

# Short Stories: Characteristics

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- **Short** - Can usually be read in one sitting.
- **Concise**: Information offered in the story is relevant to the tale being told. This is unlike a novel, where the story can diverge from the main plot.
- Usually tries to leave behind a **single impression** or effect. Usually, though not always built around one character, place, idea, or act.
- Because they are concise, writers depend on the reader bringing **personal experiences** and **prior knowledge** to the story.



# Four Major components of the Short Story

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- ◎ PLOT
- ◎ SETTING
- ◎ CHARACTERS
- ◎ THEME

# #1 PLOT

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- The action that takes place in the story. It is a series of connected happenings and their result. In order to have a result, we must have an initial event, or conflict.
- **Dramatic conflict.** Usually the basis of the story, it is the source of the problems which may or may not be overcome in the climax.

The **TYPE OF CONFLICT** presented may be :

1) CHARACTER versus CHARACTER - two people involved in a conflict

2) CHARACTER versus HIM/HERSELF – main character's personal dilemma.

3) CHARACTER versus NATURE ( OR THE ENVIRONMENT ) - problems caused by elements of nature



# PLOT (continued)

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## Stages of a Plot

- **Introduction of characters**
- The situation: **Initial conflict**
- The generating circumstances, which create a **Rising action** – a heightened sense of anticipation for the reader
- **Climax** - highest point of anticipation – a “make or break” moment for the main character.
- **Falling action and Conclusion.** These two are also known as a denouement.

# Literary Devices

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**Literary devices** are tools a skilful writer uses to improve the reading experience. These include:

**5-way sentence.** An effective start to a story, the 5-way sentence provides a lot of answers, but creates more questions in the process. It also creates a feeling that the story started before the reader started reading.

**Repetition.** At the least, it helps drive home a point. It can also be used to create other Literary devices.

**Suspense.** – Suspense provides an element of uncertainty. The reader is presented with details of excitement, action and the unknown, which entices the reader to be anxious to discover the conclusion.

**Foreshadowing.** May be used to leave clues in the story to lure readers to try to predict the ending.



# Literary Devices (continued)

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**Irony.** Writers use irony to keep readers alert - helps avoid predictability, and often leaves an impression on the reader.

A ) **Verbal Irony**, - occurs when a contrast is evident between what a character says and what the character actually means.

B ) **Dramatic Irony** – occurs when the author shares with the reader information not known by a character.

C ) **Situational Irony** – occurs when a set of circumstances turns out differently from what is expected or considered appropriate.

# Literary Devices

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(Last one. Promise)

Symbolism and metaphor. Because short stories are concise, writers will make use images or icons (symbols) to help get messages across.

By drawing parallels between smaller objects and larger concepts, writers can find quick, effective ways to set tones, establish essential information, and draw a response from the reader.



## #2 SETTING

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(I meant last one about Literary Devices)

The background against which the incidents of the story take place. Not merely a place, it includes the place where, the time when, and *social conditions* under which the story moves along.

This can include atmosphere , the tone and feeling of a story, including gloomy or cheery overtones.

In one form or another, setting is essential to the story. Often, the relevance of the story is lost in another setting.

## #3 CHARACTERS

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There must be living beings in the story that think or act in order to keep the story going. They must seem like living and feeling individuals in order for us to feel strongly about them.

The worst thing that could happen for a writer is that you feel indifferent toward the characters. If we don't care for the characters, we are not inclined to keep reading.



# FOUR COMMON METHODS OF PRESENTING A CHARACTER:

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- ① Actions or thoughts of the character.
- ② Conversations the character shares with others.
- ③ Conversations of other characters about the character in question.
- ④ Author's own opinion. This might be overt, or may be implied.

# Points of View: Presentation of a Story

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- Author Omniscient (all knowing, all seeing). This is a third person point of view. The omniscient author, writing in third person, sees whatever he wants to see, inside or outside his character, in privacy or public, and interprets as he chooses.
- Author participant (first person). The author may be the main character, or could be a secondary character.
- Author as an observer (3rd, person). Involves objective treatment, as though the storyteller had no inner sight into the character's thinking or behaviour.
- Multiple story tellers (3rd. Person).



## #4 Theme

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The total meaning of the story. IT DOES NOT HAVE TO BE TIED UP IN A SIMPLE MORAL. In many cases, stories are packages that allow readers to see the outcomes of certain behaviours. Without a theme, the story lacks meaning or purpose.

Sometimes the theme is stated, sometimes it is only implied. In other stories, the theme may be a direct refutation of a traditional theme.

# Last slide.

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- Really. I mean it.