Short Story Elements
Setting

• The setting of a literary work is the time and place of the action.

• The setting includes all the details of a place and time – the year, the time of day, even the weather. The place may be a specific country, state, region, community, neighborhood, building, institution, or home.

• Details such as dialect, clothing, customs, and modes of transportation are often used to establish setting.
Character

- Character – a person in a story, poem or play.

- Types of Characters:
  - Round - fully developed, has many different character traits
    - Ex: Liesel, you and me!
  - Flat - stereotyped, one-dimensional, few traits
    - Ex: White knight, ugly villain
Other Types

• Static
  – Remain the same throughout the story

• Dynamic
  – Undergo a permanent change in some aspect of their character, personality, or outlook
Foil Characters

- Characters who are exact opposite
- The character is usually opposite to the main character and magnifies his/her main traits.
Protagonist

• Main character of the story that changes
  – (death is not a change)
  – the most important character
  – changes and grows because of experiences in the story
  – not necessarily “good” by any conventional moral standard, but he/she is the person in whose plight the reader is most invested
Antagonist

• A major character who opposes the protagonist
• The person may not be “bad” or “evil” by any conventional moral standard, but he/she opposes the protagonist in a significant way.

• Types of antagonists:
  – People
  – Nature
  – Society
  – Technology
Characterization

- **Direct characterization**
  - The author directly states what the character’s personality is like.
  - Example: Garfield was very lazy, and would never shift himself more than was absolutely necessary.

- **Indirect characterization**
  - Showing a character’s personality through his/her actions, thoughts, feelings, words, appearance, atmosphere, or other character’s observations or reactions
  - Example: Garfield was bored with the TV program, but the remote control was inexplicably across the room, so he just watched it anyway. Jon would be in soon, and he could fetch it for him then. Garfield would just pig out until then.
Conflict

• A struggle between two opposing forces

• Types
  – Internal – takes place in a character’s own mind
    • Man vs. Him(Her)self
  – External – a character struggles against an outside force
    • Man vs. Man
    • Man vs. Nature
    • Man vs. Society
    • Man vs. Fate
Conflict

• Often, more than one kind of conflict is taking place at the same time.
• In every case, however, the existence of conflict enhances the reader’s understanding of a character and creates the suspense and interest that makes one want to continue reading.
PLOTLINE

Exposition

Climax

Falling Action

Rising Action

Resolution & Dénouement

Narrative Hook - the conflict is introduced
Exposition

• Section that introduces characters, the setting, and conflicts.
Narrative Hook

• A literary technique in the opening of a story that "hooks" the reader's attention so that he will read on.
Rising Action

• Consists of a series of complications.
• These occur when the main characters take action to resolve their problems and are met with further problems:
  – Fear
  – Hostility
  – Threatening situation
Climax

- The **turning point** in the story: the 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 action taken at the climax.
Resolution

• The character solves the main problem/conflict or someone solves it for him or her.
Dénouement

• At this point, any remaining secrets, questions or mysteries which remain after the resolution are solved by the characters or explained by the author.

• Sometimes the author leaves us to think about the THEME or future possibilities for the characters.

• You can think of the dénouement as the opposite of the exposition: instead of getting ready to tell us the story by introducing the setting and characters, the author is getting ready to end it with a final explanation of what actually happened and how the characters think or feel about it.

• This can be the most difficult part of the plot to identify, as it is often very closely tied to the resolution.
Point of View

• Vantage point from which the writer tells the story.
• First person- The narrator (I)- can only reveal his or her own thoughts or feelings and what he/she sees or is told by other characters.
• What are some limitations when writing in first person? What are the benefits?
P.O.V.- Third Person

• Third person objective - the narrator is an outsider who can only report what he/she sees and hears.

• Third Person Omniscient- The narrator is an all-knowing outsider who can enter the minds of ALL characters and reports in the third person.

• Third Person Limited Omniscient- same as omniscient, but limited to one character.
Style

• The distinctive way in which an author uses language.

• Word choice, phrasing, sentence length, tone, dialogue, purpose, and attitude toward the audience and subject can all contribute to an author’s writing style.
Mood and Tone

• **Tone**: Tone is a reflection of a writer’s or speaker’s attitude toward a subject of a poem, story, or other literary work. Tone may be communicated through words and details that express particular emotions and that evoke and emotional response from the reader.
  
  – For example, word choice or phrasing may seem to convey respect, anger, lightheartedness, or sarcasm.

• **Mood**: Mood is the emotional response within the reader to the story as a whole… how we feel about the story after we read it.
Suspense

• Suspense is the growing interest and excitement readers experience while awaiting a climax or resolution in a work of literature.

• Writers create suspense by raising questions in the minds of their readers.
Foreshadowing

- Where future events in a story, or perhaps the outcome, are suggested by the author before they happen.

- However, if the outcome is deliberately and explicitly revealed early in a story (such as by the use of a narrator or flashback structure), such information does not constitute foreshadowing.
A flashback is a literary device in which an earlier episode, conversation, or event is inserted into the sequence of events.
The movie *Titanic* is told almost entirely in a flashback.

What are some other films that contain flashback to help tell stories?

– *The Notebook*
– *Lost (TV)*

Think of some more…
Irony

A contrast between expectation and reality
Types of Irony

- **Verbal Irony** – saying one thing but meaning something completely different.
  - Calling a clumsy basketball player “Michael Jordan”

- **Situational Irony** – A contradiction between what we expect to happen and what really does happen.
  - A firehouse burning down.

- **Dramatic Irony** – occurs when the reader knows something important that the characters in the story do not know.
  - The day after the assassination, someone saw Mary Todd Lincoln and asked her how she enjoyed the play the night before. (We know and Mary knows that Abraham Lincoln was shot at the theater the night before, but the person did not.)
Symbol

- An object, person, or event that functions as itself, but also stands for something more than itself.
  - Example: Scales function is to weigh things, but they are also a symbol of our justice system.
Allusion

- Allusion- a reference in a work of literature to a well-known character, place, or situation from literature, music, mythology, film, religion (especially the Bible), art, or history.

- *The Family Guy* frequently uses allusions. Ex. This scene is an allusion to a scene in *The Lady and the Tramp.*
Imagery

• Language that appeals to the senses.
  – Touch
  – Taste
  – Sight
  – Sound
  – Smell

Example:
Creating a picture in the reader’s mind through description
Theme

• The main idea or underlying meaning of a literary work. A theme may be stated or implied.

• It is important to recognize the difference between the theme of a literary work and the subject of a literary work.

• The subject is the topic on which an author has chosen to write. The theme, however, makes some statement about or expresses some opinion on that topic. For example, the subject of a story might be war while the theme might be the idea that war is useless.
Theme

Four ways in which an author can express themes are as follows:

1. Themes are expressed and emphasized by the way the author makes us feel. By sharing *feelings of the main character* you also share the ideas that go through his mind.

2. Themes are presented in *thoughts and conversations*. Authors put words in their character’s mouths only for good reasons. One of these is to develop a story’s themes. The things a person says are much on their mind. Look for *thoughts that are repeated* throughout the story.

3. Themes are suggested through the characters. The main character usually illustrates the most important theme of the story. A good way to get at this theme is to ask yourself the question, *what does the main character learn* in the course of the story?

4. The actions or events in the story are used to suggest theme. People naturally express ideas and feelings through their actions. One thing authors think about is what an action will "say". In other words, how will the action express an idea or theme?
Diction

• Diction is choice of words especially with regard to correctness, clearness, or effectiveness

• Diction = enunciation & word choice

• Some easy examples are:
  Don’t say ‘goin’ – say ‘going’, Don’t say ‘wanna’ – say ‘want to’
Dialect

- The usage or vocabulary that is characteristic of a specific group of people
- Dialects are spoken by definable groups of people from a particular geographic region, economic group, or social class.
- Writers use dialect to contrast and express differences in educational, class, social, and regional backgrounds of their characters
Figures of Speech

- Figurative language is used for descriptive effect, often to imply ideas indirectly. It is not meant to be taken literally. Figurative language is used to state ideas in vivid and imaginative ways. It uses figures of speech.

- A figure of speech is a specific device or kind of figurative language, such as hyperbole, metaphor, personification, simile, or understatement.
Oxymoron

An Oxymoron is a figure of speech that is a combination of seemingly contradictory words.

Examples:  
Same difference  
Bitter sweet  
Roaring silence
Personification

Personification is a figure of speech in which an animal, object, force of nature, or idea is given human qualities or characteristics.

Example: Tears began to fall from the dark clouds.
Personification to spice up writing

- The train whistle blew in the night.
- The lonely train whistle cried out in the night.

- The wind blew the leaves.
- The restless wind juggled the leaves.

- The clouds went across the sky.
- The angry clouds marched across the sky.

- The chainsaw made a loud noise.
- The hungry chainsaw growled loudly.

- The school bus let the students out.
- The tired school bus spit out the students.
Alliteration

Alliteration is the repetition of sounds, most often consonant sounds, at the beginning of words. Alliteration gives emphasis to words.

Example: Peter Piper picked a peck of pickled peppers
Onomatopoeia

• The use of words that mimic sounds. They appeal to our sense of hearing and they help bring a description to life. A string of syllables the author has made up to represent the way a sound really sounds.

• Example: Caarackle!
Hyperbole

• An exaggerated statement used to heighten effect. It is not used to mislead the reader, but to emphasize a point.
• Example: She’s said so on several million occasions
• He's got **tons of money**.

• Her brain is the size of a **pea**.

• He is **older than the hills**.

• I will **die** if she asks me to dance.

• I'm so hungry I could eat a **horse**