

# Elements of literary analysis



## Elements of literary analysis Plot Summary Setting Character

## Analysis Theme Symbolism and Metaphor Conflict Moral Plot Summary The

The narrative structure of a story is divided into 5 parts. Organize, by list or diagram, the events of the story into the following points using as few words as possible. (Complicated stories may have multiple turning points. )

1. Exposition (introduction) Introduces the main characters, setting, and conflict.
2. Rising Action (conflict complicated) Secondary conflicts arise. Secondary adversaries hold protagonist back from his goal.
3. Climax (turning point) The turning point, for better or worse, in the protagonist's affairs. When we first realize the conflict will be resolved.
4. Falling Action (loose ends tied up) Headed towards resolution, maybe with a final moment of suspense.
5. Denouement (conclusion) Characters return to normal state or resolution. May close with marriage or death. Setting The setting for a story includes the time, place, and social reality within the story. Also includes how time passes within the text.

The historical and social context in which the story was written should also be considered. Each tale is a product of its time and place. The author's biographical info can also be considered as context. Character Analysis Map the story's characters by type Protagonist: The main character(s) that causes a sympathetic reaction from the reader. Also the character that moves the action in the story forward. The protagonist is not always the primary focal character in the story (see below). Focal Character: The focal character may be easily confused with the protagonist.

The key difference is a reader should feel sympathetic towards the protagonist whereas a focal character will trigger excitement and interest but not an emotional response. (Ex: Sherlock Holmes is a focal character)

Deuteragonist: The second most important character in the text, often the side-kick. (Ex. Ron Weasley in Harry Potter series)

Tritagonist: The third most important character in the text. (Ex. Hermione in Harry Potter series)

Antagonist: Character or group that opposes the protagonist. Often the villain but not always a character that is aware that they oppose. (Ex: Voldemort in Harry Potter. Ex 2: Patriarchal society in Jane Austen or Bronte novels)

Adversaries: Secondary to the antagonist, also opposes protagonist or focal character.

Foil Characters: Character opposites who highlight the differences between themselves, the protagonist, or the different routes the protagonist may take.

Narrator: Consider the narrator of the story as he/she relates to the characters. Narration may be 1st person, 3rd person limited, or 3rd person omniscient. Is the narrator reliable or unreliable?

Theme

Themes are the subjects and topics addressed in the story. Not to be confused with the Conflict or the Moral.

Common themes include:

- Friendship-Family-Individuality-Prejudice-Growing
- Up-Society-Love-Marriage-Lies/Deceit-Fear-Morality-Compassion/Sympathy-Justice
- e-Foolishness/Folly-Greed-Courage-Money-Class-Memory-Isolation-Gender-Education-Religion-Death-Nature-Ageing-Revenge-Madness-Art/Culture-Jealousy-Dreams-Innocence

Symbolism and Metaphor Separate from classifying the characters as literary types, you can decide if each or any of the characters symbolize something greater than themselves, a universal type, theme, vice or virtue. A metaphor compares two distinctly different objects pointing out how they are alike.

Symbolism uses a person, place or thing to stand for a complex abstract idea, truth, feeling, or experience. Both metaphor and symbolism are used to create a new and deeper meaning beyond the surface text. Look for symbolism and metaphor in inanimate objects, weather, nature, colors, politics, religion, architecture, and art within the art (ie: references to other books, painting, etc) Conflict The Conflict is the challenge that the Protagonist and/or Focal character faces. A conflict may be internal, relational, or external. Universal conflicts include:

Character Vs Self – Character Vs Nature – Character Vs Society Character Vs Character – Character Vs Supernatural – Character Vs Fate Moral From the author's perspective, the moral of the story is the message about the human condition, or the world that we live in, that he/she hopes to illustrate with the text. The reader may arrive at the author's moral with a careful analysis of character, setting, theme, symbolism, and conflict. A reader may also see a completely different moral than the author, based on his or her own experiences. As Oscar Wilde said, "in art there is no such thing as a universal truth".