

The Elements of the Short Story

The basic of elements of any story are plot, setting, characters and theme.

There are four primary types of short stories:

plot - The author is *mainly concerned with* the action and the development of suspense.

character - The author is *mainly concerned with* the development of character, examining a character's motivation, actions, and reactions.

theme - The author is *mainly concerned with* establishing a "universal truth concerning the human situation."

setting - The author is *mainly concerned with* examining how the physical setting impacts character

While almost every story has all four of these elements, every story can be said to be *mainly concerned with* the *one* element, as described above.

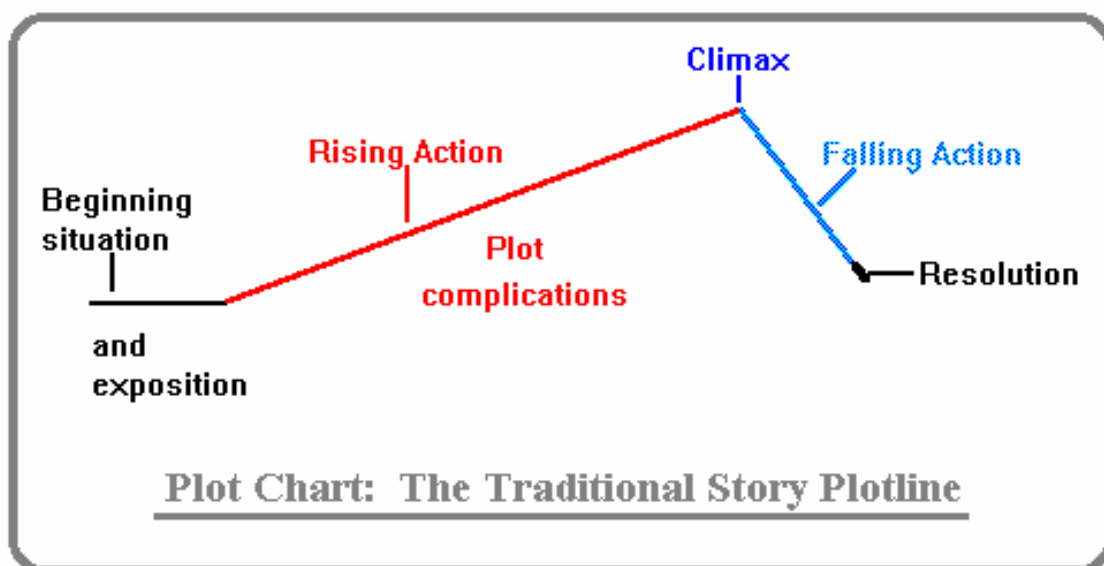
There are *two* types of endings, as far as the conclusiveness of the conflict's resolution is concerned.

determinate ending - a definitive conclusion to the conflict is reached. The reader is certain of the ultimate outcome for the protagonist.

indeterminate ending - a conclusive resolution to the conflict is not reached. The reader is not certain of the ultimate outcome for the protagonist.

PLOT

Plot is what happens, as though it were placed on a time line. The plot of a story has five distinctive parts.



exposition - this is the introduction to the story. It includes the **antecedent action**, which is what takes place before the story starts. *In "Goldilocks", young Goldilocks is out for a walk in the woods. At the bear home, Mama has been making breakfast.* It also includes the **initial incident** which is the incident that begins the conflict, or story. *In "Goldilocks", the initial incident would be when the Bears step out for a walk and Goldilocks walks into their empty home, uninvited.* The exposition presents the setting, characters, main conflict(s) and any other necessary facts.

rising action - This presents the conflict or the problem that the characters must solve. The characters are developed, the conflicts are increased and acted out in many ways, motives are introduced - things happen. It is generally the major part of the story. *In "Goldilocks", the rising action is Goldilocks trying out the porridge, chairs, and beds, until she finally falls asleep. Then the bears come home and discover their porridge, chairs, and beds disturbed.*

climax - This is the most exciting part and when the conflict becomes the greatest. It is the "high point" of the story, in which the major conflict erupts in some kind of final show-down. At the end of the climax, the "winner" will be clear. It usually happens close to the end of the story. In "Goldilocks", the climax occurs when the bears find Goldilocks asleep in Baby Bear's bed and awaken her.

falling action - This is when the problems are worked out and the story is winding down. It is the events immediately following the climax and serves as a sort of "clean-up". *In "Goldilocks", Goldilocks runs out of the Bear home with the Bears staring after her in amazement.*

resolution - This is the ending of the story; the action has concluded. The reader may have some sense of "closure" or may be asked to think about what might come next. *In "Goldilocks", Papa and Mama Bear tidy up the mess made by the girl and they all eat breakfast. One can only assume that from that moment on, Goldilocks never snoops in people's (or bears') homes again.*

CONFLICT

The plot of a story could not happen without conflict. There are three main types of conflict. Each story will have at least one conflict. (In the following explanations, the word "man" stands for all people, regardless of gender.)

Man vs Himself - This conflict is internal. A character wrestles with him or herself over whether or not to carry out an action. *Goldilocks experiences this type of conflict just before she enters the Bear home. She has to struggle between allowing her curiosity to get the better of her and go inside a stranger's home, uninvited, or simply continue on her walk. You know which struggle she gives in to...*

Man vs Man - This is an external conflict. A character struggles with another person or group of people. *In "Goldilocks", the bears will be considered as other people, simply because they eat porridge, sit in chairs and sleep in beds! Therefore, in the story, there is also a man vs man conflict - Goldilocks and the bears have a struggle. She is in their house, uninvited, snooping around and they want her out.*

Man vs Nature - This is another external conflict. In this type of conflict, a character(s) struggles against animals, the elements (wind, rain, snow, etc.), the supernatural... *There is no man vs nature conflict in Goldilocks, since for this story, we are considering the bears as equal creatures to humans, as, was previously stated, they eat porridge, sit on chairs, and sleep in beds!*

SETTING

Setting is **where** and **when** a story takes place. *Goldilocks takes place in the forest, at the present time, in the morning. (How do you know it is morning?)*

CHARACTERS

Characters are the actors, the players, the people in the story. Each character will fit into one part of each of the following pairs.

major or minor

major character - This is one who appears throughout the story, or a major section of it. He is involved in the important actions and conflict. *Goldilocks*

minor character - This is one who enters the story for a specific reason and may then not be heard of again or may exist throughout the story "in the shadow" of the major character. He may be involved in a conflict with a major character and is essential to the plot, but only so that something can be learned or shown about the major character. *the Bears*

round or flat

round - This character has many sides, many known character traits. He appears real, life-like.

flat - This character has only one side. The reader usually sees only one character trait. He may be good or bad, lazy or hard-working, etc. *Goldilocks and the Bears are flat as little is known about their characters. We know Goldilocks is far too curious, some would say downright snoopy, and the Bears appear to be mellow.*

static or dynamic

static - This character does not change as a result of the actions of the story. He is the same at the beginning as he is at the end.

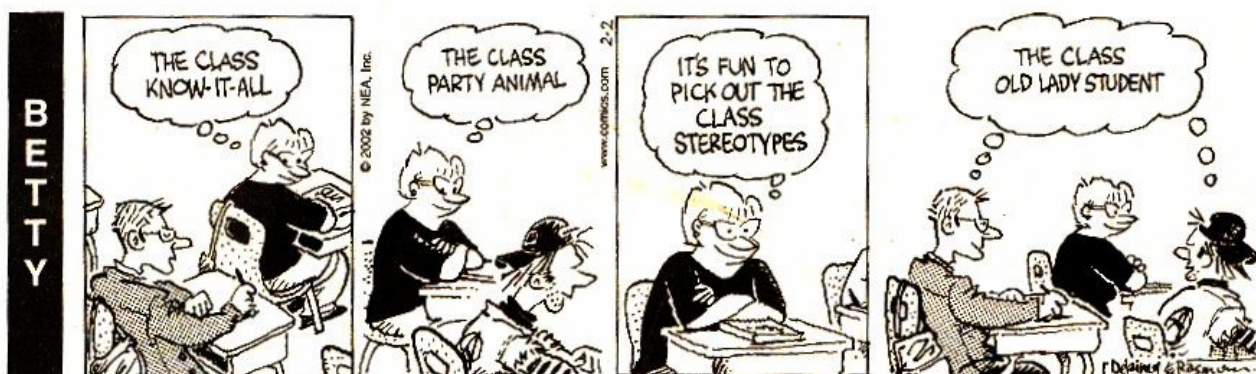
dynamic - This character does change as a result of the actions of the story. What happens to this character affects him a great deal. *Goldilocks is dynamic as one would assume that she may change her rude and snoopy ways. The Bears are dynamic as one would assume that they will no longer be as trusting as they once were, and will lock their doors from now on.*

protagonist or antagonist

protagonist - This is always a main character and is the one who is struggling to overcome and "win" the conflict. *The Bears are the protagonist, because they are struggling to get a snoopy girl out of their house.*

antagonist - This is the major character or force that opposes the protagonist. *Goldilocks is the antagonist as she is creating havoc in the home of the Bears who have left their home for a brief walk while their porridge cools.*

stereotype - A stereotype is a person or thing that conforms to an unjustifiably fixed, usually standardized, mental picture. In the literary world, stereotypes can serve as a sort of short hand, because the stereotyped figure has occurred so often in fiction that his nature is immediately known: the strong silent sheriff, the brilliant detective of eccentric habits, the mad scientist who performs fiendish experiments on living human beings, the beautiful international spy of mysterious background, the comic Englishman with a monocle and an exaggerated Oxford accent, the handsome brave hero, the beautiful modest heroine, the cruel stepmother, the sinister villain with waxed black mustaches. Such stereotypes require neither imagination nor observation on the part of the writer and are instantly recognizable to the reader. In the real world, however, such stereotypes are dangerous, as not all sheriffs are strong, silent, or honourable; not all scientists are madly experimenting on helpless human victims; most spies look like ordinary people, etc., etc.; so to make assumptions about people and or things, based on preconceived notions, is to often assume things that are not true. Stereotypes are often at the heart of most acts of prejudice and racism.



CHARACTERIZATION

Characterization occurs when the reader learns what a particular character is like. An author may achieve this through two methods.

direct characterization - the author comes right out and **tells** the reader what a certain character is like. *"For he was a quiet man, not given to talking about himself and the things he had done."*

indirect characterization - the author gives certain information and lets readers draw their own conclusions regarding the character of a person in the story.

- character's name
- character's appearance
- what character says
- what character thinks
- what other people think of and say about character
- **what character does**, that is, how he acts in a particular situation

TONE

The tone is how the writer feels about the characters and the plot. It might be light, romantic, sympathetic, ironic, pensive. (It is usually described by adjectives.) A writer often uses shifts in tone - from satirical to sympathetic, from light to serious, from humorous to sarcastic, etc., - to shock the reader and maintain interest in the story.

Tone is set by

- action - *a brutal murder sets a morbid tone*
- choice of details in presenting facts
- author's style - figurative language, diction, rhythm, sounds

THEME

Theme is the main idea behind the story. **Theme is a general truth about life.** It is always expressed in a complete sentence. It must be specific to the story, provide unity to the story, be an integral part of the story, and be universal. To find the theme, ask yourself these questions: What is the main idea behind the story? What is the author telling me? What was the conflict? Who "won" the conflict? A story may have more than one theme, and no one theme is "correct", but your statement of theme must be able to be backed-up by the events of the story. In "Goldilocks", the statement of theme could read as follows: *"It is dangerous to go into the home of strangers."* OR *"A person should always lock the doors when leaving the house."* Look at how the themes fit the definition of a general truth about life. Neither theme mentions Goldilocks or the three bears. It is important to remember that definition - a general truth about life. It is also important to remember that theme is not simply a topic like "security" or "danger". It must be expressed in a complete sentence.

Theme is a general truth about life.

For example, in the fairy tale, "Little Red Riding Hood", Little Red gets into a great deal of trouble because she talks to the Big Bad Wolf. The point the author was making in that particular story was that Little Red should not have stopped to talk to the wolf, a stranger, because she got herself, and her grandmother, into a life threatening situation because of her foolishness. That however, is not a statement of theme, because it is too specific to that particular story. Since the theme of a story has to be **general** you can't mention any names....so leave out Little Red and Granny and the Big Bad Wolf. The rest of your definition says that theme is **a truth about life**. Going back to the idea that talking to strangers is not always a good idea is certainly a truth about life, whether you are talking to a stranger face-to-face or chatting on the internet.

So, if theme is "a general truth about life", then the theme of "Little Red Riding Hood" would be, *"Talking to strangers can cause a person to find him or herself in a life-threatening situation."* Notice that the statement of theme is general - no names are mentioned, and it is a truth about life - it CAN be dangerous to talk to strangers. Notice, also, that the theme does not say "Never talk to strangers." or "All strangers are bad." or "Talking to a stranger will always get you into trouble." None of those things are true, because talking to a stranger when your car stalls on a highway in January and it is -40 and you have no cell phone, *may*

save your life. Words like "never", "all", or "always" are called absolutes, and should NEVER be part of a statement of theme. Be careful not to turn your statement of theme into a brief cliché, either, like "Don't talk to strangers." or "Don't count your chickens before they are hatched."

Theme is an important term and its definition bears repeating.

Theme is a general truth about life.

IRONY

Irony is a literary technique which reveals concealed or contradictory meanings. There are three common forms:

verbal irony - a discrepancy between what a character says and what she means. A writer may use this method to reveal a character's weaknesses, prejudices, etc. A "low" level of verbal irony is sarcasm... *"My you look lovely today," your mother comments as you show up for breakfast in wrinkled clothes and bed-head.*

situational irony - a discrepancy between what is expected, and what actually happens. Destiny appears to be controlling one's fate - where one has little influence or significance. *An Olympic swimmer drowns in the bathtub.*

dramatic irony - This occurs when the author shares with the reader information not known by a character. As a result, the reader becomes aware that a character's actions may be inappropriate for the actual circumstances, that what is to come is the reverse of what a character expects, or that a character has unknowingly made a comment which anticipates the outcome. (Any irony that you are aware of, when it occurs, is dramatic irony.)

A good example of this occurred in *Romeo and Juliet* when Romeo, exiled in Mantua, asked his servant, Balthasar, if Balthasar had any letters for Romeo from Friar Laurence. When Balthasar told him he did not, Romeo simply said, "No matter; get thee gone" Well! The audience knows that it did matter - it mattered greatly.



There were letters from Friar Laurence that explained that Juliet was not really dead, she only appeared to be. Father John had been unable to go to Mantua with the message for Romeo because he supposedly came in contact with a carrier of the plague and was thus prevented from leaving the city of Verona. Therefore, if he had been able to get to Romeo, or at least get the message to Romeo, many deaths could have been prevented - including those of Romeo and Juliet. Thus, there is a

great deal of dramatic irony in Romeo's "no matter" comment, because although he is unaware of the situation, the audience knows what it means.

SYMBOL

A symbol is something that stands for something else. *A cross stand for Christianity, the Star of David stands for Judaism.*

Symbols are much used in short stories. They may be people, objects, or the action itself to symbolize meaning - such as death, love, grief. Often symbolism is personal to an author and may be easier to decipher if the reader knows the life of the writer.

MOOD

The **atmosphere** or mood is the prevailing feeling created by the story. Atmosphere usually sets up expectations in the reader about the outcome of an episode or plot. It is created by descriptive diction, imagery, and sometimes dialogue.

POINT OF VIEW

Before an author begins writing a short story or novel, there are many questions he must ask himself...questions about plot, character, setting, and so on. One of the most important questions is, who will tell the story...who will be the narrator? Will the author tell it himself? Or will he have one of his characters tell the story? Then, if the author decides to be the narrator himself, he must also decide how much, as narrator, he will know about his characters. Will he be able to see into the minds and feelings of one or more of his characters....or will he simply observe the characters' external actions and speech. When the author has answered these two questions: who will tell the story, and how much will the narrator know, he has chosen the point of view of his story - and he has chosen the angle, the consciousness, from which we, the readers, observe the story. Though many variations are possible, there are four basic points of view.

omniscient point of view - The author is all knowing. The story is told by the author in third person. His knowledge of his characters is unlimited. He can tell us exactly what either of them is feeling or thinking at any time.

Alfred and Jane sat down at the table, just as that familiar tune, the first tune they'd ever danced to, started playing.

With the first notes, Jane was no longer upset with Alfred for forgetting her birthday. She even wanted to take his hand, but couldn't bring herself to do that. And Alfred, still angry at what he felt to be her childishness, wasn't about to speak first.

Notice that we see into both Jane's and Alfred's minds. We understand how both characters feel about this situation.

limited-omniscient point of view - The author tells the story in third person, but from the viewpoint of one character, looking at events through that character's eyes. He knows everything that goes on in the mind of that character, but nothing about what other characters are feeling or thinking - unless, of course, they express their feelings in some way.

As Alfred and Jane sat down at the table, their tune started playing. Remembering their first dance together, Jane suddenly didn't care any more that Alfred had forgotten her birthday. She wanted to take his hand, to make everything right. But Alfred sat there so still and silent, she was afraid to make any move.

While we can observe the external actions of both characters, we see into only Jane's mind. Our consciousness is limited to Jane, as we see events from her viewpoint only.

first person point of view - The author disappears completely into one of the characters, who tells the story in his own words. We view everything, subjectively, through that character's eyes.

Just as we sat down, our tune started playing. Of course, Jane recognized it, but she's such a baby that she didn't say anything about it. She was still so mad that I had forgotten her birthday.

Now, we see the situation through Alfred's eyes, subjectively. He, of course, cannot tell from her actions that Jane is no longer angry. And if we had heard the story from only his first person point of view, we wouldn't know Jane's feelings either.

objective point of view - The author becomes a type of cameraman, who can record only what he sees and hears, but cannot look into the thoughts and feelings of his characters.

Alfred and Jane sat down at the table. A romantic tune floated from the juke-box. But both of them sat silent, solemn-faced, looking away from each other.

We cannot see into either character's mind or feelings. We don't know who's angry or who's not. We can only observe their actions and make a guess.

The author chooses a particular point of view, not at random, but carefully. After all, point of view is the author's chief means for shaping the reader's opinions of the actions and people in the story. Each point of view has its own advantages and its own limitations. The author's choice for any particular story depends on the purposes of his story.

point of view	advantages	disadvantages
first person	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - illusion of story teller speaking out loud - excellent for use of verbal irony - reader identifies with character more easily ("I") - authority of eyewitness more real and immediate 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - may give impression of conceit - reader cannot expect narrator to be unbiased - his/her presence must always be justified
omniscient	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - author can reveal thoughts of any or all characters - author can comment and explain significances 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - may result in lack of focus or emphasis - not realistic - hamper reader from reaching his own conclusions
limited-omniscient	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - flexible - author can describe and comment on character - reader makes own judgments - more objective and dramatic 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - limits reader's knowledge of action to what central character experiences and observes - reader loses depth of understanding based on character's thoughts and feelings
objective	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - effect of first person narration with no danger of egotism by narrator - allows reader to draw own conclusions regarding other characters 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - may lack intimacy of first person narration

STYLE

The style of a short story is the way in which the writer uses language. There are several elements which make up a writer's style.

diction - word choice. *The American writer Ernest Hemingway liked simple words - monosyllables, if possible, rather than more sophisticated words.*

types of sentences - simple, compound, complex, compound-complex, fragmented. *Again, Hemingway preferred to use simple and compound sentences.*

use of poetic language -

figures of speech - simile, metaphor, personification

sound devices - alliteration, assonance, consonance

rhythmical patterns, symbols, imagery

theme - many writer's like to explore the same basic subject matter and theme

rhetorical devices and effects -

antithesis - balancing contrasting words or ideas against each other

apostrophe - sudden shift to direct address - either to absent person or to an abstract entity

rhetorical question - one not to evoke a reply, but to get more emphasis than a direct statement

use of dialect - the writer may have his characters speak with a certain dialect, rather than with standard English

EXAMPLE

Read through the widely-known fairy tale below and **MENTALLY** answer the questions which follow. The answers have been provided for you to compare your responses.

CINDERELLA

Once there was a gentleman who married, for his second wife, the proudest and most haughty woman that was ever seen. She had, by a former husband, two daughters of her own, who were, indeed, exactly like her in all things. He had likewise, by another wife, a young daughter, but of unparalleled goodness and sweetness of temper, which she took from her mother, who was the best creature in the world.

No sooner were the ceremonies of the wedding over but the stepmother began to show herself in her true colors. She could not bear the good qualities of this pretty girl, and the less because they made her own daughters appear the more odious. She employed her in the meanest work of the house. She scoured the dishes, tables, etc., and cleaned madam's chamber, and those of misses, her daughters. She slept in a sorry garret, on a wretched straw bed, while her sisters slept in fine rooms, with floors all inlaid, on beds of the very newest fashion, and where they had looking glasses so large that they could see themselves at their full length from head to foot.

The poor girl bore it all patiently, and dared not tell her father, who would have scolded her; for his wife governed him entirely. When she had done her work, she used to go to the chimney corner, and sit down there in the cinders and ashes, which caused her to be called Cinderwench. Only the younger sister, who was not so rude and uncivil as the older one, called her Cinderella. However, Cinderella, notwithstanding her coarse apparel, was a hundred times more beautiful than her sisters, although they were always dressed very richly.

It happened that the king's son gave a ball, and invited all persons of fashion to it. Our young misses were also invited, for they cut a very grand figure among those of quality. They were mightily delighted at this invitation, and wonderfully busy in selecting the gowns, petticoats, and hair dressing that would best become them. This was a new difficulty for Cinderella; for it was she who ironed her sister's linen and pleated their ruffles. They talked all day long of nothing but how they should be dressed.

"For my part," said the eldest, "I will wear my red velvet suit with French trimming."

"And I," said the youngest, "shall have my usual petticoat; but then, to make amends for that, I will put on my gold-flowered cloak, and my diamond stomacher, which is far from being the most ordinary one in the world."

They sent for the best hairdresser they could get to make up their headpieces and adjust their hairdos, and they had their red brushes and patches from Mademoiselle de la Poche.

They also consulted Cinderella in all these matters, for she had excellent ideas, and her advice was always good. Indeed, she even offered her services to fix their hair, which they very willingly accepted. As she was doing this, they said to her, "Cinderella, would you not like to go to the ball?"

"Alas!" said she, "you only jeer me; it is not for such as I am to go to such a place."

"You are quite right," they replied. "It would make the people laugh to see a Cinderwench at a ball."

Anyone but Cinderella would have fixed their hair awry, but she was very good, and dressed them perfectly well. They were so excited that they hadn't eaten a thing for almost two days. Then they broke more than a dozen laces trying to have themselves laced up tightly enough to give them a fine slender shape. They were continually in front of their looking glass. At last the happy day came. They went to court, and Cinderella followed them with her eyes as long as she could. When she lost sight of them, she started to cry.

Her godmother, who saw her all in tears, asked her what was the matter.

"I wish I could. I wish I could." She was not able to speak the rest, being interrupted by her tears and sobbing.

This godmother of hers, who was a fairy, said to her, "You wish that you could go to the ball; is it not so?"

"Yes," cried Cinderella, with a great sigh.

"Well," said her godmother, "be but a good girl, and I will contrive that you shall go." Then she took her into her chamber, and said to her, "Run into the garden, and bring me a pumpkin."

Cinderella went immediately to gather the finest she could get, and brought it to her godmother, not being able to imagine how this pumpkin could help her go to the ball. Her godmother scooped out all the inside of it, leaving nothing but the rind. Having done this, she struck the pumpkin with her wand, and it was instantly turned into a fine coach, gilded all over with gold.



She then went to look into her mousetrap, where she found six mice, all alive, and ordered Cinderella to lift up a little the trapdoor. She gave each mouse, as it went out, a little tap with her wand, and the mouse was that moment turned into a fine horse, which altogether made a very fine set of six horses of a beautiful mouse coloured dapple gray.

Being at a loss for a coachman, Cinderella said, "I will go and see if there is not a rat in the rat trap that we can turn into a coachman."

"You are right," replied her godmother, "Go and look."

Cinderella brought the trap to her, and in it there were three huge rats. The fairy chose the one which had the largest beard, touched him with her wand, and turned him into a fat, jolly coachman, who had the smartest whiskers that eyes ever beheld.

After that, she said to her, "Go again into the garden, and you will find six lizards behind the watering pot. Bring them to me."

She had no sooner done so but her godmother turned them into six footmen, who skipped up immediately behind the coach, with their liveries all bedaubed with gold and silver, and clung as close behind each other as if they had done nothing else their whole lives. The fairy then said to Cinderella, "Well, you see here an equipage fit to go to the ball with; are you not pleased with it?"

"Oh, yes," she cried; "but must I go in these nasty rags?"

Her godmother then touched her with her wand, and, at the same instant, her clothes turned into cloth of gold and silver, all beset with jewels. This done, she gave her a pair of glass slippers, the prettiest in the whole world. Being thus decked out, she got up into her coach; but her godmother, above all things, commanded her not to stay past midnight, telling her, at the same time, that if she stayed one moment longer, the coach would be a pumpkin again, her horses mice, her coachman a rat, her footmen lizards, and that her clothes would become just as they were before.

She promised her godmother to leave the ball before midnight; and then drove away, scarcely able to contain herself for joy. The king's son, who was told that a great princess, whom nobody knew, had arrived, ran out to receive her. He gave her his hand as she alighted from the coach, and led her into the hall, among all the company. There was immediately a profound silence. Everyone stopped dancing, and the violins ceased to play, so entranced was everyone with the singular beauties of the unknown newcomer.

Nothing was then heard but a confused noise of, "How beautiful she is! How beautiful she is!"

The king himself, old as he was, could not help watching her, and telling the queen softly that it was a long time since he had seen so beautiful and lovely a creature.

All the ladies were busied in considering her clothes and headdress, hoping to have some made next day after the same pattern, provided they could find such fine materials and as able hands to make them.

The king's son led her to the most honorable seat, and afterwards took her out to dance with him. She danced so very gracefully that they all more and more admired her. A fine meal was served up, but the young prince ate not a morsel, so intently was he busied in gazing on her.



She went and sat down by her sisters, showing them a thousand civilities, giving them part of the oranges and citrons which the prince had presented her with, which very much surprised them, for they did not know her. While Cinderella was thus amusing her sisters, she heard the clock strike eleven and three-quarters, where upon she immediately made a courtesy to the company and hurried away as fast as she could.

Arriving home, she ran to seek out her godmother, and, after having thanked her, she said she could not but heartily wish she might go to the ball the next day as well, because the king's son had invited her.

As she was eagerly telling her godmother everything that had happened at the ball, her two sisters knocked at the door, which Cinderella ran and opened.

"You stayed such a long time!" she cried, gaping, rubbing her eyes and stretching herself as if she had been sleeping; she had not, however, had any manner of inclination to sleep while they were away from home.

"If you had been at the ball," said one of her sisters, "you would not have been tired with it. The finest princess was there, the most beautiful that mortal eyes have ever seen. She showed us a thousand civilities, and gave us oranges and citrons."

Cinderella seemed very indifferent in the matter. Indeed, she asked them the name of that princess; but they told her they did not know it, and that the king's son was very uneasy on her account and would give all the world to know who she was. At this Cinderella, smiling, replied, "She must, then, be very beautiful indeed; how happy you have been! Could not I see her? Ah, dear Charlotte, do lend me your yellow dress which you wear every day."

"Yes, to be sure!" cried Charlotte; "lend my clothes to such a dirty Cinderwench as you are! I should be such a fool."

Cinderella, indeed, well expected such an answer, and was very glad of the refusal; for she would have been sadly put to it, if her sister had lent her what she asked for jestingly.

The next day the two sisters were at the ball, and so was Cinderella, but dressed even more magnificently than before. The king's son was always by her, and never ceased his compliments and kind speeches to her. All this was so far from being tiresome to her, and, indeed, she quite forgot what her godmother had told her. She thought that it was no later than eleven when she counted the clock striking twelve. She jumped up and fled, as nimble as a deer. The prince followed, but could not overtake her. She left behind one of her glass slippers, which the prince picked up most carefully. She reached home, but quite out of breath, and in her nasty old clothes, having nothing left of all her finery but one of the little slippers, the mate to the one that she had dropped.

The guards at the palace gate were asked if they had not seen a princess go out. They replied that they had seen nobody leave but a young girl, very shabbily dressed, and who had more the air of a poor country wench than a gentlewoman.

When the two sisters returned from the ball Cinderella asked them if they had been well entertained, and if the fine lady had been there.

They told her, yes, but that she hurried away immediately when it struck twelve, and with so much haste that she dropped one of her little glass slippers, the prettiest in the world, which the king's son had picked up; that he had done nothing but look at her all the time at the ball, and that most certainly he was very much in love with the beautiful person who owned the glass slipper.

What they said was very true; for a few days later, the king's son had it proclaimed, by sound of trumpet, that he would marry her whose foot this slipper would just fit. They began to try it on the princesses, then the duchesses and all the court, but in vain; it was brought to the two sisters, who did all they possibly could to force their foot into the slipper, but they did not succeed.

Cinderella, who saw all this, and knew that it was her slipper, said to them, laughing, "Let me see if it will not fit me."

Her sisters burst out laughing, and began to banter with her. The gentleman who was sent to try the slipper looked earnestly at Cinderella, and, finding her very handsome, said that it was only just that she should try as well, and that he had orders to let everyone try.

He had Cinderella sit down, and, putting the slipper to her foot, he found that it went on very easily, fitting her as if it had been made of wax. Her two sisters were greatly astonished, but then even more so, when Cinderella pulled out of her pocket the other slipper, and put it on her other foot. Then in came her godmother and touched her wand to Cinderella's clothes, making them richer and more magnificent than any of those she had worn before.

And now her two sisters found her to be that fine, beautiful lady whom they had seen at the ball. They threw themselves at her feet to beg pardon for all the ill treatment they had made her undergo. Cinderella took them up, and, as she embraced them, said that she forgave them with all her heart, and wanted them always to love her.

She was taken to the young prince, dressed as she was. He thought she was more charming than before, and, a few days after, married her. Cinderella, who was no less good than beautiful, gave her two sisters lodgings in the palace, and that very same day matched them with two great lords of the court.



1. Plot - tell where each of the following occurs in "Cinderella"

antecedent action - Cinderella's mother dies, her father remarries, her new stepmother treats her badly - like a slave

initial incident - the invitation to the Prince's ball

rising action - "steps" prepare for the ball, Cinderella not allowed to go, her godmother prepares her, Cinderella goes to the ball and enchants the prince, along with everyone else there, she loses her glass slipper, the prince searches for the mystery woman

climax - the glass slipper fits Cinderella and she is able to produce its mate

falling action - Cinderella's step sisters beg her forgiveness - she does forgive them. Cinderella marries the prince and brings her stepsisters with her and sees them married to "two great lords of the court"

resolution - "...and they lived happily ever after." (As in ALL fairy tales!!)

2. Conflict - explain the main conflict in "Cinderella"

The main conflict in the story is "man vs man", as Cinderella conflicts with her stepmother. Her stepmother assigns her "the meanest work in the house" and she is unable to attend the prince's ball. She is almost prevented from trying on the glass slipper.

3. Setting - where and when does "Cinderella" take place

This story takes place in an old-fashioned, magical kingdom, many years ago, when people "scoured", slept on straw beds, and used "looking glasses".

4. Characters

Cinderella - major or minor? Major - she is the person around whom all the scenes in the story revolve.

- **round or flat**? Flat - we know she is of good character and that is all

- **static or dynamic**? Static - her inner character does not change, even when she marries and becomes a princess, she is still the same good person

- **antagonist or protagonist**? Protagonist - she is attempting to overcome the obstacles presented by her stepmother and stepsisters

sisters - major or minor? Minor - they are important as far as tormenting Cinderella goes, but do not figure prominently in the story

- **round or flat**? Flat - we know only that they are proud and haughty, and treat Cinderella terribly.

- **static or dynamic**? Dynamic - the events of the story change them. They beg Cinderella's forgiveness for their cruelty towards her and appear to give up their haughty ways.

- **antagonist or protagonist**? Antagonist - together with their mother they treat Cinderella as a slave, rather than as an equal.

5. Theme - what is the theme of "Cinderella"?

- Beauty in a woman is a rare treasure that will always be admired. Graciousness, however, is priceless and of even greater value. This is what Cinderella's godmother gave to her when she taught her to behave like a queen. In the winning of a heart, graciousness is more important than a beautiful hairdo. Without it nothing is possible; with it, one can do anything.

- Without doubt it is a great advantage to have intelligence, courage, good breeding, and common sense.