

Narrative and storytelling terms

Find important terms and their matching definitions to know when working with aspects of narrative and storytelling, including:

- Narrative elements
- Character dynamics and conflict
- Plot development

Narrative elements

Term	Description
Plot	The sequence of events that make up the story – these include exposition, rising action, conflict, climax, falling action, and resolution. See Plot development terms on next page.
Point of view	The perspective from which the story is told. i.e., first person, third person, etc.
Setting	The environment in which the story takes place.
Theme	The story’s underlying message. A theme is often bigger than the story itself and relates to higher ideals related to life or human nature. The story is often a metaphor for the theme. The theme is what the story is truly about.

Character dynamics and conflict

Term	Description
Antagonist	The principal person, object or thing that is in direct opposition to the <i>protagonist</i> .
Dynamic character	A character that changes throughout the story.
External conflict	The struggle between the character and an external force. This could be another character, a natural phenomenon, society, a group, etc.
Internal conflict	The struggle that occurs within a character’s mind. The character must deal with and overcome opposing feelings/desires/thoughts.
Protagonist	The character involved in the central <i>conflict</i> of the story. It is their actions/choices that move the action/story forward.
Static character	A character that doesn’t change through the story.

Plot development

Term	Description
Climax	The <i>turning point</i> , or the most decisive moment in the story where the <i>protagonist</i> takes action or makes decisions about the <i>conflict</i> , which results in a change. It is the most dramatic part of the story.
Conflict	The problem or hurdle the <i>protagonist(s)</i> must overcome. It is the internal or external struggle between opposite forces in the story.
Exposition	The introduction or beginning of the plot. It sets up characters and settings and may include the key <i>conflict</i> or complication.
Falling action	The result of the climatic decision and follows from the <i>climax</i> . It eases the suspense, action, and tension as the story begins to follow its satisfactory <i>resolution</i> .
Resolution	Also known as Denouement (from French, derived from 'to untie'). This is where the story comes to a reasonable conclusion, and the <i>conflict</i> is resolved.
Rising action	The building of tension, suspense and action as the <i>conflict(s)</i> and complication(s) increase.
Turning point	A point in which the decisions are made or actions are taken that change the course of the story – for better or for worse. There can be more than one within a story.