Characteristics of a Short Story

**A short story** is prose (full sentences, not poetry) that can be read in one sitting.

**Characteristics:**

* It is based on one incident or event
* There are few characters
* It often takes place within a short period of time
* There may or may not be a definite conclusion or outcome

**The Elements of Plot:**

**1. Exposition (introduction):** the author outlines background information

1. Time (specific or general, period or date)
2. Setting: where, when, time, place, weather...
3. Antecedent Action: the events leading up to the story
4. Atmosphere or mood

**2. Initial Incident:** The first event which introduces conflict or begins suspense

**3. Rising Action:** Major part of the short story based on conflict and complications.

* Some types of conflict include:
  + Person vs. Person
  + Person vs. Self
  + Person vs. Nature

1. **Climax:** The highest point in the story, where conflict is solved.

**5. Falling Action (Denouement):** the “wrapping up” of the story. This reveals what happens to the characters following the climax

**6. Denouement/ Resolution:** the way the story ends

1. happy ending: protagonist solves the problem
2. unhappy ending: protagonist is beaten by forces
3. indeterminate ending (cliff- hanger): conflict is not solved

6.

5.

3.

2.

4.

1.

Some important words...

**Character:** “who”, physical description, personality, actions

* there is a protagonist (the main character) and an antagonist (someone who works against the main character)
* revealed through:
  + what a person does
  + what a person says
  + what others say about him/her
  + what the narrator says about him/her

**Point of View:** who is telling the story?

* 1st person (I, we, my)
* 3rd person omniscient (all-knowing)
* 3rd person objective (can only tell what they see – they are a part of the story)

**Theme:** The central big idea of the story

* What is the lesson or author’s possible message? (love, death, relationships)

**Irony:** the opposite of an expected or intended outcome or event.

**Contrast:** Showing the difference between characters, events, settings, objects or ideas.

**Foreshadowing:** Clues or hints that warn the reader of the future importance of certain events, characters and situations. This helps to create suspense.

**Symbolism:** The use of a person, place, event or object to represent and idea or a quality. ex: a red rose = love

**Imagery:** A description that appeals to the five senses and helps to paint a picture in your mind.

**Repetition:** The use of the same word, phrase or sentence for emphasis

**Simile:** A comparison using “like” or “as”. ex: as lovely as a rose

**Metaphor:** a deeper comparison that says that something is something else. ex: life is a highway.

**Personification:** An object is given human qualities. ex: the sun smiled down on us.

**Alliteration:** Two or more words in a sentence that start with the same sound. (ex: sea shells by the sea shore)