

ReadBox Project

-Short Story-



A short story is a short work of fiction. Fiction is prose writing about imagined characters and events.

Five Key Elements

Let's have a look at the five key elements that go into successful short stories: character, setting, conflict, plot and theme. The first element is the **character**; a person, or sometimes even an animal, who undergoes a change or learns something during the course of the story. This development of the character will keep the reader interested in the story. One character is typically the central focus of the story. This person is called a protagonist while the character who opposes the actions of the protagonist is called the antagonist. The characters are the heart of the story; the reader will try to identify with a character in a short story. The author helps the reader understand the characters by revealing the personality of a character. These characters' desires, hopes, dreams and thoughts are the driving force of the whole story.

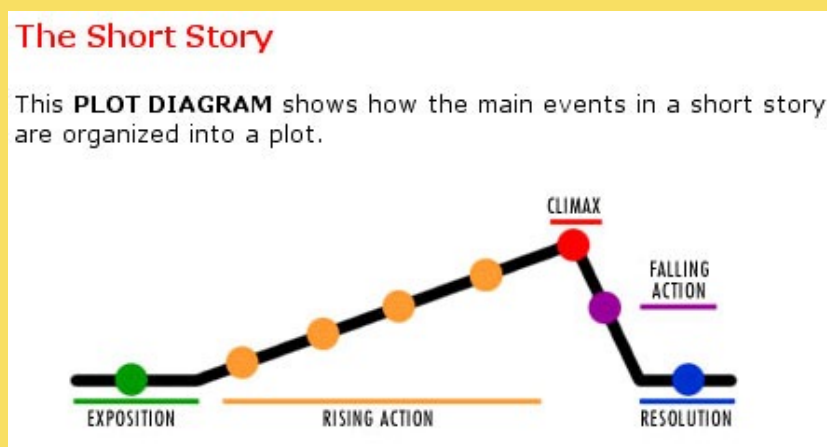
In general, characters can be divided into three groups: individual, developing and static. An individual character is round, many sided, and complex in personality. In short stories, protagonists are typically individuals. A developing character is a character who grows or changes throughout the story. The character typically undergoes a personality change as a result of some sort of action, and the change is not always for the better. Good short stories have dynamic protagonists and antagonists because rounder and more complex characters make more interesting stories. Characters may also be flat (static). These stereotypical characters hardly ever experience change of any kind throughout the story.

The second element is the **setting**. The setting is the time and place in which the story (action) takes place. Authors often use descriptions of buildings, scenery, weather, landscape etc. to provide a strong sense of setting. The setting creates a foundation for the other elements of the story.

The **conflict** is a struggle or problem between two characters within the plot of the short story. The main character is usually on one side of the conflict. Without a conflict, there is no excitement. A conflict is usually introduced in the beginning of the story and continues to build until it is finally dealt with in the climax. The problem may need to be fully resolved after the climax.

The **plot** is about a conflict or struggle that the main character goes through. It is the arrangement of events that happen within the story; it is the weapon of suspense. In a successful short story, a plot should built suspense until it reaches the climax; so every word, every sentence, every paragraph should take the reader closer to the climax of the story. Sometimes the story may end with the climax, but authors often decide to include a section to end their narrative, tying up the loose ends of the plot to make the story a complete whole. Each story has its own unique plot.

Have a look at the below plot diagram; it shows how the main events in a short story are organised into a plot. (Source: <https://wikis.engage.com/plottingashortstory>)



There are five elements in the plot:

- | | |
|-----------------------------|---|
| <i>The Exposition -</i> | The beginning of the short story; where the characters and the setting is introduced. |
| <i>The Rising Action -</i> | This is where the events in the story become complicated. Suspense is building. The beginning of the conflict: Problems arise for the main character. |
| <i>The Climax -</i> | This is the highest point of interest in the story; the turning point of the story. The reader wonders whether the conflict will be resolved or not. |
| <i>The Falling Action -</i> | The events/ complications begin to resolve themselves. Occurs after the climax has been reached and the conflict has been resolved. This eventually leads to the final part of the story. |
| <i>The Resolution -</i> | Also called denouement; This is the conclusion of the story (happy or sad ending). The conflict is resolved. |

The **theme** of the story is a main idea of a story something important that the author tries to tell us; a central idea or believe. Short stories may also contain a number of themes.

Together these five elements are really important. Try to understand what these elements mean and how they work together and you will learn to understand the structure and meaning of the short story.

Watch the following link; it is a rap on the five key elements of short stories.

Before getting started

Remember that your short story needs to be approved by your teacher before you can use it for your ReadBox project, so please check beforehand that the short story doesn't have inappropriate language or inappropriate content. If you are not certain, ask your teacher. Also make sure that your that the short story is suitable for you.

Procedure

- 1 First of all you have to find your short story. (see ReadBox Introduction for weblinks).
- 2 Scan the short story. Log onto your Edmodo ReadBox folder, make a new folder and name it: ReadBox Short Story. Upload both the short story scan onto your Edmodo ReadBox folder. If you cannot upload it, make sure that you insert a hyperlink. Also put a copy into your personal portfolio at home.
- 3 The next step is to read the short story silently.
- 4 After reading the short story for the first time, fill in the title of the story, and author, year of publication.
- 5 Read the short story a second time (and a third time if necessary). Now you are going to read for detail and specific information. Use clues in the short story to determine the theme and the author's point of view. While reading the short story, also make a vocabulary list of the most important words and take notes on any information critical for your understanding of the short story. (Use your Vocabulary Notebook/ Notes Appendix)
- 6 Answer the questions on the next page and then write down your reflections and interpretations about the short story.
- 7 Save your file as: First Name Family Name Short Story onto your Edmodo ReadBox folder.

READBOX**SHORT STORY****Name student & Class**

Title of the short story

Part of

Author

Year of publication

1 Who is the protagonist ? What kind of person is he/ she ?

2 Who is the antagonist ? What kind of person is he/ she ?

3 What is the setting of this short story ? Why is it important ?

4 What is the major conflict in this short story ? Try to be as specific as possible.

5 How is the conflict resolved in this short story ?

6 What is the theme of this short story ?

7 What images or metaphors does the author use to communicate his/ her message and/ or feelings ?

8 What is the tone of this short story ? (How does the writer feel about this story ?)

9 What is the mood of this short story ? (How does this story make you feel ?)

10 What was your favourite part of the story ? Explain your answer.

11 Please express your own reflections and interpretations about the short story.

Follow-up activity

Now that you have uncovered the layers of meaning that lead to comprehension of the short story, it is time for your follow-up activity.

You can choose from the following activities:

- ☐ **Create a comic strip or comic version** ([MakebeliefsComix](#))
- ☐ **Write an imaginary (or real) interview with the author.** (6 questions)
- ☐ **Make a mind-map to explain the short story.**

([MindMeister](#)/ [Popplet](#)/ [MindMup](#))

The 5 key elements will help you to do your follow-up activity.

Please fill in the details below:

I am aware that this project is due no later than: _____.

I will upload my digital Short Story assignment to my personal Edmodo ReadBox folder no later than _____ and I will save a copy in my personal portfolio as well.

Student Signature: _____

Date: _____