Katherine Anne Porter

“The Grave”

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| SETTING The story is told in a flashback\*. What is the setting of the flashback, and what is the setting of the frame\* (or at least of the “half-frame”)? | Setting is “the physical, and sometimes spiritual, background against which the action of a narrative (novel, drama, short story, poem) takes place.” It includes (1) geography (country / city/region), (2) time (day/night, season, century/year/era, historical and social conditions and values), and (3) society (class, beliefs, values of the characters). |
| CHARACTER How much can we tell about Miranda and Paul?  Why does Porter include each of the ‘unseen’ characters? | Character is established through (1) direct exposition (comment by the author directly to the reader, although this is nearly always filtered through a narrator or other character, whose reliability you must always question), (2) dialogue (what the character says or thinks), and (3) action (what the character actually does). |
| SYMBOL Find at least three symbols in the story and decide why Porter uses each of them. | Symbol is ‘something which is itself and yet stands for or suggests or means something else..., a figure of speech which combines a literal and sensuous quality with an abstract or suggestive aspect.” |
| POINT OF VIEW Explain the complex point of view from which the story is told. |  |
| HUMOR Identify words or phrases intended as humorous. |  |
| THEME Identify a theme of the story and state it in one sentence. | Theme (sometimes called “thesis”) is “an attitude or position taken by a writer with the purpose of proving or supporting it.” The topic is the subject about which a writer writes; the theme is what the writer says about the topic. |

Definitions are adapted from C. Hugh Holman, *A Handbook to Literature*,  
The Odyssey Press, 1972.