

Setting

[Literature](#), [Fiction](#)



Setting The first important element of a short story is the Setting. The setting refers to the time and place that the event(s) in the story take place. Did you see the setting of Nose Betty? Did you see those two characters, Chanda and John, conversing in their cramped up little room? Did you see, and indeed hear, the crowd of students as they hurried by outside? How about that big tree by the cafeteria where Nose Betty had stood waiting—did you see that too? A good setting enables the reader to visualize the scene. As you can see, the setting is not always given all at once at the beginning of the story, but developed gradually as the story progresses. Indeed, the place and time may vary as the story advances. Be sure to include all the necessary details to help your reader to visualize, but do not do it excessively. Too much detail will only make your story sound too complex. Try to get the reader to see things through the character's eyes. Take note of the words in blue in this paragraph for instance: " You are peculiar man, " John said, standing up. He walked to his friend and put his arm around him. They stared out of the window together and watched the students rushing by either from or to a lecture. Conflict This is one of the most important elements of a short story. The conflict or complication refers to the tension, the fight or the struggle between the various characters or forces in the story. It actually is what gives fuel to the story and influences its flow (i. e. its plot). Without the conflict, then you have no story. It's that important! So what do you suppose is the conflict in Nose Betty? It is the difference in opinion on the perfect criteria of beauty, and on whether or not they are manipulated by the possessors of such beauty. Character The character element is the person in a story. (Sometimes the characters are not human, but may be animals or

spirits. Incidentally, even when non-human characters are used, they tend to have human characteristics. ("Majesty Baobab" is a good example of the use of non-human characters to portray human behaviour.) Characters are usually of two types, the protagonist and the antagonist. The protagonist is the main character. He is in conflict with another character, who is known as the antagonist. Here is the list of the characters in Nose Betty. Can you identify which one is the antagonist and which one is the protagonist? - Chanda - John - Nose Betty - Sandra So who is the protagonist? 'Easy,' you say, 'It's Chanda.' That is true. But why doesn't Betty qualify to be the main character? After all, the story is named after her. Well, the action centres on Chanda, and the narrative is filtered through his perception. In fact he is even the one who relates the story of Betty. She is quite a passive character, Betty, and we do not get her views on anything. What we do get is how Chanda views her and feels about her. How about John? He is evaluated based on Chanda's observations. We learn most about him from Chanda. Take a look at this part for example: Chanda knew his friend very well. John hardly loved bathing and bathed only if it was exceedingly necessary. This was definitely fishy. Indeed, the character John works to bring to light Chanda's unusual perception of beauty. You really want to know how to tell who the main character is? Try to see which character, when removed from the plot and dialogues, would distort the story most. Remove John and we will probably learn of Betty and Chanda's views from his musings. Remove Betty so that Chanda does not meet her and we still learn of her from the story he narrates to John. But remove Chanda and we will not meet Nose Betty at all. The story will go a completely different direction. That brings us

to the other interesting question: Who is the antagonist? Anyone would be quick to conclude that it is John. After all, he and Chanda's views are in conflict with each other. But is that really so? Though they indeed do differ in the way that they perceive beauty, they both do agree on something: " You are peculiar man, " John said, standing up. He walked to his friend and put his arm around him. They stared out of the window together and watched the students rushing by either from or to a lecture. " Man, " John continued, " we should never allow women to control us..." Does this sound like two people in conflict? Chanda is very convinced that Sandra is manipulating his friend by using her enchanting beauty, but he himself denies being manipulated: " The things we do for love, " he laughed. " And he denies that Sandra controls him! I'm glad I'm not at the mercy of feminine beauty manipulation! " But is it really so that he is not really being manipulated by beauty himself? Don't you think that his struggle is an internal one? Chanda actually reveals to us how his views of beauty drastically changed when he befriended Nose Betty. After one reads the story, perhaps the question that lingers on her mind is whether Chanda was really not being manipulated or not. If Chanda's struggle is an internal one, as can be discerned from the story, then it follows therefore that he is in conflict with his own inward feelings. In some cases, the antagonist is not human at all but can be the characters own feelings, thoughts etc. But the conclusion is really yours to reach... Theme This element refers to the topic that the writer writes or comments on in his writing. The theme is the motif of the story, that is, it permeates the whole story and recurs throughout the narrative. Some themes that a writer may comment on may be love, hate, friendship and

alienation to mention just a few. The theme is actually quite broad in its scope. For example, if a story is about a who girl breaks a man's heart by going out with his best friend, the theme of the story is not 'heart break' but it is 'male-female relationships'. 'Heart Break' or 'Failed romance' may more appropriately be called the subject. Here is another example. If a story is about how a certain young man suffers the ravages of drug abuse, the theme is not 'drugs' but 'morality'. So what do you suppose is the theme of Nose Betty? This is your call... If you still have trouble differentiating between the theme and the subject, don't let that bother you much. Whenever you write a story, you automatically pick on a theme without even raking your brains. Plot The plot refers to the flow of events in the story, but we will discuss it in details in a future article. But take a close look at the way the events flow in Nose Betty and see if there is any structure... Ahhhh!!! Do you now see how you can use the different elements of a short story to write a perfectly good story? Use them according to your preference, deciding how much of each to use-but do not ignore any of them! So are you now ready to prepare your own dish? Greeeeat!!!