Analyzing a Short Story

What is a Short Story?

* A short story is a brief work of fiction where, usually the main character faces a conflict that worked out in the plot of the story

Short Story Terms:

* Character: A person in a story, poem or play.

Types of Characters:

-Round: fully developed, has many different character traits

-Flat: stereotyped, one dimensioned, few character traits

-Static: does not change

-Dynamic: change as a result of the story’s events

* Characterization: How the author develops the characters. This is done through; what the character does or say, what others say of and to the character and the author’s word choice in descriptive passages.

-Direct Characterization: the author directly states what the character’s personality is like.

-Indirect Characterization: showing a character’s personality through his/her actions, thought, feelings, words, appearance or other character’s observations or reactions

* Protagonist: The main character of the story that changes and grows due to the experiences in the story.
* Antagonist: A major character who opposes the protagonist.

Types of Antagonists:

-People

-Nature

-Society

* Setting: The time and place the story took place. It also shows the pace.
* Conflict: A struggle between two opposing forces.

-Internal: Takes place in a character’s own mind (Man vs Him/Herself).

-External: A character’s struggles against an outside force.

* Person vs Person
* Person vs Nature
* Person vs Technology and Progress
* Person vs Society
* Person vs Supernatural
* Point of View: Vantage point from where the writer tells the story.

-First Person: One character’s perspective on the story.

-Third Person: Describes the actions of the character using the words “he” or “she” to refer to the character.

-Omniscient: All knowing narrator. Can center on any thoughts or actions of any or all characters.

* Theme: The central message or insight into life revealed through a literary work (the main idea).
* Flashbacks: The present scene in the story is interrupted to flash backward and tell what happened in an earlier time.
* Foreshadowing: Clues the writer puts in the story to give the reader a hint of what is to come.
* Symbol: An object, person or event that functions as itself, but also stands for something more than itself.

-Example: A scales function is to weigh things but they are also symbols of our justice system.

What is the Plot?

* Plot: Series of related events that make up a story.

Climax

Falling Action

Resolution

Rising Action

Exposition

* Exposition: Section that introduces the characters, setting and conflict.
* Rising Action: Consists of a series of complications. These occur when the main character takes action to resolve their problems and are met with further problems; fear, hostility and threatening situations.
* Climax: The turning point in the story (high point of interest and suspense).
* Falling Action: All events following the climax or turning point in the story. These events are a result of the actions taken at the climax.
* Resolution: The end of the central conflict; it shows how the situation turns out and ties up loose ends.

Analyzing a Short Story:

* Discuss the theme, setting, point of view, and characters in the story. Describe the characters’ personalities and how they complement the setting and demonstrate the theme.
* Give a synopsis (brief summary) of the story. Identify key elements of the plot and use examples from the story to support your thoughts.