**English 2201**

**Study of Short Stories**

# Plot

The dictionary defines plot as the plan or design of a work of literature. It's the story of a character/s who becomes engaged in some situation that he or she has to get out of. The plot will determine the effectiveness of the narrative in creating interest or excitement in the reader.

Plot evolves around the following elements:

* Complication
* Suspense
* Rising action
* Climax
* Falling action
* Resolution

The plot begins at the point in the story where the action begins, usually after the introduction. In most stories, the setting, and the characters are introduced; then the story/plot begins. Passage of time is one of the main elements of narratives. The plot is immersed in this passage of time.

# Character

All short stories have character/s. There has to be a major character -- one who is faced with some situation or difficulty and who has to find a solution to that difficulty or overcome the situation. Minor characters help or hinder the major characters.

Character or personality is revealed by the following means:

* By what a person does
* By what a person says
* By what others say about that person

Since short stories are short, it might not be possible for the traits of a character/s to be full exposed or revealed; however, usually we are able to see different dimensions in contrast to the single side of a minor character. In this regard, we can refer to major characters as round characters and minor characters as flat characters.

# Setting and Atmosphere -- Tone and Mood

Setting is the time and place of the action in a story. One of the fundamental criterions for stories is the passage of time -- something happening in some time and place. Often, everything that happens is closely linked to where? and when?

Tone and Mood are also tightly hinged to setting. Tone, for instance, is the writer's attitude toward his subject and the audience; tone creates mood and, ultimately, gives rise to atmosphere. The tone of a story or essay may be varied. The following word list will help you get a sense of possible tones in stories:

* Happy or sad
* Thoughtful or whimsical
* Solemn or cheerful
* Sarcastic or sincere
* Angry or pleasant
* Admiration or disgust

Others:

* Admiration
* Appreciation
* Arrogance
* Belonging
* Bitterness
* Cynicism
* Depression
* Dignity
* Fury
* Indignation
* Irony
* Reverence
* Satire
* Wonderment

Tone, therefore, contributes to mood and atmosphere. Think about the way that you feel after watching a movie where the tone is one of bitterness. What kind of mood is evoked by the bitterness that exists within? If several people are in the same room after watching a movie like ***Titanic,*** what do you think the atmosphere in the room would be?

As a result of the time, place of the action, and the tone created by the writer, mood and atmosphere are produced.

Think about the following questions:

1. What is your present mood? Why is your mood this way?

 Does your present setting cause your present mood? (Time and the place)

1. What is the atmosphere in your present setting?

# Theme

A search for meaning is a search for theme.

One simplistic way of distinguishing theme is to contrast it to subject. The subject of a story is what the story is about -- the surface meaning or the literal meaning, the explicit meaning. This meaning can generally be simply stated in a paragraph, where the subject matter of the story is disclosed. The novel ***The Old Man and the Sea***, for instance, is about an old man who is having a tough time making ends meet in his trade: he has not caught a fish in 84 days. One day … In this case, our mission is not to look beneath the surface for meanings; rather, just telling what it is about.

Theme, however, is the inner meaning/s of the story. It's what the author is attempting to say or address by telling the story -- beneath the surface, between the lines -- the implicit meaning/s. Unlike subject, which is usually obvious, theme is not always stated. In fact, all stories do not necessarily have theme. If a story is written to entertain an audience without a focus on some truth about life or living, then a story may not have theme.

In the novel, The Old Man and The Sea, themes could be such as **unity**, **heroism**, or **manhood**. A theme could be … man's struggle against defeat: against nature, by old age, and by instinct.

Summary:

Subject: what a story is about

Theme: what the author attempts to say, or say, by telling the story.

# Point of View

All stories are told from some point of view, from some voice, perspective, or vantagepoint.

1. If an author decides that the story is going to be told from the point of view of a character within the story, and someone who is an actual participant in the story, then the story will be told from a first person point of view. In this case, personal pronouns are used to satisfy this perspective: **I, me, my, etc**. This is a direst way of telling a story and it can be told from the eyes of a major or a minor character.
2. First person point of view, however, does not give the writer an opportunity to tell what other characters think, feel, see, hear, and do elsewhere at the same time. This would require an all seeing ability, or an omniscient ability -- an all seeing

ability. When this occurs, the point of view is referred to as an omniscient point of view. It enables the writer to tell what is going on in a number of places at the same time and possibly project the thoughts in a number of characters.

1. Another point of view is the third person point of view -- the "he-him-his" or "she-her-hers" point of view. In this case, the writer assumes the role of observer but he is limited in his scope of observation. He is restricted to one character and to one place at one time. This method gives the reader a keen insight into the conscience and personality of a single character

# Irony

 Irony is an implied discrepancy between what is said and what is meant. Three kinds of irony exist:

1. Verbal irony exists when an author says one thing and means something else.
2. Dramatic irony exists when an audience perceives something that a character in the literature does not know.
3. Irony of situation is a discrepancy between the expected result and actual results.