



Short Story Terms



Atmosphere/Mood: The overall **feeling the reader gets** while reading the literature. Examples of atmosphere may be somber, dark, cheerful, questioning, strained, tense, romantic, etc.

Character:

- **Protagonist:** Considered to be **the main character** or lead figure in a novel, play, story, or poem. It may also be referred to as the “hero” of a work.
- **Antagonist:** A character that deceives, frustrates, or **works against the main character**, or protagonist, in some way. The antagonist doesn’t necessarily have to be a person. It could be death, the devil, an illness, or any challenge that opposes the main character.

Character Types:

- **Foil:** A character who **contrasts** with another character (usually the protagonist) in order to **highlight particular qualities of the other character**.
- **Dynamic:** A character that **undergoes a change** or evolves over the course of the story
- **Static:** A character that **does not change** over the course of the story.
- **Stereotype:** A character that is so ordinary or unoriginal that the character seems like an **oversimplified representation** of a type, gender, class, religious group, or occupation.
- **Stock:** A character type that **appears repeatedly in a particular literary genre**, one which has certain conventional attributes or attitudes.
- **Round:** A character who has **many sides to their personality**.
- **Flat:** A simplified character that **does not change or alter his or her personality** over the course of the story. Has only one side to their personality.

Characterization:

- **Direct:** The writer makes **direct statements about a character’s personality** and tells what the character is like. Ex: “Tom is a brave person.”
- **Indirect:** The writer **reveals information** about the character and his/her personality **through that character’s thoughts, words, and actions, along with how other characters respond to that character**, including what they think and say about him. Ex: “Tom risked his life to save the child from the fire.”

Conflict:

- **Person vs. Person:** A character has an argument, disagreement, or fight **with another character**.
- **Person vs. Self:** A character develops **an internal struggle** between their thoughts and ideas.
- **Person vs. Environment:** A character has a **problem with weather, animals, land, etc.**
- **Person vs. Society:** A character **disagrees with values, laws or beliefs shared by the public**.
- **Person vs. Supernatural:** A character struggles with elements **outside the natural realm**.

Foreshadowing: Hints, signs or clues about what is going to happen later on in a story.

Irony:

- **Situational:** A situation in which the opposite of what is expected to happen occurs.
Ex: A policeman gets a speeding ticket.
- **Verbal:** When a character says one thing, but means another.
Ex: Sarcasm
- **Dramatic:** The reader knows information that the characters in the story do not.
Ex: The reader knows the murderer is waiting upstairs, but the character does not know they are climbing the stairs, about to be killed.

Narrator: The “voice” that speaks or tells a story.

Point of View:

- **First person:** The narrator speaks as “I” and is a character in the story who may or may not influence events within it.
- **Third person limited (limited omniscient):** The narrator seems to be someone standing outside the story who refers to all the characters by name or as he, she, they, and so on. The narrator is confined to knowing the experiences, thoughts and feelings of one character.
- **Omniscient (third person omniscient):** A narrator who knows everything that needs to be known about the events in the story and who has privileged access to characters’ thoughts, feelings and motives.
- **Objective (third person objective):** A narrator who is a detached observer. They do not know what the character is thinking or feeling.

Plot:

- **Exposition:** The setting, characters, circumstances, mood, etc. are introduced in the story.
- **Initial Incident:** The “trigger” that causes the conflict or sets the conflict in motion.
- **Rising Action:** Complications or events that occur as the problem is trying to be fixed; the events leading up to the climax.
- **Climax:** The point of highest interest, suspense or greatest emotional tension.
- **Falling Action:** Events that occur as the character works towards the resolution of the conflict.
- **Resolution:** A satisfactory conclusion that is either positive or negative for the character.

Setting: The location, historical time, and social circumstances in which the story takes place.

Symbolism: A word, place, character or object that means something beyond what is on a literal level.

Theme: The author’s message; the central idea, insight, or statement that can be applied to different facets of human nature.