

Everyone can and does write! But if you want to write captivating stories, and deliver them with prose that shines, and in a style that is uniquely yours, there are things you must consider. Below are the main concepts integral to writing good fiction.

Plot is the story you wish to tell, and it should answer the question, “What’s happening?” Novels usually include subplots, which are inner “stories” connected to the main plot and are less important than the main plot. Short stories usually do not have subplots. In terms of plot structure, a story usually starts with a situation and a problem, or conflict. What follows is a rising action, followed by a climax and the resulting dénouement, or resolution, and a conclusion. Another, less common form of story is in the picaresque style, where the plot is simply a series of adventures without a clear “resolution”, since one is not called for. Most stories are structured in chronological order, although many have been written out of order, or even backwards! Flashbacks, time-lapse, and flashforwards are literary devices of structure that you can use to create a story that is unique.

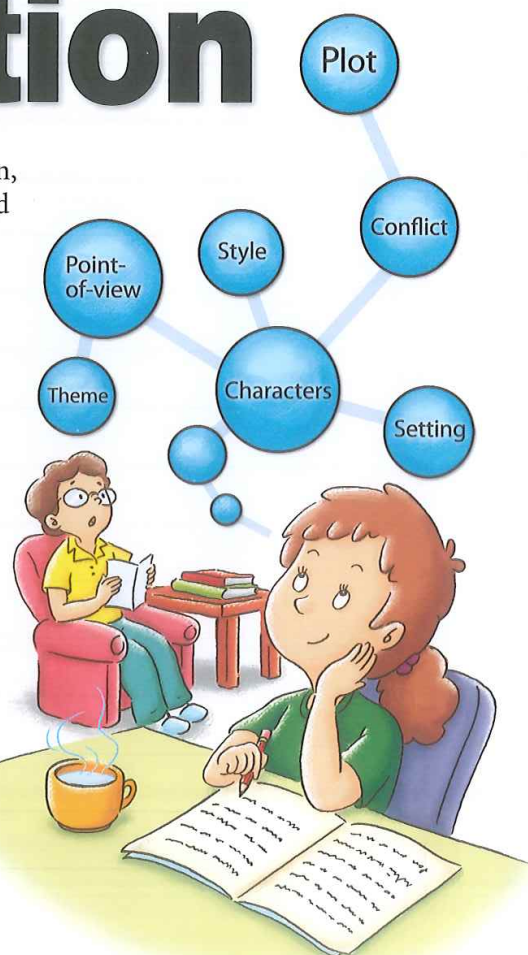
Conflict is the struggle between two people or between a person and something. Conflict is essential in a story. It would be a boring story indeed if the characters encountered no problems. Conflict can come in different forms, such as a person against another person, against nature, against himself/herself, against fate, and against society.

Characters are the people who act out the plot. The central character is the protagonist, and the antagonist is the force providing conflict for the central character. Some stories include a character foil, which is someone whose traits are meant to highlight the traits of the protagonist. Minor characters may be employed to help further the story quickly if necessary. Main characters need to be fully developed, with good and bad qualities. They must also be dynamic, that is, they must change over the course of the story.

Setting refers to the place and the time in which the plot takes place. The setting may be an important part of the plot or conflict, or it can simply act as a backdrop to the story, with no effect on outcomes.

Theme refers to the underlying meaning of the story: the reason for writing the story

The Elements of Fiction



and what the writer expects the reader to learn. The theme can be explicit (stated openly in the story) or implicit (implied by the plot, the characters' actions, etc.).

Point-of-view refers to the way a story is narrated. A "first-person" point of view means that the main character is telling the story, so we read about "I". A story can be narrated in the "third person", in which case we read about "he" or "she". The narrator may be "omniscient" (meaning that he/she knows everything about the story and the characters), "limited-omniscient", or "objective" (in which case he/she knows nothing more than the reader).

Style refers to the language the author uses to deliver the story. The style can be conversational, unusual, and can include the use of dialect. Related to style is tone, which reflects the author's (or character's) attitude towards the story as well.

Give these things the consideration they deserve, and you, too, can be a great writer!

A. Briefly explain what each of the following terms means.

1. Plot _____

2. Conflict _____

3. Characters _____

4. Setting _____

5. Theme _____

6. Point-of-view _____

7. Style _____
