

Elements of A Short Story

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What is a Short Story?

- A piece of fiction
- Relates a single event or a single moment in time
- 500 words (Flash Fiction) up to 15,000 words (but usually no more than 7,500)
- Contains a beginning, a middle and an end
- Creates an impression on the reader

“Roller Coaster” Story Elements

- **Hook** – what grabs the reader's attention
- **Rising Action** – the events leading up to the climax
- **Climax** – when the action comes to its highest point of conflict
- **Falling Action/Resolution (Dénouement)** – the incidents leading to the resolution of the conflict and the end of the story

Plot Diagram



Other Story Elements

- **Setting** – when and where the story takes place
- **Characterization** – the people in the story
 - **Protagonist**
 - the main character in the story
 - the story usually revolves around the protagonist
 - The hero
 - **Antagonist**
 - the opponent of the protagonist
 - in conflict with the main character
 - Sometimes, “the enemy”

Other Story Elements - Continued

- **Plot** – what is happening, to whom and why?
 - You should be able to sum it up in one sentence.
 - Not to be confused with the *conflict* in the story:
 - Conflict: the problem that needs to be resolved
- **Theme** – the story's main idea. The “message” the author wants to communicate to the reader

Other Story Elements - Continued

- **Point of View** – the position of the narrator (who's telling the story) and what the narrator sees from that vantage point
- Three main points of view (or POV)
 - First Person
 - Second Person (Limited Omniscient)
 - Omniscient

Points of View – First Person

- First Person
 - the most obvious POV
 - the hero tells his own story
 - lots of “I” statements
 - the reader only knows what the narrator is thinking
 - the reader learns only what the narrator knows, and sees only what the narrator sees

Points of View - 3rd Person

- Third Person (limited Omniscient)
 - The story is told by a character or several characters
 - Lots of “he” and “she” statements
 - The reader learns what several of the characters are thinking
 - The reader knows only what the POV characters know and sees only what the POV characters see

Point of View - Omniscient

- The power of this point of view is not to be “in the mind” of the characters but to point out to the reader the elements of the story that the POV characters cannot see
- For instance:
 - It allows the author to tell the reader what happens **after** the main character has left the room
 - It allows the author to show the expression on someone's face after the POV character has turned away

Another POV - Second Person

- Second-Person POV
 - rarely used in story telling
 - the *imperative* case
 - lots of “you” statements

Wrapping Up

- A story is a piece of fiction with a beginning, middle and end
- It follows the “roller coaster” plot-structure to build tension and come to a satisfying conclusion
- Other elements in the story are characters, plot, theme and point of view

Questions?