

NARRATIVE ELEMENTS

Lesson 5

PATTERNS & RULES

- ◉ Most fictional stories share common elements.
- ◉ These are the basic building blocks of storytelling.
- ◉ Almost any story can be reduced to this statement: Something happens to someone, somewhere. These all work together to create the story.
 - Something =
Plot
 - Someone =
Character
 - Somewhere =
Setting

FICTION GENRES

- Authors select genres that will best convey their stories, messages, and themes.

- ◉ **Realistic fiction:** believable; it could happen to anyone.
- ◉ **Fantasy:** has one or more features not seen in our world.
- ◉ **Historical fiction:** set in a specific time in history; sometimes including historical figures.
- ◉ **Contemporary fiction:** takes place in today's world
- ◉ **Science fiction:** a type of fantasy; set in a time or place in which technology has reshaped society in significant ways.
- ◉ **Folktale:** handed down from generation to generation by word of mouth.
- ◉ **Myth:** answers basic questions about the world.
- ◉ **Tall Tale:** ordinary story that has been stretched so far that it become unbelievable.

TIP 1: LOOK FOR IMPORTANT DETAILS ABOUT THE CHARACTERS.

- ◉ Authors can tell about characters in a variety of ways:
 - **Direct characterization:** giving details about their appearance, age, or background.
 - **Indirect characterization:** revealing what a character is like through what he or she says or does, and through the way other characters respond.

CHARACTER CLUES

- Ask yourself these questions about the characters as you read a story:
 - Is this a major or minor character?
 - What is the character like?
 - What does the character want most? Why?
 - What is the main problem the character faces?
 - How does the character view his or her situation?
 - What kinds of relationships does he or she have with the other characters in the story?
 - How does the character change throughout the story?

OTHER CHARACTERIZATION TECHNIQUES

- ◉ **Compare and Contrast:** authors often tell us about characters by showing us how they are similar to or different from other people in the story.
- ◉ **Dramatic monologues:** often long and addressed to another character, who remains silent.
- ◉ **Soliloquy:** reveals a character's inner emotions to the audience, but not to the other characters. The character is usually alone on stage when this happens and seems to be talking to himself or herself.

TIP 2: DETERMINE WHAT POINT OF VIEW IS USED IN THE STORY.

- ◎ **Point of View:** lets the reader know who is telling the story.
 - An author might switch from one point of view to another in order to show the perspectives of different characters.

TYPES OF POINT OF VIEW

- **First Person:** is told by one of the characters in the story. The only events included in the story are those the **narrator** experiences directly or learns about through someone else.

“In the gathering darkness, I glanced at my luminous watch. I decided to wait another five minutes before lunging down the path between the massive oaks and murmuring stream. We needed total darkness. The nearly full moon would rise in about an hour. We would have to move quickly.

“I’m ready,” David whispered anxiously to me.

“Five more minutes!” I said, my heart racing wildly.

“Then we’ll move out.”

- from *Night Games* by Nick Liakouras

TYPES OF POINT OF VIEW

- ⦿ **Third Person:** the narrator is not part of the story.
- ⦿ **Third Person Limited:** the narrator focuses on a single character's thoughts and actions.

Tara stared at her friend Jenny, wondering what in the world she had done to her hair. The once-beautiful blond hair was now a shocking pink. She didn't know why Jenny seemed so proud of it, and she certainly didn't understand the girl's happy smile.

TYPES OF POINT OF VIEW

- ◎ **Third Person Omniscient:** the narrator tells of the thoughts and actions of several characters. (Omniscient means “all-knowing”)

Tara stared at Jenny, wondering what in the world she had done to her hair. The once-beautiful blond hair was now a shocking pink.

Jenny enjoyed the look of horror on Tara’s face and smiled. She decided not to tell Tara about the strange events that had led to her startling new hair color.

NARRATIVE NONFICTION GENRES

- Here are a few types of nonfiction that may use elements of narration to tell their stories:
 - **Biography:** an account of someone's life written by someone other than the subject.
 - **Autobiography:** an account that a person writes about his or her own life.
 - **Diary or Journal:** forms of autobiographical writing that give a day-to-day account of events and personal thoughts.

TIP 3: NOTICE HOW THE SETTING ENHANCES THE MEANING OF THE STORY.

- ◉ **Setting:** the time and location of the story.
 - Details that describe the setting can include the year, season, time of day, weather, geographical location, landscape, kind of building, and so on.
 - Setting can be central to the story, meaning the story would not be the same if it had a different setting.
- ◉ **Time Frame:** the length of time in which the story takes place.
- ◉ **Historical Context:** the time and place of the author's life- this is not the same as the setting.

TIP 4: FIND THE CONFLICT OR PROBLEM IN A SCENE OR STORY.

- Most plots revolve around conflict.
- The main character (the **protagonist**) might be in conflict with another person (an **antagonist**), society, nature or him or herself.
- Usually stories involve more than one conflict.
- A way to identify the conflict is to ask yourself *what is the biggest problem the main character must overcome?*

TYPES OF CONFLICT

- ◉ Character vs. Character (Protagonist vs. Antagonist)
- ◉ Character vs. Society
- ◉ Character vs. Self
- ◉ Character vs. Nature

TIP 5: USE WHAT YOU KNOW ABOUT THE CONFLICT TO PREDICT HOW THE PLOT WILL DEVELOP.

- ◉ **Plot:** the structure of the story's action; usually with a beginning, middle and an end.
 - The plot of a story usually involves the development and resolution of the conflict.
- ◉ **Rising Action:** everything after the characters, setting and conflict is introduced that leads up to the climax.
- ◉ **Climax:** the turning point, when the problem must be faced once and for all.
- ◉ **Falling Action:** begins to resolve the conflict; the characters will either solve the problem or accept that it has no solution.
- ◉ **Resolution:** describes or explains the outcome of the action and often points to the theme.

PLOT DIAGRAM



TIP 6: NOTICE HOW THE PACE OF THE STORY IS AFFECTED BY THE PLOT.

- ⦿ Conflicts, parallel plots, and subplots affect the pacing of action in a story.
- ⦿ The **pace** of events can be fast or slow depending on what the author wants to achieve.
- ⦿ Authors can alter the pace by shifting the action from the main story to a parallel plot or subplot.

PARALLEL PLOT & SUBPLOT

- ◉ **Parallel Plot-** two equally important story lines the author tells at the same time by switching back and forth between them.
 - The author may choose to shift from one plot to another in order to add suspense or to show how the two plots are related.
 - **The two plots can be related in many ways:**
 - ◉ The main characters split up and have separate experiences
 - ◉ Events in the present are connected to the past
 - ◉ The relationship may not be clear until the end
- ◉ **Subplot-** a minor or secondary story line woven through the main plot.

MORE PLOT TRICKS

- ◉ Other techniques writers use to make the story more interesting:
- ◉ **Flashback**- an interruption of the action to convey events that happened earlier.
- ◉ **Foreshadowing**- “shadowy” clues or hints about something that will happen later in the story.

TIP 7: IDENTIFY AND ANALYZE THE AUTHOR'S USE OF DICTION AND DIALOGUE

- ◉ **Diction**- the choice and use of words is determined by the effect the writer is trying to achieve.
 - Diction is most strongly felt in dialogue.
- ◉ **Dialogue**- the conversation the characters have with each other.
 - The diction in dialogue can help us to understand the characters and their motivations.

TIP 8: IDENTIFY THE OVERALL MOOD CREATED BY THE AUTHOR

- **Mood-** the general feeling or atmosphere in the story.
 - By choosing descriptive language and significant details, the author can help the readers understand the story and *feel* it, too.

TIP 9: ASK YOURSELF, “WHAT IS THE AUTHOR TRYING TO SAY WITH THIS STORY?”

- When you read any work of literature you need to ask yourself these questions:
 - Why is the author writing this?
 - What does he or she want you to take away from the story?
 - What is the moral of the story?
 - Is there a lesson the author is trying to teach?
- These questions can help you determine what point the author is trying to make as well as what themes are present in the literature.

TIP 10: ANALYZE HOW GENRE AFFECTS THE EXPRESSION OF A THEME OR TOPIC

- ◉ **Theme-** the underlying insights about life that runs throughout the passage.
- ◉ Theme can be thought of as the author's central message to the reader.
- ◉ The following questions can help you analyze a passage for its theme and evaluate the author's development and use of it:
 - In what ways does the passage express the theme?
 - How do the characters contribute to the development of the theme?
 - How does the setting contribute to the development of the theme?
 - Does the entire passage support the development of the theme?
 - What portion of the passage best emphasizes the theme?

SUMMARY

- ⦿ Look for important details about the characters.
- ⦿ Determine what point of view is used in the story.
- ⦿ Notice how the setting enhances the meaning of the story.
- ⦿ Find the conflict or problem in a scene or story.
- ⦿ Use what you know about the conflict to predict how the plot will develop.
- ⦿ Notice how the pace of the story is affected by the plot.
- ⦿ Identify and analyze the author's use of diction and dialogue.
- ⦿ Identify the overall mood created by the author.
- ⦿ Ask yourself, "What is the author trying to say with this story?"
- ⦿ Analyze how genre affects the expression of a theme or topic.