

# Elements of Fiction I

*by Anthony Starros, M.F.A.*

# What is a short story?

## Short Story:

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

## Three “Rules” of Writing:

- 1) *Show--don't tell.*
- 2) *Write about what you know.*
- 3) *Always have a sympathetic character your readers can relate to.*

**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.”*

## Setting:

the physical and social context in which the action of a story occurs: time, place, social environment, etc. Setting can/should be used to evoke theme & mood.

-time of day

-place (*home, office, back seat of a car, etc.*)

-geography (*country? state? city?*)

-era (*modern day, recent past, distant past, etc.*)

## **Exposition:**

providing necessary background info about characters and circumstances. It can explain what has gone on before the start of the story, relationships between characters, introduction of conflict, or any other necessary information.

## **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?”

## **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.

### **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.

### **Falling Action:**

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

## **Climax:**

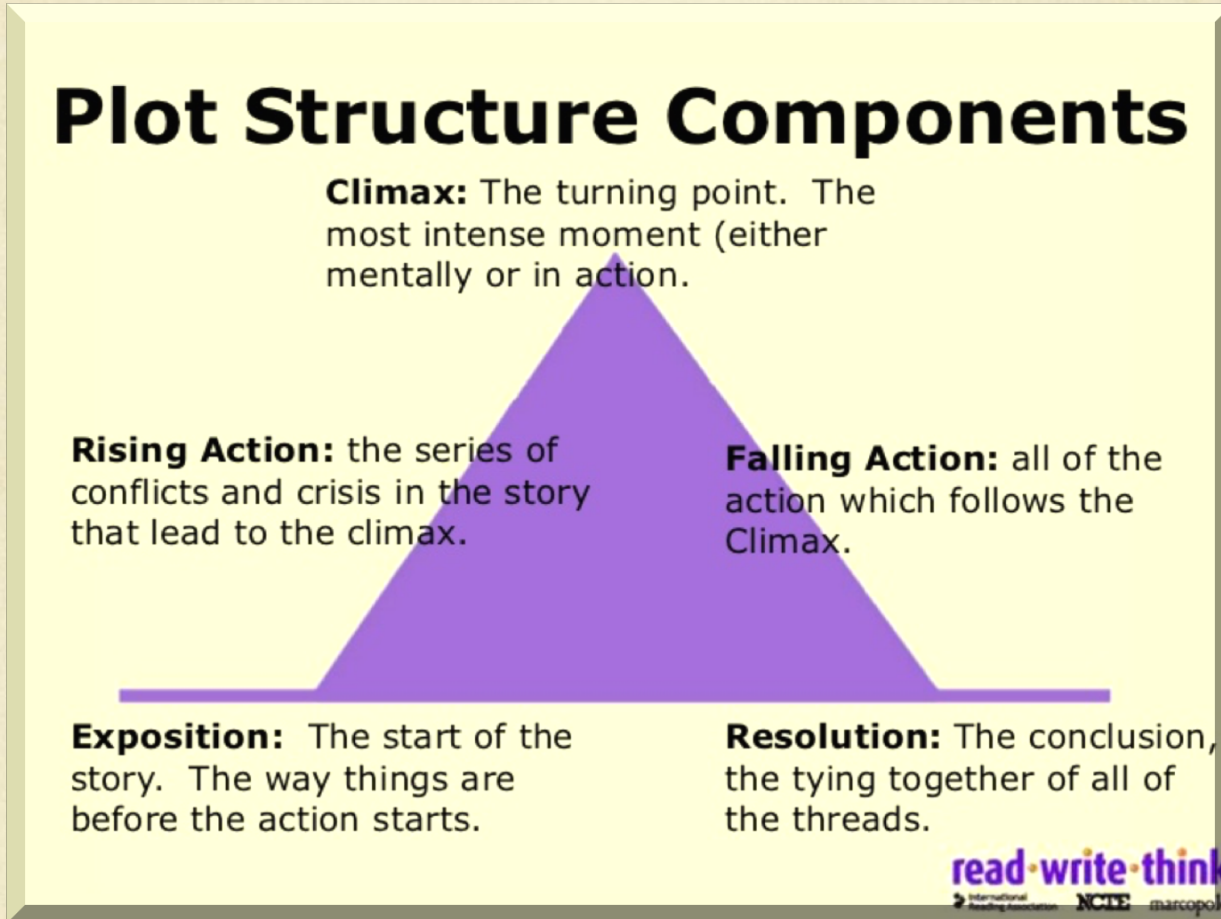
“the turning point” – the point of highest interest in the narrative – the point where the most important part of the action takes place, where the central character could win or lose all that’s “at stake.”

## **Resolution (*Denouement*):**

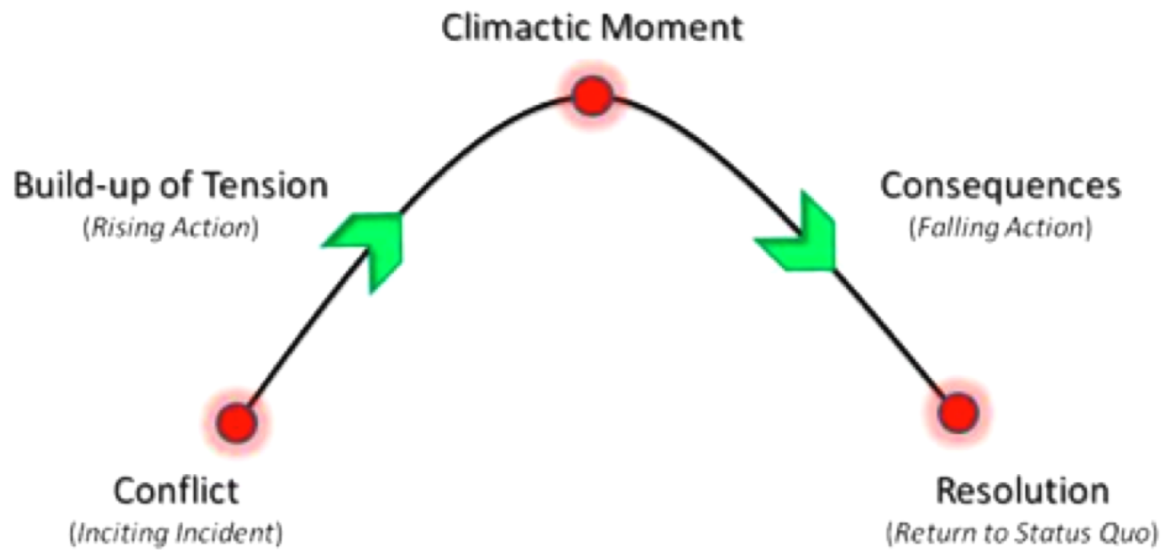
the “falling action” of the narrative in which the conflict is settled or significantly altered.



# Freytag's Pyramid



## Simple Story Arc



**Foreshadowing:**

verbal and dramatic hints early in a story that suggest or hint at what is to come later.

**Pacing:**

how an author handles the passing of time in a story so as not to feel too rushed or too slow.

## **Theme:**

the unifying concept or idea of a literary work ~ a reader's interpretation of what the author intended the story to mean.

## **Tone:**

the author's attitude toward the theme of a story as expressed through the use of word choice, imagery, narrative, setting, and exposition.

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