CREATIVE WRITING ESSENTIALS

Characterization:

Round or Individual - characters who recognize, change with, or adjust to circumstances. Complex and many-sided, they touch life at many points. The round character—usually the main figure in a story—profits from experience, is altered by circumstances, and undergoes a change or alteration, which may be shown in action, the realization of new strength and therefore the affirmation of previous decisions, the acceptance of a new condition, or the discovery of heretofore unrecognized truths. Round (or dynamic) characters generally fall into one of two categories:

* Protagonist: central to the action, moves against an antagonist and exhibits the ability to adapt to new circumstances. The central character in a story.
* Antagonist: any force in a story that is in conflict with the protagonist. An antagonist may be another person, an aspect of the physical or social environment, or a destructive element in the protagonist's own nature.

Flat or Static: characters who do not grow, who end where they begin, who are static. Flat characters usually highlight the development of round characters and are usually minor (although not all minor characters are necessarily flat). They can be characterized by one or two traits, summed up in a sentence.

Narrator: (Narrative voice)

The voice and implied speaker of a fictional work, to be distinguished from the actual living author. For example, the narrator of Joyce's "Araby" is not James Joyce himself, but a literary fictional character created expressly to tell the story. Types of narrative voice are:

First Person:
This person is the kind that uses the "I" narrator. As a reader, you can only experience the story through the person's eyes. So you won't know anything about the people or events that this character hasn't personally experienced.

     1. The Protagonist: Relatively straightforward, this is a story the hero narrates. He'll narrate the same way he talks, but with more description and perhaps better grammar. The reader is privy to all his thoughts and opinions, which means we get to know the hero faster, and often relate to him more easily.

2. **The Secondary Character:** Someone close to the protagonist, but not the main hero. The same things in the above type apply to this type, but the focus of the story moves away from the narrator.

Third Person:

The third person is the most common point of view used in fiction writing and is the traditional form for academic writing. Authors of novels and composers of papers use "he," "she," or "it" when referring to a person, place, thing, or idea.

1. **Third person omniscient:** This type knows all, peeking into the lives of major and minor characters, reading everyone's thoughts. This enables the writer to explore multiple facets of the story in depth. Cornelia Funke's *Inkheart* trilogy, for example.

2. **Third person limited:** This type knows only what the main character, or characters, know. This is more restrictive, but increases suspense and intrigue, because the reader only solves the mystery at the same time the characters do.*1984*, by George Orwell, is a good example.

PLOT :

The plot is how the author arranges events to develop his basic idea; it is the sequence of events in a story or play. The plot is a planned, logical series of events having a beginning, middle, and end. The short story usually has one plot so it can be read in one sitting. There are five essential parts of plot:

a) **Introduction** - The beginning of the story where the characters and the setting is revealed.

b) **Rising Action** - This is where the events in the story become complicated and the conflict in the story is revealed (events between the introduction and climax).

c) **Climax** - This is the highest point of interest and the turning point of the story. The reader wonders what will happen next; will the conflict be resolved or not?

d) **Falling action** - The events and complications begin finding resolution (events between climax and denouement).

e) **Denouement** - This is the final outcome or untangling of events in the story.

It is helpful to consider climax as a three-fold phenomenon:

1) the main character *receives* new information

2) *accepts* this information (realizes it but does not necessarily agree with it

3) *acts* on this information (makes a choice that will determine whether or not he/she gains his objective).

CONFLICT:

Conflict is essential to plot. Without conflict there is no plot. It is the opposition of forces which ties one incident to another and makes the plot move. Conflict is not merely limited to open arguments; rather it is any form of opposition that faces the main character. Within a short story there may be only one central struggle, or there may be one dominant struggle with many minor ones. There are two types of conflict:

1) **External** - A struggle with a force outside one's self.

2) **Internal** - A struggle within one's self; a person must make some decision, overcome pain, quiet their temper, resist an urge, etc.

There are four kinds of conflict:

1) **Man vs. Man (physical)** - The leading character struggles with his physical strength against other men, forces of nature, or animals.

2) **Man vs. Circumstances (classical)** - The leading character struggles against fate, or the circumstances of life facing him/her. (nature, the actions of others, uncontrollable events, etc.

3) **Man vs. Society (social)** - The leading character struggles against ideas, practices, or customs of other people.

4) **Man vs. Himself/Herself (psychological)** - The leading character struggles with himself/herself; with his/her own soul, ideas of right or wrong, physical limitations, choices, etc.

THEME :

The theme in a piece of fiction is its *controlling idea or its central insight*. It is the author's underlying meaning or main idea that he is trying to convey. The theme may be the author's thoughts about a topic or view of human nature. The title of the short story usually points to what the writer is saying and he may use various figures of speech to emphasize his theme, such as: **symbol, allusion, simile, metaphor, hyperbole, or irony**. Some simple examples of common themes from literature, TV, and film are:

       1) Things are not always as they appear to be

       2) Love is blind

       3) Believe in yourself

       4) People are afraid of change