

Analyzing & Writing About Short Fiction

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What is a short story?

Short Story:

a short story is a narrative that displays some sort of change, slight or grand.

Plot:

how and/or why a story progresses—plot focuses on *causality*:

Narrative:

“The king died—then the queen died.”

Plot:

“The king died—then the queen died of grief.”

Conflict:

the force & counterforce of a story—it is what creates the “drama” or the “tension.” It is the struggle between opposing forces. “What’s at stake?”

Rising Action:

The early events in a story that build anticipation and begin setting up the *conflict* that will be driving the storyline, adding suspense, and engaging the reader.

Climax:

“the turning point” – the point of highest interest in the narrative – the point where the most important part of the action takes place, where the central character could win or lose all that’s “at stake.”

Resolution (*Denouement*):

the “falling action” of the narrative in which the conflict is settled or significantly altered.

A **Dynamic** character **changes over time**, usually as a result of the conflict or crisis.

A **Static** character is someone who **does not change over time**; his or her personality does not transform or evolve.

A **Foil** is a character (usually the antagonist or an important supporting character) whose personal qualities contrast with another character (usually the protagonist). By providing this contrast, we get to know more about the other character.

Protagonist:

the central character of a story around who the actions take place.
The protagonist can be a “good guy” or a “bad guy.”

Antagonist:

an opposing force with which the protagonist struggles: another character, a situation, or an environment, etc.

A **Sympathetic Character** is pretty much a character we like, a character we feel for, one we may identify with or even admire.

Freytag's Pyramid

Plot Structure Components

Climax: The turning point. The most intense moment (either mentally or in action).

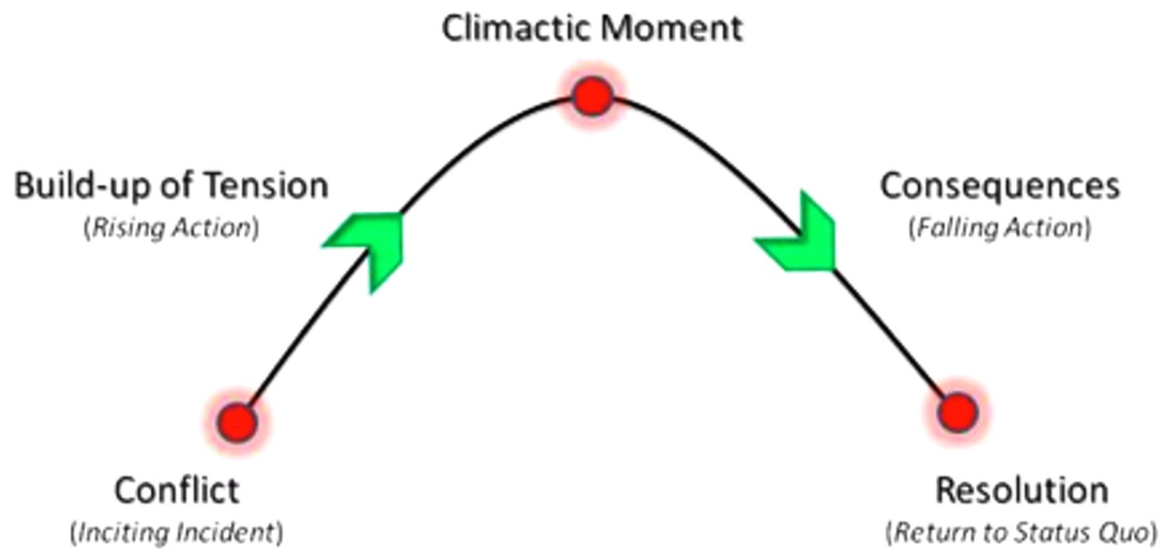
Rising Action: the series of conflicts and crisis in the story that lead to the climax.

Falling Action: all of the action which follows the Climax.

Exposition: The start of the story. The way things are before the action starts.

Resolution: The conclusion, the tying together of all of the threads.

Simple Story Arc



Part Two:

“A&P” by John Updike

1. Is Sammy a sympathetic character? How/why?
2. How does the P.O.V and Sammy’s voice affect the story?
3. Where is the conflict in the story?
4. What “change” does Sammy go through?
5. Why does Sammy feel “how hard the world was going to be to me hereafter.”?

Today’s Activity:

- Review questions
- Discuss in groups
- Class discussion
- In-class journal entry #1

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