

# Notes: Story Elements

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A **character** is a person, animal, or object that an author uses in telling a story. Characters can be real or make-believe. Just like you, characters have problems, wants, feelings, and thoughts. To learn about the characters in a story, pay attention to what they say and do. Ask yourself the following questions:

## What traits does the character have?

A **trait** is an interesting thing about a character. It makes a character special. A trait could be the way a character looks or acts. Words like "funny," "fast," "strong," or "smart" describe traits.

*Example: Freddie is a tall boy with black hair. He likes to eat ice cream.*

## What relationships does the character have?

A **relationship** is a connection between people. This can mean characters are friends, family, or schoolmates.

*Example: Bea and Carolina are sisters. They are also best friends. They always do everything together.*

## Why does the character do something?

It is important to know why characters do things. Characters sometimes do things because of how they feel.

*Example: Joe Bear kicked the skateboard because he was angry.*

## What problem does the character have?

Most stories are about how characters solve a problem. Look for what characters in a story are having trouble with. How do they solve their problems?

*Example: Joey's bike has flat tires. He solves his problem by putting more air in them.*

## How does the character change?

Sometimes, characters change in a story. Another character in the story may change how the main character acts.

*Example: George did not like his neighbor Kate. She never said hi to him. One day, Kate tripped and hurt her ankle. George asked Kate if she was okay and helped her get up. Now, George and Kate are best friends.*

**Setting** is a very important part of a story. The setting tells **when** and **where** the story happens. It is the time period and place in which a story occurs.

The setting of *The Little Mermaid* is the sea. Sometimes, the setting can cover many different times and places. For example, a science fiction story about time travel may take place across the deserts of the old West, in jungles filled with dinosaurs, and on a space station circling the earth—all in one story!

The main events of a story are called the **plot**. Plot is also the order of the events. The plots of most stories have five common parts: the exposition, the rising action, the climax, the falling action, and the resolution.

**Exposition:** This is the beginning of the plot. It starts off the story and lets the reader know any important information before the action starts. It introduces the characters, the setting, and the basic conflict of a story. A conflict is a problem that the characters must solve. A **conflict** can be between characters or between characters and nature.

**Rising action:** This occurs after the main conflict is introduced. It includes details about what the character does to solve his or her problem. Smaller problems or crises may occur before the climax is reached.

**Climax:** This occurs right after the rising action. It is the most intense or exciting event in the story because the character deals with the main conflict for the last time. It is also the turning point in the story. After the climax, things either get better or worse for the character.

**Falling Action:** This occurs after the climax and before the resolution. It is everything that happens because of the climax. The characters respond to what happens in the climax. This leads the reader to the conclusion of the story.

**Resolution:** This is the conclusion of the story. It ties together the whole story. It explains how the conflict is resolved and what happens to the characters after the story ends.

