

ELEMENTS OF STORIES

1. CHARACTER

CHARACTERS are persons—or animals, things, or natural forces presented as persons—appearing in a short story, novel, play, or narrative poem.

A writer generally develops a character in one or more of the following ways:

- (1) by showing *the character acting and speaking*
- (2) by giving a *physical description* of the character
- (3) by revealing *the character's thoughts*
- (4) by revealing *what other characters think about the character*
- (5) by *directly commenting* on the character

Numbers 1, 2, 3 and 4 are *indirect* methods of characterization. In other words, the writer shows or dramatizes the character and **allows the reader to draw conclusions**. Number 5 is called *direct characterization*. That is when **the writer tells the reader directly** what to think of the character.

2. PLOT

The **PLOT** is *what happens* in the story. It is the sequence of events or incidents.

Conflict is the most important element of the plot. **Conflict is the struggle between two opposing forces or characters**. Four main kinds of conflict are:

- (1) a person against another person
- (2) a person against society
- (3) a person against nature
- (4) a person “against” her or himself (also known as conflicting ideas within a person)

In the **PLOT**, the action is generally introduced by a section of *exposition, information necessary for understanding the story*.

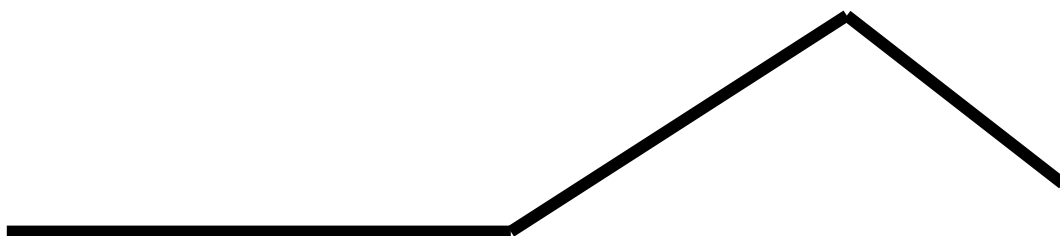
The *exposition* is part of the *rising action*, during which there are often *complications, points where the central character meets some opposition*.

The action rises to a *climax* (also called the turning point or crisis).

The *falling action* follows the *climax*.

The *resolution* is the end of the action, *the moment in the plot when the conflict ends*.

A **PLOT CHART** is sometimes drawn like this:



3. SETTING

The **SETTING** is *where and when* the story takes place.

4. POINT OF VIEW

The *point of view* is the vantage point or position from which a story or poem is told.

The two basic *points of view* we are going to discuss are

the **first-person point of view**

and

the **third-person point of view**.

In the *first-person point of view*, the story is told by one of the characters in the story. It is told in her or his own words (from the “I” vantage point). The *first-person point of view* is a **limited point of view**, because the reader is only told what this one character knows and observes.

The author’s use of *first-person* brings us into the story and gives it a sense of immediacy.

In the *third-person point of view*, the narrator is not a character in the story, but instead tells the story from the “he” and “she” vantage point.

In the *third-person point of view*, the narrator might be **limited** (knowing only some of what is going on, maybe knowing and observing only one or two of the characters;

Or the narrator might be **omniscient**, an **ALL-KNOWING** observer who can describe all the characters and actions in the story, as well as comment on what the characters think and feel.

5. THEME

The **theme** is the main idea or basic meaning of a literary work.

The *theme* of a work is **NOT** the same thing as its subject.

You can think of *theme* as meaning, moral, or basic point or lesson to be learned from the poem, story, movie, play, video, song, book, etc. *Theme* is what the work is really **about**.