

Elements of Fiction

Teacher's Guide

by Nancy Roberts Garrity

The posters in this set present information about seven important elements of fiction. The accompanying activity sheets should be used in conjunction with your presentation and discussion of the information on the posters and in this teacher's guide.

Plot

The events that occur in a story make up the plot, or story line. The plots of most works of fiction contain five elements: exposition, rising action, climax, falling action, and resolution. The poster explains and gives an example of each of the five elements. The examples are scenes from the fairy tale "Little Red Riding Hood." Since both the poster and the activity sheet refer to events in "Little Red Riding Hood," you may wish to read or tell the story to students so that its plot is fresh in their minds. Once students have successfully answered the plot questions (1-5) on the activity sheet, have them analyze the development of plot in other well-known fairy tales.

Theme

The theme is the central idea or lesson about life that an author conveys in a piece of literature. In most stories, the theme is not directly stated. It is communicated through characters' thoughts or actions or through a series of events.

Have students complete the theme portion of the activity sheet. Next, ask them to identify the themes of other stories they have read. More advanced students might enjoy writing their own fables. Have the students devise the morals, or provide some morals and have the students develop fables that convey them. (Examples: "If at first you don't succeed, try, try again." "Be careful what you wish for; you might get it." "Beauty is in the eye of the beholder." "A stitch in time saves nine.")

The Theme section of the poster shows a scene from "The Tortoise and the Hare." Point out to students that this is one of many tales written by Aesop, a Greek slave who lived around the middle of the sixth century B.C.

Setting

The setting of a story is where and when the action takes place. Have students identify the settings of various stories they have read. You may wish to have students alter the settings of well-known stories so that the events take place in modern times or in a different location.

Mood

Mood is the feeling a reader gets from a story. The mood of a story is created by the author's use of specific words to describe certain situations and actions. It is important to remember that mood describes the feelings the reader has, not necessarily the feelings of the characters in the story.

Characterization

Characterization is the development of the characters in a story. Often a reader learns about a character through description, dialogue, the character's actions, or the reactions of other characters to the character. Most stories present two opposing characters referred to as the protagonist and the antagonist. The poster defines and provides examples of these terms.

The protagonist is the character most central to the action. This character may or may not be the hero. Ask students to name the protagonists in well-known stories. Work with students to identify common traits of these characters.

Discuss with students the fact that the antagonist helps to create the conflict in a story. In many stories, especially fairy tales, the antagonist is evil.

The poster explains that static characters stay the same throughout a story and dynamic characters develop and grow in response to events in the story. Have students identify dynamic and static characters from various works they have read.

Conflict

Conflict is a struggle that a character must overcome. The conflict of a story produces tension and drives the action of the plot. The conflict may

be internal or external. Internal conflict involves a struggle within the character (man vs. self). External conflict involves a struggle against another character (man vs. man), a force of nature (man vs. nature), or the law or some other aspect of society (man vs. society).

Figurative Language

The figures of speech an author uses to add to or clarify the meaning of writing are called figurative language. The poster and activity sheet focus on the most common figures of speech: simile, metaphor, personification, and hyperbole. After students have examined the poster and successfully completed the activity sheet, ask them to think of additional examples of figurative language. You may also wish to have students select an example of figurative language and make a drawing of how the phrase would look if taken literally rather than figuratively.

ACTIVITY SHEET ANSWERS

Plot and Theme

1. Little Red Riding Hood is taking a basket of goodies to her sick grandmother. Little Red Riding Hood must walk through the woods to get to Grandmother's house.
2. Little Red Riding Hood meets a hungry wolf. The wolf wants to get to Grandmother's house before Little Red Riding Hood arrives there. He hopes to eat Grandmother and Little Red Riding Hood.
3. The author builds suspense by including repetitive dialog about Grandmother's strange appearance.
4. The woodcutter kills the wolf and rescues Little Red Riding Hood and her grandmother.
5. Little Red Riding Hood and her grandmother live happily ever after.
6. Wording may vary, but students' morals should suggest that flatterers should not be trusted.
7. Wording may vary, but students' morals should suggest that quality is better than quantity.

Setting and Mood

1. Where: Watson's bedroom in a home on Baker Street in London
When: a morning in early April 1883
2. Where: bungalow and gardens at a British military station in Segowlee, India
When: late 1800s
3. Where: a counting-house in London
When: 3 P.M. on Christmas Eve
4. b
5. a
6. b

Characterization and Conflict

1. Cinderella
2. Answers will vary, but possible character traits include kind, hard working, caring, trusting, and intelligent.
3. Cinderella's stepmother and stepsisters
4. Answers will vary, but possible character traits include jealous, demanding, cruel, self-centered, mocking, spiteful, and vindictive.
5. Answers will vary.
6. Answers will vary.
7. I
8. E
9. E
10. I

Figurative Language

- | | |
|--------------------|------------------------|
| 1. metaphor | 11. metaphor |
| 2. personification | 12. metaphor |
| 3. simile | 13. hyperbole |
| 4. metaphor | 14. hyperbole |
| 5. simile | 15. personification |
| 6. personification | 16. hyperbole |
| 7. simile | 17. Answers will vary. |
| 8. hyperbole | 18. Answers will vary. |
| 9. personification | 19. Answers will vary. |
| 10. hyperbole | 20. Answers will vary. |

Name _____

Figurative Language

Figurative language refers to the figures of speech an author uses to add to or clarify the meaning of writing. Here are some of the most common figures of speech:

- A simile is a comparison of two unlike things that includes the words *like* or *as*.
- A metaphor is a comparison of two unlike things that does not include the words *like* or *as*.
- Personification is giving human characteristics to something that is not human.
- Hyperbole is the use of extreme exaggeration to clarify meaning.

Read each sentence below. Identify which figure of speech it is by writing simile, metaphor, personification, or hyperbole in the blank.

1. _____ Her eyes were shining stars.
2. _____ The rustling leaves whispered my name.
3. _____ Grandpa's hair is as white as snow.
4. _____ The road was a ribbon of moonlight.
5. _____ Her face drooped like a wilting flower.
6. _____ The rain on my windowpane sang a lullaby to me.
7. _____ My cousin eats like a bird.
8. _____ I laughed my head off at the joke.
9. _____ That piece of chocolate cake is calling my name.
10. _____ She cried buckets of tears at the sad movie.
11. _____ Her smile was a ray of sunshine on that dark, sad day.
12. _____ The sky was a blanket of stars.
13. _____ He runs faster than a speeding bullet.
14. _____ He was so angry smoke poured from his ears.
15. _____ The tall corn danced in the fields.
16. _____ My bedroom is so cold a polar bear could live in my closet.

Create your own examples of figures of speech on the lines below.

17. Simile: _____

18. Metaphor: _____

19. Personification: _____

20. Hyperbole: _____

Name _____

Characterization and Conflict

Characterization is the development of the characters in a story. Often a reader learns about a character through description, dialogue, the character's actions, or the reactions of other characters to the character. Most stories present two opposing characters. The protagonist is the main character. The antagonist is a character that works against the protagonist.

1. In the well-known fairy tale "Cinderella," who is the protagonist? _____
2. Describe some of the character traits of this protagonist.

3. Who are the antagonists in "Cinderella"?

4. Briefly describe some of the character traits of the antagonists.

5. A dynamic character develops and grows in response to events in the story. A static character stays the same throughout a story. Name a dynamic character in a story or play that you have read.

6. On the lines below, briefly describe how the dynamic character changes. What brings about the change? How is this change important to the story?

Conflict is the struggle that a character must face. The conflict of a story produces tension and drives the action of the plot. Internal conflict involves a character's struggle with his or her own personal issues. External conflict involves a character's struggle against an outside force, such as another character, a force of nature, or law or another aspect of society.

Write I in the blank before each description of an internal conflict. Write E before each description of an external conflict.

7. ___ Susan sees the answers to an upcoming test on the teacher's desk. She knows it is wrong, but she is tempted to jot down some of the answers.
8. ___ A man is lost in a blinding snowstorm and struggles to find shelter.
9. ___ Two families are involved in a feud that has lasted several generations.
10. ___ Tim finds a wallet containing fifty dollars. Although there is an I.D. card inside, he is tempted to keep the wallet and money rather than return it to its owner.

Name. _____

Setting and Mood

The setting is where and when a story's action takes place.

List the two elements of setting included in each passage below: where the action occurs and when it occurs.

1. Sherlock Holmes and his friend Dr. Watson shared quarters at 221B Baker Street in London. It was early in April in the year 1883 when Watson awoke one morning to find Sherlock Holmes standing fully dressed by his bed. Watson looked up at him in surprise.

Where: _____

When: _____

2. The story of "Rikki-tikki-tavi" takes place in the bungalow and gardens belonging to Teddy and his parents. They live in a British military station in Segowlee, India, in the late 1800s.

Where: _____

When: _____

3. The clocks had just chimed the hour of three, but it was already quite dark on this Christmas Eve. Fog and darkness prevailed as Ebenezer Scrooge sat in his counting-house, listening to the people outside stomping about through the snowy streets of London.

Where: _____

When: _____

Mood is the feeling a reader gets from a story. It is created by the author's use of specific words to describe certain situations and actions. It is important to remember that mood describes the feelings the reader has, not necessarily the feelings of the characters in the story.

Read each passage below, then circle the letter of the mood it conveys.

4. It stood all alone among the barren trees. Tattered curtains struggled to cover broken panes of glass as vines attempted to conceal the ever-widening cracks in the stone. Every trace of the home's once stately appearance had vanished.
- a. anticipation b. regret c. despair d. excitement
5. It was a beautiful morning. The sunbeams danced among the trees, and the beautiful flowers bobbed their heads in the fresh breeze.
- a. happiness b. eagerness c. contentment d. fear
6. "O.K. I'm ready. Let's go!" Ryan called to his friends as he grabbed his coat from its hook in the closet. As he stepped into the hall of his dorm, however, he noticed a deafening silence. No clicking of computer keys. No students' chatter. Confused, Ryan looked around.
- a. terror b. mystery c. sorrow d. sadness

Name _____

Plot and Theme

The events that occur in a story make up the plot, or story line. The plots of most stories have five parts: exposition, rising action, climax, falling action, and resolution.

Answer the questions below about the plot of the story "Little Red Riding Hood."

1. The exposition gives background information, tells where the story takes place, and usually introduces the characters. Why does Little Red Riding Hood go for a walk in the woods?

2. The rising action reveals the problem(s) or conflict(s) in the story. Whom does Little Red Riding Hood meet as she walks through the woods? What problem or conflict does this character present?

3. The climax is the turning point in the story. It is the most intense or suspenseful part of the story. The climax begins when Little Red Riding Hood arrives at her grandmother's house. How does the author build suspense during this part of the story?

4. The falling action explains the result of the climax. What happens just after the climax?

5. During the resolution, the problem(s) or conflict(s) is resolved. How is the conflict resolved in "Little Red Riding Hood"?

Theme is the central idea or lesson about life that an author conveys in a piece of literature. A fable's theme is stated at the end of the story as a moral.

Read each fable below, then write a sentence that states the moral (theme) of it.

6. A crow sat in a tree, holding a piece of cheese in his beak. A sly fox smelled the cheese and said to the crow, "How handsome and noble you look today. Your wings are so shiny and black. I wish I could hear you sing, for I'm sure that your voice must be as beautiful as the rest of you." In an attempt to impress the fox with his wonderful voice, the crow opened his mouth and croaked, "Caw! Caw!" Down fell the piece of cheese right into the clever fox's open mouth.

7. A female fox was proudly tending her large brood of offspring. She scoffed at a lioness because the lioness never bore more than one cub at a time. "Only one," the lioness replied, "but it is a lion."
