



Elements of Short Story



Theme

- Some idea or insight about human life and human nature that gives meaning to the story.



Theme continued...

May be stated in a single sentence or a full essay. A theme must be a statement about the subject of the story, rather than a phrase such as “the rewards of old age.”

Is not the same as the subject, which can usually be expressed in a word or two: old age, ambition, love.

Is also different from a moral, which is a lesson or rule about how to live. Ask yourself, “What does this story reveal?”



Theme continued...

- Ask how the protagonist has changed during the course of the story. Often, what this character has learned about life is the truth the writer also wants to reveal to the reader.
- Consider the title. Often, the title will hint at the meaning of the story.
- Must be expressed as a generalization about life or human nature; it should not refer to specific characters or events in the story.



Theme continued...

- This generalization about life should not be broader than is justified by the story itself.
 - Should explain the whole story, not just parts of it.
 - There is no one way to state the theme of a story.
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- End of Theme



Point of View

- The vantage point from which a writer tells a story



Omniscient point of view

- The omniscient narrator is a **godlike observer who knows everything** that is going on in the story and who can see into each character's heart and mind. This narrator may tell us what all-or only some-of the characters are thinking, feeling, and observing; may comment on the meaning of the story, or may leave us to our own devices.



First Person Point of View

- (opposite of omniscient)
- The first-person “I” draws us directly into the story. We feel as if we are listening to a friend telling a story, or as we are reading someone’s letters or diary.



First Person continued...

- We must always keep in mind that a first-person narrator **may or may not be objective or reliable or honest-or even terribly perceptive** about what's going on in the story. We must always ask ourselves how much the writer of the story is allowing the narrator to know and understand-and how much the writer agrees with the narrator's perspective on life.



Limited Third-Person Point of View

- The story is told by an outside observer. This narrator views the action only from the vantage point of a single character in the story. The third-person pronouns are used to refer to all characters.



Determining a Story's Point of View

1. Who is telling the story?
2. How much does this narrator know?
3. How much does this narrator understand?
4. How much does this narrator want us to know?
5. In what ways would the story be different if someone else were telling it?



The Narrator's Tone

- Is the attitude a speaker or writer takes toward a subject, audience, or character.
- In speaking and in writing, tone is revealed by the way we say something, just as much as by what we actually say.



Tone can be conveyed through Words and Attitudes: Connotations

- Connotations of words-the tone or attitude of the words
- Skinny suggests a critical tone.
- Slender suggests approval.
- Red-faced/Rosy
- Fat/Plump
- Cheap/Reasonable



Tone can be conveyed through the details a writer uses.

- Six-year-old child
 - Ragged clothes
 - Dirty face
- Jealous of baby sister
 - Or
 - Sweet face
- Cheery disposition
 - Braided hair



Tone continued...

- Tone is conveyed by the way a writer manipulates the plot and characters in a story.
- Point of view also affects tone.
- We are often attracted to a particular writer because his or her tone reveals an attitude toward life that resembles our own-or because it provides a welcome contrast.



What do we use symbols?

- People are born symbol-makers. It seems to be a part of our nature.
- No one knows why we are such consistent symbol-makers. But one advantage of symbols in stories is that they can express and suggest-by means of a single vivid object or event or person-a whole range of ideas and meanings.
- You may also find that you will remember and think about the symbol long after you have forgotten other details of the story's plot.



Symbol

An object that suggests an idea




Symbol

A person, place, thing, or event that stands both of itself and for something beyond itself.



Examples of symbols

- A heart is a symbol of love.
- A snake is a symbol of evil.
- A cross...
- A six-pointed star...
- A crown...
- A skull and crossbones...
- A clenched fist...
- The stars and stripes...
- The hammer and sickles...
- A dove with an olive branch...


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- Public symbols-established symbols
 - Personal symbols-invented by writers, whose meaning is revealed in a work of poetry or prose.



Guidelines to follow when you sense that a story is operating on a symbolic level.

1. Symbols are often visual.
2. When some event or object or setting is used as a symbol in a story, you will usually find that the writer has given it a great deal of emphasis. Often it reappears throughout the story.

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- 3. A symbol is a form of figurative language. Like a metaphor, a symbol is something that is identified with something else that is very different from it, but that shares some quality. When you are thinking about whether something is used symbolically, ask yourself: does this item also stand for something essentially different from itself?
 - 4. A symbol usually has something to do with a story's theme.



Setting: “Putting Us There”

The time and place of a
story or play.



Setting

- It gives us readers a feeling of being in the situation with the characters.
- Setting, accurately portrayed, can give the story a kind of truth or believability. We call this **verisimilitude**, which means “like truth.”



Setting

- Usually established early in a story.
- May be present immediately through descriptive details.
- Or it may be revealed gradually through a combination of description and action.
- Often contributes greatly to a story's emotional effect.
- May also play a role in the story's conflict.
- An important function is to reveal character.



Atmosphere

- Feeling of harshness or mildness, or gloom or cheer, of beauty or ugliness
- The dominant emotional feeling of a literary work that contributes to the mood. Authors create atmosphere primarily through details of setting, such as time, place, and weather. The description of the rooms at the ball in Edgar Allan Poe's "The Masque of the Red Death" build an atmosphere of suspense and foreboding.

