Notes - Short Story Elements

Genre

- a category of literary or artistic work

Elements of a Short Story

- Plot

- Character

- Setting

- Conflict

- Theme

- Point of View

SETTING

What is the historic time, place, social background of the story?

Does the setting influence the plot or characters?

Would it make any difference if the story or certain scenes were set elsewhere?

Is there any use of symbolism in the setting?

What are the most striking scenes?

How is the setting presented ?

How much time does the action cover? How does the author treat gaps in time?

Atmosphere -
 is the feeling or mood created by a writer; for example, fear in a ghost story, tension in a mystery story.
pervading tone of a place or situation

Question to ask: what kind of atmosphere does the writer create and how does he do it?

What is Conflict ?

All stories are built on CONFLICT. It provides the central source of <u>tension</u> and drama that make stories interesting to read.

Types of Conflict:

Man vs. Man

Man vs. Society

Man vs. Nature

Man vs. Self

Man vs. Fate

Man vs. Technology

Man vs. Man – involves conflicts between people – such as family conflict, trouble with a buddy, difficulties in romance, etc.

Man vs. Society – involves conflict between an individual and larger groups – such as the outsider in a strange culture, a poor character's struggle to "make it" in the business world, etc.

Man vs. Nature – involves conflict between and individual and the natural world – such as fighting a powerful hurricane, surviving a plane crash in the desert, etc.

Man vs. Self – involves characters' psychological conflicts with themselves – such as overcoming a drug habit or alcoholism, grieving over the loss of a loved one, etc.

Man vs. Fate – involves conflict with what seems to be an uncontrollable problem – such as destiny.

Man vs. Technology – involves a conflict with the forces of man-made technology – such as a robot.

Conflict, Continued:

EXTERNAL CONFLICT:

A struggle between a character and an outside force.

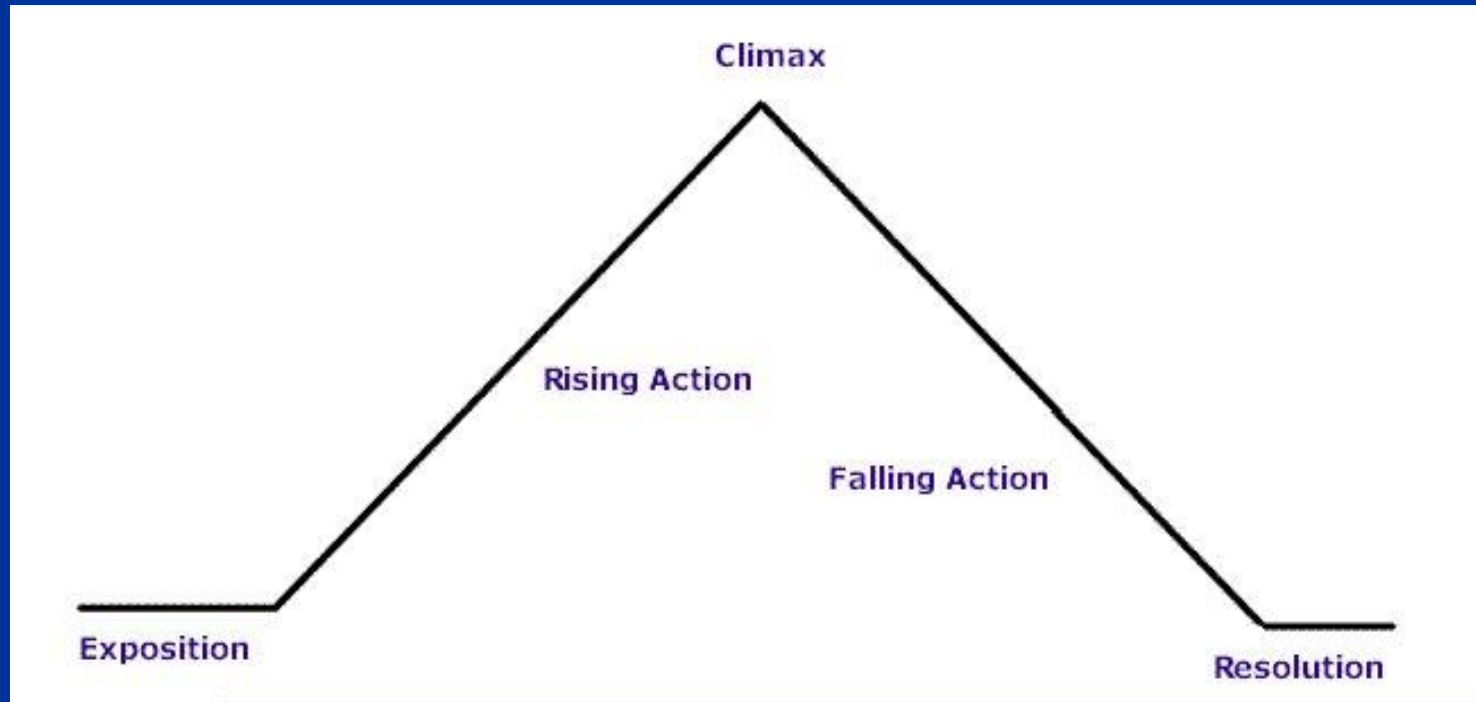Which types of CONFLICT are EXTERNAL?.

INTERNAL CONFLICT:

A struggle that takes place in a character's mind.

Which types of CONFLICT are INTERNAL?

What is Plot ?

- The sequence of events, or basically what happens in a story.

Climax

Rising Action

Falling Action

Exposition

Resolution

Stages of a Plot

- Introduction of characters (exposition)
- The situation: Initial conflict (complication),
- Rising action – heightened anticipation for the reader
- Climax
- Falling action and Conclusion (resolution/denouement).

Questions to ask about plot

- Give a brief synopsis of the story.

- Is the plot logical and believable?

- Is there a well-defined beginning, middle, and end?

- Is there one central episode, or is the plot more episodic with no one outstanding event? If there is more than one action, is there a main plot with sub-plots?

PLOT

- Is there a climax or turning point?

- Is curiosity aroused? Does the author make use of dilemmas, irony, foreshadowing, flashbacks?

- Is the conclusion satisfactory? Why?

- Is the title a good one? Does it help to define the plot?

What is Setting?

The SETTING of a story serves different functions in the action and the emotional effect it has on the reader.   In some stories, the setting might almost be considered a   "character" itself!

Setting works in many important ways in the short story:

Provides a backdrop for the action (mood).

Establishes atmosphere.

Shapes character and action.

Reflects character psychology.

What is Character?

CHARACTER is perhaps the most important of all elements of the short story. Almost invariably, it is the people in stories that interest us most.

TECHNIQUES OF CHARACTERIZATION

DIRECT CHARACTERIZATION:
The author TELLS the reader information about the characters directly.

INDIRECT CHARACTERIZATION:
The author SHOWS the character in action and lets the readers make their own interpretations.

AUTHOR'S CHARACTERIZATION TOOLS:
The character's name
Physical appearance
Character's dress
Occupation
Home & surroundings
Habits & Actions
What other characters say or think about him/her

Types of Character

- <u>Protagonist</u> - the main character , typically the "good guy" (but not always)

- <u>Antagonist</u> - the character or force in conflict

What is Point of View?

- The perspective from which a story is told. Ask yourself, "Who is telling the story?"

- There are several different POINTS OF VIEW:

Limited Points of View

FIRST PERSON: the character narrates his/her own experiences directly.

THIRD PERSON: the author tells the story from the viewpoint of JUST one character.

POINT OF VIEW

- Who tells the story and how s/he tells it are critical issues that determine the interpretation of the story.

- The teller of a story is the narrator (not to be confused with the author).

- The narrator could be either objective (detached) or subjective (biased).

OMNICSCIENT POINT OF VIEW

This point of view is called "Third Person Omniscient" if the author is OUTSIDE the story and presents the thoughts of ALL the characters involved as an OBJECTIVE OBSERVER.

Ex: When Jane saw Bill jogging past her house, her heart skipped a beat. When Bill saw Jane in the hallway at school, he fought hard to catch his breath. No doubt about it – it was love!

The Narrator vs. The Author

If the NARRATOR is telling the story, readers must be careful not to confuse the narrator's attitude with the author's. Often authors create a character to act as a narrator who expresses far different attitudes than those they hold for themselves.

THE UNRELIABLE NARRATOR:

Sometimes authors create a narrator who gives the reader clues that he or she is <u>not to be trusted</u> as a reliable source of information. It then becomes the <u>reader's job</u> to decide the "real truth" beneath the unreliable narrator's lies or distortions.

What is Theme?

Theme is a novel/short story/poem's central message or insight into life;

a "universal truth."

It is NOT "What is the story about."   It is what the work <u>MEANS.</u>

Flashback & Foreshadowing

- **<u>Flashback</u>** is an interruption in the present action of a story to tell about something that happened in the past—a jump back in time.

- **<u>Foreshadowing</u>** is when the author gives clues or hints about what might happen later on in a story.

What is Figurative Language?

- <u>**Figurative language**</u> is a tool that an author uses to help the reader visualize what is happening in a story or poem. Figurative language is meant to be interpreted imaginatively, not literally.

Types of Figurative Language

- **Simile**- a figure of speech that compares two dissimilar things by using the key words "like" or "as"

- **Metaphor**- a figure of speech that compares two unlike things describing one as if it were the other. *Does not use "like" or "as"*

- **Personification**- a figure of speech in which human qualities are given to a nonhuman subject

Figurative Language, Cont.

- **<u>Hyperbole</u>** - an exaggerated statement or overstatement. It's a figure of speech that is not to be taken literally.

Symbolism

- <u>Symbols</u> are animals, elements, things, places, or colors, writers use to represent other things.

What might these things symbolize?

Lamb

Snake

Purple

Fox

Sunset

Red

Black

Spring

Winter

Thunderstorm

Tone & Mood

- <u>**TONE**</u> is the author's attitude/feelings about the subject of his/her writing.

- It is the way a writer uses words (connotation), creates images, chooses details, uses language, and structures sentences to present a certain attitude or feeling to the reader about his/her writing topic.

- <u>Tone</u> can be *positive, negative, or neutral.*

Tone, & Mood

Mood is the overall feeling - light, happy, dark or mysterious, for example - created by an author's words.

Mood is the way the a text makes the READER feel.

Questions to ask about diction

- What highly connotative words does the writer choose?

- Is the essay's diction elevated, vulgar, simple, obscure?

- How does the writer's diction contribute to the theme and tone of the essay?

Questions to ask about tone:

- How does the author's use of words, imagery, or details such as gestures or allusions reveal the author's attitude toward a character or event in the story?

- What words best describe the author's attitude toward this subject, character, or event?

Other questions to ask

- Is symbolism important?

- Are there any flash backs, or is the story's time element chronological?

- Was exaggeration used in the story and why?

- Was the ending foreshadowed (предсказуемый) and consistent (логичный) ?

- How does the author use dialogue?

- Is humor used? How is it used?

CHARACTERIZATION

- Characterization -method used by a writer to develop a character. The method includes:
- showing the character's appearance.
- displaying the character's actions.
- revealing the character's thoughts.
- letting the character speak.
- getting the reactions of others.
- giving the narrator's own opinion (overt or implied).

Getting to know the characters

- Be alert to characters in the same way you are when you meet someone.

- Observe their actions.

- Listen closely to what they say and how they say it.

- Notice how they relate to other characters and how other characters respond to them.

- Look for clues as to their purpose and significance in the story.

The characters can also be

- symbolic

- satirical

- stock

- realistic

- exaggerated

Questions to ask about characters

- Can you sum up the appearance and important characteristics of each major character?

- Which characters change during the story? Are the changes consistent and sufficiently motivated?

- Are there marked similarities or contrasts among characters?

- Which characters are distinct individuals (round characters)? Are there any types (flat characters)?

Questions to ask about characters

- Does every character have a function? Are any minor characters foils, or are they interesting in themselves?

- How are the main characters presented? Description by author? Through their own thoughts and acting? Through comments of others?

A General Scheme of Analysis

- **Optional Information**
- a) about the author; b) about the book; c) about the historical and cultural context/ literary trend/ etc
I. **General Text Interpretation**
1) *The **title** (<u>informative</u>, <u>evaluative</u> or <u>constructive</u>)*
2) *The **theme** (the "what" of a story/ extract/ etc)*
- <u>one-theme</u>/ <u>multiple-theme</u> story   <u>basic</u> and <u>by-themes</u>
1) *The **idea** (≠ moral, ≠ common truths)*   <u>explicit</u>/ <u>implicit</u> (implied) idea

Text Analysis as Such:

1) *Genre* (✔psychological, ✔social, ✔historical, ✔adventure, ✔science fiction, ✔detective, ✔Gothic fiction, ✔fantasy, ✔fairy tale, ✔, etc.)

2) *Compositio*

3) *n,* **Narrative Composition Forms**:

- ✔<u>narration</u> proper (<u>scenic</u>/<u>panoramic</u>)

- ✔<u>description</u> (of nature, premises, appearances, characters, etc)   ✔<u>dynamic description</u>

- ✔<u>dialogue</u>   ✔<u>interior monologue</u>

Plot

1) ***Plot**, **Conflict** and **Plot Structure***

- **Conflict:** ✔ <u>single</u>/ <u>multiple</u>   ✔<u>external</u>/ <u>internal</u>

-    ✔<u>physical</u>/ <u>mental</u>/ <u>emotional</u>/ <u>moral</u>/ etc

-    ✔man against <u>man</u>/ ✔man against <u>himself</u>/ ✔man against <u>society</u>/ <u>nature</u>/ <u>fate</u>/ etc.

- **Plot structure:**   <u>Exposition</u> (natural or manufactured setting)

-    <u>Story</u> including <u>beginning</u>, <u>development</u>, <u>climax</u>

-    <u>Ending</u> (surprise, happy, undetermined, etc)

- **Plot Structure Pattern**:   ✔<u>open</u>/ <u>closed</u>

1) <u>straight line</u> narrative presentation

n <u>complex</u> narrative presentation (flashbacks and/or flashforwards)

n <u>circular</u> pattern   4. <u>frame</u> structure (a story in a story)

Characters and *Character Drawing*

- **Character presentation:** <u>direct</u> (author's presentation or direct self-disclosure)/ <u>indirect</u> (shown in action)

- **Characters:** ✔<u>flat</u>/ <u>round</u>   ✔<u>static</u>/ <u>dynamic</u>

General Tone of the Text (<u>emotional</u>, <u>unemotional</u>, <u>calm</u>, <u>satirical</u>, <u>sarcastic</u>, <u>ironic</u>, <u>humorous</u>, <u>elevated</u>, <u>pathetic</u>, etc.)

✔ <u>varying</u> with the parts of the text or <u>the same</u> throughout the whole text

LINGUISTIC STYLISTIC TEXT ASPECT

1) *Syntactical Text Pattern*:   ✔length and grammatical peculiarities of sentences

   ✔Syntactical (& Lexico-Syntactical) Stylistic Devices

2) *Lexical Text Pattern*:   ✔the choice of words (neutral, colloquial or bookish vocabulary)

   ✔Lexical (& Lexico-Syntactical) Stylistic Devices

3) *Phono-Graphical Text Pattern*:   ✔graphical form

   ✔ the prevailing intonation patterns and their presentation

   ✔Phonetic, Phono-Graphical & Graphical SDs and Expressive Means

CONCLUSION

- ✔The prevailing Text Formation Principle,
- ✔prevalent SDs,
- ✔most interesting and important peculiarities of the author's style,
- ✔the way the author conveys his message to the reader