Story Terminology

Take notes on the presentation based on the information presented on screen. In addition to definitions, also take notes on PowerPoint tips, and examples from your recent story or novel.

- Stories rely on 4 elements: **Characters**, **Setting**, **Plot**, and **Theme**
- Like 4 legs on a table, these elements help create a platform for a good story.
- If a story relies on ONE element more than any other, then it is called "dependent" (character dependent, setting dependent, etc.)

Character

- **Direct Presentation**
  - An author **TELLS** you about a character's personality and development
  - "He was a mean man who enjoyed tormenting others to get what he wanted out of life"
- **Indirect Presentation**
  - An author **SHOWS** you about a character's personality and development; we infer the personality based on observation.
  - "He crept slowly towards the elderly man sleeping in the seat in the packed theatre. As he yelled, the old man jumped up, and the man slip into the now empty seat and proceeded to watch the movie."
- **Protagonist**
  - Main character who actively advances the plot
  - There is only protagonist in each story unless there are several plots (i.e. _____, _____, or _____.)
  - The protagonist is not always the "good guy" (i.e. _____, _____, or _____.)
- **Antagonist**
  - Character or force that works against the protagonist getting what he wants to achieve
  - While there may be many conflicts, there is only one main antagonist.
- **Round Character**
  - A character who displays *many different emotions and traits*
  - Behaves like a real person, though not always realistic behavior
  - We feel *sympathy* (we've experienced the same thing) or *empathy* (we can imagine experiencing the same thing) for these characters
  - We are happy for them; sad for them
- **Flat Character**
  - A character who *only displays one or two dominant traits or emotions*
  - Often stereotypical (English butler, dumb jock, computer geek) or utilitarian (cashier, postman, waiter, etc)
- **Dynamic Character**
  - A character who learns from his experiences during the story and develops or "grows" as a result.
  - These are emotional or spiritual changes, not physical changes
- **Static Character**
  - A character who remains unchanged by his experiences and does not become a "better" person as a result.
  - Despite what has happened to him and around him, this character has not "learned" anything
- **Conflicts:** External or Internal
  - Regardless of conflict type (person vs. person, vs. self, vs. environment, vs. unknown), it should be thoroughly explained in terms of motivation and the issues that are in contention.

As we read about characters we can make certain observations based on the author's description.

- **Physical Appearance** (age, height, weight, clothes, beauty, etc.)
- **Mental Level** (intelligent, dumb, simple, education, etc.)
- **Emotional Level** (often stressed, optimistic, quick to anger, etc.)
- **Spiritual Level** (believes in God, higher power, atheist, agnostic, not applicable, etc.)
- **Motivation** (Why does he want? What makes him get out of bed in the morning? What does he want to achieve?)
- **Development** (Does the character change or learn anything during the story? Does he behave the same way as he did at the beginning of the story?)

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Setting
Stories have specific locations where important events occur. Setting plays a key role for creating an emotional connection for a reader. Like character there are several elements to setting

- **Physical Aspects**
  - **Where and when** does the story occur
  - **Location** (castle, coffee house, school, village)
  - **Duration** (from start to finish, how much time has passed? Hour? Day? Year? Decade?
  - **Period** (what time period or year is it time? Time of year? Season?)
- **Emotional**
  - **Mood & Atmosphere** of a setting; identical settings can produce different feelings depending on description
  - **Emotion:** Happy, sad, scary, reflective, lonely, nostalgic, etc.
  - **Impression:** Based on all factors, what is the overall impression that the setting creates

These significant settings fall into two categories:

- **Primary Setting**
  - the main location or area where the majority of the significant events occur
  - A story can have more than one primary setting, but often most stories do not have more than 2 or 3.
- **Secondary Setting**
  - A location where less important events in the story occur
  - Most authors do not use secondary settings unless the story is focused more on the plot such as mysteries, horror, thrillers, and epic stories.

Plot
The series of important events or significant actions in a story that usually involves one of the four conflicts.

- **Significant action** are only an those events which affect the characters, setting, storyline, or theme
- **Plot manipulation** occurs when events happen that are unrealistic based on the setting, characters, prior plot points, or the story's reality.
- **Plot Summary**: a prose summary of the key events in a story from beginning to end (maximum ½ page for a short story; one page for a novel, movie, or play)
- **Plot Diagram:** A line diagram of key events in a story from beginning to end with 10-15 events points for a short story or 30-40 events for a novel, movie, or full-length play.
  1. Reread the story and make a point-form, chronological list of ALL the most important significant actions.
  2. Rank each item from 1-100 based on the amount of tension or conflict at that moment
  3. Graph the tension on the y-axis and events on the x-axis and connect the dots.
  - **Introduction**: introduces the setting, characters and general plot
  - **Initiating action**: first conflict that causes the tension to rise
  - **Rising action**: all events between the initiating action and climax
  - **Climax**: highest point of tension in a story; typically when the conflict between the protagonist and antagonist is resolved
  - **Denouement or Falling action**: decline of tension after the climax
  - **Ending**: final moment or overall feeling at the end of the story
    1. Happy / Sad Ending
    2. Expository Ending: loose ends are explained by a narrator
    3. Indeterminate Ending: story ends abruptly without resolving major issues or conflicts
    4. Surprise Ending: unexpected twist to the plot

Theme
This is the message the author wishes to share based on the interactions between the characters, settings, and main plot

- A moral lesson we are meant to learn
- Controlling idea or focal point
- Must be a general statement
- Not an absolute statement
- Cannot be a cliché
- Must account for all major aspects of the story

Story Terminology

Symbol:
An object, event, or even a person that has a deeper meaning or significance
- A sword can symbolize "revenge" and also "connection" (The Princess Bride)
- Colours can have inherent symbolism: red (blood, love), black (evil, night), white (good, purity), green (jealousy, money)
- Symbols can be layered (a red Sith light saber represents evil, revenge, hatred, power)

Irony
The contrast in meaning or ideas to what is generally meant or understood
- **Verbal** : saying one thing but meaning another; sarcasm is a "tone" that can indicate verbal irony; body language and "sounds" are considered verbal
- **Dramatic**: the reader or audience knows something that characters do not know
- **Situational**: an outcome that is very different from what is normally expected

Point of View
This is how an author's chooses to tell the story. The choice of which "type" of narrative is used determines the "flavour" of the story
- **First Person Narrative**
  - Using "I"
  - May involve a character who is directly or indirectly involved in the story
  - We are strictly limited to what this character can observe and see; his abilities to "tell" are also a factor; he could be lying; he could be exaggerating
- **Omniscient Narrative**
  - Uses the 3rd person (he, she, they)
  - The narrator is an unseen force
  - The thoughts of any character can be shared; we know what characters are thinking
  - Narrator is not limited by time or space; can comment or explain anything
- **Limited Omniscient Narrative**
  - Like "Omniscient", yet only one character's thoughts are shared
- **Objective Narrative**
  - Like a "movie camera", the narrator can only share what can be seen or heard
  - No commentary or explanations are provided

Foreshadowing
- Plot, character, or setting elements that "hint" at something that is going to happen later in the story; often has elements of irony when the "hint" is made clear

Flashback
- A scene from the past is retold or "re-narrated" as if it is currently happening

Suspense
- The building of tension that maintains the interest of the reader

Common Topics & Themes

Refining your writing to focus on a piece of literature's topic and theme will often provide you with a better grade. Below are some common topics and themes.

A *TOPIC* is the subject that a piece of writing is about.
For example, the TOPIC of Scooby Doo is solving mysteries.
A *THEME* is the important point about the topic that the writing makes.
One THEME of Scooby Doo is that Good triumphs over evil.

Story Terminology

Abandonment	Grief	Pride
Alienation	Growth and initiation	Race
Ambition	Guilt	Regret
American Dream	Heroism	Rejection
Birth/Childhood	Hope	Religion
Coming of Age	Human relations	Responsibility
Commoditization	Identity	Revenge
Commercialism	Illness	Sacrifice
Commerce	Individual & Nature	Science & Technology
Community	Individual & Society	Sex & Sensuality
Cruelty	Individual & God	Social Class
Death	Innocence	Spirituality
Education	Isolation	Stages of Life
Ethics	Journey & Struggle	Success
Experience	Justice	Suffering
Fall from Grace	Love & Friendship	Survival
Family	Memory	Time
Fate	Nationalism	Tradition
Freedom	Nature	Violence
Futility	Oppression	Work
Gender	Parenthood	

Themes

- Nature is at war with each of us and proves our helplessness.
- People are out of place in Nature and need technology to survive.
- People are destroying nature and themselves with uncontrolled technology.
- Society and a person's inner nature are always at war.
- Social influences determine a person's final destiny.
- A person's identity is determined by place in society.
- You can't change who you are.
- There are few friends who will make extreme sacrifices.
- A child must go through a series of obstacles before becoming a grown-up.
- Everyone had an inner child. Sometimes it holds us back, sometimes it brings us happiness.
- A person grows by facing obstacles.
- Enjoy life now because we all die too soon.
- By the time we understand life, there is too little left to live.
- Death is part of living, giving life its final meaning.
- Sometimes people do stupid things to impress other people.
- Honesty is always the best policy.
- Honest isn't always the best policy.
- Family is the most important thing.
- Faith is the most important thing.
- A good friend is hard to find.
- Don't judge a book by its cover.
- Things aren't always what they seem.
- We can change the future. (Free will)
- The future is already set for us. (Fate)
- Every action has a reaction.
- The fittest are most able to survive.
- With freedom comes responsibility.
- It is important to be your own person (don't be a poser).
- Love is stronger than hate.
- Good is stronger than evil.

Story Terminology

	Physical	Mental	Emotional	Spiritual	Motivation	Development
	• _____	• _____	• _____	• _____	• _____	• _____
	• _____	• _____	• _____	• _____	• _____	• _____
	• _____	• _____	• _____	• _____	• _____	• _____
	• _____	• _____	• _____	• _____	• _____	• _____
	• _____	• _____	• _____	• _____	• _____	• _____
	• _____	• _____	• _____	• _____	• _____	• _____
	• _____	• _____	• _____	• _____	• _____	• _____
	• _____	• _____	• _____	• _____	• _____	• _____
	• _____	• _____	• _____	• _____	• _____	• _____
	• _____	• _____	• _____	• _____	• _____	• _____
	• _____	• _____	• _____	• _____	• _____	• _____
	• _____	• _____	• _____	• _____	• _____	• _____
	• _____	• _____	• _____	• _____	• _____	• _____
	• _____	• _____	• _____	• _____	• _____	• _____
	• _____	• _____	• _____	• _____	• _____	• _____
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	• _____	• _____	• _____	• _____	• _____	• _____
	• _____	• _____	• _____	• _____	• _____	• _____
	• _____	• _____	• _____	• _____	• _____	• _____
	• _____	• _____	• _____	• _____	• _____	• _____

Story Terminology

	Location	Duration	Period	Emotion	Impression
	• _____	• _____	• _____	• _____	• _____
	• _____	• _____	• _____	• _____	• _____
	• _____	• _____	• _____	• _____	• _____
	• _____	• _____	• _____	• _____	• _____
	• _____	• _____	• _____	• _____	• _____
	• _____	• _____	• _____	• _____	• _____
	• _____	• _____	• _____	• _____	• _____
	• _____	• _____	• _____	• _____	• _____
	• _____	• _____	• _____	• _____	• _____
	• _____	• _____	• _____	• _____	• _____
	• _____	• _____	• _____	• _____	• _____
	• _____	• _____	• _____	• _____	• _____
	• _____	• _____	• _____	• _____	• _____
	• _____	• _____	• _____	• _____	• _____
	• _____	• _____	• _____	• _____	• _____
	• _____	• _____	• _____	• _____	• _____
	• _____	• _____	• _____	• _____	• _____
	• _____	• _____	• _____	• _____	• _____

Story Terminology

	Introduction	Initiating Action	Rising Action	Climax	Falling Action	Ending
	• _____	• _____	• _____	• _____	• _____	• _____
	• _____	• _____	• _____	_____	• _____	_____
	• _____	• _____	• _____	_____	• _____	_____
	• _____	• _____	• _____	_____	• _____	_____
	• _____	• _____	• _____	_____	• _____	_____

Theme Statement

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• _____

• _____

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• _____

Plot Summary

Theme Explanation

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