

Short Story Elements Review – ELA20F

SETTING

The time and location in which a story takes place is called the setting.

- 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?
- e) **mood or atmosphere** - What feeling is created at the beginning of the story?

CHARACTER

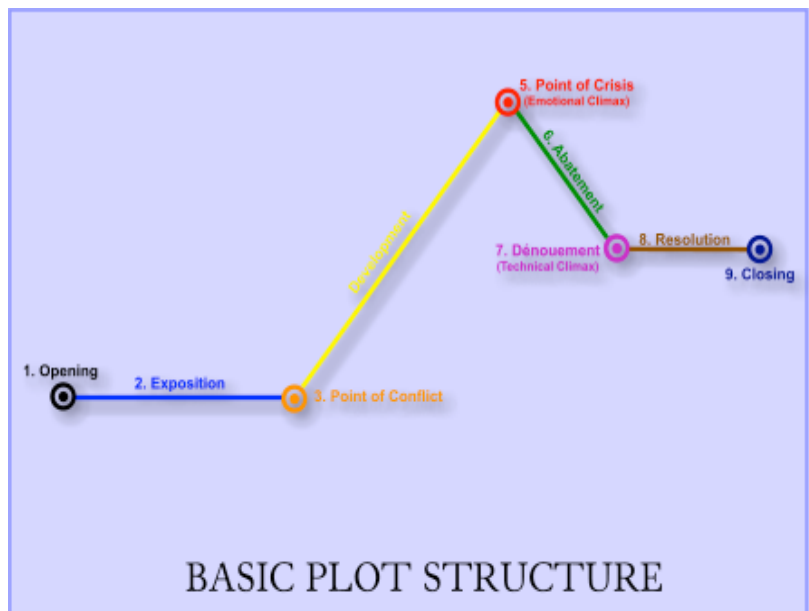
There are two meanings for the word character:

- a) The person in a work of fiction.
 - i) **Protagonist** - One character is clearly central to the story with all major events having some importance to this character.
 - ii) **Antagonist** - The opposition of the main character.
- b) The characteristics of a person (must seem real or be relatable)
 - i) **Individual** - round, many sided and complex personalities.
 - ii) **Developing** - dynamic, many sided personalities that change, for better or worse, by the end of the story e.g. Scrooge
 - iii) **Static** - Stereotype, have one or two characteristics that never change and are emphasized e.g. brilliant detective, drunk, cruel stepmother, etc.

PLOT

The plot is how the author arranges events to develop his basic idea; it is the sequence of events in a story or play.

- a) **Lead In (opening)** - The beginning of the story where the characters and the setting is revealed.
- b) **Rising Action** - This is where the events in the story become complicated and the conflict in the story is revealed (events between the introduction and climax).
- c) **Climax** - This is the highest point of interest and the turning point of the story. The reader wonders what will happen next; will the conflict be resolved or not?
- d) **Falling Action** - The events and complications begin to resolve themselves. The reader knows what has happened next and if the conflict was resolved or not (events between climax and denouement).
- e) **Resolution** - This is the final outcome or unangling of events in the story.



CONFLICT/TENSION

Conflict and tension are essential to plot. It is the opposition of forces which ties one incident to another and makes the plot move. Conflict is not merely limited to open arguments; rather it is any form of opposition that faces the main character. Within a short story there may be only one central struggle, or there may be one dominant struggle with many minor ones.

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.

There are four kinds of conflict:

- 1) **Man vs. Man** (physical) - The leading character struggles with his physical strength against other characters, forces of nature, or animals.
- 2) **Man vs. Circumstances** (classical) - The leading character struggles against fate, or the circumstances of life facing him/her.
- 3) **Man vs. Society** (social) - The leading character struggles against ideas, practices, or customs of other people.
- 4) **Man vs. Self** (psychological) - The leading character struggles with himself/herself; with his/her own soul, ideas of right or wrong, physical limitations, choices, etc.

POINT OF VIEW

Point of view, or P.O.V., is defined as the angle from which the story is told.

1. **Innocent Eye** - Through the eyes of a child (his/her judgment being different than that of an adult) .
2. **Stream of Consciousness** - Inside the head - knows all thoughts and reactions.
3. **First Person** - Told by the protagonist or one of the characters (using pronouns I, me, we, etc). Reader sees story through this person's eyes as he/she experiences it, BUT only knows what he/she knows or feels.
4. **Second Person** – Addresses the reader (using pronouns such as you, your, yours, etc).
5. **Third Person Omniscient** - Author can move from character to character, event to event, having free access to the thoughts, feelings and motivations of characters; author introduces information where and when he or she chooses (using pronouns they, she, he, it, etc). There are two main types of omniscient point of view:
 - a) **Omniscient Limited** - We know only what the character knows and what the author allows him/her to tell us. We can see the thoughts and feelings of characters if the author chooses to reveal them to us.
 - b) **Omniscient Objective** - It appears as though a camera is following the characters, going anywhere, and recording **only** what is seen and heard. There is no comment on the characters or their thoughts. The reader interprets and infers.

THEME – The Throughline of the Story

The theme in a piece of fiction is its controlling idea or its central insight - the author's underlying meaning or main idea that he/she is trying to convey. The theme may be the author's thoughts about a topic or view of human nature (ex: chaos and order, death, everlasting love, motherhood, the superciliousness of youth, good vs. evil, etc.)

SYMBOLISM

Something that is itself and yet also represents something else, like an idea (ex: skull symbolising death).

PATHOS

Pathos occurs when the author expresses thoughts and feelings in a way that evokes pity or compassion.

MOOD

The prevailing emotions of a work or of the author in his or her creation of the work. The mood of a work is not always what might be expected based on its subject matter.