

How to read fiction

Introduction To Literary Appreciation

story Elements

- Setting**
- Characters**
- Plot**
- Point of View**
- Theme**

SETTING

- Setting is the “**where and when**” of a story.
- It is the **time and place** during which the story takes place.

FUNCTIONS OF 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

How to Analyse a setting

- ❖ **What aspects make up the setting?**
 - **Geography, weather, time of day, social conditions?**
- ❖ **What role does setting play in the story? Is it an important part of the plot or theme? Or is it just a backdrop against which the action takes place?**
- ❖ **Study the time period which is also part of the setting**
- ❖ **When was the story written?**
 - **Does it take place in the present, the past, or the future?**
 - **How does the time period affect the language, atmosphere or social circumstances of the novel?**

CHARACTERS

- The person, animals, and things participating in a story
- The ***protagonist*** is the main character of the story, the one with whom the reader identifies. This person is not necessary “good”.
- The ***antagonist*** is the force in opposition of the protagonist; this person may not be “bad” or “evil”, but he/she opposes the protagonist in a significant way
- ***Major characters*** are characters who play major role in the story (including protagonists and antagonists)
- **Minor characters** are characters whose existence is to support the story and have minor role.

HOW TO ANALYZE CHARACTER/CHARACTERIZATION

- Through dialogue?
- By the way they speak?
- Physical appearance? Thoughts and feelings?
- Interaction – the way they act towards other characters?
- Are they static characters who do not change?
- Do they develop by the end of the story?
- What type of characters are they?
- What qualities stand out?
- Are they stereotypes?
- Are the characters believable?

PLOT

- **Plot is the organized pattern or sequence of events that make up a story.**
- **Plot is the literary element that describes the structure of a story. It shows arrangement of events and actions within a story.**

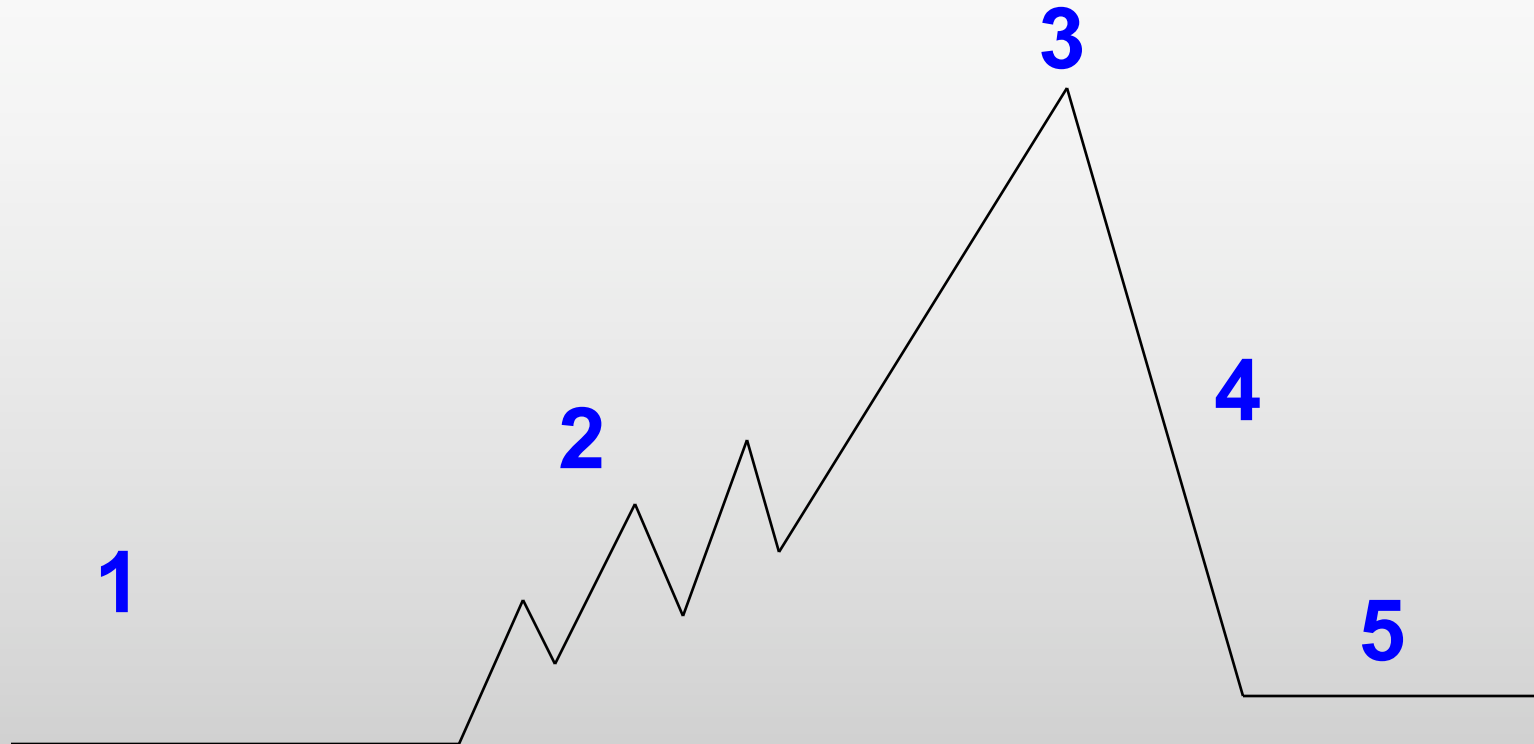
PLOT STRUCTURE

The plot is the main sequence of events that make up the story. In short stories the plot is usually centered around one experience or significant moment.

In general, a story is structured in:

- Exposition - introduction; characters, setting and conflict (problem) are introduced
- Rising action- events that occur as result of central conflict
- climax- highest point of interest or suspense of a story
- Falling action - tension eases; events show the results of how the main character begins to resolve the conflict
- Resolution- loose ends are tied up; the conflict is solved

PLOT STRUCTURE



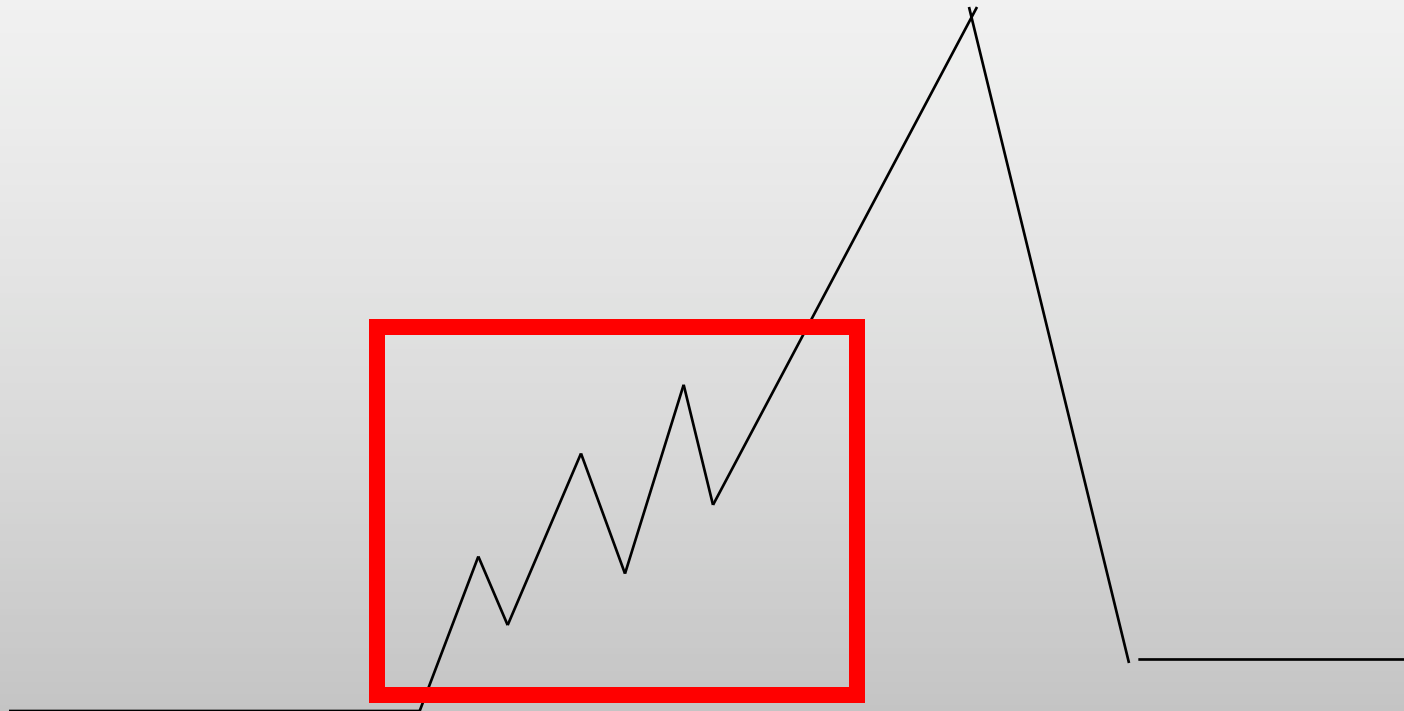
1. EXPOSITION

- This usually occurs at the beginning of a short story. Here the characters are introduced. We also learn about the setting of the story. Most importantly, we are introduced to the main conflict (main problem).



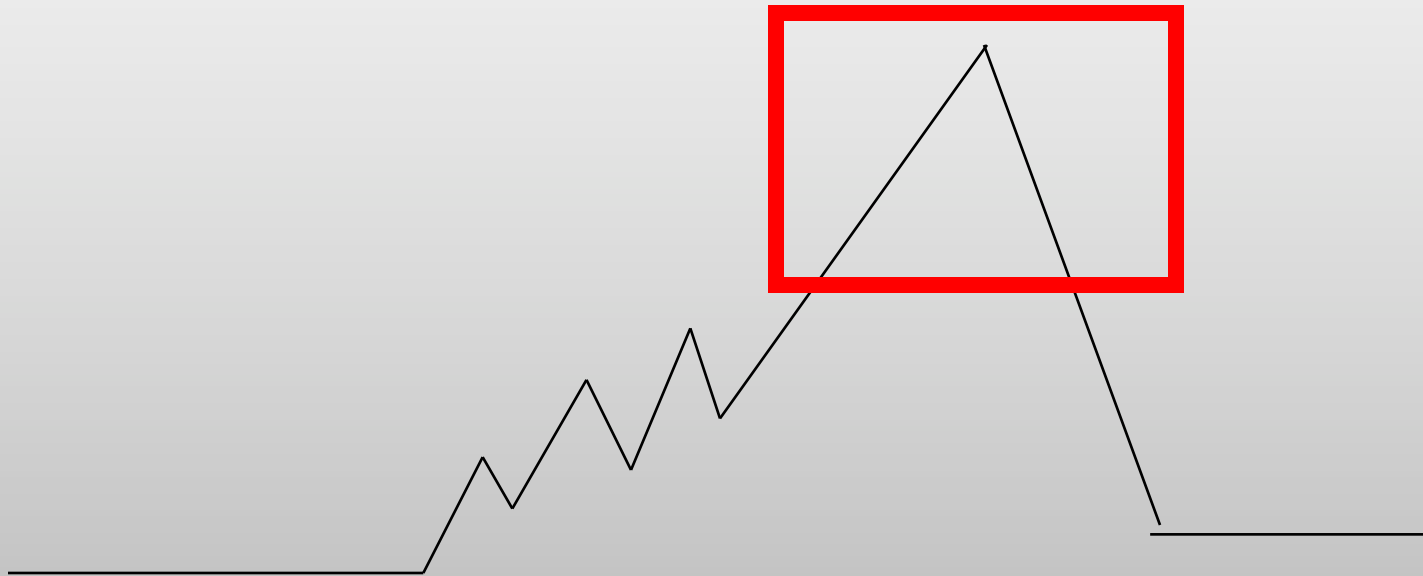
2. RISING ACTION

- **This part of the story begins to develop the conflict(s). A building of interest or suspense occurs and leads to the climax. Complications arise**



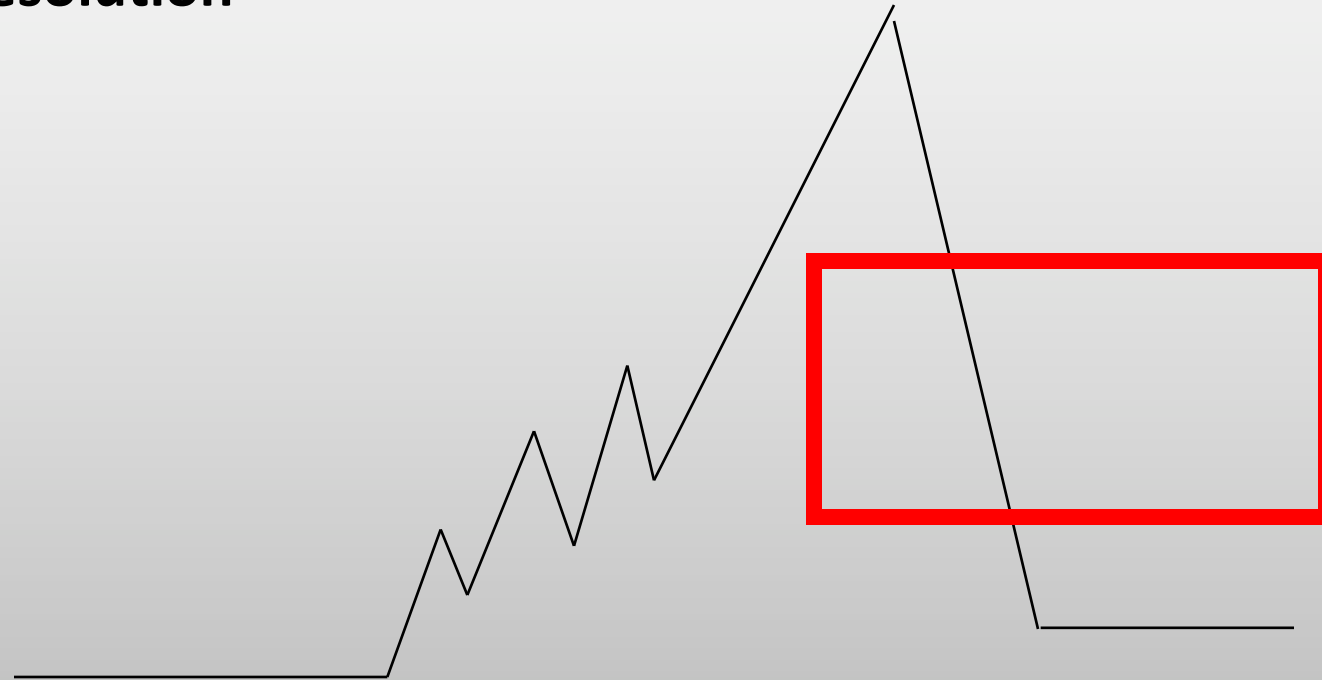
3. CLIMAX

- **This is the turning point of the story. Usually the main character comes face to face with a conflict. The main character will change in some way. This is the most intense moment.**



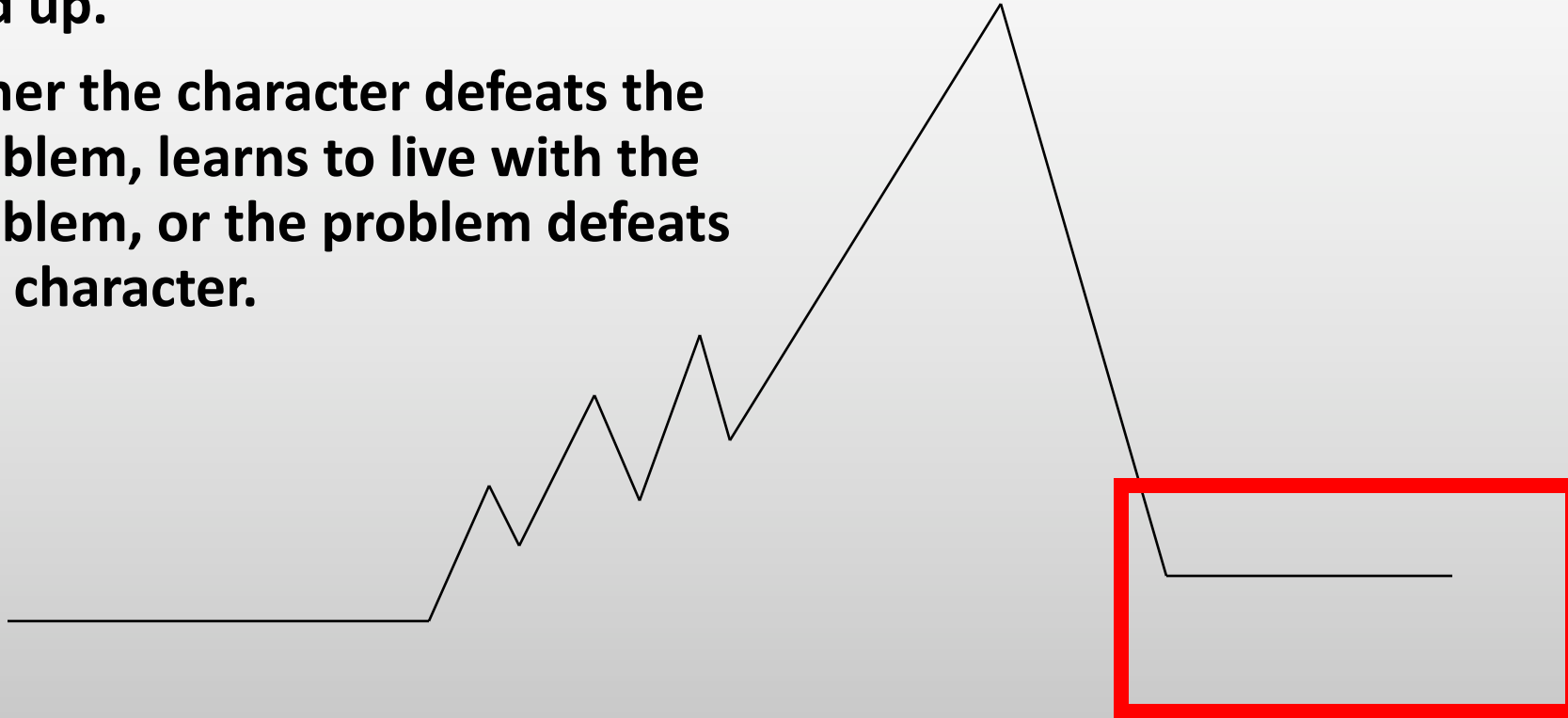
4th FALLING ACTION

- Action that follows the climax and ultimately leads to the resolution



5. RESOLUTION

- **The conclusion; all loose ends are tied up.**
- **Either the character defeats the problem, learns to live with the problem, or the problem defeats the character.**



SPECIAL TECHNIQUES

- ❑ **Suspense**- excitement, tension, curiosity
- ❑ **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
- ❑ **Symbolism** – use of specific objects or images to represent ideas
- ❑ **Personification** – giving human qualities to inanimate objects
- ❑ **Surprise ending** - conclusion that reader does not expect

HOW TO ANALYZE PLOT

- What is the most important event?
- How is the plot structured? Is it linear, chronological or does it move around?
- Is the plot believable?

CONFLICT

- ❑ Conflict is the dramatic struggle between two forces in a story. Without conflict, there is no plot.
- ❑ Based on the source, conflict is divided into internal conflict and external conflict.
- ❑ Based on its type, conflict is categorized into:
 - Character vs. character
 - Character vs. society
 - Character vs. nature
 - Character vs. fate
 - Character vs, self

HOW TO ANALYZE CONFLICTS

- How would you describe the main conflict?
- Is it an internal conflict within the character?
- Is it an external conflict caused by the surroundings or environment the main character finds himself/herself in?

POINT OF VIEW

- **First person point of view**- a character from the story is telling the story; uses the pronouns “I” and “me”
- **Third person point of view**- an outside narrator is telling the story; uses the pronouns “he”, “she”, “they”. Two types of third person POV:
 1. Third-person limited
The narrator knows the thoughts and feelings on only ONE character in a story.
 2. Third-person omniscient
The narrator knows the thoughts and feeling of ALL the characters in a story.
- **Framed narrative** – some narratives, particularly collections of narratives, involve a frame narrative that explains the genesis of, and/or gives a perspective on, the main narrative or narratives that follow

HOW TO ANALYZE POINT OF VIEW

- Who is the narrator or speaker in the story?
- Does the author speak through the main character?
- Is the story written in the first person “i” point of view?
- Is the story written in a detached third person “he/she” point of view?
- Is there an “all-knowing” third person who can reveal what all the characters are thinking and doing at all times and in all places?

THEME

- The theme is the central, general message, the main idea, the controlling topic about life or people the author wants to get across through a literary work
- To discover the theme of a story, think big. What big message is the author trying to say about the world in which we live?
- What is this story telling me about how life works, or how people behave?
- The practical lesson (moral) that we learn from a story after we read it. The lesson that teaches us what to do or how to behave after you have learned something from a story or something that has happened to you.

HOW TO ANALYZE THEME

- How is the theme expressed?
- Are any elements repeated and therefore suggest a theme?
- Is there more than one theme?

MOOD & STYLE

- **Mood** is the feeling that the author tries to convey throughout the story. The atmosphere or emotional condition created by the piece, within the setting. Does the author want the reader to be **frightened** or **sad**, or does the story make the reader **laugh** and **think happy thoughts**?
- To figure out mood, examine how you feel while reading the story. Often mood is conveyed by the story's setting.
- The author's **style** has to do with the his or her vocabulary, use of imagery, tone, or the feeling of the story. It has to do with the author's **attitude** toward the subject. In some short stories the tone can be ironic, humorous, cold, or dramatic.

HOW TO ANALYZE MOOD/STYLE

- Is the author's language full of figurative language?
- What images are used?
- Does the author use a lot of symbolism? Metaphors (comparisons that do not use "as" or "like") or similes (comparisons that use "as" or "like")?
- Your literary analysis of a short story will often be in the form of an essay where you may be asked to give your opinions of the short story at the end. Choose the elements that made the greatest impression on you. Point out which character/characters you liked best or least and always support your arguments.