

Focus Questions for Short Short Stories

writer → _____

title → _____

PLOT <i>Characterize the chronology of the plot. Where does it differ from the chronology of the story?</i>	<p>PLOT is an author's selection and arrangement of incidents in a story to shape the action and give the story a particular focus. Discussions of plot include not just what happens, but also how and why things happen the way they do. [B]</p>
CHARACTER	<p>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). [H]</p>
SETTING	<p>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). [H]</p>
POINT OF VIEW <i>Where are examples of Free Indirect Style in this story?</i>	<p>POINT OF VIEW refers to who tells us a story and how it is told. The two broad categories are (1) the third-person narrator who tells the story and does not participate in the action and (2) the first-person narrator who is a major or minor participant. [B]</p>
SYMBOL	<p>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." [H]</p>
THEME <i>State the theme of this story in one sentence.</i>	<p>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. [H]</p>
STYLE, TONE, and IMAGERY	<p>TONE is the author's implicit attitude toward the reader or the people, places, and events in a work as revealed by the elements of the author's style. STYLE is the distinctive and unique manner in which a writer arranges words to achieve particular effects. An IMAGE is a word, phrase, or figure of speech that addresses the senses, suggesting mental pictures of sights, sounds, smells tastes, feelings or actions.</p>

Definitions are adapted from C. Hugh Holman, *A Handbook to Literature*, Indianapolis: The Odyssey Press, 1972, Print. [Those marked "H"] or from Michael Meyer, ed., *The Bedford Introduction to Literature*, 8th Edition, Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2008. Print. [Those marked [B]