**Short Stories Study Guide**

**Plot –** The action and events of the story. What happens to the protagonist as the result of the conflict.

* **Introduction –** establishes main characters, setting, mood
* **Turning Point -**  an event that triggers the conflict and begins the rising action \*Some stories have a second turning point before the resolution
* **Rising Action –** the action in a story between the turning point and the climax. Usually, the protagonist is presented with a series of obstacles which block the resolution of the conflict.
* **Climax –** usually the moment of highest action, the climax is the moment when the conflict begins to resolve
* **Falling action –** events from the climax to the resolution. Usually, problems established in the rising action are solved as the protagonist approaches the end of the story
* **Resolution –** When events of the story “Return to normal”, or return to a new version of normal for the protagonist

**Setting –** The time and location of a story

* **Time and location** can be very general or very specific. These can change significantly throughout the story
* **Mood –** is the emotional setting of the story. Usually described by an adjective

**Characters –** the people in a story.

* **Protagonist –** the main character of the story. Not always a ‘hero’.
* **Antagonist –** The person (or force) against whom the protagonist struggles
* **Secondary characters –** other characters who appear in the story
* **Character foil –** a secondary character who is very similar or very different from the protagonist. Provides a comparison or a contrast to the protagonist
* **Stereotype –** a ‘flat’ or ‘stock’ character. Stereotypes are predictable and easily recognized.
* **Flat character –** characters who are not well-developed (they don’t have many traits or seem overly simplified)
* **Round Character –** Characters who are well-developed (have many traits) and realistic.
* **Static Character -**  a character who does not change significantly throughout the story
* **Dynamic Character –** a character who changes in some important way through the events of the story
* **Character traits –** the qualities a person has, the ‘ingredients’ of their personality

**Conflict –** the main problem the protagonist faces. Conflict can be determined by asking what the protagonist wants most, then deciding what is preventing the protagonist from achieving their goal. Conflict can be one of four different types:

* **Character versus character –** the protagonist is in conflict with another character
* **Character versus nature/environment (or the supernatural) –** character is in conflict with the natural or supernatural world
* **Character versus Self –** Character has an internal conflict. Character must grow through or overcome a personality trait or psychological problem
* **Character versus society –** Character is in conflict with the expectations, rules (or lack thereof) or social structure of society.

**Perspective (point-of-view)** – the viewpoint of the story`s narration. May help create suspense or irony, since some perspectives limit or distort events. Four main types include:

* **Omniscient –** the narrator can access the thoughts and feelings of *all* characters
* **Limited Omniscient -** the narrator can access the thoughts and feelings of *only one* character
* **First Person –** The narrator is a character and uses ‘I’, ‘Me’, ‘My’ while telling the story
* **Objective -** the narrator cannot access thoughts or feelings of *any* characters.sometimes referred to as ‘camera’ perspective

**Techniques –** Tools authors use to create readers’ interest.

* **Suspense –** the feeling that the audience wants to know more, but are left wondering (in film or TV, this is often referred to as a ‘cliffhanger’)
* **Foreshadowing –** giving subtle hints that something is going to happen.
* **Flashback –** shifting the action to the past, usually to give context to present events or to remind readers of what has happened previously. May also be used as a **Flash Forward** to show the results of actions in the present
* **Irony** – when the author creates an expectation, then delivers a different result. Irony comes in three types:
  + **Situational Irony –** When something contrary to expectations happens
  + **Verbal Irony –** When something contrary to expectations is said
  + **Dramatic Irony –** When the audience knows something the character doesn’t know
* **Theme –** The main idea of the story. The lesson or moral (though these terms are a little too simplistic). What the author wants you to take away and think about in your real life. To figure out theme, identify the conflict and ask yourself what message the author wants to send readers about the conflict, or how a character resolves the conflict in a story