

# Parts of a Short Story: Literary Devices



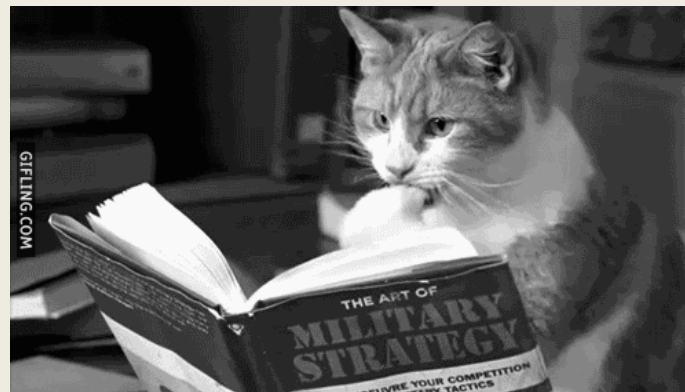
ENGLISH I



# Short Stories



- **Short Stories** = a brief fictional narrative intended to be read in a single setting.
- A good short story leaves the reader with a unified and strong impression, or **main effect**.
- Each element of a short story contributes to the main effect.



# Plot

- **Plot:** the structure of the story's action or the sequence of events it tells; usually with a beginning, middle and an end.
  - The plot of a story usually involves the development and resolution of the conflict.
  - Contributes to the unified effect of the story.



# Parts of Plot

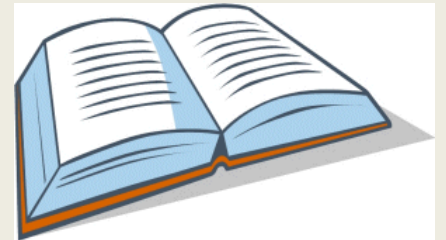


- **Exposition:** introduces the characters and the setting.
  - Often includes the **inciting event** –an event that establishes the conflict.
- **Rising Action:** includes events and complications that intensify the conflict.
- **Climax:** the turning point, where the character reaches an insight or undergoes a change. The moment of highest tension or suspense.
- **Falling Action:** sets up the story's conflict as the intensity of the conflict lessens and events wind down usually by characters finding a solution to the conflict.
- **Resolution or Denouement:** describes or explains the outcome of the action and often points to the theme.

# Setting



- **Setting:** the time and location of the action.
  - Details that describe the setting can include the year, season, time of day, weather, geographical location, landscape, kind of building, and so on.
  - Stories can take place in a single, unified setting or in multiple settings.
  - Setting can be central to the story, meaning the story would not be the same if it had a different setting.



# Mood



- **Mood**- the general feeling or atmosphere the story conveys.
  - By choosing descriptive language and significant details, the author can help the readers understand the story and *feel* it, too.
  - Elements that set the mood include:
    - ✦ **Setting**
    - ✦ **Characters' Thoughts (what they think and feel)**
    - ✦ **Characters' Actions (what they say and do)**

# Conflict



- **Conflict:** A struggle between two forces.
- Plots are driven or propelled by conflict.
- Short stories usually focus on one central conflict.
- **External Conflict:** takes place between a character and an outside force, such as another character, a force of nature, or society.
- **Internal Conflict:** takes place in the mind of a character. The character struggles to make a decision or overcome feelings.
- A way to identify the conflict is to ask yourself *what is the biggest problem the main character must overcome?*

# Comprehension Check



- Describe a conflict shown in this [clip](#) and identify what type of conflict it is (external or internal).





# Symbolism



- **Symbol:** an object, person, or event that is used to represent something else, often an abstract or complicated idea.
- Symbols are often used to represent or develop the theme.



# Characters

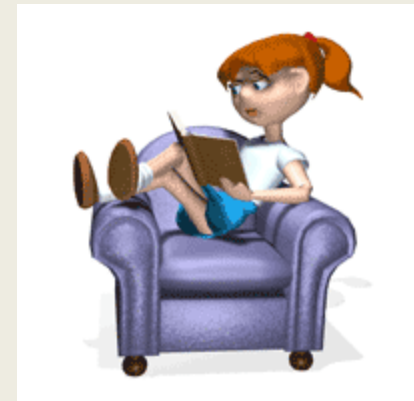


- **Characters** = the people or animals who take part in the action of the story.
- Details in the story help readers understand characters' **traits**, or qualities, and **motives**, or reasons for acting.
- The main effect of a story often involves a change or revelation experienced by a character.

# Complex Characters



- They show multiple or even contradictory **traits** or qualities.
- They struggle with conflicting **motivations**, or reasons for acting as they do.
- They may **change** by the end of the story.



# Characterization



- To create or develop a character, a writer will use techniques of **characterization**.
- Authors can tell about characters in a variety of ways:
  - **Direct characterization:** the narrator gives direct statements about their appearance, age, personality or background.
  - **Indirect characterization:** readers learn what characters are like by analyzing what they say or do, as well as how other characters respond to them.
    - ✦ **S** (speech) **T** (thoughts) **E** (effect) **A** (actions) **L** (looks)

# Comprehension Check



- Which type of characterization is exemplified in the passage below?

Summer or winter, in sun, wind, or rain, Jess rose before dawn and jogged the two-mile loop around the reservoir. After a quick shower and two chocolate donuts, she always felt ready to face the day.



# How Characters Advance a Story



- The choices characters make while interacting with one another and struggling to overcome problems advance the story.
- A character's action—or decision *not* to take action – can lead to new plot developments and may intensify the conflict, heightening tension or suspense in the story.

# Example



- **Conflict:** Cindy is friendly with Matilda. Cindy's friends Staci and Ashley do not like Matilda and put pressure on Cindy to shun her.
- **Characters' Interactions:** Cindy decides that Staci and Ashley are being unfair and makes a point of attending a school game with Matilda.
- **Result:** Intensified conflict-Staci and Ashley invite everyone to their party except Cindy.

# How Characters Develop Theme



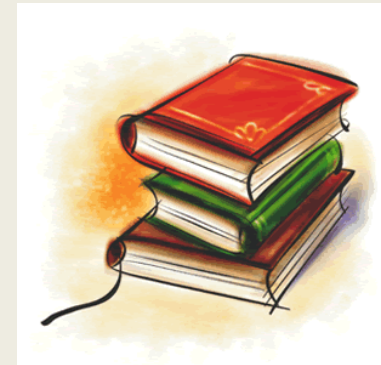
- A character's struggles can teach a general lesson—just as our struggles can teach us a lesson.
- Through these lessons learned the characters help develop the theme.
- Pay close attention to the ways that characters change and to the lessons that they learn.
- These details can point you toward the story's theme.



# Example



- **Character's Experience:** After struggling to please her friends, Cindy realizes they are shallow and decides to let them go.
- **Theme:** As people grow, they may outgrow their friendships with others.



# Plot Structure



- **Plot Structure:** Authors make decisions about the order in which to present information as well as the pacing of events.
  - **Openings:** The opening established the general feeling of the story
    - ✦ Focus on setting
    - ✦ Focus on character
    - ✦ In medias res (“in the middle of things”)
  - A narrative can create a sensation of “**speed**” and excitement by moving quickly from one idea to another in a scene that is loaded with tension.

# Plot Structure Cont'd



- **Sequence:** The order in which the narrator chooses to tell the events.
  - **Chronological Order:** the order in which events occurred.
  - **Flashbacks:** an interruption of the action to convey events that happened earlier. Flashbacks can give insights into characters' motivations.
  - **Foreshadowing:** “shadowy” clues or hints about something that will happen later in the story.
    - ✦ Foreshadowing can create **suspense:** a reader's anxious feelings of uncertainty about the outcome of a text.
- **Pacing:** the “speed” with which a narrator relates events.

# POV: Point of View



- **Point of View:** lets the reader know who is telling the story. The point of view also determines the information an author includes.
- POV can be used to achieve striking effects.
  - For example, the first-person narrator is naïve, or unsophisticated, the reader may know more about what is going on than the narrator, creating an effect known as dramatic irony.

# Types of Point of View



- Four main types:
  - **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.
  - **Third Person:** the narrator is not part of the story.
  - **Third Person Limited:** the narrator focuses on a single character's thoughts and actions.
  - **Third Person Omniscient:** the narrator tells of the thoughts and actions of several characters. (Omniscient means “all-knowing”)

# Comprehension Check



- What point of view is the passage below wrote in?

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.



# Isn't it Ironic...



- **Irony:** a reversal of expectations.
  - **Verbal Irony:** is created when a speaker says one thing but means something opposite.
  - **Situational Irony:** occurs when events lead to the opposite of what was expected.
  - **Dramatic Irony:** takes place when the reader or audience knows important facts that the characters do not.

# Comprehension Check



- Which type of irony is demonstrated in these pictures?

