

Short Story Short Story Definition We know well that a short story is “a work of fiction that is usually written in prose, often in narrative format. A short story usually deals with a few characters and often concentrates on the creation of the mood rather than the plot”. It is a fictional work with a thematic focus which depicts the character’s conflicts. Normally, the shortest stories may be no more than a page or two in length. But there are longest ones also such as D. H. Lawrence’s *St Mawr* which runs to over several pages. Literature has varieties and short story is one of the types of literature. In broader sense of the term, it is a story which is short. It is a form or a genre having its own. According to H. E. Bates, short story can be anything that the author describes it to be. Characteristics of Short Story Short stories tend to be less complex than novels. Usually, a short story will focus on only one incident, has a single plot, a single setting, a limited number of characters, and covers a short period of time. In longer forms of fiction, stories tend to contain certain core elements of dramatic structure: exposition (the introduction of setting, situation and main characters); complication or turning point (the event of the story that introduces the conflict); rising action, crisis (the decisive moment for the protagonist and their commitment to a course of action); climax (the point of highest interest in terms of the conflict and the point of the story with the most action); resolution or dénouement (the point of the story when the conflict is resolved); and moral. Elements of Short Story A story may be true or false as it has no connection with real life. In writing the stories, the first essential is that something shall happen. There is no story without a succession of incidents of some kind. So the first element is incident. A story may be written without any interest other than that of incident, but a story dealing with men will not have much interest for thoughtful readers unless it also includes some showing of character. It is a fact that the lives of all men and women are more or less conditioned by their surroundings and circumstance so each story requires more or less description. Incidents are of but little moment, character showing may have but slight interest, description is purposeless, unless the happenings of the story develop in the characters feelings towards which we assume some attitude of sympathy or opposition. If we include the fourth element of the story, we shall then have incident, description, character, mood, as the first elements of the narrative form. The elements normally comprise of setting with time and place, conflict, subject, themes, and characters. However, there are five major elements of short story which are discussed below: 1. SETTINGS WITH TIME AND PLACE The setting is the time and physical space where the characters are placed and the story happens. Short stories take place in any setting the author makes. It can be imaginary fantasy worlds or outer space or any modern day cities. The descriptions of the story build a strong sense of the weather season, social setting and atmosphere. For example: the stories and novels of R. K. Narayan make us more and more aware of the surroundings of Malgudi and South India of that time. 2. CONFLICT The readers follow the main character or protagonist who is in a conflict with another character. The conflict can also be internal with some hostile spiritual or psychological force. Conflict is the point of tension within the story. It can be between different characters (interpersonal conflict), between characters and the environment (external conflict) and can be present as the conflict within the characters themselves inner conflict). Some stories include philosophical conflict, where characters may be taken to symbolize different ideologies or values, such as materialism versus spirituality. The most memorable stories offer conflict on a variety of levels. 3. SUBJECT Few persons

often mistake the subject of a story for its theme. The common subjects for modern short fiction normally include class, ethnic status, race, gender, and social issues like poverty, violence, divorce, and drugs. 4.

THEME The theme is the element of a short story that gives a higher meaning to the conflict and events between characters. The diverse subjects facilitate the writer to write about the larger theme which is the center of the fictional work. The individual in conflict with society's institutions, spiritual struggles, and morality may be included in the theme. For example: alienation, human isolation, the conflict of generations, anxiety, love and hate relationship; male-female relationships: self-delusion and self-discovery: beginning from innocence to experience; illusion and reality: the relationship between life and art are some of the main themes of 20th-century short stories. Nearly all major fiction writers like Edgar Allan Poe, Guy de Maupassant, Anton Chekov or O Henry have these themes in their stories. 5.

CHARACTERS Characters are the people, animals, and sometimes spirits machines or robots. Actually the characters make the world of the short story. Authors can include a range of different characters in the text. The story itself revolves around one character which is known as the protagonist. The main person who provides conflict or opposition to this main character is called the antagonist. We come to know about the nature and behavior of characters through their actions, voice, and appearance and through the reaction of other characters to them. In a short story, one may find a range of characters. There are stereotypes which are familiar such as the lonely housewife of the aggressive businessman. There may also be archetypal characters just as the rebel, the alter ego, the scapegoat, and some who are engaged in some kind of search. Best Short Story Writers Gabriel García Márquez, Roald Dahl, Jack London, Arthur Conan Doyle, Guy de Maupassant, Franz Kafka, Flannery O'Connor, Raymond Carver, O. Henry, F. Scott Fitzgerald, Hans Christian Andersen, H. P. Lovecraft, Stephen King, H. G. Wells, Vladimir Nabokov, Fyodor Dostoyevsky, Agatha Christie, Washington Irving, Charles Bukowski, Alice Munro, Haruki Murakami, Joseph Conrad, Mikhail Bulgakov, Katherine Mansfield and Rabindranath Tagore etc. are among the world class short story writers.