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ENGLISH

Introduction to Story Writing

What is a Story?

A **story** is an imaginary account about people or situations that is told for **entertainment**. Everybody loves to read or listen to stories. But writing them is not a simple task. In this chapter, we will learn the guidelines to writing a good story.

Components of a Story

- **Theme:** The theme is the main idea around which the story revolves.

- What idea do you wish to convey through your story?
- Good versus evil, revenge, love conquers all

Often stories have a basic idea. They tend to convey a message to the reader. Aesop's Fables revolve around morals, Akbar–Birbal stories revolve around wit and intelligence, and the Panchatantra revolves around worldly conduct.

- **Setting:** The surrounding or the time period where the story unfolds.

- Where is the story set?
- When do the events in the story take place?

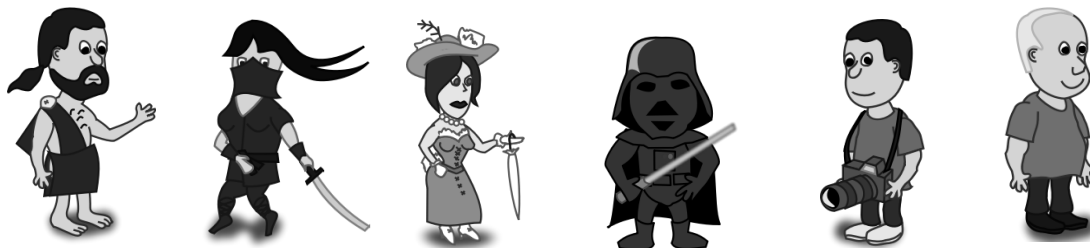
Good stories often engage the readers' senses. They have vivid descriptions that create visual (sight), aural (sound), olfactory (smell), gustatory (taste) and tactile (feel) imagery. The setting sometimes plays a big role in the narrative. It provides a background for the story to unfold.

The air was burning their skin. Prince Arjuna and his charioteer Dharmapal had abandoned their chariot far behind and were dragging their feet through the dusty road. Beads of perspiration dripped from their foreheads as they searched the desolate place for a drop of water. The prince felt his throat getting drier and drier. From a distance, they could hear a faint tinkling of water. It seemed as if there was a stream somewhere in this dry, parched land.

The paragraph above aims to help the reader empathise with the characters. The description establishes not only the place but also the time when the events happen.

- **Characterisation:** Characterisation is the process of portraying characters.

- Who is the main character?
- What are his/her/its physical/mental attributes?
- What is the problem faced by the character?
- How does the character change or evolve in the end?



Characters are the catalysts in the story; their actions take the narrative forward. Good stories are often built around interesting characters whose circumstances change them. Characters can be flat (uncomplicated, do not evolve) or round (complex, undergo change). The key to writing a good story lies in developing interesting characters. Rather than stating the qualities of the character, good stories often let the readers derive their own conclusion about them.

Instead of: *Meena was always punctual.*

Write: *Meena reached ten minutes early for the interview.*

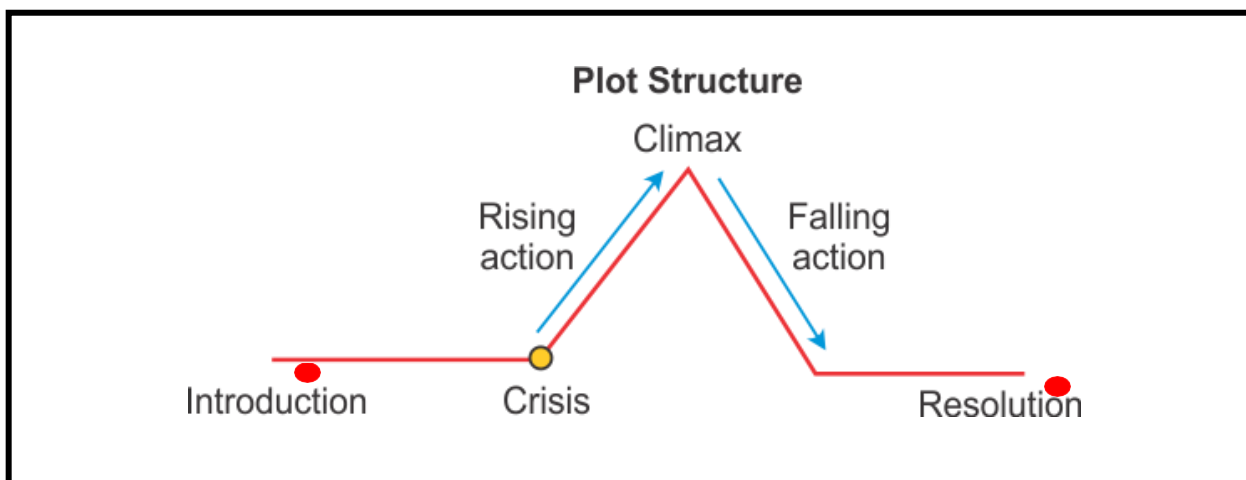
Instead of: *Akshay was the laziest person.*

Write: *Akshay wore a crumpled shirt and unpolished shoes. His hair was also dishevelled.*

Instead of: *The girl was petrified.*

Write: *The girl broke into a cold sweat; her fingers froze as she stood transfixed.*

- **Plot:** The plot comprises the main events of the story.
 - **Introduction:** The characters are introduced. A brief account of the setting is also established in this part.
 - **Rising action:** Rising action refers to the events that lead up to the crisis.
 - **Crisis:** Characters go through some kind of predicament. Crisis becomes the main catalyst for the evolution of the story and the character.
 - **Climax:** Climax refers to the stage where the crisis escalates to its highest point. It is the most crucial part of the story.
 - **Falling action:** Falling action refers to the events that follow the climax. The intensity of the events lessens in this stage.
 - **Resolution:** It is also known as **Denouement**. It is where the conflict and the crisis in the story are finally resolved. Loose ends of the story are tied and the story is brought to a close.



Steps for Writing a Story

(Sample taken: The Resignation by Premchand)

- **Step 1:** Fix a theme that you want to write about. What would be the moral of your story?
The theme or moral of the story would be
‘Dignity can be taken away only if it is surrendered.’
- **Step 2:** Establish the setting
 - The story is set in India.
 - The story unfolds in pre-independence India.
- **Step 3:** Create character sketches
 - Fatehchand, who is a man of great dignity, but does not have the courage to defend himself.
 - Eventually he has the courage to stand up to his offender.
 - The Saheb is Fatehchand's boss. He is very abusive.
 - Ultimately, he is taught a lesson by Fatehchand. He vows not to harm another soul.
- **Step 4:** Outline the plot of the story

Introduction	Lala Fatehchand is a workaholic. He is good natured man but has faced only setbacks in life. He is in poor health and his heart is devoid of courage. Despite Fatehchand's dedication towards his work, his boss is always abusive towards him.
Rising Action	One day, he is called by his boss, the Saheb immediately as an urgent matter has come up. Fatehchand rushes to work at once despite his wife's objections. He walks as fast as he could.
Crisis	But the Saheb is annoyed as he expected him to get to work faster. He humiliates Fatehchand and shakes him by his ears. Later that day, after a deep contemplation, Fatehchand decides to avenge his humiliation. He enters the Saheb's house and threatens him with a stick. Saheb starts to tremble in fear and tries to reason with Fatehchand.
Climax	Fatehchand strikes the Saheb with a blow to the head when he tried to snatch the stick away from his hand. He makes the Saheb promise that he would never hurt a self-respecting human being again. He resigns from his job and reprimands the Saheb for being a wicked man.
Resolution	Fatehchand leaves with his head held high. He feels the pleasure of having tasted his very first victory.

Samples and Types

Outline of the Story

Sample 1

- In such questions, the outline of the story is provided. Students are expected to connect the points to form a comprehensive narrative.

Master sent a slave to the market—slave returned frightened—said he saw a woman in the market—the woman was Death herself—she made a threatening gesture at him—slave feared for his life—asked master to lend him his horse—he wanted to escape death—master obliged and lent him his horse—slave rode the horse to Bagdad—master went to the market to investigate—found Death there—he asked her why she threatened his slave—she said she didn't threaten—she was surprised to see him there—she had an appointment with him in Bagdad in the evening.

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| ○ Read the outline clearly. | ○ Use the tense form consistently. |
| ○ Understand the plot and the theme. | ○ Add some details of your own, but do not change the course of the story given in the outline. |
| ○ Do not omit any points. | ○ Use good introduction and conclusion to make your story interesting. |
| ○ Stick to the order of the points. | ○ Use simple language. |
| ○ Use connectors to join points. | ○ Check for grammatical errors. |
| 📖 Since, Hence, Therefore, Because | ○ Give it a suitable title based on the main character or the theme of the story. |
| 📖 And, But, So, For, Or, Nor | |
| ○ Use appropriate words to denote time. | |
| 📖 Once upon a time, Long ago, Later that day | |
| ○ Dialogues should sound natural. | |

Death at Bagdad

Once there lived a master and his slave. The master sent his slave to the market to buy provisions. He returned frightened for he had seen a woman in the market. She was Death herself and she had made a threatening gesture at him. The slave feared for his life and asked the master to lend him his horse since he wanted to escape death. The master obliged and let the slave go. The slave rode the horse all the way to Bagdad. The master then went to the market to investigate. He found Death there standing in the market. He approached her and asked her why she threatened his slave. Death calmly replied that she didn't threaten him. In fact, she was surprised to see him there since she had an appointment with him in Samarra later in the evening.

