

What is a short story?

A **short story** is a prose narrative that is significantly shorter than a novella or novel, usually 10-30 pages. They are self-contained and often literary in nature. Their function is to impart a moral upon the reader, remark upon a specific commentary such as a social or political dialogue, or explore a theme in a concise way. Short story authors of note include Edgar Allan Poe, Virginia Woolf, James Joyce, Octavia Butler, Amy Tan, Toni Morrison, and Alice Walker.

Elements included in a short story:

Character

The main, or central, character will drive the plot, but supporting characters should operate to move the plot forward as well. Short stories typically have a small cast of characters.

Setting

The setting can influence the plot just as much as a character. Think about what setting will best serve your story. Settings can range from regional locations to specific ones, such as a house in New York or a park in Virginia. Regardless, the setting should serve your plot. If your main character is a fisherman, it won't necessarily make sense to place them in an NYC apartment.

Plot

A plot is the main events in your short story. Each event correlates to one another and builds upon the conflict.

Conflict

A conflict is a struggle experienced by the main character relating to the overarching plot. Conflicts can arise from other characters, trauma, internal distress, environmental factors, and more. Conflict provides tension for your plot, and eventually leads to a resolution.

Theme

The theme of your short story is your central message or topic. What would you like your story to say?

Resources:

<https://www.lib.uiowa.edu/exhibits/previous/shortstory/>

<https://www.masterclass.com/articles/how-to-write-a-great-short-story-writing-tips-and-exercises-for-story-ideas>

<https://www.gadoe.org/Curriculum-Instruction-and-Assessment/Curriculum-and-Instruction/Documents/COLLEGE%20READINESS/AP%20Lit%20101%20Theme.pdf>

<https://writers.com/how-to-write-a-short-story>