

# Short Story Notes



# Plot



Plot is what happens and how it happens in a narrative. A narrative is any work that tells a story, such as a short story, a novel, a drama, or a narrative poem.

# **Plot** – the sequence of events that make up a story.

- **Exposition** – introduces characters and setting.
- **Rising action** – development of the story that leads to a climax.
- **Climax** – the highest point of intensity.
- **Falling action** – the story moves toward resolution.
- **Denouement** – the conflict is resolved and the story ends.
- **Conflict** – the problem in the story.

# Special Techniques of Plot

- **Suspense**- excitement or tension
- **Foreshadowing**- hint or clue about what will happen in story
- **Flashback**- interrupts the normal sequence of events to tell about something that happened in the past
- **Surprise Ending**- conclusion that reader does not expect



# Conflict – a struggle between opposing forces.

- **Internal** – the problem is moral or intellectual.
  - Man vs. self

For example: Sue's friend stole from a store and now Sue must decide whether she should tell on her friend or not.



# Conflict – a struggle between opposing forces.

- **External** – the problem is outside of the character's mind.

- **Man vs. man**

For example: Bob is angry with Mark for breaking his truck.

- **Man vs. nature**

For example: Ranger Rick must fight an angry bear.

- **Man vs. society**

For example: Arnold, the lawyer, must fight the legislature to repeal an unfair law.

- **Man vs. fate/God**

For example: Even though the soldier knows detonating the explosives will kill him, he does so to save his platoon.



# CHARACTERS

- Actors in the story's plot
  - May be human, animal, object, etc.
    - *Protagonist* – main character
    - *Antagonist* – person in conflict with the main character
- \*Not all stories have an antagonist.

# Character – people (or animals) who appear in a story and impact the plot.

- **Flat** – one sided; stereotypes.

For example: Steven Erchol as the nerd.



- **Round** – well developed; multidimensional.

For example: Medea as a woman who cares for her family, but struggles in her relationships.





# Character – people (or animals) who appear in a story and impact the plot.

- **Static** – characters do not change during the course of the story. They remain the same no matter what happens to them.

For example: Shaggy and Scooby Doo as the lovable dorks.



- **Dynamic** – characters change or learn something. The changes they undergo affect their attitudes, beliefs, or behavior.

For example: Fonzie from Happy Days who changes from a gang member to a college professor.



# Factors in Analyzing Characters

- Physical appearance of character
- Personality
- Background/personal history
- Motivation
- Relationships
- Conflict
- Does character change?



## Characterization – the ways in which characters appear or are described in a story.

- **Direct** – the author tells you how the character looks and behaves.
- **Indirect** – the author shows you through the actions and reactions of other characters the way a character looks or behaves.

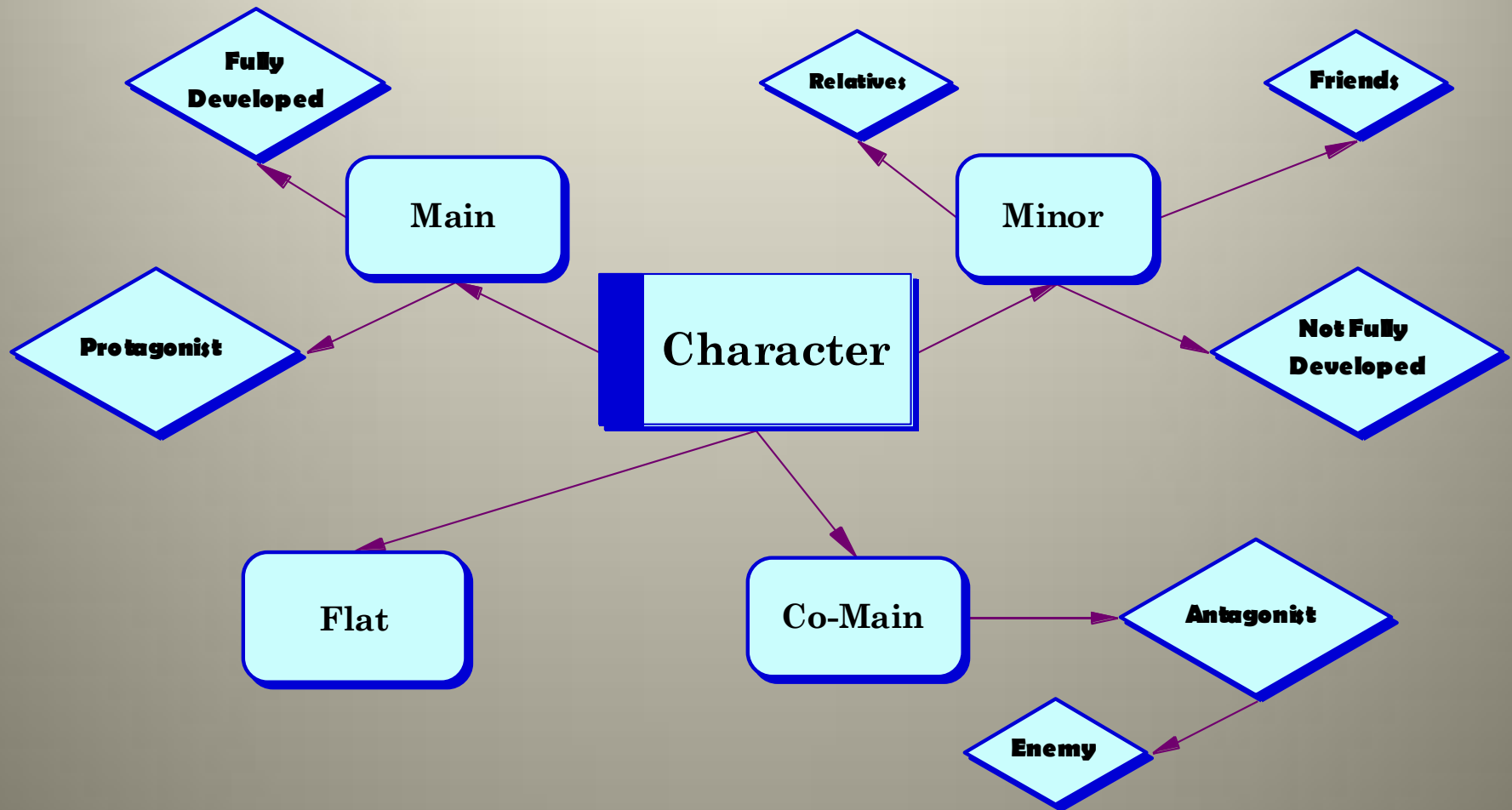
# Direct Characterization

...And I don't play the dozens or believe in standing around with somebody in my face doing a lot of talking. I much rather just knock you down and take my chances even if I'm a little girl with skinny arms and a squeaky voice, which is how I got the name Squeaky.

From "Raymond's Run" by T. Bambara



# Elements of Character



# Indirect Characterization

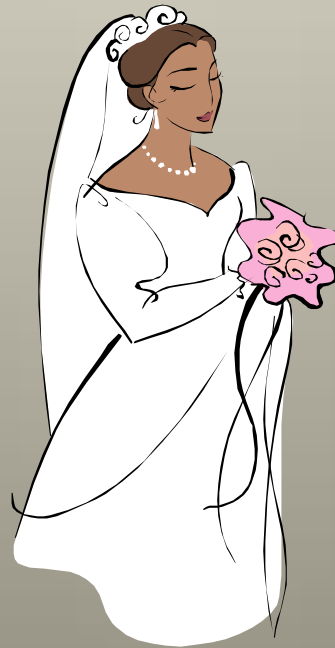


The old man bowed to all of us in the room. Then he removed his hat and gloves, slowly and carefully. Chaplin once did that in a picture, in a bank--he was the janitor.

From "Gentleman of Rio en Medio" by J. Sedillo

**Symbol – a physical object or event that represents something else.**

- red = passion or danger.
- white = purity or innocence





## Theme

- A central message, concern, or insight into life expressed through a literary work
- Can be expressed by one or two sentence statement about human beings or about life
- May be stated directly or implied
- Interpretation uncovers the theme



**Theme – the message or general idea about life that the author hopes to convey.**

For example: love, courage, honor, doing the right thing, bravery in the face of danger, etc.

## Example of Theme

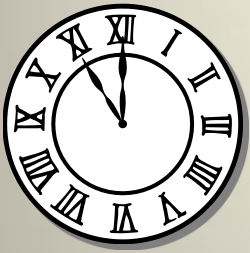
“Every man needs to feel allegiance to his native country, whether he always appreciates that country or not.”

From “A Man Without a Country” by Edward Hale  
pg. 185 in Prentice Hall Literature book

# Setting – the time and place a story takes place.

- The location: town, the city, the state, the country
- The terrain: country, city, natural, urban
- The time: past, present, future
- The circumstances: new beginning, post war, etc.





# Setting

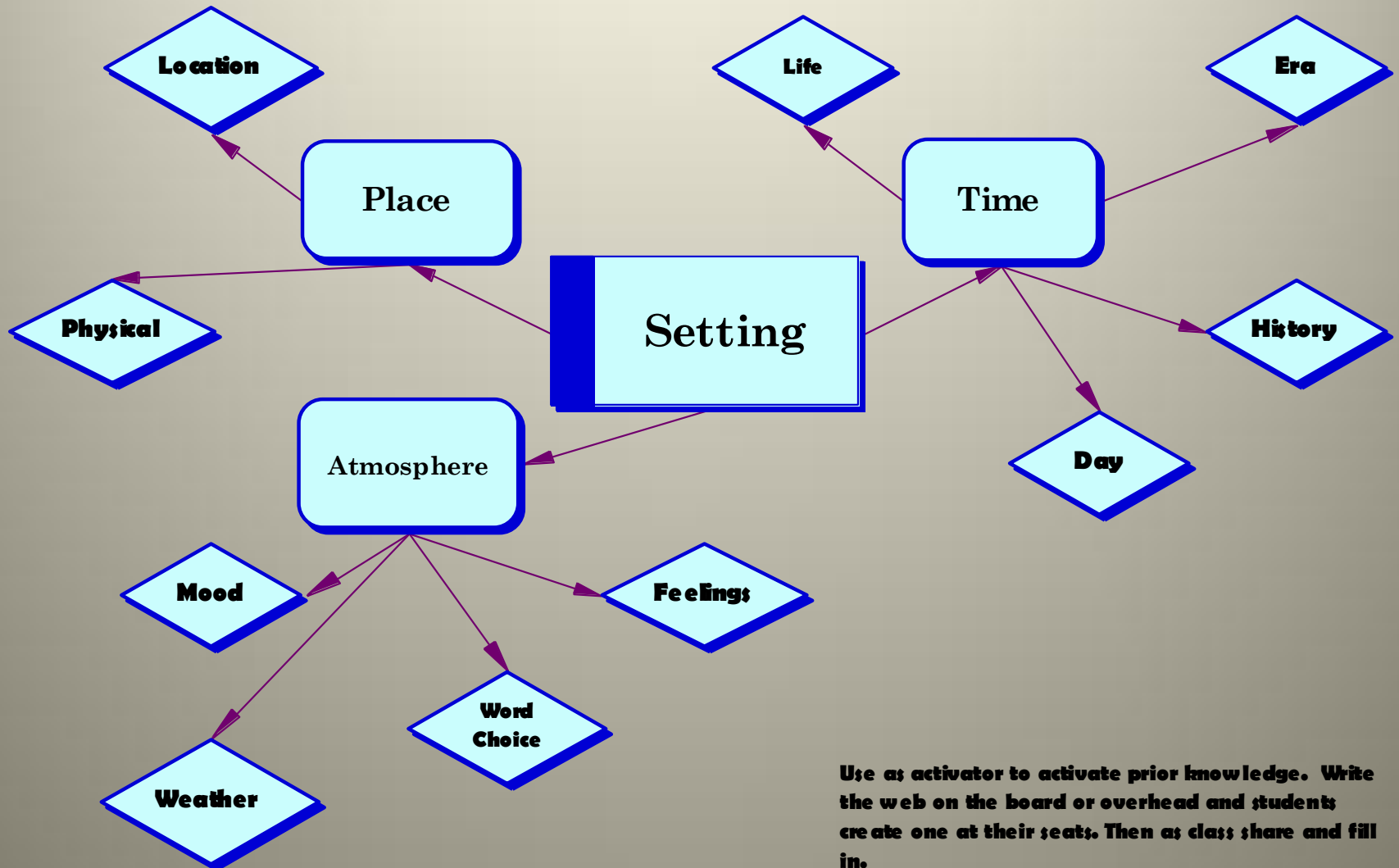
Time and place are where the action occurs

Details that describe:

- ✓ Furniture
- ✓ Scenery
- ✓ Customs
- ✓ Transportation
- ✓ Clothing
- ✓ Dialects
- ✓ Weather
- ✓ Time of day
- ✓ Time of year



# Elements of a Setting



Use as activator to activate prior knowledge. Write the web on the board or overhead and students create one at their seats. Then as class share and fill in.

# The Functions of a Setting

- To create a mood or atmosphere
- To show a reader a different way of life
- To make action seem more real
- To be the source of conflict or struggle
- To symbolize an idea

We left the home place behind, mile by slow mile, heading for the mountains, across the prairie where the wind blew forever.

At first there were four of us with one horse wagon and its skimpy load. Pa and I walked, because I was a big boy of eleven. My two little sisters romped and trotted until they got tired and had to be boosted up to the wagon bed.

That was no covered Conestoga, like Pa's folks came West in, but just an old farm wagon, drawn by one weary horse, creaking and rumbling westward to the mountains, toward the little woods town where Pa thought he had an old uncle who owned a little two-bit sawmill.

# Point of View – the perspective from which a story is told.

- **First person** – the narrator is one of the characters and refers to himself with the pronoun “I”.
- **Third person** – the narrator does not participate in the action.



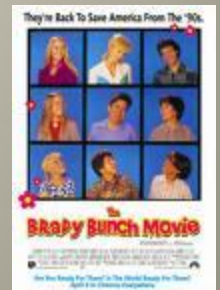


# Point of View – the perspective from which a story is told.

- **Limited** – the audience knows the thoughts and feelings of one character in a story.
- For example: The Wonder Years



- **Omniscient** – the audience is “god-like”, knowing the thoughts and feelings of numerous characters.
- For example: The Brady Bunch Movie

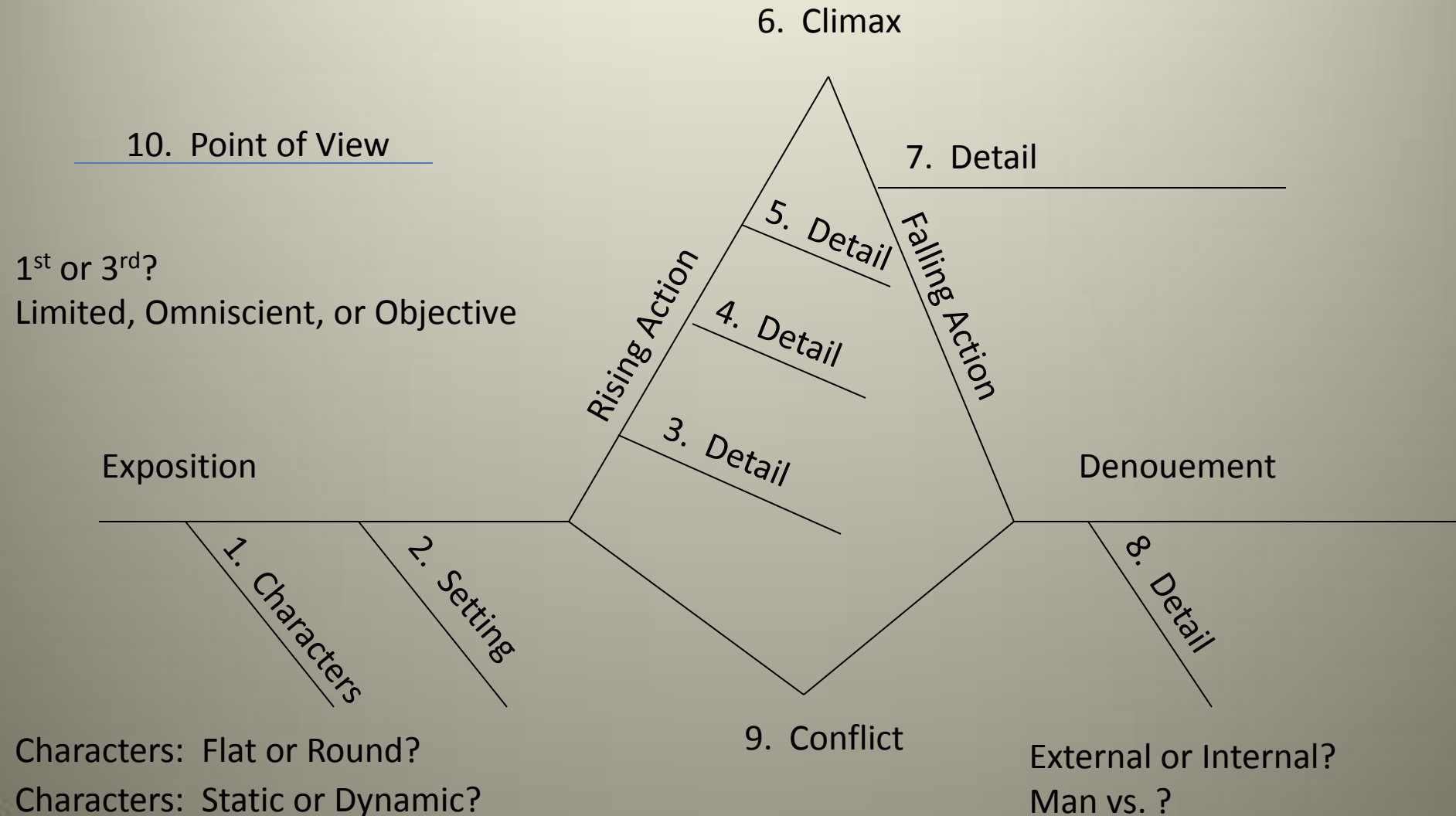



- **Objective** – also known as the “camera-view”; the audience only sees and hears the story as it occurs. They have no knowledge of internal dialogue or emotions.





# Diagram of Plot





**THIS IS  
THE END**