

Writing about Fiction

Plot

1. Does the plot conform to a formula? Is it like any other stories you have read? Is it predictable?
2. What is the source and nature of the conflict for the protagonist? Is the major interest in the story based on what happens next or on some other concern? What does the title reveal?
3. Is the story told chronologically? If not, in what order is it told, and what is the effect of that order?
4. What does the exposition reveal? Are flashbacks used? Are there foreshadowings? Where is the climax?
5. Is the conflict resolved in the end?
6. Is the plot unified? Is each incident somehow related to some other element in the story?

Character

1. Do you identify with the protagonist? Who (or what) is the antagonist?
2. Do the characters change and develop in the course of the story?
3. Is the behavior of the character motivated and plausible?
4. Note the characters which seem to be stock or flat. What is their purpose?
5. How does the author reveal characters?
6. Are they directly described or indirectly presented?
7. Are the characters' names used to convey something about them?

Setting

1. Is the setting important? If it were changed would the story's action and meaning be significantly different?
2. Is the setting used symbolically? Are the time, place, and atmosphere related to the theme?
3. Is the setting used as an antagonist?

Point of View

1. Who tells the story? Is it a first-person or third-person narrator? Is it a major or minor character or one who does not participate in the action? How much does the narrator know? Does the point of view change during the course of the story?
2. Is the narrator reliable and objective? Does the narrator appear too innocent, emotional, or self-deluded to be trusted?
3. If told from a different point of view, how would the story change? Would anything be lost?

Symbolism

1. Are there any symbols in the story? Are they actions, characters, settings, objects, or words?
2. How do the symbols contribute to the meaning of the story? Would the meaning be there without them?

Theme

1. Is there a theme or themes?
2. Is the theme state directly, or is it developed implicitly through the plot, characters, or some other element?
3. Is the them a confirmation of most people's values, or does it challenge them?