

The Short Story

A **short story** is a work of fiction. It is imaginative writing. Its **primary purpose** is **to entertain**, not to communicate information. Information is best communicated through essays, articles, reports and other expository writings.

A short story has **character**, **setting** and **plot**. It revolves around a **central** or **main character** who is usually confronted with a problem or difficulty. Other characters are brought in to help or hinder the main character, to provide humour or suspense, or for some other significant reason.

The **setting of a story is the time and place of the action**. In creating a story, a writer has to decide how important the setting is. In some stories the setting helps create the atmosphere. In others, the setting may not be all that important. Some stories could take place almost anywhere and others may have more than one setting. Some could only happen in a specific location. Setting is essential for all stories, because what happens must take place somewhere and at some time.

Plot is the action of the story. The main character is at the centre of it. He or she is involved in some difficulty. Someone or something complicates matters and stretches out the action until the turning point, or climax is reached. Then the story quickly comes to a close.

Character, setting and plot – all interwoven – make the short story a form of writing that is entertaining to read. But a short story may do more than entertain. It may have a message, an observation to make about society or life in general. Such a message or observation is a story's theme.

Point of view

- Who is telling the story, from what point-of-view?

Types:

- 1) First person point of view: this is when the author is telling the story from the main characters point of view. We know this because the author uses the words "I", "Me". The benefit of this is that we know what the character is thinking, feeling and why they are doing so.
- 2) Third person point of view: this is when the author is telling the story. We know this because the author is using the words "He", "She", "They", etc. As a result we have to use what the characters say and do to draw a conclusion as to what they mean, or what they are like. We don't know what they are thinking we can only make a guess.

Theme

- The main message or idea within a short story/novel or piece of writing.
- There can be more than 1 theme within a piece of work.
- Remember that each person who reads the piece of work can have a different theme. The experience we have determines the message we get. ALWAYS make sure that you explain your theme.

Symbol

- When an object or idea has a meaning beyond its literal meaning. Ex. A dove is just a bird – but it has a meaning of peace.

Symbolism

- Is the meaning behind the symbol?

Example: dove is the symbol and peace is what it symbolizes.

Conflict

- Struggle between opposing forces. Three types:

1) Internal Conflict:

- Man vs. Himself – in other words man is struggling with a decision/ feeling he had to make.

2) Interpersonal Conflict

- Man vs. Man – in other words is when two or more individuals struggle either physical or verbal with one another.

3) External Conflict

- Man vs. Nature – this is when is struggling with the outside world; things beyond his control.