

Story and Novel Terms 9

This list of terms is a building block that will be further developed in future grades. It contains the terms you are responsible for learning in your grade nine year.

Short Stories: General

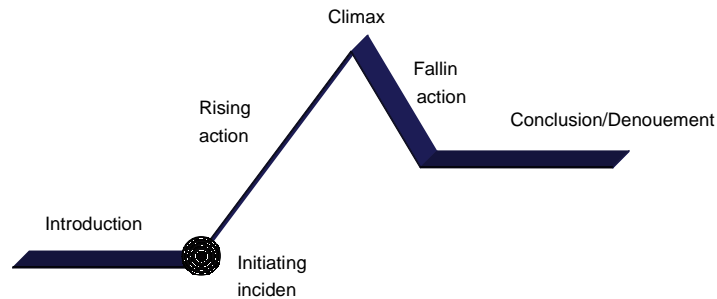
Short Story: A fictional tale of a length that is too short to publish in a single volume like a novel. Short stories are usually between five and sixty pages; as a result, they can be read in a single sitting. Usually, short stories concentrate on a single event with only one or two characters.

The short story has three elements: **plot**, **characterization**, and **setting**. In addition, short stories also contain other devices/features including: **theme**, **conflict**, **point of view**, **suspense**, **foreshadowing**, and **flashback**. Theme is so vital to the short story, however, that some critics consider it the fourth element, rather than a device or feature.

Short Story Elements

- A. Plot:** The events of the story or the series of actions that make up the story are referred to as the plot. Basically, the plot is what happens in the story. Traditionally, it is divided into five parts.
1. **Introduction:** The reader meets the characters and discovers the setting. Reader interest is aroused here. The conflict that drives the story's action is discovered at the end of the introduction, with the initiating incident.
 2. **Rising action:** Builds up the story (the longest part)— a series of steps that lead to the climax. You get more information about conflict and character here.
 3. **Climax:** Here, the reader finds out what happens to the conflict, or how the conflict might be resolved. The story may not yet be finished, but the reader now has a good understanding of what way it is going to go.
 4. **Falling action:** The plot begins to wrap up in this section of the story, which is usually brief.
 5. **Denouement/Conclusion/Resolution:** This part follows quickly after the climax and provides the last pieces of information for the reader. "Denouement" is French for "unknotting"; you may therefore think of denouement as the "unknotting" or "untangling" of the plot. Other words for denouement are conclusion or resolution (think about it as the resolution of the climax). However, not all conclusions provide resolution.

Plot Diagram: Also known as Freytag's Pyramid, the story diagram or plot diagram, was invented in 1864 by Gustav Freytag to visually represent the five plot parts and their relationship with one another. Modern stories may or may not tidily fit Freytag's Pyramid.



B. Character Types

- **Protagonist:** The main character in the story. The protagonist is usually, but not always, a “good guy.”
- **Antagonist:** The force against the protagonist. The antagonist is usually another character, but not always, especially if the conflict is “person against self.” The antagonist is usually described as “the bad guy”, although that description doesn't work if the conflict is person against self or person against environment.
- **Flat:** This is a minor character with one or maybe two sides to the personality. These characters might not seem very realistic or life-like because so little is known about them.
- **Round:** These characters are believable and complex people with several sides to their personality. They are lifelike and behave like real people would, if real people were in those same situations.
- **Dynamic:** Also known as a kinetic character, a dynamic character changes in some important way because of plot events. For example: a cruel old man might see the error of his ways and become generous and kind, or a gentle girl becomes vicious and angry because her parents divorce.

- **Static:** These characters are the opposite of dynamic characters. These people don't change through the course of a story. They have the same personality throughout.
- **Stereotypical:** Also known as **stock**, these characters are people who are easily recognized as "types". It wouldn't matter in which story they appear, they are always the same. For example, the old witch-like woman, the geeky scientist, the airhead, and the dumb jock characters are all stereotypical, or stock, characters.

Character Analysis: The author may choose any of six ways to reveal a character to the reader. The reader must therefore be prepared to watch for "clues" about each character in these same six ways:

1. physical appearance
2. things the character says
3. things the character does (actions)
4. things the character thinks
5. things other characters say about the character
6. author information

Character Sketch: A character sketch is a description of a character's moral and personality qualities, written in paragraph form with specific examples from the story in question. Usually, the character terms (see above) are used in the course of the description. Physical appearance and dress (if showing something about personality) are sometimes described as well.

C. Setting: The author may choose to state the setting clearly or leave it to the reader to infer from textual clues (such as weather). There are two parts to a complete setting:

- **Emotional Setting:** Mood or atmosphere
- **Physical Setting:** Time, place, season

Short Story Devices and Features

A. Theme: The message of the story stated in one or two complete sentences. When a person describes a story's theme, the person is describing what can be learned about life and/or people from the story. Theme is so important that it is often described as the fourth element of the short story.

B. Conflict: Conflict drives the plot forward. The reader discovers the conflict by the end of the introduction with the initiating incident, which is an event that

demonstrates the conflict to the reader and begins the rising action. There are four different types of conflict:

- person versus person
- person versus self
- person versus environment
- person versus the supernatural/machine

C. Point of View: The writer selects the point of view from which to tell the story that best suits his/her intentions as a writer

- **First person:** “I” is the central character and tells his or her own story. “I walked to my car, humming to myself.”
- **Second person:** The story is told about “you.” “You could see the anger in her eyes.”
- **Third person:** The story is told using “he” or “she.” (For example: Barbara heard a noise behind her. She walked quickly to the car.) Third person (s/he) includes three points of view: omniscient, limited omniscient, and objective (this will be covered in detail in grade ten).

D. Flashback: When a character thinks back to an event that occurred before the story began. Sometimes flashbacks are written as separate “interrupter” sections within a novel or short story.

E. Foreshadowing: A hint of events to come.

F. Suspense: Anxiety or apprehension resulting from an uncertain, undecided, or mysterious situation. Suspense is when the writer creates excited anticipation of an approaching climax in the reader.

Novels

Many of the terms associated with short stories are also used in novels, particularly setting, characterization, plot, and theme. The difference between a novel and a short story is in the length and complexity of the narrative. Novels are longer and more complex than short stories; therefore, they take several sittings to read in their entirety.

Novels, like short stories, can be written in different style categories, or genres. A few of the different sub-genres include romance, science fiction, fantasy, or contemporary (there are others beyond these few).

Style: writers use many, many different techniques to attract reader interest and attention or to accomplish literary purpose in short stories, novels, poems and plays. Several such techniques follow here:

- **Irony:** When there is a surprising gap between what might be expected and what actually occurs.

- **Satire:** Style of writing that has the goal of mocking or scorning either an individual, an institution, or society as a whole. Angry and bitter satire is called Juvenalian satire while gentle mockery is called Horatian satire.
- **Symbol:** A symbol has two levels of meaning: a literal level and a figurative level. Objects, characters, events and settings can all be symbolic in that they represent something else beyond themselves. E.g. the dove is literally a bird, but has become a universal symbol of peace.