STORY WRITING

Story Writing is a fictional writing method that is written in a simpler way and has its own natural flow. Story Writing covers five elements: Character (Crucially a Protagonist and Antagonist), Setting, Plot, Conflict, and Resolution.

Story elements are the building blocks needed to make a story work. Without these blocks, a story will break down, failing to meet the expectations of readers. Simply put, these elements remind writers what to include in stories, and what needs to be planned. By understanding each element, you increase the chances of writing a better story or novel.

Over the years, writers have adapted these elements to suit their writing process. In fact, there can be as few as 4 elements in literature all the way up to 12 elements. The most universally used story elements contain just five building blocks:

1. Characters

2. Setting

3. Plot

4. Conflict

5. Resolution

These five elements are a great place to start when you need help planning your story. You may also notice that these story elements are what most <u>book outlining</u> techniques are based on.

5 Elements Of A Story

Below we have explained each of the five elements of a story in detail, along with examples.

1. Characters

Characters are the most familiar element in stories. Every story has at least one main character. Stories can also have multiple secondary characters, such as supporting characters and villain/s. The main character should be introduced at the beginning. While introducing this character it is a good idea to include key information about this character's personality, past and physical appearance. You should also provide a hint to what this character's major conflict is in the story (more on conflict later).

The main character also goes through changes throughout the story. All the challenges and obstacles they face in the story allow them to learn, grow and develop. Depending on your plot, they might become a better person, or even a worse one – if this is a villain's origin story. But be careful here – Growth should not be mistaken for a personality change! The main character must stay true to who they are. Deep inside their personality should stay more or less the same. The only thing that changes is the lessons they learn, and how these impact them.

Check out this post on 20 tips for character development for more guidance.

2. Setting

Settings in stories refer to three things: Location, Time Period and Mood. The easiest element to understand is **location**. Location is the physical place/s the story takes part in mostly. For example, the tale of Cinderella takes part in two main locations: Cinderella's Palace and the Ballroom at the Prince's Palace. It is a good idea to explain each new location in great detail, so the readers feel like they are also right there with the characters. The physical location is also something that can be included at the beginning of the story to set the story's tone.

Next comes the **time period**. Every story is set in some time period. Some stories especially about time travel may be set across multiple time periods. You don't always have to include the exact date or year in your story. But it is a good idea that during the planning phase, you know the year or even dates the story is set in. This can help you include

accurate details about location and even key events. For example, you don't want to be talking about characters using mobile phones in the 18th century – It just wouldn't make sense (Unless of course, it's a time travel story)!

The final part of the setting is the **mood**. The mood is the feeling you want readers to feel when reading your story. Do you want them to be scared, excited or happy? It's the way you explain and describe a particular location, object or person. For example in horror stories, you may notice dark language being used throughout, such as gore, dismal, damp or vile. While a fairy tale such as Cinderella uses light and warm language like magical, glittering, beautiful or happily ever after. The choice of words sets the mood and adds an extra layer of excitement to a story.

3. Plot

The plot explains what a story is about from beginning to end. It can contain multiple scenes and events. In its simplest form, a plot has a beginning, middle and end. The beginning introduces the characters and sometimes shows a minor conflict. The middle is where the major conflict occurs. And the ending is where all conflicts are resolved, and the story comes to a close. The story mountain template is a great way to plan out a story's plot.

The plot is the events or actions that drive your story — it describes the "what" of your tale. The plot lets the reader know what's happening, describes the problems your characters are trying to solve, and gives the details on how they attempt to solve them.

However, your story does need several clearly defined plot elements to help you structure your tale's events and keep the story moving forward.

Elements of Plot

To keep your reader engaged and interested, your story should include these plot elements: **exposition**, **rising action**, **climax**, **falling action**, and **resolution**. Let's explore each one.

Exposition

Exposition **gives the reader the background info they need to jump right into your story's world**. This is often found towards the beginning of your story.

Exposition can be given in a variety of ways. Some examples include:

- Flashbacks

- Character dialogue

- Letters from the past

- Setting or character descriptions

- Point of View (aka POV, such as the narrator or main character's thoughts)

Rising Action

The rising action is **the moments in your story that lead up to the climax** — choices your main characters have made and the events happening that are at odds with your characters' goals. This is where your story builds and your reader begins to invest in your characters.

This is likely going to be the longest section of your story. A **whole lot** happens between the start of the novel and that moment, but often you'll find yourself holding your breath and waiting to see what will happen. That is the power of rising action.

Climax

This is it — **the primary turning point and what your story has been building towards**. What are your main characters going to do? Will they succeed or fail?

Typical climaxes include victories or defeats. The main goal of the climax is to resolve the conflict, but whether that positively or negatively affects your character is up to you. Or maybe it's not that simple.

Falling Action

Now that the main conflict is resolved, it's time to **begin wrapping everything up**. The falling action is a great time to tie up any loose ends while also giving your characters a chance to deal with the aftermath of the climax.

4. Conflict

A story is not a story without conflict. Conflict is also a key part of a story's plot (see section above). The purpose of conflict in stories is to challenge your characters and push them to their limits. It is only when they face this conflict, do they really grow and reach their full potential. Conflicts can be internal, external or both. Internal conflicts come from inside your main character, such as not having the confidence in themself or having a fear of something. While external conflicts are created elsewhere, such as natural disasters or evil villains creating havoc.

5. Resolution

The resolution is a solution to the main conflict. Without a resolution, the conflict would be neverending, and this could lead to a disappointing ending to your story. Resolutions could include huge battle scenes or even the discovery of new information which changes everything. Sometimes in stories resolutions don't always solve the conflict 100%. This normally leads to cliffhanger endings, where a small piece of conflict still exists somewhere. But the important thing to remember is that all conflicts need some kind of resolution in stories to make them satisfying to the reader.

Story Elements Examples

We explained each story element above, and now it's time to put our teachings into practice. Here are some common story element examples we created.

The fox and the crow

The fox and the crow is one of <u>Aesop's most famous fables</u>. It tells the story of a sly fox who tricks a foolish crow into giving her breakfast away. You can read the full fable on the <u>read.gov website</u>.

Here are the elements of a story applied to the fable of the fox and the crow:

- **Characters:** A sly fox and a foolish crow.
- **Setting:** Bright Morning in the woods.
- **Plot:** A hungry fox is looking for food. The fox notices the crow with cheese in its beak. Using his charming words, the fox tricks the crow into dropping the cheese into the fox's mouth. The story ends with the fox feeling satisfied, and the crow left with nothing to eat.
- **Conflict:** The Fox wants the cheese that the Crow has.
- **Resolution:** Using his charming words, the fox is able to trick the crow into singing. When she starts to sing, the cheese drops into the fox's mouth.

Cinderella

Cinderella is one of the most famous <u>fairy tales</u> of all time. It tells the tale of a poor servant girl who is abused by her stepmother and stepsisters. One night with the help of her fairy godmother, she attends the ball. It is at the ball that the prince falls in love with Cinderella. Eventually leading to a happy ending.

Here are the elements of a story applied to the short story of Cinderella:

- **Characters:** Cinderella, the stepsisters, the stepmother, the fairy godmother, and the prince.

- Setting: Long time ago in a kingdom. Physical locations include Cinderella's Palace and the ballroom at the Prince's Palace.

- Plot: Cinderella's father passes away leaving her with her horrible stepmother and two stepsisters. They abuse her and make her clean the house all day. One day, an invite comes from the Prince's palace inviting everyone to the ball. Cinderella is forced to stay at home, while her stepmother and sisters attend. Suddenly Cinderella's fairy godmother appears and helps her get to the ball. But she must return home by midnight. At the ball, Cinderella and the Prince fall in love. The clock nearly strikes twelve and Cinderella runs away leaving a glass slipper behind. The prince then searches the kingdom to find Cinderella. Eventually, he finds her. The two get married and live happily ever after.

- **Conflict:** Cinderella must find a way to get away from her stepmother and stepsisters.

- **Resolution:** Cinderella and the prince get married.

Point of view

Point of view (or POV) describes the lens through which the story is being told.

Types of Point of View

First Person Point of View

A story told in the first person is most often told from the point of view of the protagonist. Our protagonist narrator will speak using first person pronouns (I, we, me, etc). And as the reader, we are privy to their innermost thoughts and feelings.

This is a great way to pull a reader into the story, and a very strong bond can be formed between the reader and the narrator.

Second Person Point of View

You won't see second person used very often in literature, but it is an important POV to keep in mind. In the second person, the reader is addressed directly and may even become a character of sorts in your story. This point of view is written using second person pronouns (you, your, etc).

Though you can find some books written in second person, most often you will see this writing in your digital reading, such as ads and blog posts — why, hello there!

Third Person Point of View

Third person POV is by far the most common point of view in fiction writing. In this kind of story, the reader is a bystander, observing the actions of the characters as told by an 'outside narrator'. This POV used third person pronouns (he, she, they, etc). But how much we learn as a reader depends on which style of narrator you choose.

Here is the story writing format:

- **<u>Beginning</u>**: Kickstart your story with a catchy beginning that grips your readers right away!
- **<u>Character Introduction</u>**: Familiarise your readers with the main characters, their part in the story and help them fit the pieces of your story puzzle!
- **<u>Plot</u>**: This is when the real drama begins, as the main plot comes to the limelight. Expose the story and let your characters react, evolve and reach towards the main conflict.
- **<u>Climax/Ending/Conclusion</u>**: Whether you go for a happy one or an open ending, make sure that at least some of the issues if not all of them get resolved by the end and you leave a long-lasting impression on the readers!