**Chapter one**

**Defining short story as a genre**

The short story is very different from orally told traditional stories. It is usually treated in comparison to the novel rather than the other form of short fiction. The novel and the short story are only two and one century old respectively. Oral stories, by contrast, can be considered as old as language. The only clear common feature between the short story and orally told traditional stories seems to be the shortness in length.

As the name indicates, short story is short. It is a work of fiction. It is limited in length and generally focuses on one event. It is agreed that short stories are short although no one could conclusively say up to how many words. When the short story was formally recognized as a genre of literature in the 19th century, scholars tended to limit the short story to ten thousand words. However, later developments and artistic sophistications in most short stories have made it difficult to decide how short a short story should be.

Compared to the novel, what does the shortness of short story imply? The expanse of space and time would allow the novel to be lengthy and comprehensive in the material it incorporates. As a result, we take a lot of time to complete reading a novel. We get depth of meaning and manifold life experience as well.

By contrast, short story is limited in length. If that is the case, shall we accept that short story is also limited in depth of meaning? The answer is no. the shortness of a short story has nothing to do with lack of depth of meaning. A short story should be readable in one sitting. A good short story, however, presents life-like qualities. Through these qualities which are also qualities of the novel, short story is able to communicate a complete, full meaning and experience. In other words, the short story form is not short in its depth of meaning.

Flannery o’ connor, in Diogenese and Moneyhun( 2001: 14 ) asserts this:

Perhaps the central question to be considered in any discussion of the short story is what dowe mean by short. Being short doesn’t mean being slight. A short story should be long in depth and should give us an experience of meaning.

**Silent qualities of modern short story**

The modern short is different from orally told traditional stories in many ways. Gordon and Kuehner (1999: 4) discuss five such features of the short story. The following five points are based on their discussion.

**Short stories are consciously made**

The substance of short stories is imitated from real life. In fiction, however, imitation doesn’t mean recording, as in history and journalism. In journalism, a major event in the current affairs is supposed to be recorded. On the other hand, short story writers make up a story based on such a major event, rather than retelling what occurred as it is. Making up a story out of such an event may involve rearranging the corroborating minor events, combining characters and inventing a more suitable setting. This is done with certain purpose in mind, to achieve a desired goal, usually, to make a general point about life. Therefore, short stories are not records of spontaneous flow of real events, but consciously made up stories.

**Short stories have a formal structure**

No matter how many events or incidents a short story has, it is a single and complete work of art. It will have a beginning where by the setting, the characters or the conflict is introduced. This will be followed by a chain of events in which the conflict is complicated and suspense is created. This comprises the middle part. The last part constitutes how the conflict is resolved and the characters are transformed. The three parts, that is the beginning, the middle and the end, together bestow kind of form or structure on the short story.

**Short stories exhibit causality**

The events in a short story are not arranged in a loose chronological order as in traditional, oral stories. In stories like legends and tales only asking ‘what happens next?’ may give us the whole point, where as in short story we have to ask the question ‘why?’ in addition to ‘and then what happened?’ in order to understand it fully. This is to say that the events in short story are arranged in cause and effect relationship; in a way that one major event is the effect of the event before it and cause of the event after it. The establishment of cause and effect reveals why characters act as they do and what the logical results of their actions are.

**Short stories develop and end inevitably**

The causality in short story makes each and every event plausible and acceptable in a way that readers expect a necessary consequence or an inevitable result. When this is applied in all the events in a short story, the progress of the story can be mapped out and its end is bound to be anticipated. Thus, all actions and the series events in a short story should seem inevitable. This is particularly true of the ending.

**Short stories establish an atmosphere or mood**

The atmosphere or mood of a short story should complement the characters and their actions. For example, if the situation of a character is that of poverty and ‘bad luck’, a mood should be created through serious complaints and unprivileged conditions of the character or through a depiction of disdainful and hostile settings. Similarly, actions of crime should be supported by a mood of horror, and love by an atmosphere of romance. It is the case that appropriate establishment of mood or atmosphere accentuates the world of fiction, the situation of the characters and what happened to them.

**Some Characteristics of Short Story and the Novel**

**Common Grounds**

The novel and the short story are the most dominant genres of fiction in the world’s experience of imaginative literature. They have been cherished, with slight differences at certain times, both by fiction writers and readers ever since they evolved as new genres of literature. Many novels and short stories are translated in to various languages from their original languages in which they were written. One important reason why these fictional genres have been and are highly favored seems to be their presentation of material very akin to actual life and their consequential ability to appeal to the emotions of their readers.

The verisimilitude of real life is generally the characteristics that the novel and short story as well as novella and other forms of modern literary works like film have in common. In deeded, the verisimilitude is achieved by none other than the qualities of their elements. The whole discussion about the elements of fiction can apply for both (as well as novella) genres of fiction. for instance, in both modern novels and short stories character and characterization are reflections of real people and their personalities. The conflicts on which the events, in good novels and short stories, wound are usually carefully selected from life and are logically organized so as to be gripping. Similarly, their themes are often of the nature that they communicate so important generalizations about life that they apply to humanity and elicit grand response from readers all over the world and perhaps at all times. The above qualities are common by and large in most contemporary novels and short stories.

These common qualities constitute (or can be summarized under) verisimilitude. Verisimilitude basically means to appear real, look-like or simulate real life. It implies that both fictional forms derive from the same source, which is life itself. In conclusion, the novel and the short story are generally similar in that they have the same elements out of which they are made up and the same source in being true to actual life and, hence, in being appealing to a large number of audiences.

**Important differences**

The novel and the short story, have some recognizable differences. Many books available on literature treat the novel and short story separately-implicitly leaving the differences between the two to the student of literature. Yet some writers, like Frank O’ Connor, have furnished a discussion of short story in relation to the novel. Therefore, the discussion under this topic is slightly adapted from Frank O’ Connor’s article, in Diogenese and Moneyhum (2005:38-48), entitled ‘Introduction To The Lonely Voice.’

It has been said that above that the novel and short story derives from the same source; but, the way they derive from the source differs-the way they reveal insights about real life differs. On account of the different ways by which they derive from actual life, we have the two distinct fictional forms-the novel and short story. The difference between the two forms lies on the way they organize and integrate their materials to communicate a general theme about life. O’ Connor identifies two basic differences, namely ideological and formal difference. These differences are based on the fabrics of the elements of fiction in the novel and short story.

**Ideological difference**

This type of difference between the novel and short story particularly concerns character. The ideological difference may be understood as that of collectivism and individualism in philosophy. This means the multitude of characters in novels plays the ground for the portrayal of an ideal figure to which society (collectivism) could identify with. By contrast, short stories usually present a glimpse of an individual figure or character that is typical rather than general.

According to O’Connor, one character, at least, in any novel must present the reader in some aspects of his own conception of himself. In other words, a reader often finds in a novel a character with some degree of common personality traits; other readers of the same novel may find other characters to identify with. In this way, novels can provide heroes- model characters-to their respective readers. Instances of such characters’ personality trait can be “the loving husband,” or “the rebellious young,” or “self-assertive woman,” or “a committed professional,” or “ a friend in need (thus a friend in deeded),” etc. it is with these and many other personality traits of characters that readers of the novel may identify themselves with.

Consequently, this process of identification with characters of novels culminates in some concept of normality, a sense of collective idea of personality and some relationship with society as a whole. Since novels portray their characters in relentless details of situation, actions and conversations, the opportunity to draw a generalization of moral and psychological strings is very high compared to the case in short story. This generalization usually comes as a collective value of a given society.Ultimately, the heroes of most good novels, particularly the protagonists, are often ideologically in agreement with collective ideals of societies.

It appears that, however, short story is ideologically relatively remote from society. One reason for this is that characters of short stories are usually portrayed as antithesis of an ideal person of a society. O’ Connor writes, “always in short story there is the sense of out lowed figures wandering about the fringes of society.” Most short story characters are portrayed in contrast to what the collective mind upholds, and they may reveal personalities either uncomfortable, rebellious, in variance, or denouncing of the basic standards of collective establishments such as religion, culture and systems. No matter how the means and the event vary, characters in short stories relatively tend to defy some collective features of a given society.

 Characters in short stories do not usually appear as esteemed personalities or holding the higher position in the ladder of society. Frank O’ Connor remarks rather boldly that the short story has never a hero ( in the sense the novel), but submerged group of people. This implies that such characters could be of lower status, ordinary, despised class or the ones usually forgotten by the general society.

The clearest ideological difference is seen in the typified characters that most short stories portray. Pointing that these characters do not embody any social ideal, O’ Connor claims that characters in short story are often too specific, too eccentric, to make any generalization of collective (social) figure. As a representation of a submerged group in society, they usually cannot speak for themselves, let alone deliberating on abstractions. As a result, readers cannot identify with these characters as there is too little to share with them. Thus, characters in short stories are left to their individual, suggesting a distinctive ideology of individualism as opposed to collectivism.

**Formal difference**

Perhaps, considering how time works in the novel in contrast to short story is the best way to discern their formal difference, “for the novelist,” in O Conner’s words, “is not limited by time and space as the short story writer.” The novel does not only amass a bulk of events and a score of characters but can also order them in a longer span of time. For instance, a novel can afford a treatment of a central character from youth up to childhood with all the major events and situations in the process. The same can be done for other major characters in the novel. Eventually, the novel assumes a form which is characterized by a chronological development of characters and incidents.

However, short story cannot afford to mass and chronologically develop characters and events like the novel can. Short story is limited by time and space. Therefore, it is bound to a few selected scenes in which the emphasis lies on a single moment of peculiar significance enacted by a few characters. Short story is *short* because it is made up of a few characters and a scene of peculiar significance caught in a single moment.

Now we can notice how the time element-the way time works-in the two forms of fiction crystallizes to point their formal difference. The essential form of the novel is like the form which we see in life. The chronology implies the consecutive presentation of past, present and future, and the development suggests a step-by step growth of character’s consciousness or any other aspect in the novel. This is the novel’s essential form, and it is very much like the form of development that we see in life.

On the other hand, the form of short story is quite different from that of life. Past, present and future never mix in life, but they do in short story. While the novel has a form which gives the impression of whole lifetime, the short story has what O’Conner calls “organic form.” Since a whole lifetime must be crowded in to a few minutes, short story improves these minutes in to a story which enables us to view past, present and future as though they were contemporaneous. This sense of the time being contemporaneous is what furnishes short story its organic form. O Conner further describes this organic form as “something that springs from a single detail and embraces past, present and future.”

As a result of time, the novel and short story have a formal difference of space. Obviously, the novel covers a larger expanse of space measured by printed words in hundreds of pages, where as hardly any short stories take twenty such pages. Space or number of pages refers to the lengths of the narrative in each form. Length, in turn, implies the amount of necessary information stuffed in the narrative.

Frank O’ Conner states “in giving the reader precisely enough information short story differs from the novel.” Here, it is important to reckon that both the novel and short story do give enough information to their respective readers; the difference involves the way they do so. The way short story does this is more precise and concise than that of the novel. O’ Conner further explains, “no convention of length ever seems to affect the novelist’s power to tell us all we need to know.” Yet any convention of length can never apply to a short story. Only its organic form determines the length of a short story; to the contrary, only its length determines the form of the novel. In the words of O’ Conner, “the form of the novel is given by the length, in short story the length is given by the form.”

A final, but important, point is the ‘*longness’*of the novel and shortness of short story must not be equated with the quality of meaning readers can get from each. Since the novel provides a kind of whole experience of lifetime, it is easy to recognize its completeness. However, recognizing short story as a narrative incomplete action which communicates less meaning is gravely wrong. In his concluding sentences, Frank O’ Conner observes, “a good short story should not have less meaning than a novel, nor should its action be less complete.” In spite of their ideological and formal differences, therefore, both the novel and short story can be said equally capable of communicating a depth of meaning.

**Short story and novella (short fiction)**

A third form of fiction that needs to be discussed in relation to the novel and short story is novella, sometimes referred to as *short novel*. Novella or the short novel is a fictional narrative whose attribute is largely that of size. Definitely it is a long fiction, but how long is long? As long fiction it shares characteristics with novel, and as short novel it shares characteristic with short story. Thus, novella has both the ‘longness’ of the novel and the shortness of the short story.

The size of the short novel or novella is described in terms of elements, with special emphasis on character and plot. Robert DiYanni (2000:43) writes, “like the longer novel the short novel accumulates incidents and illustrates character over time in ways the short story cannot because of its more limited scope.” In other words, the short novel is long like the novel as its plot and number of characters can be large and many respectively. DiYnni then describes its shortness like a short story by writing, “yet like the short story, the short novel relies on glimpses of understanding, flashes of insight, quick turns of action to solidity theme or reveal character.”

Similarly, Kennedy and Gioia describes novella making reference to character. Character is the most important element in differentiating between the novel, novella and short story. Since the narrative in all of these fictional forms draws on ‘what happens to whom,’ the plot, setting and theme are determined by the nature and number of characters that appear in the short story. Accordingly, the two writers compare and contrast character in the short novel and short story as follows:

 Generally, a short novel, like a short story, focuses on just one or two characters; but unlike a short story, it has room to examine theme in a greater depth and detail. A short novel also often explores theme over a greater period of time.

 Kennedy and Gioia; 1999:270

The above discussion may be summarized as asserting that the short novel shares characteristics with both the novel and the short story. Novella or short novel, then, is a mid way between the longer novel and the short story. It achieves this quality “by diminishing large things and enlarging small ones.” Thus novella or short novel is a fictional narrative which comprises the necessary conciseness and brevity of short story and the potential stretch and expanse of the novel.

**Unit two**

**Fiction, fact and fancy**

The word fiction is usually associated to the meaning other than that what it actually has in literature. In our everyday language we tend to use the word fiction to mean the opposite of fact. However, fiction has a lot to do with fact too. It is through the use of both fact and fancy that fiction actualizes itself as a form of art. Thus, the way how fiction works, by and large, can be described in terms of both fact and fancy.

Fiction is best understood as a made-up story (Robert Scholes and others, 1991:121). In this definition the word made-up should be given emphasis. One can have a glimpse of the craft involved in fiction, because it is made up by the writer as a chair is by the carpenter. A fictional story, whether it is based on actual events or imaginatively created, is made-up. It is possible to illustrate this by considering two instances.

In the first instance, we can think of a public event like national election, where by different competitive parties carry out their respective campaign, then the general public engages in the election process and finally the result is announced followed by serious complaints by the parties which have lost the election. After the whole process of the election is over, a story can be made-up for it-we have fiction.

In the second instance, we can think of an imaginary love relationship where by two youngsters pass through so many obstacles until they consummate their love in marriage which is not susceptible to divorce. If this imaginary story is penned down, we have fiction.

The material in the first case is factual event, where as in the second case it is fancy; in both cases we have a made-up story; in both cases we have fiction.

It follows that fiction is a craft made available based on both factual events and imaginary ones. This leaves us with the understanding that fiction is applied to both true stories and created stories. In the same token, the Bible is fiction as is John Milton’s paradise lost which gives the account of the Bible itself in a story form.

Consequently, it is possible to see that fact and fiction form important acquaintance in fiction. In our everyday language, fact is associated with concepts like reality and truth, where as fiction is erroneously related to unreality and falsehood. The heart of the matter is, however, fact and fiction are complementary rather than contradictory. We can understand fact as a thing done and fiction as a thing made. A thing done or fact seizes to exist after it is done. For it to exist it needs a story to be made, it needs fiction. Anything done continues to live when it is shaped in a story. Therefore, fact can live through fiction, once again proving that they are complementary.

Once the relationship between fact and fiction is established, it is easier to see how fiction is related to fancy. As ‘a pure’ product of human imagination, fancy is usually associated with falsehood. Imaginatively created stories, in our case fancy, may include possibilities which are not part of our real existence yet. It may involve events which we cannot readily perceive using our sense organs. To the very least, fancies modify or defy the reality somehow. This explains why fiction is usually understood in terms of falsehood.

Be it as it may however, many modern novels and short stories work through consciously selected variation and combination of fact and fancy. No fictional work can be said to have been absolutely made-up of only fancy only or fact only. It combines fact and fancy in various degrees. This gives rise to another aspect of fiction, the fact that it imitates life.

Life itself can be understood as an intricate web of fact and fancy. The fact shapes our present and the fancy our future. Similarly, the fact aspect of fiction bestows on us insights and inspirations to our present life and the fancy aspect of fiction ignites our imagination and makes us realize our potentials for the future. In this and other ways fiction imitates life.

Imitation has great significance in fiction. It is what makes us (readers) read fiction. Marvin and Clyde (‘2000:7) write “Aristotle insists that ‘imitation’ is natural to man from childhood and that it is natural for all to delight in works of imitation.” unarguably, fiction is a work of imitation. It appears that humans are delighted when their lives are represented (imitated) in a form like fiction. In other words, imitation is so significant that it gives fiction its function as a source of entertainment.

Yet we cannot limit the function of fiction only by the fact that it delights us. Itteaches us too. Fictions teach us about life in the way philosophy does. Elaborating on this point Marvin and Clyde (2000:7) states the following:

The teaching is not academic kind, but an inquiry in to the nature of human experience, intent on discovering and illuminating the meanings of our thought and action.

If we agree that fiction delights and teaches us, then it also touches our emotional and cognitive faculties respectively. In life our emotional and cognitive faculties are moved by the details in our experiences. Fiction has imitated this too (i.e.the use of details) from life. As Flannery O’ Conner remarks, (in Marvin and Clyde; 2000:13), fiction proceeds by the use of details. It is the details in the world of fiction that makes us feel (details) and understand (learn) something about life. As a closing remark, O’Conner (ibid) has this to say:

Fiction operates through the sense: the first and most obvious characteristic of fiction is that it deals with reality through what can be seen, heard, smelled, tasted, and touched. No reader who doesn’t actually experience, who isn’t made to feel the story, is going to believe anything the fiction writer merely tells him.

**Escape and interpretive literature**

The above discussion about the function of fiction as enjoyment and understanding leads us to discern two broad categories of fiction based on the relative purpose they serve. We have said that fiction delights us –gives us enjoyment. But unless fiction gives something more than pleasure, it hardly justifies itself as a subject of college study. To have a compelling claim on our attention, fiction must yield not only enjoyment, but understanding. With regard to this, the common experience of people who read literature is that all fictional works may furnish as such understanding and insights about life. However, the bulk of fiction doesn’t present such insights; only some does. Therefore, literature may be classified in to two broad categories**: literature of escape and literature of interpretation.**Laurence Perrine, in story and structure, provides a thorough discussion on the two categories; accordingly, what follows is adapted from his work.

Escape literature is that written purely for entertainment-to help us pass the time agreeably. Interpretive literature is written to broaden and deepen and sharpen our awareness of life. Escape literature takes us away from the real world: it enables us temporarily to forget our troubles. Interpretive literature takes us, through the imagination, deeper in to the real world: it enables us to understand our troubles. Escape literature has as its only object pleasure. Interpretive literature has as its objective pleasure plus understanding.

Having established a distinction, however, we must not exaggerate or oversimplify it. Rather than being a clear cut dichotomy, the two categories are opposite ends of a scale, the two poles between which the world of fiction spins. The difference between them doesn’t lie in the absence or presence of ‘a moral.’ The story which in all of its incidents and characters is shallow may have an impeachable moral, while the interpretive story may have no moral at all in any conventional sense. The difference doesn’t lie in the absence or presence of ‘facts.’ The historical romance may be full of historical information and yet be pure escape in its depiction of human behavior. The difference doesn’t lie in the presence or absence of an element of fantasy. The escape story may have the surface appearance of everyday reality, while the tale of seeming wildest fancy may reveal some sudden truth about life.

The difference between the two kinds of literature is deeper and more subtle than any of these distinctions. A story becomes interpretive as it illuminates some aspect of human life or behavior. An interpretive story presents us with an insight-large or small-in to the nature and conditions of our existence. It gives us a keener awareness of what it is to be a human being in a universe sometimes friendly, sometimes hostile. It helps us to understand our neighbors and ourselves.

Perhaps we can clarify the difference by suggestions. The escape writer is like an inventor who devises a contrivance for our diversion. When we push the button, for example, lights flash or bells ring. The interpretive writer is like a discoverer: he takes us out in to the midst of life and says, “Look, here is the world!” the escape writer is full of tricks and surprises. The interpretive writer takes us behind the scenes and shows us the true picture of things (in life) like in a mirror. This is not to say the interpretive writer is merely a reporter. More surely than the escape writer he shapes and gives form to his materials. But he shapes and forms them always with the intent that we may see and feel and understand them better, not for the primary purpose of furnishing entertainment.

Fiction, like food, is of different nutritive values. Some is rich in protein and vitamins; it builds bone. Some is highly agreeable to the taste but not permanently sustaining. Some may be adulterated and actually harmful to our health. Escape fiction is of the later two types. The harmless kind bears frankly on the face of it what it is. It pretends to be nothing else than pleasant diversion and never asks to be taken seriously. The second kind masquerades under the appearance of interpretation. It pretends to give a faithful treatment of life as it is, perhaps even thinks that it does so, but through its shallowness it subtly falsifies life in every line. Such fiction, taken seriously and without corrective, may give us false notions of reality and leads us to expect from experience what experience does not provide.

**Experiencing fiction**

Experiencing fiction involves reading and analyzing (studying) fiction. The experience of reading fiction is different from academic reading or reading newspapers. In many ways we tend to exclude ourselves from the immediate environment when we read fiction and live there. This is one reason why many people like to read fiction. Fortunately, analysis (study) of fiction promotes the reading of fiction by offering thoughtful criticism and insight. This results in an enjoyable experience of reading fiction.

A fictional work may or may not entirely reflect readily, but the experience of reading fiction is always unreal. This is what Scholes and others (1991: 122) assert when they say, “though fiction itself has a real existence- a book has weight and occupies space-our experience of fiction is unreal.” In other words, the experience of fiction has its parallel in dream.

Reading and experiencing fiction is as unreal as dreaming. In both reading fiction and dreaming the body is at rest; whatever we experience in fiction and dream, we experience alone-it is a solitary experience that excludes the disturbance of others. Though the body is at rest, we are mentally active. In both cases we feel, cry, laugh, are frightened, be delighted, are put in suspense, etc. However, the consequence of the events in both fiction and dream doesn’t affect us existentially. For example, if there is a gunshot or a bomb blast, we don’t get injured physically. As much as dreaming is unreal, so is the experience of reading fiction.

Studying and analyzing fiction, on their part, play the role of enhancing the experience of reading fiction generally. In athletics, the athlete passes through routine experience and repetitious practices before he/she actually experiences the final content for the gold medal. In literature, analysis, criticism and interpretation provide the same training ground as in athletics. Provide that readers, especially language learners, and critical analysis of fiction more often, they will better experience and understand fiction. Therefore, the overall purpose of discussion and study in literary matters is to prepare readers for the successful experience of fiction.

**Modes of fiction**

In the study of literature it is a common practice to categorize literary works under various modes or types. One such category involves fiction. All fictional works are made up of the combination of fact and fancy, but not all fictional works are of the same type because of that. Some fictions incorporate more ‘fact elements’ than ‘fancy elements’ and others more ‘fancy elements’ than ‘fact elements’. Accordingly, we have two major mode of fiction, namelyRealism and Romance. Nevertheless, this distinction, or any other categorization of this sort, is not to be regarded as a hard line dividing all fictional works into two tangible categories, but rather as a relative and convenient way to broaden our understanding of the concept of fiction.

There are two substantial ways by which fiction is related to life. In the first place it resembles life when it is more of fact. In the second place it differs from life when it is more of fancy. Understood this way, it is easy to recognize two modes of fiction- those that resembles life (Realism) and those that differ from life (Romance).

Similar to what has been said about the division between realism and romance, the division between fact and fancy should be seen in relative way. For instance, though we generally take history as an example of fact (past reality), we still find in it some unrealistic, therefore, fanciful elements. To be exact, various documents of the same historical event usually render, to some extent, sometimes to a greater extent, different accounts.

At the very least, the point view or bias or prejudice of the historian might find way to get into the material he is writing as history. By the same token, no fantasy (fancy) is completely original; it usually copies from reality to some or greater extent. Scholes and others (1991:1230) elaborate on this idea as follows:

Now only a recording angel, taking note of all the needs of men without distorting or omitting anything, could called a ‘pure’ historian. And only a kind of deity, creating a world out of this own imagination, could be called a ‘pure’ fantasist…all history recorded by men becomes fictional. All human fantasy involves some resemblance –however far-fetched- to life.

Therefore, it is invaluable in the concept of fiction to understand that fiction is the combination of historical (fact) and imaginative (fancy) materials. This can be strengthened by understanding life itself-that it is the combination of opposing variables such as good and bad, happiness, and sadness, truth and lie.

Based on the extremes of history and fantasy we can now relatively locate the two modes of fiction on a continuum staring from history, followed by realism, then romance and finally fantasy. In terms of the position they occupy, both realism and romance are found in between the two extremes -history in one of the extremes and fantasy on the other. By contrast, realism is nearer to history (fact) and farther from fantasy (fancy), and romance is nearer to fantasy (fancy) and farther from history (fact). As it were, this is very relative and convenient to describe and study fictional works as having realistic and/or romantic bent.

**Realism**

Realism is a matter of perception. Give the reality of our existence, the realistic writer is expected to have a good command of observation with the habit of interpreting even the slightest detail in life that go unnoticed by the average man. In a realistic fiction the entire content of the work is geared towards reflecting the fact of the society in which it is based. For instance, if crime and arrogance are prevalent in the youngsters of a society, its realistic fiction normally depict young characters committing crimes and behaving arrogantly. This in turn implies that the realistic writer must have mastered a great deal of knowledge and experience of the society on which his/her fiction is based. As an agent of truth, the realistic writer maintains the culture, dialect, norms, the general belief and common sense of the society.

By and large, realism is about life as it is experienced by real people. With this mental disposition, the realistic writer seeks always to give the reader a sense of the way things are. In so doing, the writer achieves some degree of objectivity in his/her work.

However, the objectivity in realism is enclosed by the subjectivity of impressions from the writer’s part. The content and material of realistic fiction is more of life-like, hence objective. The writer’s attitude and impressions about the life-like materials are his/her own, hence subjective. Consequently, even if the realistic writer is to play within the domain of objective reality, there is still a room to include subjective impressions about this reality.

Realism can be compared to journalism. In both cases there is basic intention to present things the way they are, with a minimum distortion of reality. In journalism we have, or are supposed to have, a record of a story, while in realism, we have a made-up story. In the words of Scholes and others (1991:123), “it is proper to a realistic writer to feel that a made-up structure of character and event can do better justice to the way things are than any attempt to copy reality directly.”

**Romance**

If realism is a matter of perception, romance is a matter of vision. Both perception and vision seem to entail the act of seeing. But vision is about seeing using the eye in the mind. If we look at a wall in a classroom, it is a perception (observation). If we look beyond the wall in the same room, it is vision. Thus as far as romance is a matter of vision, it is a bit way beyond the reality.

Going a little beyond reality is an act of imagination. Romance writers do not offer us their impressions about real life, but the ideas they have about real life. They rely more on imagination than observation. Their imagination reach out not to the ugliness they observe in reality, but to the beauty they create. For instance, if crime and arrogance are prevalent in the youngsters of a given society, it is a source of dissatisfaction for romantic writers. They would rather go beyond this reality and make-up a story in which there are good natured and disciplined young characters than depict it as it is.

The idea of going beyond reality in romance clearly shows ‘a distortion’ of reality. This means that in romance fiction the reality is deliberately altered, shaped and modified. Therefore, in romance, unlike reality, there is a presentation of things the way they should be or ought to be. In order to achieve this goal, the way things should be, romantic writers usually give us a polished, decorated and beautified form of the reality.

**Unit three**

**Features of short story and their analysis**

**Introduction**

The elements offiction are the building blocks artistically arranged by an author in order to make up narrative. By and large, the evaluation of a fictional work depends on the pattern and purpose assigned to these elements. It is assumed that understanding these elements an indispensable way of understanding fiction itself. The elements that are discussed in this unit include plot, character, setting, point of view, tone and style, and theme.

Plot refers to what happens in fiction. This comes as a series of events not only arranged chronologically but also in a cause and effect relationship. At the center of the events lies a conflict. The whole structure of a plot, from the explosion up to the resolution, is a kind of movement from introducing the conflict to showing the way it is resolved. With the use of various techniques of storytelling, a good plot engages the reader who ultimately responds to what happened in the story.

Speaking of plot entails character. Character refers to what happens to whom-or to whom do the events of the plot belong. Characters

+ are imaginary persons that populate a fictional work. Based on the role and personality traits assigned to different characters in the story, we can identify types of character. Major character, especially protagonists, is worth mentioning here. Protagonist is the subject of the story whom the entire plot relates about. The way each type of character is portrayed is called characterization. It is possible to evaluate the plausibility and consistency of characterization through the motivation of characters which justifies why they act and behave the way they do in the story.

In addition to plot and character, setting is an important element of fiction. It is, simply put, the world of fiction. Setting suggests where and when the plot happens and characters live. It reinforces the plot by providing the ground to influence actions and increase their credibility. Setting can also reinforce character by identifying them-who characters are implicitly indicates where and when they live or vice versa. Furthermore, setting has the important purpose of creating the mood or atmosphere of a story through the presentation of details suggestive of the sane.

A fourth element of fiction is a concern on who narrates a given story. The presence of a narrator leads us to a necessary discovery of point of view as a perspective from which a story is narrated. Usually, a narrator of fiction is identified with either a character or the author. Accordingly, have two major points of view in fiction: first person point of view and third person point of view respectively. The point of view of a story is controlling element that determines what is presented how in how in the story. Therefore, point of view may greatly influence the interpretation of a story.

Tone and style, as element of fiction, refer to the linguistic aspect. Tone (attitude) and style are that of the writer as revealed in his/her use of language. As an element of the writer’s attitude, tone can be inferred from multitude of linguistic clues in a story. Similarly, the writer’s style is determined by a close study of language use particular, sometimes personal, to a given writer. But determining style is more comprehensive in that linguistic feature such as diction, syntax, imagery, and symbol along with organizational structure should be considered. Analysis of a writer’s tone and style, finally, provides an important ground to a valid interpretation of a given story.

A writer artistically arranges the building blocks of his/her narrative with an implicit agenda conveying a message in mind. Indeed, the total effect of the foregoing elements of fiction is summed up in to making a general statement about life. This statement is the theme of a story. Theme is central to the other elements of fiction because the systematic array of plot, character, setting, point of view, tone and style is a form of persistent contribution to the theme or meaning of a story. It is up to the good reader to notice this contribution at every stage of the story and come up with a valid statement the whole story makes about life.

To sum up, the integration of these elements of fiction is what defines a novel or a short story. Thus, questioning whether a fictional work is good purports the question of integration of the elements of fiction. The question can be presented in a chain as what happens-what happens to whom-where and when does it happen to whom- from what angle is what happens to whom where and when narrated-how does the language use indicate the writer’s presentation of this narration-and finally what does the whole thing mean? Each question in the chain could be replaced by the words plot, character, setting, point of view, tone and style and theme respectively. Hence, a satisfactory answer for each question purports the integration of the elements of fiction in a given story and proves it to be a good one.

**Plot**

Roughly speaking, plot is the sum-total of the events or incidents in a story. The way these incidents are arranged is a focal point of discussion. The movement of the events in a good plot is characterized by a cause and effect relationship, apart from being arranged in a time sequence, this quality is achieved, indeed, if all the events are constructed over a strong and central conflict. In other words, the conflict as a base and the events as the walls make up the whole structure of the plot. Viewed in this way, therefore, plot is a construction which has its own structure. Plot structure in many novels and short stories is common. However, the techniques used to effect this structure might vary from story to story. Sometimes, the techniques used in some fictional works may even violate the common structure of plots. These and other related points are discussed in sub-topics below.

**Definition of technical terms**

**Conflict:** at the center of a plot, a struggle between two opposing forces that is usually resolved at the end of a story.

**Exposition**:direct statements by the writer given as introduction and background information about people, places, and situations that are crucial to the reader to understand the plot of a story.

**Narrative hook:**the pointin a short story at which the author catches readers’ attention by presenting an interesting problem or situation that begins the conflict.

**Climax**: the point of our (readers’) highest and greatest tension in the conflict at which the possible and alternative outcomes become clear.

**Movement and causality**

Plot can beunderstood as a movement-a movement from the first event to the last in a story. For the reader, there is also the movement from the first to the last page of the story. However, it is the nature of the events or incidents in the story that determine the number of pages you read. As you move from incident to incident, you observe the changes in the story. Noticing the changes between the beginning of the story and end will give you the whole movement of the plot. This in turn helps you understand and appreciate the story you have read.

Suppose that you read a certain good fictional work and you liked it so much that you want to tell it to your friends over a coffee. How are you going to tell them? Are you going to narrate each and every detail? Can you remember everything in the story? Well, what you normally do is highlight the major events in the story. You can do this easily if you have observed the movement of the plot and the major changes that happened from the beginning to the end. Thus, the movement of the plot is from and to. As a result, changes occur in the character, conflict or the general situation in the story.

Robert Scholes and others (1991:128) summarizes this point as follws:

Fiction is movement. A story is a story it tells a process of change. A person’s situation changes. Or there is changed in some way. Or our understanding of the person changes. These are the essential movements of fiction. Learning to read stories involves learning to “see” these movements, to follow them, and to interpret them.

As the plot moves, the changes in the characters or their situations happen for reasons. The story as having a good plot should also show the reason why these changes happen. To this effect, the events of a good plot are interconnected in a cause and effect relationship-causality.

Causality is what differentiates plot from traditional stories. A famous example given in most literature books to illustrate this point is presented bellow.

Case1: the king died, and then the queen died.

Case2: the king died, and then the queen died of grief.

Have you observed any difference between the two cases? In the first one, we have two events one happening after the other-the queen died after the king. The relationship between the two events is only that of time. By contrast, the second case does not only give us the time order but also the causality between the two events. The queen died not only after the king but also because of the king’s death which aroused grief in her.

Consequently, in case1 we have story only, where as in case2 we have plot also. Causality defines plot. Gordon and Kuehner (1991:1) write, “a plot is a series of actions, often presented in chronological order, but the ingredient a plot has that a story lacks is causality.” that is, plot has sequence of events like a story, but the emphasis is on causality in the events.

Clarifying the term, Robert DiYanni (2000:44) also writes, “causality is an important feature of realistic fictional plots: it simply means that one thing happens because of- as a result of-something else.” To conclude, we can define plot as a sequence of events in a story with special emphasis on causality in the sense that an event is both a result of the event before it and a cause for the event after it.

**Conflict**

A good plot is constructed over a strong and central conflict. Robert DiYanni (describes) conflict as, “struggle between opposing forces that is usually resolved by the end of the story.” The struggle between the opposing forces of the story should be gripping enough to elicit readers’ attention and put them in suspense. It usually turns out that, the stronger the conflict, the better the quality of the plot. In addition to causality, therefore, conflict determines a good plot.

Causality and conflict in a good plot are complementary. To make the matter simple, we can understand causality as the electric cable that connects the bulbs in a house and conflict as that current which runs through the cable. Only connecting the bulbs with cable does not produce light unless electric current runs through it. In the same token, only connecting the events with causality does not give us a good plot unless strong conflict runs throughout the events.

Now, let us consider the nature of conflict. If conflict in a plot refers to the struggle between opposing forces, the question will be ‘what are these opposing forces struggling about against each other?’ this leads us to the discussion of types of conflict.

Generally, conflict occurs between the major character ( the protagonist) and different forces acting against each other. These forces arise either from situations outside the major character or from within. Accordingly we have external and internal conflict.

**External conflict**

This happens when the major character in a story struggles against an external force. Instances of external force are different in their natures. But the overall possibilities include character getting in conflict against another character (character vs. another character); or character challenged by hostile environment such as mountain, desert, oceanic tide (character vs. nature); or character being opposed to society, culture, religion, rules and regulations (character vs. establishment). A case where the main character suffers from a disease which would come as an obstacle to achieve an immediate goal is also a form of external conflict.

**Internal conflict**

As the name indicates, such a conflict happens within the main character. When the character is not at peace with himself/herself, when he/she is not psychologically well, when the character is in conflict with himself/herself, that is when internal conflict happens. A typical illustration of internal conflict is when a character is bewildered by several alternatives and hence is put in dilemma. The dilemma may involve which career, religion, ideology or lifestyle to choose among many.

An important variety of internal conflict is character against his own fate. Fate, in this case, refers to the general situation of a character, usually attributes that are not welcomed by the character. These attributes are not normally earned, but given by nature or nurture. For example, if a character is not comfortable about the ethnicity, culture or color to which he belongs, he is said be in as serious internal conflict called identity crisis in psychology. If, also, a character is born to a poor family or with physical deformity and feels inferior about it, an internal conflict happens. Other such cases include a sense of failure, superstitious beliefs about the self and taking important things in life for granted.

**Plot structure**

Once considering plot as a construction, we can then discern a kind of structure or form. RobrtDiYianni (2000: 46) remarks, “if plot is the sequence of unfolding action, structure is the design or form of the completed action.” Structure gives order, proportion, and arrangement for the events of the story. It also helps to see the story as a single whole which in turn helps to get the clue to the meaning of the fictional work. The general and common parts of the plot structure of many fictional works include: exposition, narrative hook, rising action, climax and falling actions and resolution. The discussion of each part below is illustrated by a suggestion of what happens in the situation of the best player of a football team given in the beginning part of this sub-topic.

**Exposition**

Exposition” refers to the explanatory information a reader needs to comprehend the situation in the story.” ( Gordon and KKuehner; 1999: 3)

In the exposition part background information is given by the narrator. These are piece of information which are necessary or indispensable to understand the whole story. Thus, in a good fiction, the exposition usually introduces the setting in which the main character is situated. This may include the weather conditions (season), locality (city, or rural area), whereabouts (house or office or hotel room) or atmosphere (church or frightening place). These will also be coupled by the indication of the time as era, year, month, day, morning and noon or late in the night.

The exposition part of a plot may comprise crucial information about some of the characters as well. By way of introduction, the name, the age, the profession, the aspirations, physical appearance or special qualities of the major and some other characters are insinuated. The information will help the reader to have a glimpse of the character and to decide what to expect further in the story.

Introduction of the conflict-and not necessarily the dramatization of it-sometimes comes as the content of the exposition in some works. This is more appropriate if the conflict is a common and easily identifiable one. Agents of external conflict such as epidemic disease, natural disaster and social anomalies can be introduced in the exposition part of the plot.

Finally, it is good to know that most good short stories and novels present background information about setting, character and conflict in combination in the exposition part. In this way, exposition serves as a bridge, threshold, to the expanse of the dramatized events, to the whole plot.

**Narrative hook**

It is “the event that changes the situation established in the exposition and sets the conflict in motion.” (Gordon and Kuehner; 1993:3)

Narrative hook is otherwise understood as the initiating incident. It serves as a hook to catch the readers’ attention. It is usually the first event of the plot in which the conflict begins to be dramatized. If the exposition introduces the conflict, narrative hook dramatizes it, that is to sayit sets it in motion. As a result, the reader will be able to see the first instance of the problem.

That is an important distinction between exposition and narrative hook: that the former is descriptionwhereas the latter is dramatization. While providing background information, exposition informs, explains or describes. It does not involve any action or movement. By contrast, narrative hook invokes movement as a form of dramatization. That is the reason why narrative hook in a good plot is usually gripping.

By ‘narrative hook dramatizes,’ it means that dialogue and/ or action by the characters begin. It marks the beginning of characters talking and/ or acting. In the middle of the talking and the acting, we find the conflict being enacted. The talking and acting of the characters along with the enactment of the conflict gives us what we call event, the first event, the narrative hook. Understood this way, it should be easier to locate the narrative hook in a given short story.

**Rising actions**

Rising actions refer to the various episodes that occur to develop, complicate, or intensify the conflict. (ibid)

Rising actions are the process, the movement of the plot. The process takes place as the problem (conflict) that began in the narrative hook gets more and more complicated. The first instance of the conflict gives rise to a stronger development of a second, and it continues like that. An event is added upon another and the causality thereby. This leads to the fact that the greater stuff of the plot falls within the rising actions.

The relative bulk of the chains of events in the rising actions is validated by the interest created thereof. In a good short story or novel, the rising actions provide a series of interesting events that would put the reader in suspense. Suspense is an important achievement a story must work toward so as to keep the reader engaged until the end. As the events in the rising actions proceed, the curious question of what happens next would make readers stay tuned to the story. In short, as the actions rise, the suspense in the reader also rises. That marks successful rising actions.

**Climax**

Climax is “the point of greatest conflict, the emotional high point at which one of the opposing forces gains the advantage. (ibid)

We have considered narrative hook as the beginning of the conflict and rising actions as its process. Now we can consider climax as the end of that process. The conflict that began in the narrative hook and tensed in the rising actions reaches its highest point at the climax. In other words, the climax is the highest point of the conflict. As there is no point higher than the highest, we can understand climax as the end of the conflict.

Being a critical point in the plot, climax involves significant turns of events. A stories climax often requires the main character to choose some form of action that will either worsen or improve his/ her situation. As a result of the realization of the character’s critical situation, the greatest suspense is created in the reader at the climax. Moreover, the crisis at the climax makes the reader be able to guess how the story is going to end depending on the two alternatives that the major character is usually faced with at the point, to guess that the situation of the major character is not going to be the same again. For better or worth, the situation of the major character changes for good.

This change is usually so significant that the major character may experience personal revelation. This personal revelation that a character experience is sometimes referred to as epiphany. Tom Bailey (2000:123) describes epiphany as, “a magical moment, a felt moment, and the change it signals, no matter how seemingly subtle, is irrevocable.” With this sudden change, the major character decides to move on solving the conflict. In the meanwhile, the reader experiences the greatest suspense.

**Falling actions and resolution**

The events that follow the climax are referred to as falling actions. The falling actions lead to the resolution. The term resolution sometimes refers to all the events that follow the climax. But the question remains: what does really fall in the falling actions? The tensions falls; the tension that rose up to the climax falls down. The events in this part mark how the major character is dealing with the crisis at the climax. The change will begin to show up as better or worse for the major character. Eventually, the reader feels happy for the character or pities him/her for the unfavorable turning out of events.

In short story the falling action is brief. However, it dramatizes how the character has decided to solve the conflict and, most importantly, how the character is acting up on his action. At this stage the character is conscious of the consequence of his actions. This in turn leads to the resolution.

The resolution of a plot refers to actual culmination of the conflict or the end of the story itself. It comprises final events which are the logical results of the event in the climax and the reactions of the character up on it. As the logical result of all the events in the story, the resolution might be too obvious for the reader who has grasped the cause and effect relationship in the whole plot. Some fictional works, especially some short stories, hence, practically end in the falling actions or the climax.

**Techniques of storytelling**

Not allfictional works are told in a clear-cut chronological order. Fictions of style and sophistication clearly violate the common plot structure for a purpose. As a result, the arrangement of events may not come in a linear pattern. Discussing this point, Robert DiYanni (2000:45) writes:

Most stories do not exhibit such strict formality of design. A story’s climatic moment, for example, may occur simultaneously with its ending, with little or no formal resolution. Or its action may rise and fall repeatedly in a jugged and uneven pattern…

Suchunevenpatternis made possible through the use of different techniques. Flashback, frame story and foreshadowing are some of the common techniques of storytelling**.** Flashback in a story is the presentation of material that occurred before the events of the story; it interrupts the chronology and often provides important exposition. (Gordon and Kuehner; 1999:5). It involves moment in a plot from present event to an earlier one, and then back to the present event.

This moving back to earlier events disrupts the normal arrangement of events. If the events in a plot flow in a natural, chronological order as 1,2,3, or A,B,C,.., we can call it linear plot. However, the use of flash back gives us another kind of pattern (i.e.2,1,3 or B,A,C,). For instance, if a story begins from the middle event, then flashback is used to bring earlier event, and the last events may follow in a normal time sequence. Obviously, such a plot is not linear, it is rather called media’s rest. In connection to this Michael Meyer (1994:37) states, “Stories can also begin in the middle of things, the Latin term for this common plot strategy is in media’s res.”

Another plot strategy used by fiction writers is frame story. Understanding literature (page 701) frame story is defined as, “a story structure that includes the telling of a story within a story.” The frame story is other, outer story, usually echoing the theme of the inner and more important story.

Like flashback, foreshadowing is a common technique used to tell story. It gives “hints or clues that suggest or prepare the reader for events that occur later in a work.” (Gordon and Kuehner, 1999:6). The present event in a story may provide sufficient background as to what will happen in the next events. Since foreshadowing is a kind of projection to the future, we can say that it represents a movement form the present to the future unlike that of flashback.

**Suspense and surprise**

Thediscussion under the following sub-topics of plot are entirely taken from Laurence Perrine’s book, story and structure, (1966).

According to him, “suspense is that quality in a story which makes the reader ask, ‘what is going to happen next’ or ‘how will this turn out? And impels him to read on to find the answers to these questions.” Suspense is greatest when the reader’s curiosity is combined with anxiety about the fate of some sympathetic character. For instance, suspense can be created by leaving the hero hanging from the edge of a cliff or by leaving the heroine tied to the railroad tracks with the express train rapidly approaching. In murder mysteries suspense is created by the question of who committed the murder. In love stories it is created by the question, “will the boy win the girl? Or ‘will the lovers be re-united, and how? In more sophisticated stories suspense often involves not so much the question what as the question why- not ‘what will happen next?’ but ‘how is the protagonist’s behavior to be explained in terms of human personality and character?’

The form of suspense range from crude to subtle and many concern not only action but psychological considerations and moral issues. Two common devices for achieving suspense are to introduce an element of mystery-an unusual set of circumstances for which the reader craves an explanation, or to place the protagonist in a dilemma-a position in which he must choose between two courses of action.

Suspense is usually the first quality mentioned by a young reader when asked what makes a good story-and, indeed, unless a story makes us eager to keep on reading it, it can have little merit at all. A good story, like a good dinner, should furnish its pleasure as it goes, because it is amusing or well,- written or morally penetrating or because the characters are interesting to live with. Nevertheless, the importance of suspense is often over- rated. One test of a story is whether it creates a desire to read it again. The discriminating reader, therefore, while he does not disvalue suspense, may be suspicious of stories in which suspense is artificially created-by the simple withholding of vital information, for instance-or in which suspense is all there is. He will ask whether the author’s purpose has been merely to keep him guessing what will happen next or whether it has been to reveal something about experience.

Closely connected with the element of suspense in a short story is the element of surprise. If we certainly know ahead of time exactly what is going to happen in a story, and why, there can be suspense; as long as we don’t know, whatever happens comes with an element of surprise. Surprise is created when a reversal of expectation occurs-when events in the plot turn out to be different from what the reader expected. The surprise is proportional to the unexpectedness of what happens, it becomes pronounced when the story departs radically from our expectation. In the short story such radical departure is most often found in a surprise ending one which reveals a sudden new turn or twist.

As with physical action and surprise, the inexperienced reader makes heavier demand for surprise than the experienced reader. There are two way by which the legitimacy and value of a surprise ending may be judged: (1) by the fairness with which it is achieved; (2) by the purpose which it serves. If the surprise is brought about as a result of improbable coincidence or an unlikely series of small coincidences, or by planting of false clues-details whose only purpose is to mislead the reader, or through the withholding of information which the reader ought to have been given earlier in the story, or by manipulation of point of view, then we may well dismiss it as a cheap trick. Again, a surprise ending may be judged as trivial if it exists simply for its own sake-to shock or titillate the reader as is the case in much routine commercial fiction.

If, on the other hand, the ending which comes at first as a surprise seems perfectly logical and natural as we look back over the story, we may grant it as fairly achieved. The justification of a surprise ending comes when it serves to open up or to reinforce the meaning of the story. The worthwhile surprise is one which furnishes illumination, not just a reveal of expectation.

**Happy/unhappy and indeterminate ending**

Whether or not a story has a surprise ending, the beginning reader usually demands that it has a happy ending: in which the protagonist must solve his problems, defeat the villain, win the girl, ‘live happily ever after.’ A common obstacle confronting such a reader who is making his first attempt to enjoy stories of high value is that they often-though by no means always- end unhappily. He is likely to label such stories as ‘depressing’ and to complain that ‘real life has troubles enough of its own’ or, conversely, that ‘real life is seldom as unhappy as all that.’

Two justifications may be made for the unhappy ending. First, many situations in real life have unhappy endings; therefore, is fiction is to illuminate life, it must present defeat as well as triumph. For instance, in a sports-story in which there are 10 competing teams, what is the chance of success for one team? Obviously, it is only one tenth-while the remaining nine tenth is failure. In situations like this, at least, success is much less frequent than failure. Second, the unhappy ending has a peculiar value for the writer who wishes us to ponder about life. After reading a story with a happy ending, the reader is sent away feeling pleasantly about the world and ceases to think about the story searchingly. The unhappy ending, on the other hand, may cause the reader to brood over the results, to go over the story in his mind, and thus by searching out implications to get more from it.

The discriminating reader evaluates an ending, not by whether it is happy or unhappy, but by whether it is logical in terms of what precedes it and by the fullness of revelation it affords. An ending which meets these can be profoundly satisfying, whether happy or unhappy. Furthermore, to be artistically satisfying, a story need have no ending at all in the sense that its central conflict is resolved in favor of protagonist or antagonist. In real life some problems are never solved and some contests never permanently won. A story, therefore, may have an indeterminate ending, one in which no definitive conclusion is arrived at. Of course, there must be conclusion of some kind, but the conclusion need not be in terms of a resolved conflict.

**Character**

In fictional stories, something happens, and the happening is always inseparable from to whom it happens. Thus the question ‘what happens’ necessarily entails ‘what happens to whom’. The answer for the former question involves plot; the answer for the later involves character. Character is the most important element of fiction that we cannot have the possibility of one without the other. Characters are the human element of the plot and determine how the plot turns out to be. This is basically so since a good plot is plausible and complex enough in proportion to the potential dispensations of the characters.

The several characters that populate a particular fictional work do not play equally significant roles. One distinction based on this is between major and minor characters. While major characters are the focal point of a story, minor characters are designed to reveal the purposes and dramatize the actions of the major characters.

Characters are like real persons. They are not real persons, but like real persons. That means they are endowed with human qualities and behavior. A good characterization is the function of characters with all the possible similitude of humanity. It follows that though the characters are not real people, it will be inhuman of us (readers ) not to respond to their humanity.

Characters will be more lifelike on condition that their actions are guided by and consistent with their wishes and aspirations. In real life people are motivated to engage in an action by their purpose.We understand people more when we know why they do and say what they do and say. In the same token, we understand characters better when we know their motivation, their reasons behind what they do and what they say.

The four points, namely fictional people, types of characters, characterization and motivation, are discussed under this sub topic.

**Fictional people**

One of the concepts of fiction we discussed under unit one relates that fiction can be made up of historical (actual) as well as imagined events. In both cases, the characters who involve in the events are not real people. It would be a mistake to reckon characters as real, even if the plot recounts historical events as happening to historically recognized personalities. In all cases of fiction characters should be defined as *persons created for fictional purpose.*

As a corollary, though characters are never real people, they are always like real people. They are consciously endowed with human personality traits and the sense of the way real people behave, sometimes with all the minute details of demeanor and temperament. This likeness is so subtle in some good stories that we to emphasize their unreality. We have said in unit one that the experience of fiction is like a dream; the same works for characters. In support of this idea, Robert DiYanni (2000:55) states, “we might say that fictional characters posses the kind of reality that dreams have, a reality no less intense for being imagined.” If at all characters have ‘reality’, it is dream-like, equally intense, therefore, life-like. In a more realistic story, characters behave and live like ordinary people in everyday life. Realistic writers normally present characters which are psychologically plausible and events actually possible. The more realistic (and full of material from life) characters are, the more human response they command from readers. The most accomplished characters in fiction make it look-like inhuman for the reader not to emotionally respond to their humanity-their likeness to real people. Robert Scholes and others (1991:129) make an emphatic summary of the above point in the following quote.

No character in a book is a real person. Not even if he is in a history book and is called Ulysses S. grant. Characters in fiction are like real people. They are also unlike them. In realistic fiction, which includes most novels and short stories, writers have tried to emphasize the lifelikeness of their characters. This means that such writers have tried to surround these characters with details from contemporary life. And they have tried to restrict the events of their narrative to things likely to happen in ordinary life.

The last sentence in the above quote provides a view of plot in relation to character. It states that realistic writers create realistic (lifelike) characters and construct realistic (lifelike) events. In other words, they are concerned with subduing the form of their plot to the qualities of their characters. One can understand, thus, that plot is determined by characters in the sense that it contains only those actions which can successfully be put in to practice by the characters involved. For instance, a plot in which a self-actualized character easily succumbs to identity crisis is a bad plot; its flaw is inconsistency and implausibility.

 A good story is characterized by, among other things, a great deal of consistency between character and plot, even to the extent of making these two elements of action inseparable. Plot should not demand of characters to do actions which they can’t (logically) and are not supposed to (structurally). What happens in the story should be drawn from and oriented by to whom it happens. Here isRobert DiYanni’s statement (2000:55) as a closing remark for this sub topic.

Indeed, one reason we read stories is to find out what happens (to see how the plot works our), an equally compelling reason is to follow the fortunes of the characters. Plot and character, in fact, are inseparable; we are often less concerned with “what happens” than with “what happened to him or her.” We want to know not just “how did it workout,” but ‘how did it workout for them?”

**Types of characters**

A group of people in a family or social structure are distinguished by the role they play in the division of labor or the personality traits they have assumed over a period of time. Like real people, characters in fiction assume arrange of roles in the plot and varieties of personality traits in the span of the story. Accordingly, it is possible to distinguish among types of characters in fictionvis-a –vis the significance of their respective role and the quality of the typical personality traits they are endowed with in a given story.

 Conventionally, there are six very common types of characters in fiction. These include major, minor, round, flat, dynamic and static characters.

**Major character**

Is “an important figure at the center of the story’s action and theme.” Major characters are ‘major because of the dominant role they play in the entire story. For instance, most of the actions are performed by them and the conflict basically falls on them. If the main conflict of the story is a form of struggle between characters against each other, we have further two types of major characters, namely **protagonist** and **antagonists**.

**Protagonist** is the mostcentral character of a fictional story**.** The whole story is about the protagonist’s struggle against the antagonist or any opposing forces**.** The good readernormally emphasizes with the protagonist: feeling happy for success, pity for failure, criticizing weakness and flaws, admiring strength and virtue. By the time the reader is done reading, he/she has read the story of the protagonist in relation to the other characters or the conflict.

**Antagonist**in fiction is usually a major character in a sharp contrast to the protagonist. This character diametrically opposes or challenges or struggles against the protagonist. The two major characters usually stand on the opposite poles of values, beliefs and circumstances because of which the conflict arises and runs until resolved for good. However, antagonist may also be understood as a force (natural or man-made), non character, pausing a kind of obstacle in the protagonist’s onward march to achieve the set goal, taxing the protagonist to deal with it dully until it is no more.

**Minorcharacter** are characters other than the major characters whose functions are partly to illuminate the major characters. They have limited roles-roles which depend on the major characters’ situations. Minor characters are in the story for the sake of the major characters; they are not there for themselves. Needles to say that the number of times a minor character appears in a given story is bound to be relatively few. Their importance lies on the fact that whenever they appear in the story, they reveal a further piece of information, insight and background about the major characters or the general theme of the story.

**Round characters**

is a three dimensional character complex enough to be able to surprise the reader without losing credibility. The classification of characters as round and flat depend on the number of different characteristics or personality traits they are endowed with as evidence by the text of the story. Round characters, for instance, exhibit many characteristics, some consistent, others inconsistent. Particularly, the inconsistent characteristics, their contradictory aspect of the self draws on the pattern of real people’s behavior. At times, they can surprise the reader with their convincing ‘consistent inconsistencies.’ Due to their well developed personality traits, round characters are more like humans.

**Flat character**

“are flat because they exist in one dimension. ..they do not exhibit a human being’s possibilities for emotion, for action and reaction.” (Tom Bailey, 2000) a flat character in a given story exhibits only one personality trait that can be described usually by one adjective as a ‘fool’ or ‘cowardly’ or ‘liar’, and there is nothing more to it. Because of their design (though done consciously by the writer) with a singular personality trait, flat characters are right away known as they are whether they appear in the story and are unable to surprise the reader with a new turn of personality trait as round characters usually do.

**Dynamic character**

**“**is one who changes because of what happens in the plot.” (Gordon and Kuehner; 1999:97).Classifying characters as dynamic and static concerns whether or not a character changes an aspect of its personality because of the situation in the plot. If a character changes even a single personality trait as a result of the pressure from the conflict or the influence of the situation in the story, we call it dynamic character. It is self explanatory in that the change in the personality trait depicts the dynamism of the character. Eventually, the way the reader knows a dynamic character at the beginning of the story and in the end is not the same. Such a character that is known at the beginning of the story as innocent may change in to cunning, careless in to responsible or hostile in to friendly in the end of the story, because of what happens in the plot.

**Static characters**

“remain unchanged; their character is the same at the end of the story as at the beginning.” (ibid) as the name itself indicates there is no movement in the personality trait of a static character I the entire story. They are static; they don’t change. That also means their character survives and stays intact throughout in spite of the pressure and influence of what happens in the given story. For instance, a character that was innocent, careless or hostile at the beginning of the story remains the same at the end.

As a last word on this sub topic, it is important to notice that the classification of characters into six types or more doesn’t necessarily means that each type is exclusive. A major character, for example, may also be both round and dynamic at the same time. Similarly, minor characters, especially in most short stories, are also flat and static at the same time. Nevertheless, it is not advisable to identify a major character automatically as round and dynamic, or a minor character automatically as flat and static. Only thoroughly examining the aspects of each type of first and then judging accordingly would enhance the reader’s understanding of the types of characters in fiction.

**Characterization**

Characterization essentially refers to method, the method of fiction writers to create their characters. Robert DiYanni (2000:56) defines characterization as “ the means by which writers present and reveal character.” The job of the writer, in this case, is demanding. It demands creating a fictional person out of human personality traits, if not human body parts. These traits define who a particular character is. Thus, the kind of the role the writer plays in characterization is like that of a creator.

As a creator, the writer should characterize his character in the likeness of particular individuals and in the way people generally are. In real life, a person has his/her own unique qualities as an individual. At the same time, an individual person is typified as (identifies with) a member of a larger group based on race, language, locality or profession. this basic fact about real people must be drawn on character. Characterization should proceed in the vein of typifying and at the same time individualizing each character in fiction. In the following quotation, Robert Scholes and others (1991:129-130) stress this aspect of characterization.

It may be useful for us to think of character as a function of two impulses: the impulse to individualize and the impulse to typify. Great and memorable characters are the result of a powerful combination of these two impulses. We remember the special, individualizing quirks-habitual patterns of speech, action, or appearance-and we remember the way the character represents something larger than himself…in realistic fiction a character is likely to be representative of a social class, a race, a profession; or he may be a recognizable psychological type… or he may be a mixture of social and psychological qualities.

The art of characterization involves using several methods. What authors do to bring their characters to life can be discussed in two categories as direct and indirect characterization.

**Direct characterization**

The narrator brings about direct characterization in a story. One such instance is when a chunk of information is given by the narrator in summary form. The summary may include description of details, facts about a character, physical appearance as well as surface details. A description of who a character is provided in terms of apparent qualities such as appearance, status, personality, etc. in cases where the writers are also the narrators, they get into the minds of their characters and directly tells us characters’ attitudes, thoughts, wishes and values. Direct characterization may also include comments and value judgment. The writer as narrator may depict characters in a form of commentary, judging them as good or bad, or as great or weak, or as acceptable or unacceptable. Varieties of adjectives might be used for the purpose. In all these cases, direct characterization is a form of telling-telling directly something about a character.

**Indirect characterization**

Ifdirectcharacterizationis telling**,** then indirectcharacterization is showing. It is indirect because the reader has to infer the personalities of the characters from what is shown. Indirect characterization allows the reader to participate in determining whether the characters are to be viewed in a certain way along with the judgment they deserve. The writer usually shows the characters in two major ways: through dialogue and action.

In fiction the dialogue between characters are important methods of indirect characterization. As we can learn people’s behavior from what and how they talk, we can also see distinctive peculiarities of each character from the dialogues. It is up to the good reader to recognize whether the characters are earnest, honest, compassionate, clever or any from what and how they talk. However, any suggestion of indirect characterization through dialogue must be confirmed through actions too.

Consequently, the reader has to analyze the characters’ action to have a wise recognition of their characterizations. Actions show a lot about people’s temperament and behavior. Therefore, the kind of physical reaction characters exhibit is usually tantamount to the kind of personality trait they are endowed with. Many modern writers show their characters’ important traits simply through carefully selected actions in a particular situation. Moreover, the consistency (or inconsistenct) of characters in what they do in different situations can be summed up as showing who they are. In conclusion, what characters say and do as conveyed by dialogue and action are the methods by which characters are portrayed.

**Motivation**

Psychology holds that human beings are desire-driven. We need; we want; we desire, so we act. A psychologically sane person embarks on an act as a result of a certain desire from within. This desire behind an action, an impetus in the process its completion, is what is called motivation. The same psychological concept applies to characters in fiction. Motivation is an impeccable proof that characters are like real people. A good fiction justifies its characters’ actions by their motivation; in the words X.J. Kennedy (1987:73), it gives “sufficient reason to behave as they do.”

A writer of modern fiction is not at ease to throw characters into frivolous rendering of random actions. Characters will sound more human if they are made to act upon a plausible motivation. In fact, the worth of a story is partly determined by the plausibility and strength of its characters’ motivation. Further elaborating on motivation, Tom Bailey (2000:26) has this say:

In fiction, as in life, motivation is the heart and soul of any character’s action or inaction…without motivation, a character has no need to move, to act or react-enjoy, coerce, ridicule, praise, lie-and so if our characters lack strong motivation, chances are we won’t have much of a story.

In addition to making a story a plausible one, motivation provides the reader with tangible evidence to judge a character. In fully understanding characters the statement given by direct characterization and the inference made from indirect characterization may not be always enough. in real life, shocking speeches and actions by people are better understood later when the ‘why’ behind is known. For example, killing is generally understood as a bad act, but if a person kills a terrorist a minute before the terrorist throws a bomb on innocent civilians, the killer is justified by his motivation to kill the terrorist, that is to save the innocent civilians. Similarly, a reader should access the motivation for a character’s actions before passing judgment on the character. Seen in this way, therefore, motivation itself is an important aspect of characterization, of understanding and evaluating fictional characters.

**Setting**

Setting refers to the place and time of the story. In life, real people have their experiences in the world they live. In fiction the story of the characters happens in the setting. Therefore, setting is the world of the characters in a given story. It is the space-time frame in which the character-plot is imprinted.

The events of the characters can be dramatized at different levels of setting. The particulars of life experiences of people usually take place in locations (country, city, locality, and house) and period of time (year, season, occasion, day, morning or evening) which are both general and specific. This aspect of space-time frame is adopted in fiction to create a lifelike story.

Setting in fiction reveals characters’ cultural potentialities and shapes plot in a certain way. Real people are apt to act and behave in a way they are oriented by their cultures. This is also drawn on fiction. That is, characters are bound to act and behave as much as their setting allows them to. Generally, setting serves a lot of purposes, illuminating on characters and partly determining plots in fiction.

Having being introduced to the notions of setting briefly as the above note, we now go a little deeper into this element of fiction with the discussion under the following sub topics.

**The world of fiction**

Among other thing, the word ‘world’ can be understood as man and its environment in general terms. The interaction an individual person makes with the environment constitutes the biography of the person in question. When we translate this idea in to fiction, the individual person becomes character, the biography plot and the environment setting. Viewed this way, setting is the world in which characters interact.

Setting is both place and time together. Considering only ‘place’ would give a partial view of setting. One has to be clear with ‘when’ the story takes place in as much as knowing ‘where’ the actions took place. Place or location of story’s action along with the time in which it occurs is its setting. This is true even if many literature books seem to discuss setting in terms of place only. For instance, let’s take Robert DiYanni’s (2000) reflections on setting while also quoting Eudora Welty.

Place is the “conductor of all the currents of emotion and belief and moral conviction that charge out from the story.” Moreover, when the world of experience is within reach of the world of appearance, place both makes and keeps the characters real; it animates them, so much so that, as Miss Welty observes, “every story would be another story, and unrecognizable as art, if it took up its characters and plot and happened somewhere else.”

The above quotation emphasizes on the place aspect of setting. However, it doesn’t intend to exclude the time aspect of setting; it is just that the mention of place by itself necessarily entails and draws on time too. The space-time is inseparable in this respect.

**Aspects of setting**

 By aspect of setting, general and specific settings are intended in this sub topic. Let ‘s consider the first sentence of a certain novel to elaborate on the two aspects of setting. It goes, “in the times of King Alfred there lived a poor woman, whose cottage was in a remote country village, many miles from London.” In this sentence the character, i.e. the poor woman, is located in a setting mentioned in different levels. The references of the setting, especially the place, include ‘cottage,’ ‘village,’ and ‘London.’ Yet, it doesn’t mean that the poor woman lived in three different places. She lived in ‘a place.’ The place she lived in has aspects of being general and specific. ‘many miles from London’ is her general setting, where as ‘a remote country village’ and ‘cottage’ are her specific settings. These aspects of setting can be applied to fictional stories in general.

Accordingly, setting as an element of fiction, has two aspects: general and specific. The general setting of a fiction refers to larger localities such as a city, town, or establishment. Similarly, the general time also indicates an era, a period in history or contemporary times. This general aspect of a setting identifies characters culturally, socially, politically and economically. For instance, a character situated in the northern part of Ethiopia during the feudal regime of Haileselassie I can be easily identified in terms of religion, social class, values and ethics in general terms without any description from the author. Unlike many novels, in many short stories general setting is usually constant; however, it encompasses possibilities of several specific settings within the constant general setting.

Specific setting, therefore, is more important than general setting in many short stories. Events like public celebration, demonstration of festivals occur in a general setting such as city, or town. But short story, unlike novel, is hardly about public celebrations and festivals. It is normally about a few or one character in a particular place and specific time. The particular place can be one of the hotels, houses, etc, of a city. The specificity of the time may extend to early morning, late in the evening, the first day of the month, around the end of the office hours, etc.

**Purpose of describing setting**

To a greater or lesser extent, setting is consciously described in every fictional work by writers. What is the purpose of describing general and specific setting in a work? The relationship between character, plot and setting as a whole was indicated above. Some of the most important purposes of describing setting in fiction are discussed below.

**Defining character**

Characters normally act and behave in the way their general setting, their background setting, dictates them to. In real life we ask where a person is from in order to know or form an idea of who the person is. The same is usually true in fiction. In many instances what setting a character has been situated in amounts to how the character acts and behaves. This emanates from the stock of information a setting can have about a person, and hence about a character who is like a person. Setting suggests personality in terms of language, life style, general belief system, code of conduct, right and wrong, good and bad, do’s and don’ts, and many other traits. It provides the background about the quintessential nature of a character and the pattern in which it is going to act and behave. It is to be noted that it is the general setting that provides the background of the character’s general identity, and it is usually the setting in which the character has been brought up or lived for over a long period of time.

**Influencing action**

The immediate environment in which a character is newly situated can be a driving force to lead the character into particular ways of behavior and action. Such a new setting can be so powerful an influence that character may eventually behave and act contrary to what is normally expected given the background setting of the character in question. For instance, the way an average character normally acts is very likely to change if the character is situated in a parliament of state prison. In the same token, a character with rustic background may turn out to be a terrific dealer if situated in an immediate metropolitan setting like an open market. It comes as a common knowledge that some particular new settings highly influence the original personality of a person for better or worse. Parliament and state prison are already mentioned, but others include military camps, university campuses, training centers, religious orders (e.g. monastery), on-the road business (e.g. driving or conducting taxi) and so on. Due to the heavy influence such settings exert, characters may engage in actions which were not part of their personalities and have never been intended originally. Showing this is one purpose why writers describe setting in fiction. This sends a message for the good reader that if a character is acting and behaving inconsistently, the influence of the immediate setting should be taken in to consideration.

**Enhancing credibility**

Describing setting is an indispensable means by which a story gains its credibility. This specially concerns specific setting. Just a mention of a specific setting, like in traditional stories, would not be convincing in a modern story. A detailed description of a specific setting where important events of the plot happen is a mark of a good story. Detailed description enables the reader to realize and experience the complete weight of events in a story.

No reader would appreciate what he/she has not sensed to a degree. If an important event happens in an obscure specific setting, it is likely to be doubtful and unconvincing. This is because an important qualifier of the event, that is the full picture of its specific setting, is missing. Let ‘s imagine, for example, great lovers met after three years of separation since one of them went abroad and just returned, and they decided to say at the Sheraton hotel for the whole night. Let’s also say this event is described as follows:

The two lovers hurried to the Sheraton hotel and lodged one of the rooms there for the night. They were eager to quench their thirst for romance. They entered the room and had a very good time for the whole night. In the morning, they left Sheraton.

The above example predominantly lacks details description. The event is important for the lovers, but there is no enough description to support it. Let alone the details of the night-long romance, the details of the Sheraton room is not given. Normally, readers would like to know what a room at Sheraton looks likes, including size, color, quality of furniture, lightening system, etc. no detail of the kind is given. As a result, the credibility, believability of the fact the two lovers stayed at the Sheraton becomes doubtful or unconvincing.

**Contributing to the mood**

Most writers come with description of setting that agrees to the mood or atmosphere of their respective stories. For instance, a ghost story normally assumes a ghostly atmosphere by creating a mood of horror. A description of setting which is full of darkness, weird sounds and scary objects, then, would significantly contribute to bring about the mood of horror in such a story. Generally, the presentation and description appropriate setting materializes the proper mood of a given story.

In addition to contributing to the mood, setting also facilitates the recognition of the story’s message. In other words, setting description serves as an important clue to the theme of q story a whole. For example, in a story, where the communication of the gloomy side of life is intended, a gloomy description of setting can be used. This may take the form of frequenting foggy weather condition, dirty and stinking environment, disorganized and broken furniture and the like. Such a description is likely to create a sense of (a mood of) disgust in the reader who may ultimately state the theme of that story as something like ‘life is detestable.’ In this way setting can draw on the dramatization of the theme of a given story.

**Symbol and irony**

The discussion under this topic is entirely from Laurence Perrine’s **story and structure**, 1966.

Most successful stories are characterized by compression. The short story writer’s aim is to say as much as possible as briefly as possible. This doesn’t mean that most good stories are brief. it means only that nothing is wasted and that each word and detail are chosen for maximum effectiveness. The force of an explosion is proportionate to the strength and amount of power used and the smallness of space it is confined in.

The writer achieves compression by exercising a rigid selectivity. He chooses those details and incidents which contribute most to the meaning he is after; he omits those whose fullness is minimal. As far as possible he chooses details which are multi-valued-which serve a variety of purposes at once. A detail which expresses character at the same time that it advances the plot is more useful than a detail which does only one or the other.

Symbol and irony are two elements of fiction which are contributory resources of the writer for achieving compression. Both of them may increase the explosive force of a story, but both demand awareness and maturity on the part of the reader.

A literary symbol is something which means more than what it is. It is an object, a person, a situation, an action, or some other item, which has a literal meaning in the story but suggests or represents some other meaning as well. In some stories symbols will fit so naturally in to the literal context that their symbolic value will not at first be apparent except to the most perceptive reader. In other stories-usually stories with a less realistic surface-they will be so central and so obvious that they will demand symbolical interpretation if the story is to yield significant meaning. In the first kind of story the symbols reinforce and add to the meaning. In the second kind of story they carry the meaning.

The ability to recognize and identify symbols requires perception and tact. Te great danger facing the student when he first becomes aware of symbolical values is a tendency to run wild-to find symbols everywhere and to read in to the details of a story all sorts of fanciful meanings not legitimately supported by it. The ability to interpret symbols is nevertheless essential for a full understanding of literature. The beginning reader should be alert for symbolical meanings, but should observe the following cautions:

The story itself must furnish a clue that a detail is to be taken symbolically.

The meaning of a literary symbol must be established and supported by the entire context of the story. The symbol has its meaning in the story, not outside of it.

To be called a symbol, an item must suggest a meaning different in kind from its literal meaning; a symbol is more than a representative of a class or type.

A symbol may have more than one meaning. It may suggest a cluster of meaning. At its most effective a symbol is like a many-faceted jewel: it flashes different colors when turned into the light.

**Irony**

Is a term with a range of meanings, all of them involving some sort of discrepancy or incongruity. It is a contrast in which one term of contrast in some way mocks the other term. It is not to be confused with sarcasm, however, which is simply language, designed to cause pain. The story writer uses irony to suggest the complexity of experience, to furnish indirectly an evaluation of his material, and at the same time to achieve compression.

Three kinds of irony may be distinguished here: verbal irony, dramatic irony and irony of situation.

**Verbal irony**, the simplest and, for the story writer, the least important kind, is a figure of speech in which the opposite is said from what is intended. The discrepancy is between what is said and what is meant. Thus verbal irony may be a way of saying two contradictory things at once, both true but in different senses.

**In dramatic irony**

The contrast is between what a character says and thinks and what the reader knows to be true. The value of this kind of irony lies in the comment it implies on the speaker and his expectation.

**Irony of situation**

Usually the most important kind for the story writer, the discrepancy is between appearance and reality, or between expectation and fulfillment, or between what is said and what would seem appropriate.

In all these three kinds irony enables the author to gain power with economy. Like symbolism, irony makes it possible to suggest meanings without stating them. Simply by juxtaposing two discordant facts in the right direction, the writer can start a current of meaning flowing between them, as between two poles in an electric battery. We don’t need to be told a kind of irony used makes this or that meaning; the ironic contrast itself generates meaning.

**Assignment**

**Read the short stories below and analyze each of them based on the given questions.**

1. Write the plot summary of the story by a paragraph.
2. Where do the story’s insight moment, climax, resolution and denouements “begin?
3. In what kinds of conflicts the story is developed/ how the characters are motivated or affected by either internal (psychological, spiritual), external (familial, social, natural etc.)?
4. Who is the protagonist of the story and what is/are the most important characteristics/ personality/trait of the main character? Does any of the character change during the story? How is this change brought about?
5. How does the setting impact the developments of the story and contribute to the overall theme of the story?
6. Is there any symbol, irony or allegorical nature?
7. Discuss the mood/atmosphere and the tone of the story and the ending of the story?

**Consider the language, the structure and logicalness of your assignment, and it should be supported by extracts from the story.**

**The Necklace**

**By: Guy de Mumpassant**

She was one of those pretty and charming girls born, as though fate had blundered over her, into a family of artisans. She had no marriage portion, no expectations, no means of getting known, understood, loved, and wedded by a man of wealth and distinction; and she let herself be married off to a little clerk in the Ministry of Education. Her tastes were simple because she had never been able to afford any other, but she was as unhappy as though she had married beneath her; for women have no caste or class, their beauty, grace, and charm serving them for birth or family, their natural delicacy, their instinctive elegance, their nimbleness of wit, are their only mark of rank, and put the slum girl on a level with the highest lady in the land.

     She suffered endlessly, feeling herself born for every delicacy and luxury. She suffered from the poorness of her house, from its mean walls, worn chairs, and ugly curtains. All these things, of which other women of her class would not even have been aware, tormented and insulted her. The sight of the little Breton girl who came to do the work in her little house aroused heart-broken regrets and hopeless dreams in her mind. She imagined silent antechambers, heavy with Oriental tapestries, lit by torches in lofty bronze sockets, with two tall footmen in knee-breeches sleeping in large arm-chairs, overcome by the heavy warmth of the stove. She imagined vast saloons hung with antique silks, exquisite pieces of furniture supporting priceless ornaments, and small, charming, perfumed rooms, created just for little parties of intimate friends, men who were famous and sought after, whose homage roused every other woman's envious longings.

     When she sat down for dinner at the round table covered with a three-days-old cloth, opposite her husband, who took the cover off the soup-tureen, exclaiming delightedly: "Aha! Scotch broth! What could be better?" she imagined delicate meals, gleaming silver, tapestries peopling the walls with folk of a past age and strange birds in faery forests; she imagined delicate food served in marvellous dishes, murmured gallantries, listened to with an inscrutable smile as one trifled with the rosy flesh of trout or wings of asparagus chicken.

     She had no clothes, no jewels, nothing. And these were the only things she loved; she felt that she was made for them. She had longed so eagerly to charm, to be desired, to be wildly attractive and sought after.

     She had a rich friend, an old school friend whom she refused to visit, because she suffered so keenly when she returned home. She would weep whole days, with grief, regret, despair, and misery.

One evening her husband came home with an exultant air, holding a large envelope in his hand.

     "Here's something for you," he said.

     Swiftly she tore the paper and drew out a printed card on which were these words:

     "The Minister of Education and Madame Ramponneau request the pleasure of the company of Monsieur and Madame Loisel at the Ministry on the evening of Monday, January the 18th."

     Instead of being delighted, as her husband hoped, she flung the invitation petulantly across the table, murmuring:

     "What do you want me to do with this?"

     "Why, darling, I thought you'd be pleased. You never go out, and this is a great occasion. I had tremendous trouble to get it. Every one wants one; it's very select, and very few go to the clerks. You'll see all the really big people there."

     She looked at him out of furious eyes, and said impatiently: "And what do you suppose I am to wear at such an affair?"

     He had not thought about it; he stammered:

     "Why, the dress you go to the theatre in. It looks very nice, to me . . ."

     He stopped, stupefied and utterly at a loss when he saw that his wife was beginning to cry. Two large tears ran slowly down from the corners of her eyes towards the corners of her mouth.

     "What's the matter with you? What's the matter with you?" he faltered.

     But with a violent effort she overcame her grief and replied in a calm voice, wiping her wet cheeks:

     "Nothing. Only I haven't a dress and so I can't go to this party. Give your invitation to some friend of yours whose wife will be turned out better than I shall."

     He was heart-broken.

     "Look here, Mathilde," he persisted. "What would be the cost of a suitable dress, which you could use on other occasions as well, something very simple?"

     She thought for several seconds, reckoning up prices and also wondering for how large a sum she could ask without bringing upon herself an immediate refusal and an exclamation of horror from the careful-minded clerk.

     At last she replied with some hesitation:

     "I don't know exactly, but I think I could do it on four hundred francs."

     He grew slightly pale, for this was exactly the amount he had been saving for a gun, intending to get a little shooting next summer on the plain of Nanterre with some friends who went lark-shooting there on Sundays.

     Nevertheless he said: "Very well. I'll give you four hundred francs. But try and get a really nice dress with the money."

     The day of the party drew near, and Madame Loisel seemed sad, uneasy and anxious. Her dress was ready, however. One evening her husband said to her:

     "What's the matter with you? You've been very odd for the last three days."

     "I'm utterly miserable at not having any jewels, not a single stone, to wear," she replied. "I shall look absolutely no one. I would almost rather not go to the party."

     "Wear flowers," he said. "They're very smart at this time of the year. For ten francs you could get two or three gorgeous roses."

     She was not convinced.

     "No . . . there's nothing so humiliating as looking poor in the middle of a lot of rich women."

     "How stupid you are!" exclaimed her husband. "Go and see Madame Forestier and ask her to lend you some jewels. You know her quite well enough for that."

     She uttered a cry of delight.

     "That's true. I never thought of it."

     Next day she went to see her friend and told her her trouble.

     Madame Forestier went to her dressing-table, took up a large box, brought it to Madame Loisel, opened it, and said:

     "Choose, my dear."

     First she saw some bracelets, then a pearl necklace, then a Venetian cross in gold and gems, of exquisite workmanship. She tried the effect of the jewels before the mirror, hesitating, unable to make up her mind to leave them, to give them up. She kept on asking:

     "Haven't you anything else?"

     "Yes. Look for yourself. I don't know what you would like best."

     Suddenly she discovered, in a black satin case, a superb diamond necklace; her heart began to beat covetously. Her hands trembled as she lifted it. She fastened it round her neck, upon her high dress, and remained in ecstasy at sight of herself.

     Then, with hesitation, she asked in anguish:

     "Could you lend me this, just this alone?"

     "Yes, of course."

     She flung herself on her friend's breast, embraced her frenziedly, and went away with her treasure. The day of the party arrived. Madame Loisel was a success. She was the prettiest woman present, elegant, graceful, smiling, and quite above herself with happiness. All the men stared at her, inquired her name, and asked to be introduced to her. All the Under-Secretaries of State were eager to waltz with her. The Minister noticed her.

     She danced madly, ecstatically, drunk with pleasure, with no thought for anything, in the triumph of her beauty, in the pride of her success, in a cloud of happiness made up of this universal homage and admiration, of the desires she had aroused, of the completeness of a victory so dear to her feminine heart.

     She left about four o'clock in the morning. Since midnight her husband had been dozing in a deserted little room, in company with three other men whose wives were having a good time. He threw over her shoulders the garments he had brought for them to go home in, modest everyday clothes, whose poverty clashed with the beauty of the ball-dress. She was conscious of this and was anxious to hurry away, so that she should not be noticed by the other women putting on their costly furs.

     Loisel restrained her.

     "Wait a little. You'll catch cold in the open. I'm going to fetch a cab."

     But she did not listen to him and rapidly descended the staircase. When they were out in the street they could not find a cab; they began to look for one, shouting at the drivers whom they saw passing in the distance.

     They walked down towards the Seine, desperate and shivering. At last they found on the quay one of those old nightprowling carriages which are only to be seen in Paris after dark, as though they were ashamed of their shabbiness in the daylight.

     It brought them to their door in the Rue des Martyrs, and sadly they walked up to their own apartment. It was the end, for her. As for him, he was thinking that he must be at the office at ten.

     She took off the garments in which she had wrapped her shoulders, so as to see herself in all her glory before the mirror. But suddenly she uttered a cry. The necklace was no longer round her neck!

     "What's the matter with you?" asked her husband, already half undressed.

     She turned towards him in the utmost distress.

     "I . . . I . . . I've no longer got Madame Forestier's necklace. . . ."

     He started with astonishment.

     "What! . . . Impossible!"

     They searched in the folds of her dress, in the folds of the coat, in the pockets, everywhere. They could not find it.

     "Are you sure that you still had it on when you came away from the ball?" he asked.

     "Yes, I touched it in the hall at the Ministry."

     "But if you had lost it in the street, we should have heard it fall."

     "Yes. Probably we should. Did you take the number of the cab?"

     "No. You didn't notice it, did you?"

     "No."

     They stared at one another, dumbfounded. At last Loisel put on his clothes again.

     "I'll go over all the ground we walked," he said, "and see if I can't find it."

     And he went out. She remained in her evening clothes, lacking strength to get into bed, huddled on a chair, without volition or power of thought.

     Her husband returned about seven. He had found nothing.

     He went to the police station, to the newspapers, to offer a reward, to the cab companies, everywhere that a ray of hope impelled him.

     She waited all day long, in the same state of bewilderment at this fearful catastrophe.

     Loisel came home at night, his face lined and pale; he had discovered nothing.

     "You must write to your friend," he said, "and tell her that you've broken the clasp of her necklace and are getting it mended. That will give us time to look about us."

     She wrote at his dictation.

By the end of a week they had lost all hope.

     Loisel, who had aged five years, declared:

     "We must see about replacing the diamonds."

     Next day they took the box which had held the necklace and went to the jewellers whose name was inside. He consulted his books.

     "It was not I who sold this necklace, Madame; I must have merely supplied the clasp."

     Then they went from jeweller to jeweller, searching for another necklace like the first, consulting their memories, both ill with remorse and anguish of mind.

     In a shop at the Palais-Royal they found a string of diamonds which seemed to them exactly like the one they were looking for. It was worth forty thousand francs. They were allowed to have it for thirty-six thousand.

     They begged the jeweller not to sell it for three days. And they arranged matters on the understanding that it would be taken back for thirty-four thousand francs, if the first one were found before the end of February.

     Loisel possessed eighteen thousand francs left to him by his father. He intended to borrow the rest.

     He did borrow it, getting a thousand from one man, five hundred from another, five louis here, three louis there. He gave notes of hand, entered into ruinous agreements, did business with usurers and the whole tribe of money-lenders. He mortgaged the whole remaining years of his existence, risked his signature without even knowing if he could honour it, and, appalled at the agonising face of the future, at the black misery about to fall upon him, at the prospect of every possible physical privation and moral torture, he went to get the new necklace and put down upon the jeweller's counter thirty-six thousand francs.

     When Madame Loisel took back the necklace to Madame Forestier, the latter said to her in a chilly voice:

     "You ought to have brought it back sooner; I might have needed it."

     She did not, as her friend had feared, open the case. If she had noticed the substitution, what would she have thought? What would she have said? Would she not have taken her for a thief?

Madame Loisel came to know the ghastly life of abject poverty. From the very first she played her part heroically. This fearful debt must be paid off. She would pay it. The servant was dismissed. They changed their flat; they took a garret under the roof.

     She came to know the heavy work of the house, the hateful duties of the kitchen. She washed the plates, wearing out her pink nails on the coarse pottery and the bottoms of pans. She washed the dirty linen, the shirts and dish-cloths, and hung them out to dry on a string; every morning she took the dustbin down into the street and carried up the water, stopping on each landing to get her breath. And, clad like a poor woman, she went to the fruiterer, to the grocer, to the butcher, a basket on her arm, haggling, insulted, fighting for every wretched halfpenny of her money.

     Every month notes had to be paid off, others renewed, time gained.

     Her husband worked in the evenings at putting straight a merchant's accounts, and often at night he did copying at twopence-halfpenny a page.

     And this life lasted ten years.

     At the end of ten years everything was paid off, everything, the usurer's charges and the accumulation of superimposed interest.

     Madame Loisel looked old now. She had become like all the other strong, hard, coarse women of poor households. Her hair was badly done, her skirts were awry, her hands were red. She spoke in a shrill voice, and the water slopped all over the floor when she scrubbed it. But sometimes, when her husband was at the office, she sat down by the window and thought of that evening long ago, of the ball at which she had been so beautiful and so much admired.

     What would have happened if she had never lost those jewels. Who knows? Who knows? How strange life is, how fickle! How little is needed to ruin or to save!

     One Sunday, as she had gone for a walk along the Champs-Elysees to freshen herself after the labours of the week, she caught sight suddenly of a woman who was taking a child out for a walk. It was Madame Forestier, still young, still beautiful, still attractive.

     Madame Loisel was conscious of some emotion. Should she speak to her? Yes, certainly. And now that she had paid, she would tell her all. Why not?

     She went up to her.

     "Good morning, Jeanne."

     The other did not recognise her, and was surprised at being thus familiarly addressed by a poor woman.

     "But . . . Madame . . ." she stammered. "I don't know . . . you must be making a mistake."

     "No . . . I am Mathilde Loisel."

     Her friend uttered a cry.

     "Oh! . . . my poor Mathilde, how you have changed! . . ."

     "Yes, I've had some hard times since I saw you last; and many sorrows . . . and all on your account."

     "On my account! . . . How was that?"

     "You remember the diamond necklace you lent me for the ball at the Ministry?"

     "Yes. Well?"

     "Well, I lost it."

     "How could you? Why, you brought it back."

     "I brought you another one just like it. And for the last ten years we have been paying for it. You realise it wasn't easy for us; we had no money. . . . Well, it's paid for at last, and I'm glad indeed."

     Madame Forestier had halted.

     "You say you bought a diamond necklace to replace mine?"

     "Yes. You hadn't noticed it? They were very much alike."

     And she smiled in proud and innocent happiness.

     Madame Forestier, deeply moved, took her two hands.

     "Oh, my poor Mathilde! But mine was imitation. It was worth at the very most five hundred francs! . . . "

The Interlopers

By: [Saki](http://www.eastoftheweb.com/cgi-bin/read_db.pl?search_field=author_id&search_for=Saki&order_by=author_last,title&page=1)

In a forest of mixed growth somewhere on the eastern spurs of the Karpathians, a man stood one winter night watching and listening, as though he waited for some beast of the woods to come within the range of his vision, and, later, of his rifle. But the game for whose presence he kept so keen an outlook was none that figured in the sportsman's calendar as lawful and proper for the chase; Ulrich von Gradwitz patrolled the dark forest in quest of a human enemy.

     The forest lands of Gradwitz were of wide extent and well stocked with game; the narrow strip of precipitous woodland that lay on its outskirt was not remarkable for the game it harboured or the shooting it afforded, but it was the most jealously guarded of all its owner's territorial possessions. A famous law suit, in the days of his grandfather, had wrested it from the illegal possession of a neighbouring family of petty landowners; the dispossessed party had never acquiesced in the judgment of the Courts, and a long series of poaching affrays and similar scandals had embittered the relationships between the families for three generations. The neighbour feud had grown into a personal one since Ulrich had come to be head of his family; if there was a man in the world whom he detested and wished ill to it was Georg Znaeym, the inheritor of the quarrel and the tireless game-snatcher and raider of the disputed border-forest. The feud might, perhaps, have died down or been compromised if the personal ill-will of the two men had not stood in the way; as boys they had thirsted for one another's blood, as men each prayed that misfortune might fall on the other, and this wind-scourged winter night Ulrich had banded together his foresters to watch the dark forest, not in quest of four-footed quarry, but to keep a look-out for the prowling thieves whom he suspected of being afoot from across the land boundary. The roebuck, which usually kept in the sheltered hollows during a storm-wind, were running like driven things to-night, and there was movement and unrest among the creatures that were wont to sleep through the dark hours. Assuredly there was a disturbing element in the forest, and Ulrich could guess the quarter from whence it came.

     He strayed away by himself from the watchers whom he had placed in ambush on the crest of the hill, and wandered far down the steep slopes amid the wild tangle of undergrowth, peering through the tree trunks and listening through the whistling and skirling of the wind and the restless beating of the branches for sight and sound of the marauders. If only on this wild night, in this dark, lone spot, he might come across Georg Znaeym, man to man, with none to witness - that was the wish that was uppermost in his thoughts. And as he stepped round the trunk of a huge beech he came face to face with the man he sought.

     The two enemies stood glaring at one another for a long silent moment. Each had a rifle in his hand, each had hate in his heart and murder uppermost in his mind. The chance had come to give full play to the passions of a lifetime. But a man who has been brought up under the code of a restraining civilisation cannot easily nerve himself to shoot down his neighbour in cold blood and without word spoken, except for an offence against his hearth and honour. And before the moment of hesitation had given way to action a deed of Nature's own violence overwhelmed them both. A fierce shriek of the storm had been answered by a splitting crash over their heads, and ere they could leap aside a mass of falling beech tree had thundered down on them. Ulrich von Gradwitz found himself stretched on the ground, one arm numb beneath him and the other held almost as helplessly in a tight tangle of forked branches, while both legs were pinned beneath the fallen mass. His heavy shooting-boots had saved his feet from being crushed to pieces, but if his fractures were not as serious as they might have been, at least it was evident that he could not move from his present position till some one came to release him. The descending twig had slashed the skin of his face, and he had to wink away some drops of blood from his eyelashes before he could take in a general view of the disaster. At his side, so near that under ordinary circumstances he could almost have touched him, lay Georg Znaeym, alive and struggling, but obviously as helplessly pinioned down as himself. All round them lay a thick- strewn wreckage of splintered branches and broken twigs.

     Relief at being alive and exasperation at his captive plight brought a strange medley of pious thank-offerings and sharp curses to Ulrich's lips. Georg, who was early blinded with the blood which trickled across his eyes, stopped his struggling for a moment to listen, and then gave a short, snarling laugh.

     "So you're not killed, as you ought to be, but you're caught, anyway," he cried; "caught fast. Ho, what a jest, Ulrich von Gradwitz snared in his stolen forest. There's real justice for you!"

     And he laughed again, mockingly and savagely.

     "I'm caught in my own forest-land," retorted Ulrich. "When my men come to release us you will wish, perhaps, that you were in a better plight than caught poaching on a neighbour's land, shame on you."

     Georg was silent for a moment; then he answered quietly:

     "Are you sure that your men will find much to release? I have men, too, in the forest to-night, close behind me, and THEY will be here first and do the releasing. When they drag me out from under these damned branches it won't need much clumsiness on their part to roll this mass of trunk right over on the top of you. Your men will find you dead under a fallen beech tree. For form's sake I shall send my condolences to your family."

     "It is a useful hint," said Ulrich fiercely. "My men had orders to follow in ten minutes time, seven of which must have gone by already, and when they get me out - I will remember the hint. Only as you will have met your death poaching on my lands I don't think I can decently send any message of condolence to your family."

     "Good," snarled Georg, "good. We fight this quarrel out to the death, you and I and our foresters, with no cursed interlopers to come between us. Death and damnation to you, Ulrich von Gradwitz."    "The same to you, Georg Znaeym, forest-thief, game-snatcher."

     Both men spoke with the bitterness of possible defeat before them, for each knew that it might be long before his men would seek him out or find him; it was a bare matter of chance which party would arrive first on the scene.

     Both had now given up the useless struggle to free themselves from the mass of wood that held them down; Ulrich limited his endeavours to an effort to bring his one partially free arm near enough to his outer coat-pocket to draw out his wine-flask. Even when he had accomplished that operation it was long before he could manage the unscrewing of the stopper or get any of the liquid down his throat. But what a Heaven-sent draught it seemed! It was an open winter, and little snow had fallen as yet, hence the captives suffered less from the cold than might have been the case at that season of the year; nevertheless, the wine was warming and reviving to the wounded man, and he looked across with something like a throb of pity to where his enemy lay, just keeping the groans of pain and weariness from crossing his lips.

     "Could you reach this flask if I threw it over to you?" asked Ulrich suddenly; "there is good wine in it, and one may as well be as comfortable as one can. Let us drink, even if to-night one of us dies." "No, I can scarcely see anything; there is so much blood caked round my eyes," said Georg, "and in any case I don't drink wine with an enemy."

     Ulrich was silent for a few minutes, and lay listening to the weary screeching of the wind. An idea was slowly forming and growing in his brain, an idea that gained strength every time that he looked across at the man who was fighting so grimly against pain and exhaustion. In the pain and languor that Ulrich himself was feeling the old fierce hatred seemed to be dying down.

     "Neighbour," he said presently, "do as you please if your men come first. It was a fair compact. But as for me, I've changed my mind. If my men are the first to come you shall be the first to be helped, as though you were my guest. We have quarrelled like devils all our lives over this stupid strip of forest, where the trees can't even stand upright in a breath of wind. Lying here to-night thinking I've come to think we've been rather fools; there are better things in life than getting the better of a boundary dispute. Neighbour, if you will help me to bury the old quarrel I - I will ask you to be my friend."

     Georg Znaeym was silent for so long that Ulrich thought, perhaps, he had fainted with the pain of his injuries. Then he spoke slowly and in jerks.

     "How the whole region would stare and gabble if we rode into the market-square together. No one living can remember seeing a Znaeym and a von Gradwitz talking to one another in friendship. And what peace there would be among the forester folk if we ended our feud to-night. And if we choose to make peace among our people there is none other to interfere, no interlopers from outside ... You would come and keep the Sylvester night beneath my roof, and I would come and feast on some high day at your castle ... I would never fire a shot on your land, save when you invited me as a guest; and you should come and shoot with me down in the marshes where the wildfowl are. In all the countryside there are none that could hinder if we willed to make peace. I never thought to have wanted to do other than hate you all my life, but I think I have changed my mind about things too, this last half-hour. And you offered me your wineflask ... Ulrich von Gradwitz, I will be your friend."

     For a space both men were silent, turning over in their minds the wonderful changes that this dramatic reconciliation would bring about. In the cold, gloomy forest, with the wind tearing in fitful gusts through the naked branches and whistling round the tree-trunks, they lay and waited for the help that would now bring release and succour to both parties. And each prayed a private prayer that his men might be the first to arrive, so that he might be the first to show honourable attention to the enemy that had become a friend.

     Presently, as the wind dropped for a moment, Ulrich broke silence.

     "Let's shout for help," he said; he said; "in this lull our voices may carry a little way."

     "They won't carry far through the trees and undergrowth," said Georg, "but we can try. Together, then."

     The two raised their voices in a prolonged hunting call.

     "Together again," said Ulrich a few minutes later, after listening in vain for an answering halloo.

     "I heard nothing but the pestilential wind," said Georg hoarsely.

     There was silence again for some minutes, and then Ulrich gave a joyful cry.

     "I can see figures coming through the wood. They are following in the way I came down the hillside."

     Both men raised their voices in as loud a shout as they could muster.

     "They hear us! They've stopped. Now they see us. They're running down the hill towards us," cried Ulrich.

     "How many of them are there?" asked Georg.

     "I can't see distinctly," said Ulrich; "nine or ten,"

     "Then they are yours," said Georg; "I had only seven out with me."

     "They are making all the speed they can, brave lads," said Ulrich gladly.

     "Are they your men?" asked Georg. "Are they your men?" he repeated impatiently as Ulrich did not answer.

     "No," said Ulrich with a laugh, the idiotic chattering laugh of a man unstrung with hideous fear.

     "Who are they?" asked Georg quickly, straining his eyes to see what the other would gladly not have seen.

 “Wolves”

**The Cask of Amontillado**

***By: Edgar Allan Poe***

THE thousand injuries of Fortunato I had borne as I best could, but when he ventured upon insult I vowed revenge. You, who so well know the nature of my soul, will not suppose, however, that gave utterance to a threat. At length I would be avenged; this was a point definitely, settled --but the very definitiveness with which it was resolved precluded the idea of risk. I must not only punish but punish with impunity. A wrong is unredressed when retribution overtakes its redresser. It is equally unredressed when the avenger fails to make himself felt as such to him who has done the wrong.

It must be understood that neither by word nor deed had I given Fortunato cause to doubt my good will. I continued, as was my wont, to smile in his face, and he did not perceive that my smile *now* was at the thought of his immolation.

He had a weak point -- this Fortunato -- although in other regards he was a man to be respected and even feared. He prided himself on his connoisseurship in wine. Few Italians have the true virtuoso spirit. For the most part their enthusiasm is adopted to suit the time and opportunity, to practise imposture upon the British and Austrian millionaires. In painting and gemmary, Fortunato, like his countrymen, was a quack, but in the matter of old wines he was sincere. In this respect I did not differ from him materially; --I was skilful in the Italian vintages myself, and bought largely whenever I could.

It was about dusk, one evening during the supreme madness of the carnival season, that I encountered my friend. He accosted me with excessive warmth, for he had been drinking much. The man wore motley. He had on a tight-fitting parti-striped dress, and his head was surmounted by the conical cap and bells. I was so pleased to see him that I thought I should never have done wringing his hand.

I said to him --"My dear Fortunato, you are luckily met. How remarkably well you are looking to-day. But I have received a pipe of what passes for Amontillado, and I have my doubts."
"How?" said he. "Amontillado, A pipe? Impossible! And in the middle of the carnival!"
"I have my doubts," I replied; "and I was silly enough to pay the full Amontillado price without consulting you in the matter. You were not to be found, and I was fearful of losing a bargain."
"Amontillado!"
"I have my doubts."
"Amontillado!"
"And I must satisfy them."
"Amontillado!"
"As you are engaged, I am on my way to Luchresi. If any one has a critical turn it is he. He will tell me --"
"Luchresi cannot tell Amontillado from Sherry."
"And yet some fools will have it that his taste is a match for your own.
"Come, let us go."
"Whither?"
"To your vaults."
"My friend, no; I will not impose upon your good nature. I perceive you have an engagement. Luchresi--"
"I have no engagement; --come."
"My friend, no. It is not the engagement, but the severe cold with which I perceive you are afflicted. The vaults are insufferably damp. They are encrusted with nitre."

"Let us go, nevertheless. The cold is merely nothing. Amontillado! You have been imposed upon. And as for Luchresi, he cannot distinguish Sherry from Amontillado."

Thus speaking, Fortunato possessed himself of my arm; and putting on a mask of black silk and drawing a roquelaire closely about my person, I suffered him to hurry me to my palazzo.

There were no attendants at home; they had absconded to make merry in honour of the time. I had told them that I should not return until the morning, and had given them explicit orders not to stir from the house. These orders were sufficient, I well knew, to insure their immediate disappearance, one and all, as soon as my back was turned.

I took from their sconces two flambeaux, and giving one to Fortunato, bowed him through several suites of rooms to the archway that led into the vaults. I passed down a long and winding staircase, requesting him to be cautious as he followed. We came at length to the foot of the descent, and stood together upon the damp ground of the catacombs of the Montresors.

The gait of my friend was unsteady, and the bells upon his cap jingled as he strode.

"The pipe," he said.
"It is farther on," said I; "but observe the white web-work which gleams from these cavern walls."

He turned towards me, and looked into my eyes with two filmy orbs that distilled therheum of intoxication.
"Nitre?" he asked, at length.
"Nitre," I replied. "How long have you had that cough?"
"Ugh! ugh! ugh! --ugh! ugh! ugh! --ugh! ugh! ugh! --ugh! ugh! ugh! --ugh! ugh! ugh!"

My poor friend found it impossible to reply for many minutes.

"It is nothing," he said, at last.

"Come," I said, with decision, "we will go back; your health is precious. You are rich, respected, admired, beloved; you are happy, as once I was. You are a man to be missed. For me it is no matter. We will go back; you will be ill, and I cannot be responsible. Besides, there is Luchresi --"

"Enough," he said; "the cough's a mere nothing; it will not kill me. I shall not die of a cough."

"True --true," I replied; "and, indeed, I had no intention of alarming you unnecessarily --but you should use all proper caution. A draught of this Medoc will defend us from the damps.

Here I knocked off the neck of a bottle which I drew from a long row of its fellows that lay upon the mould.

"Drink," I said, presenting him the wine.

He raised it to his lips with a leer. He paused and nodded to me familiarly, while his bells jingled.

"I drink," he said, "to the buried that repose around us."
"And I to your long life."
He again took my arm, and we proceeded.
"These vaults," he said, "are extensive."
"The Montresors," I replied, "were a great and numerous family."
"I forget your arms."
"A huge human foot d'or, in a field azure; the foot crushes a serpent rampant whose fangs are imbedded in the heel."
"And the motto?"
"Nemo me impunelacessit."
"Good!" he said.

The wine sparkled in his eyes and the bells jingled. My own fancy grew warm with the Medoc. We had passed through long walls of piled skeletons, with casks and puncheons intermingling, into the inmost recesses of the catacombs. I paused again, and this time I made bold to seize Fortunato by an arm above the elbow.

"The nitre!" I said; "see, it increases. It hangs like moss upon the vaults. We are below the river's bed. The drops of moisture trickle among the bones. Come, we will go back ere it is too late. Your cough --"

"It is nothing," he said; "let us go on. But first, another draught of the Medoc."

I broke and reached him a flagon of De Grave. He emptied it at a breath. His eyes flashed with a fierce light. He laughed and threw the bottle upwards with a gesticulation I did not understand.

I looked at him in surprise. He repeated the movement --a grotesque one.
"You do not comprehend?" he said.
"Not I," I replied.
"Then you are not of the brotherhood."
"How?"
"You are not of the masons."
"Yes, yes," I said; "yes, yes."
"You? Impossible! A mason?"
"A mason," I replied.
"A sign," he said, "a sign."
"It is this," I answered, producing from beneath the folds of my roquelaire a trowel.

"You jest," he exclaimed, recoiling a few paces. "But let us proceed to the Amontillado."

"Be it so," I said, replacing the tool beneath the cloak and again offering him my arm. He leaned upon it heavily. We continued our route in search of the Amontillado. We passed through a range of low arches, descended, passed on, and descending again, arrived at a deep crypt, in which the foulness of the air caused our flambeaux rather to glow than flame.

At the most remote end of the crypt there appeared another less spacious. Its walls had been lined with human remains, piled to the vault overhead, in the fashion of the great catacombs of Paris. Three sides of this interior crypt were still ornamented in this manner. From the fourth side the bones had been thrown down, and lay promiscuously upon the earth, forming at one point a mound of some size. Within the wall thus exposed by the displacing of the bones, we perceived a still interior crypt or recess, in depth about four feet, in width three, in height six or seven. It seemed to have been constructed for no especial use within itself, but formed merely the interval between two of the colossal supports of the roof of the catacombs, and was backed by one of their circumscribing walls of solid granite.

It was in vain that Fortunato, uplifting his dull torch, endeavoured to pry into the depth of the recess. Its termination the feeble light did not enable us to see.

"Proceed," I said; "herein is the Amontillado. As for Luchresi --"
"He is an ignoramus," interrupted my friend, as he stepped unsteadily forward, while I followed immediately at his heels. In an instant he had reached the extremity of the niche, and finding his progress arrested by the rock, stood stupidly bewildered. A moment more and I had fettered him to the granite. In its surface were two iron staples, distant from each other about two feet, horizontally. From one of these depended a short chain, from the other a padlock. Throwing the links about his waist, it was but the work of a few seconds to secure it. He was too much astounded to resist. Withdrawing the key I stepped back from the recess.

"Pass your hand," I said, "over the wall; you cannot help feeling the nitre. Indeed, it is very damp. Once more let me implore you to return. No? Then I must positively leave you. But I must first render you all the little attentions in my power."
"The Amontillado!" ejaculated my friend, not yet recovered from his astonishment.
"True," I replied; "the Amontillado."

As I said these words I busied myself among the pile of bones of which I have before spoken. Throwing them aside, I soon uncovered a quantity of building stone and mortar. With these materials and with the aid of my trowel, I began vigorously to wall up the entrance of the niche.

I had scarcely laid the first tier of the masonry when I discovered that the intoxication of Fortunato had in a great measure worn off. The earliest indication I had of this was a low moaning cry from the depth of the recess. It was not the cry of a drunken man. There was then a long and obstinate silence. I laid the second tier, and the third, and the fourth; and then I heard the furious vibrations of the chain. The noise lasted for several minutes, during which, that I might hearken to it with the more satisfaction, I ceased my labours and sat down upon the bones. When at last the clanking subsided, I resumed the trowel, and finished without interruption the fifth, the sixth, and the seventh tier. The wall was now nearly upon a level with my breast. I again paused, and holding the flambeaux over the mason-work, threw a few feeble rays upon the figure within.

A succession of loud and shrill screams, bursting suddenly from the throat of the chained form, seemed to thrust me violently back. For a brief moment I hesitated, I trembled. Unsheathing my rapier, I began to grope with it about the recess; but the thought of an instant reassured me. I placed my hand upon the solid fabric of the catacombs, and felt satisfied. I reapproached the wall; I replied to the yells of him who clamoured. I re-echoed, I aided, I surpassed them in volume and in strength. I did this, and the clamourer grew still.

It was now midnight, and my task was drawing to a close. I had completed the eighth, the ninth and the tenth tier. I had finished a portion of the last and the eleventh; there remained but a single stone to be fitted and plastered in. I struggled with its weight; I placed it partially in its destined position. But now there came from out the niche a low laugh that erected the hairs upon my head. It was succeeded by a sad voice, which I had difficulty in recognizing as that of the noble Fortunato. The voice said--
"Ha! ha! ha! --he! he! he! --a very good joke, indeed --an excellent jest. We will have many a rich laugh about it at the palazzo --he! he! he! --over our wine --he! he! he!"
"The Amontillado!" I said.
"He! he! he! --he! he! he! --yes, the Amontillado. But is it not getting late? Will not they be awaiting us at the palazzo, the Lady Fortunato and the rest? Let us be gone."
"Yes," I said, "let us be gone."
"For the love of God, Montresor!"
"Yes," I said, "for the love of God!"
But to these words I hearkened in vain for a reply. I grew impatient. I called aloud --
"Fortunato!"
No answer. I called again --
"Fortunato!"
No answer still. I thrust a torch through the remaining aperture and let it fall within. There came forth in return only a jingling of the bells. My heart grew sick; it was the dampness of the catacombs that made it so. I hastened to make an end of my labour. I forced the last stone into its position; I plastered it up. Against the new masonry I re-erected the old rampart of bones. For the half of a century no mortal has disturbed them. In pace requiescat!

# The Tell-Tale Heart

By Edgar Allan Poe

TRUE! - nervous - very, very dreadfully nervous I had been and am; but why will you say that I am mad? The disease had sharpened my senses - not destroyed - not dulled them. Above all was the sense of hearing acute. I heard all things in the heaven and in the earth. I heard many things in hell. How, then, am I mad? Hearken! and observe how healthily - how calmly I can tell you the whole story.It is impossible to say how first the idea entered my brain; but once conceived, it haunted me day and night. Object there was none. Passion there was none. I loved the old man. He had never wronged me. He had never given me insult. For his gold I had no desire. I think it was his eye! yes, it was this! He had the eye of a vulture - a pale blue eye, with a film over it. Whenever it fell upon me, my blood ran cold; and so by degrees - very gradually - I made up my mind to take the life of the old man, and thus rid myself of the eye forever.

Now this is the point. You fancy me mad. Madmen know nothing. But you should have seen me. You should have seen how wisely I proceeded - with what caution - with what foresight - with what dissimulation I went to work! I was never kinder to the old man than during the whole week before I killed him. And every night, about midnight, I turned the latch of his door and opened it - oh so gently! And then, when I had made an opening sufficient for my head, I put in a dark lantern, all closed, closed, that no light shone out, and then I thrust in my head. Oh, you would have laughed to see how cunningly I thrust it in! I moved it slowly - very, very slowly, so that I might not disturb the old man's sleep. It took me an hour to place my whole head within the opening so far that I could see him as he lay upon his bed. Ha! would a madman have been so wise as this, And then, when my head was well in the room, I undid the lantern cautiously-oh, so cautiously - cautiously (for the hinges creaked) - I undid it just so much that a single thin ray fell upon the vulture eye. And this I did for seven long nights - every night just at midnight - but I found the eye always closed; and so it was impossible to do the work; for it was not the old man who vexed me, but his Evil Eye. And every morning, when the day broke, I went boldly into the chamber, and spoke courageously to him, calling him by name in a hearty tone, and inquiring how he has passed the night. So you see he would have been a very profound old man, indeed, to suspect that every night, just at twelve, I looked in upon him while he slept.

Upon the eighth night I was more than usually cautious in opening the door. A watch's minute hand moves more quickly than did mine. Never before that night had I felt the extent of my own powers - of my sagacity. I could scarcely contain my feelings of triumph. To think that there I was, opening the door, little by little, and he not even to dream of my secret deeds or thoughts. I fairly chuckled at the idea; and perhaps he heard me; for he moved on the bed suddenly, as if startled. Now you may think that I drew back - but no. His room was as black as pitch with the thick darkness, (for the shutters were close fastened, through fear of robbers,) and so I knew that he could not see the opening of the door, and I kept pushing it on steadily, steadily.

I had my head in, and was about to open the lantern, when my thumb slipped upon the tin fastening, and the old man sprang up in bed, crying out - "Who's there?"

I kept quite still and said nothing. For a whole hour I did not move a muscle, and in the meantime I did not hear him lie down. He was still sitting up in the bed listening; - just as I have done, night after night, hearkening to the death watches in the wall.

Presently I heard a slight groan, and I knew it was the groan of mortal terror. It was not a groan of pain or of grief - oh, no! - it was the low stifled sound that arises from the bottom of the soul when overcharged with awe. I knew the sound well. Many a night, just at midnight, when all the world slept, it has welled up from my own bosom, deepening, with its dreadful echo, the terrors that distracted me. I say I knew it well. I knew what the old man felt, and pitied him, although I chuckled at heart. I knew that he had been lying awake ever since the first slight noise, when he had turned in the bed. His fears had been ever since growing upon him. He had been trying to fancy them causeless, but could not. He had been saying to himself - "It is nothing but the wind in the chimney - it is only a mouse crossing the floor," or "It is merely a cricket which has made a single chirp." Yes, he had been trying to comfort himself with these suppositions: but he had found all in vain. All in vain; because Death, in approaching him had stalked with his black shadow before him, and enveloped the victim. And it was the mournful influence of the unperceived shadow that caused him to feel - although he neither saw nor heard - to feel the presence of my head within the room.

When I had waited a long time, very patiently, without hearing him lie down, I resolved to open a little - a very, very little crevice in the lantern. So I opened it - you cannot imagine how stealthily, stealthily - until, at length a simple dim ray, like the thread of the spider, shot from out the crevice and fell full upon the vulture eye.

It was open - wide, wide open - and I grew furious as I gazed upon it. I saw it with perfect distinctness - all a dull blue, with a hideous veil over it that chilled the very marrow in my bones; but I could see nothing else of the old man's face or person: for I had directed the ray as if by instinct, precisely upon the damned spot.

And have I not told you that what you mistake for madness is but over-acuteness of the sense? - now, I say, there came to my ears a low, dull, quick sound, such as a watch makes when enveloped in cotton. I knew that sound well, too. It was the beating of the old man's heart. It increased my fury, as the beating of a drum stimulates the soldier into courage.

But even yet I refrained and kept still. I scarcely breathed. I held the lantern motionless. I tried how steadily I could maintain the ray upon the eye. Meantime the hellish tattoo of the heart increased. It grew quicker and quicker, and louder and louder every instant. The old man's terror must have been extreme! It grew louder, I say, louder every moment! - do you mark me well I have told you that I am nervous: so I am. And now at the dead hour of the night, amid the dreadful silence of that old house, so strange a noise as this excited me to uncontrollable terror. Yet, for some minutes longer I refrained and stood still. But the beating grew louder, louder! I thought the heart must burst. And now a new anxiety seized me - the sound would be heard by a neighbour! The old man's hour had come! With a loud yell, I threw open the lantern and leaped into the room. He shrieked once - once only. In an instant I dragged him to the floor, and pulled the heavy bed over him. I then smiled gaily, to find the deed so far done. But, for many minutes, the heart beat on with a muffled sound. This, however, did not vex me; it would not be heard through the wall. At length it ceased. The old man was dead. I removed the bed and examined the corpse. Yes, he was stone, stone dead. I placed my hand upon the heart and held it there many minutes. There was no pulsation. He was stone dead. His eve would trouble me no more.

If still you think me mad, you will think so no longer when I describe the wise precautions I took for the concealment of the body. The night waned, and I worked hastily, but in silence. First of all I dismembered the corpse. I cut off the head and the arms and the legs.

I then took up three planks from the flooring of the chamber, and deposited all between the scantlings. I then replaced the boards so cleverly, so cunningly, that no human eye - not even his - could have detected anything wrong. There was nothing to wash out - no stain of any kind - no blood-spot whatever. I had been too wary for that. A tub had caught all - ha! ha!

When I had made an end of these labors, it was four o'clock - still dark as midnight. As the bell sounded the hour, there came a knocking at the street door. I went down to open it with a light heart, - for what had I now to fear? There entered three men, who introduced themselves, with perfect suavity, as officers of the police. A shriek had been heard by a neighbour during the night; suspicion of foul play had been aroused; information had been lodged at the police office, and they (the officers) had been deputed to search the premises.

I smiled, - for what had I to fear? I bade the gentlemen welcome. The shriek, I said, was my own in a dream. The old man, I mentioned, was absent in the country. I took my visitors all over the house. I bade them search - search well. I led them, at length, to his chamber. I showed them his treasures, secure, undisturbed. In the enthusiasm of my confidence, I brought chairs into the room, and desired them here to rest from their fatigues, while I myself, in the wild audacity of my perfect triumph, placed my own seat upon the very spot beneath which reposed the corpse of the victim.

The officers were satisfied. My manner had convinced them. I was singularly at ease. They sat, and while I answered cheerily, they chatted of familiar things. But, ere long, I felt myself getting pale and wished them gone. My head ached, and I fancied a ringing in my ears: but still they sat and still chatted. The ringing became more distinct: - It continued and became more distinct: I talked more freely to get rid of the feeling: but it continued and gained definiteness - until, at length, I found that the noise was not within my ears.

No doubt I now grew very pale; - but I talked more fluently, and with a heightened voice. Yet the sound increased - and what could I do? It was a low, dull, quick sound - much such a sound as a watch makes when enveloped in cotton. I gasped for breath - and yet the officers heard it not. I talked more quickly - more vehemently; but the noise steadily increased. I arose and argued about trifles, in a high key and with violent gesticulations; but the noise steadily increased. Why would they not be gone? I paced the floor to and fro with heavy strides, as if excited to fury by the observations of the men - but the noise steadily increased. Oh God! what could I do? I foamed - I raved - I swore! I swung the chair upon which I had been sitting, and grated it upon the boards, but the noise arose over all and continually increased. It grew louder - louder - louder! And still the men chatted pleasantly, and smiled. Was it possible they heard not? Almighty God! - no, no! They heard! - they suspected! - they knew! - they were making a mockery of my horror!-this I thought, and this I think. But anything was better than this agony! Anything was more tolerable than this derision! I could bear those hypocritical smiles no longer! I felt that I must scream or die! and now - again! - hark! louder! louder! louder! louder!

"Villains!"I shrieked, "dissemble no more! I admit the deed! - tear up the planks! here, here! - It is the beating of his hideous heart!"