

Five Elements of Fiction: **Plot, Setting, Character, Point of View, Theme**

I. Plot – How the author arranges events to develop the basic idea; it is the sequence of events in a story or play. The plot is a planned, logical series of events having a beginning, middle, and end. The short story usually has one plot so it can be read in one sitting. There are five essential parts of plot:

- 1) **Exposition (introduction)** – Beginning of the story; characters, background, and setting revealed.
- 2) **Rising Action** – Events in the story become complicated; the conflict is revealed. These are events between the introduction and climax.
 - **Conflict** – Essential to plot, opposition ties incidents together and moves the plot. Not merely limited to arguments, conflict can be any form of struggle the main character faces. Within a short story, there may be only one central struggle, or there may be many minor obstacles within a dominant struggle. There are two **types** of conflict:
 - **Internal** – Struggle within one's self.
 - **Character vs. Self** – Struggles with own soul, physical limitations, choices, etc.
 - **External** – Struggle with a force outside one's self.
 - **Character vs. Character** – Struggles against other people.
 - **Character vs. Nature** – Struggles against animals, weather, environment, etc.
 - **Character vs. Society** – Struggles against ideas, practices, or customs of others
- 3) **Climax** – Turning point of the story. Readers wonders what will happen next; will the conflict be resolved or not? Consider the climax as a three-fold phenomenon:
 - Main character receives new information.
 - Main character accepts this information (realizes it but does not necessarily agree with it).
 - Main character acts on this information (makes a choice that will determine whether or not objective is met).
- 4) **Falling action** – Resolution begins; events and complications start to fall into place. These are the events between climax and denouement.
- 5) **Resolution (Conclusion)** – Final outcome of events in the story.

II. Setting – Time and location that a story takes place. For some stories, the setting is very important; while for others, it is not. When examining how setting contributes to a story, there are multiple aspects to consider:

- 1) **Place** - Geographical location; where is the action of the story taking place?
- 2) **Time** - Historical period, time of day, year, etc; when is the story taking place?
- 3) **Weather conditions** - Is it rainy, sunny, stormy, etc?
- 4) **Social conditions** - What is the daily life of the character's like? Does the story contain local colour (writing that focuses on the speech, dress, mannerisms, customs, etc. of a particular place)?
- 5) **Mood or atmosphere** - What feeling is created at the beginning of the story? Cheerful or eerie?

III. Character – There are two meanings for “**character**”: 1) a person in a fictional story; or 2) qualities of a person.

- 1) People in a work of fiction can be a(n):
 - **Protagonist** – Clear center of story; all major events are important to this character.
 - **Antagonist** – Opposition or “enemy” of main character.
- 2) Characteristics of a character can be revealed through:
 - his/her physical appearance
 - what he/she says, thinks, feels, dreams and what he/she does or does not do
 - what others say about him/her and how others react to him/her