

Short Story Vocabulary

Protagonist: The main character of the story. Can be one person or a group of people. Always faces a dilemma and present in the climax. Always has some revelation or realization that he needs to have.

Dilemma: A struggle between opposing forces. The conflict can be internal or external. It's often a problem the protagonist needs to solve or a realization that he needs to have.

Climax: That point in the story where you know that the protagonist has resolved his dilemma. It must be a direct quote from the story. The protagonist must be present in the climax.

Denouement: What happens as a result of the protagonist solving his dilemma. Not every story has one.

Antagonists: Forces upon the Protagonist creating his dilemma. Must have both positive and negative forces or there is no dilemma. They can be a person, thing, situation, or belief.

Theme: A universal truth about people – the things they do, the way they are, that can be applied to your life. Not a dippy moral.

Characterization: A drawing of three-dimensional characters that include looks, personality, character traits. In a short story it needs to be done quickly.

Plot: What happens in a story. Limited in a short story.

Setting: Where the story takes place. Includes description and sensory images.

Title: Name of the story. Often an important key into the meaning of the story.

Oxymoron: Figure of speech in which opposite or contradictory ideas or terms are combined for a certain effect. (Bittersweet, horribly good.)

Connotation: An emotional impact of a word or phrase beyond its literal meaning.

Science Fiction: A literary genre that deals with people or worlds that do not exist in our reality. Based loosely on scientific principles.

Flashback: A literary device where an event from the past is inserted into the present. Seems as if it is happening in present time. Shows how the present is influenced by the past.

Chronological Order: The order in which events actually occur in time.

Foreshadowing: A device where the author gives clues that hint at later events in the story. Makes surprise endings more believable.

Red herring: False clue meant to mislead.

Foil: Anyone serving to set off/contrast someone different or superior.

Symbol: Something that has meaning in itself and also stands for or represents something else. (American flag – patriotism, Dove – peace, Crucifix – our faith)

Surprise ending: Unexpected twist at the end of a story that you did not predict. Must be believable. Use of foreshadowing to hint at the surprise so it is believable.

Irony: Figure of speech in which the actual intent is expressed in words which carry the opposite meaning. Lighter than sarcasm.

Dramatic Irony: A contradiction between what a character thinks and what the audience or reader knows to be true.

Irony of situation: An event occurs that directly contradicts the expectations of the character or the reader.

Allusion: Reference in a work of literature to person, place, or thing in another work such as literature, music, history, painting, or mythology. Adds meaning to the story.

Willing suspension of disbelief: Reader voluntarily agrees to set aside what he knows to be true and accept what is presented as reality in the story.

Alliteration: Repetition of an initial consonant sound in two or more words of a phrase.
Consonant is picked to enhance meaning. (Huge, hooting, howling, hissing, horrible, bellow)

Point of view: The way an author chooses to see and tell a story.

First-person narrative: A character tells the story referring to himself as "I" and presenting only what he knows about events.

Inference: Reasonable conclusion one can draw from facts or evidence given.

Caricature: The distortion or exaggeration of the peculiarities in a character's personality. Often for humorous effect.