

Short Stories

Literary Terms to Remember

Short story: a short, concentrated, fictional narrative

Character

Protagonist: the main character whose conflict drives the plot; the leading character whose story is being told

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Antagonist: the character who directly opposes the protagonist

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Direct Characterization: the author tells us directly what the character is like; clear description of a character's physical or personality traits, or a description of their situation (ex. *Mrs. Spaman was a tall English teacher who lived in Holland.*)

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Indirect Characterization: when the reader has to use his/her own judgment to decide what characters are like based on what they do, what they say, and what others say about them (ex. *Mrs. Spaman screamed, "How dare you not finish your homework! You all fail!" With that she stomped away angrily.*)

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Static character: a character that does not change in a significant way over the course of a story

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Dynamic character: a character that changes significantly as a result of the story's events; this change is deep and to the core of who the character is, not like getting a haircut

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Round character: a character is like a real person, complex and with many different traits, that sometimes contradict each other

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Flat character: a character that has only one or two traits, can be described in one or two words

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Theme: the central message of a work of literature; an essential take-away revealed in the text

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Conflict: the struggle between opposing characters or opposing forces; the problem that drives the plot

Internal Conflict: problems that take place in the character's mind

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Man vs. Self: (ex. "I will never be good enough!")

External Conflict: when a character struggles against an outside force

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Man vs. Man: (ex. when you quarrel with a parent)

Man vs. Nature: (ex. surviving a tornado)

Man vs. Society: when a character struggles against societal norms (ex. Harrison Bergeron trying to stand out in his society)

Symbol: a person, a place, a thing, or event that stands for itself and for something beyond itself as well (ex. the American flag stands for democracy and freedom)

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Allusion: a reference to something that should be well known to the reader—a person; a place; or an event from literature, history, religion, mythology, politics, sports, science, or culture (ex. *George was an honest kid; like the former president of the same name, he simply could not tell a lie.*)

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Diction: a writer's or speaker's choice of specific words in order to create a certain effect/tone

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Foreshadowing: the use of clues to hint at events that will occur later in the plot

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Irony: contrast between expectation and reality

Verbal irony: a writer or speaker says one thing but really means something completely different

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Situational irony: when one expects something to happen, but the opposite occurs

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Point of View: vantage point from which a story is told

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First person: one of the characters is telling the story using the pronoun "I"

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Third person: when the story is told by an outside narrator; uses "he/she, they" pronouns

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-Limited: the narrator who plays no part in the story, zooms in on the thoughts and feelings of just one character

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-Omniscient: the narrator telling the story knows everything there is to know about the characters and their problems

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Plot: series of related events that make up a story

Exposition: gives us information about the characters, setting, and/or conflicts at the start of the story

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Rising action: events leading to the climax/turning point of a story

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Climax: the turning point of a story; exciting, tense moment when the eventual fate of the protagonist is being revealed; there is no “turning back” after this moment

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Falling action: the events leading to the end of the story

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Resolution/Denouement: the final outcome of the story for all involved; a denouement allows for a somewhat unresolved ending

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Tone: the attitude a writer takes toward the audience, a subject, or a character; the feeling of emotion that surrounds a story

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