he uses the pronoun “I” referring to himself.
  + **Omniscient:** the narration of a story as through an all-knowing observer, who can be in several places at the same time and can see into the hearts and minds of all characters
  + **Omniscient Limited:** the narration of a story by an all-knowing observer but limited primarily to what one of the characters can see, know, hear, or experience.

# PARTS OF A SHORT STORY

1. Exposition: gives background and events that lead to the presentation of the main idea or purpose of a work of literature

**a) Setting**

* + **Mood:** the frame of mind, emotional tone or state of feeling created by a piece of writing
  + **Tone:** the speaker’s or author’s attitude toward the subject, which is revealed by the words he or she chooses.
  + **Time:** the time in which a work of fiction takes place; clock time, seasonal time; yearly time; historical time
  + **Place:** the space in which the work of fiction takes place; geographical location
  + **Atmosphere**: the over-all feeling/emotional impression of the entire environment in a story, conveyed in large part by the setting and the mood
  + **Local Colour:** the presentation of characters, their manners, customs, dress and dialect of the characters that clues us to where the story is happening

**b)Characters**

* + **Protagonist:** the character who faces a problem and in his attempt to solve it, becomes involved in a conflict with an opposing force.
  + **Antagonist:** the force (usually a person) that opposes the protagonist that produces tension or conflict

2. **Initial Incident/Conflict/Complicating Incident**: the first indication of an obstacle that increases the tension. (Suspense begins)

* **Complications/Conflict(s):** ESSENTIAL TO PLOT. The struggle between two opposing forces, ideas or beliefs which form the basis of the plot. A writer uses a conflict/situation to test a character to reveal personal strengths or weaknesses. The conflict is resolved when one force – usually the protagonist – succeeds or fails in overcoming the opposing force or gives up trying. A character often experiences fore than one conflict.
* **TWO TYPES OF CONFLICT**
  + - **External conflict**: a struggle with a force outside one’s self
    - **Internal conflict:** a struggle within one’s self; a person must make some decision, overcome pain, quiet their temper, resist an urge etc.
* **FOUR KINDS OF CONFLICT**
  + **Man vs. Man (physical)** - the leading character struggles with his physical strength against other men, forces of nature, or animals.
  + **Man vs. Circumstances (classical) –** the leading character struggles against fate, or the circumstances of life facing him/her
  + **Man vs. Society (social)** – the leading character struggles against ideas, practices, or customs of other people
  + **Man vs. Himself/Herself (psychological) –** the leading character struggles with himself/herself; with his/her own soul, ideas of right or wrong, physical limitations, choices, etc.

3. **Rising Action:** the series of incidents that grow out of the conflict/problem to be solved and that build up to the climax

**Crisis:** the point in which the character (usually the protagonist) has to make a decision to either solve the problem or give up on the problem (usually right before the climax) (Fight or flight response)

4. **Climax**: the point of highest interest or dramatic intensity. It marks the turning point in the action (the protagonist – usually – acts on a decision)

5. **Denouement (Falling Action):** When the suspense subsides. The unraveling of the plot, following the climax, in which the writer explains how and why everything turned out as it did as the resolution to the conflict is examined

**6. Resolution:** Tells how the story concludes; where the conflict presented in the climax is solved

**Devices/Techniques used in the story (examples):**

* **Symbolism:** an object that stands for, or represents, an idea, belief, superstition, social or political institution, etc.; an object that evokes ideas or associations not literally part of the object; e.g. a pair of scales represents justice.
* **Imagery:** language that creates pictures in a reader’s mind to bring to life an experience or feelings described in literature. It may be a metaphor, a simile, or a straightforward description. An image may also have a symbolic meaning.
* **Foreshadowing:** the dropping of important hints or suggestion by the author to prepare the reader for what is to come and to help him to anticipate the outcome.
* **Suspense:** a feeling of excitement, curiosity, or expectation about the outcome of a literary work; keeps the reader turning pages
* **Contrast:** difference emphasized to provide variety and understanding; used to draw attention and exemplify depth of character usually
* **Irony:** a mode of expression in which the author says one thing and means the opposite. The term also applies to a situation, or to the outcome of an event (or series of events), that is the opposite of what might be expected.
* **Flashback:** when a writer interrupts the main action of a story to recreate a situation or incident of an earlier time as though it were occurring in the present; used to clarify present actions or circumstances
* Other figures of speech commonly used – Allusion, metaphor, similes, repetition