ELEMENTS OF STORY II

INTRODUCTION AND REVIEW
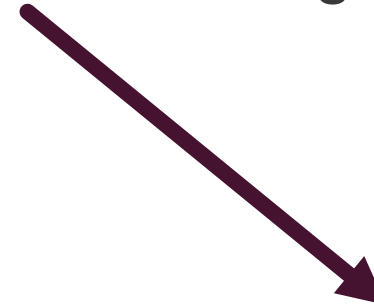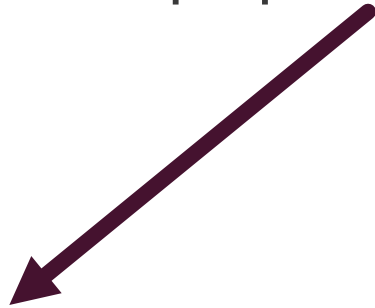
BRAINSTORM

In your groups, discuss the following question

Why do we read/tell stories?

THE PURPOSE OF STORIES

Stories combine the purpose of entertaining with that of revealing life

Interpretive   Escape

INTERPRETIVE STORIES

Interpretive stories focus on two main ideas: Theme and Character

A story gains depth and significance as the characterization becomes more developed and realistic (multi-dimensional, conflicting, like us). A story that reveals life provides us with an experience that may be significant because it may affect our understanding of ourselves and others

- Commentary of society/culture

- Makes the reader think (deeply, about life)

- Characters are less defined as "good" or "bad" but "round". Story is driven by characters rather than by plot

- Plot may be non-linear and complicated

- Ending may be ambiguous or clearly "unhappy"

ESCAPE STORIES

Generally, stories that provide an "escape" from reality

- Reading for pleasure / enjoyment

- Plot driven (exciting, action-packed, suspenseful)

- Often satisfactory or predictable endings

- A sympathetic hero/heroine (we want to be like that character sometimes)

- A theme is present but confirms the opinions already held by people (the "moral" may be obvious and, at times, cliché)

THE PURPOSE OF STORY

Note: there is nothing to prevent a story from making a serious point while being entertaining, and a story that aims chiefly to entertain can provide us with thought-provoking insights about humanity

Thinking about the **purpose** of the story is important because it leads us to think beyond surface qualities to consider meaning, value, and success of the story

YOU BE THE JUDGE!

IS IT ESCAPE OR INTERPRETIVE?

A trailer for a movie will play. When the trailer is done, discuss with your group members what qualities the film has (is it character or plot driven? Etc.) and determine which category the film is most likely to fit into

Ready?

ESCAPE AND INTERPRETIVE

Consider the general market of films – do they fit in escape or interpretive fiction?

THE PURPOSE OF STORIES

- Entertain
- Provide insight
- To question
- Present a view of life
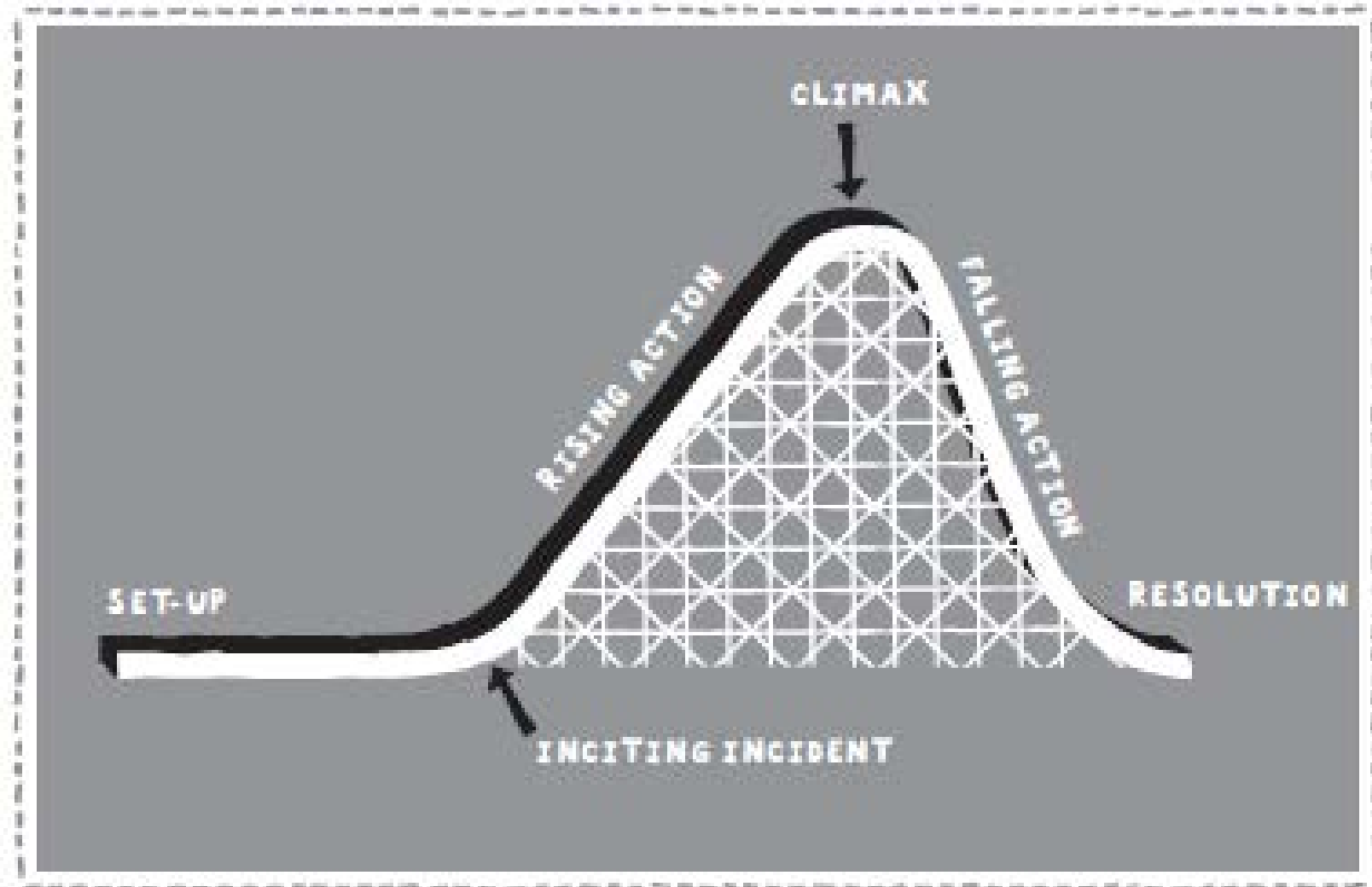- Provide a set of values

These purposes are achieved through story elements:

1. Plot
2. Setting
3. Characters
4. Themes

1. PLOT

Serves as the framework for the story with key features

1. Exposition
2. Inciting Incident
3. Rising Action
4. Climax
5. Falling Action
6. Resolution

1. PLOT

Exposition:

- Establishes the main character of the story

- The primary setting

- Gives background information necessary to story

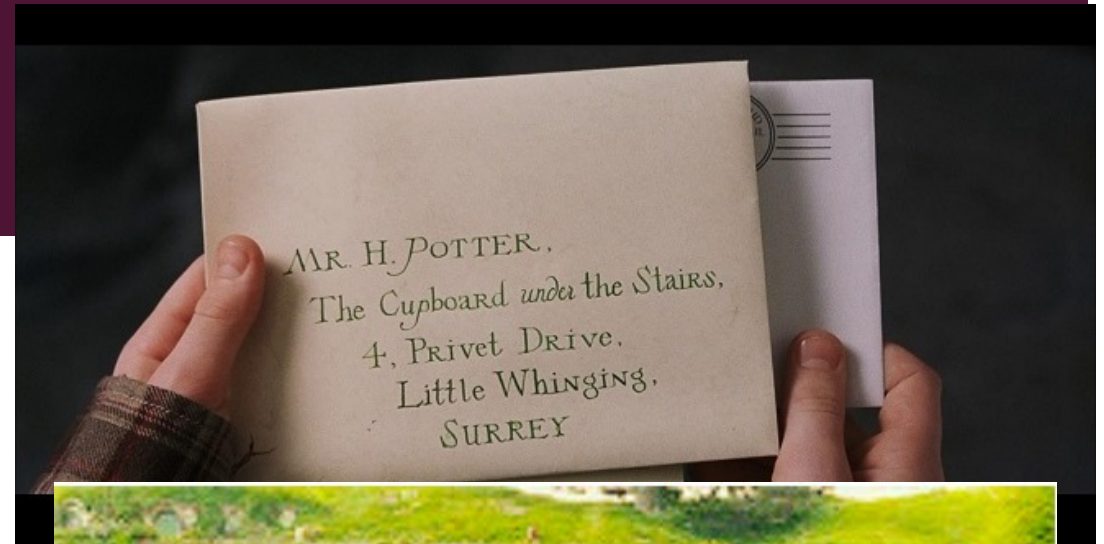- May suggest a possible ending (flashback or foreshadowing)

1. PLOT

Inciting Incident:

The "inertia" that propels the story forward

- Introduces the conflict the main character will have to face/overcome
- Without this event, the story will not take place

1. PLOT

Rising Action:

- Series of events that develop character and suspense

- Further reveals the conflict in the story

  - Conflict: the clash or fight between opposing forces/persons/ideas/emotions
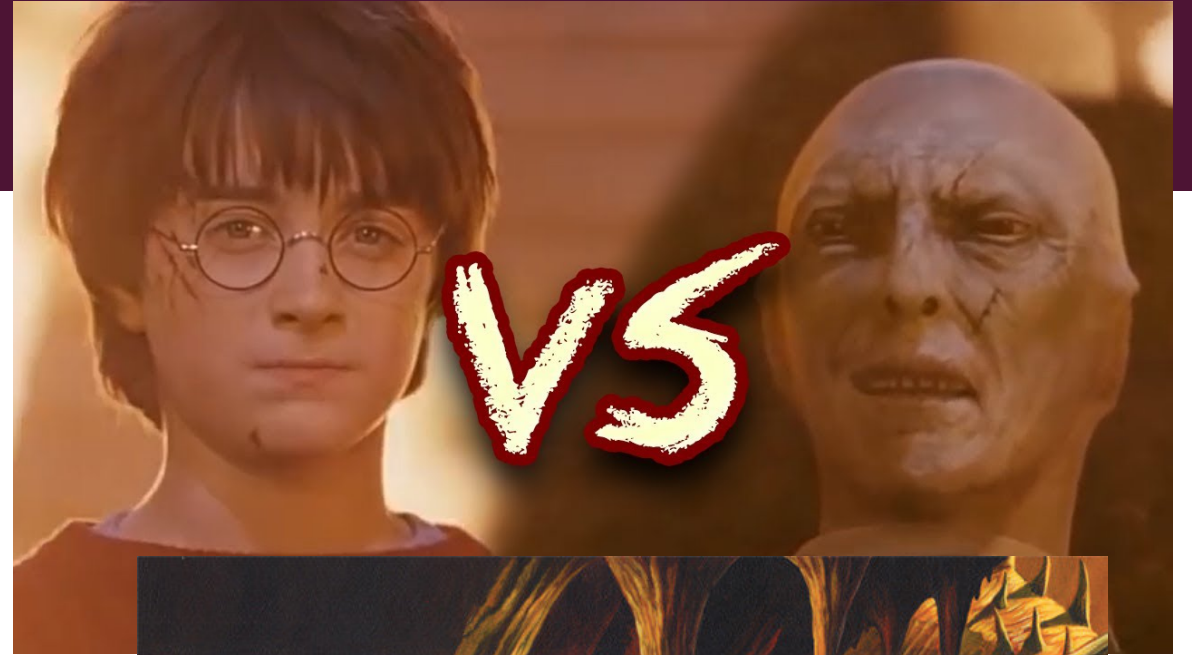
LET'S PAUSE FOR CONFLICT

Man Vs. Man

What are the different forms of conflict?

- Man vs self
- Man vs man
- Man vs nature / environment
- Man vs technology / machine
- Man vs supernatural (supernatural forces such as time)
- Man vs society (a collective group, government, accepted rules or norms)

Write down all of these forms of conflict and draw a doodle to illustrate what this conflict looks like

Which of these is internal? External?

(Internal are fears and insecurities that a protagonist has to overcome)

1. PLOT

Climax:

The conflict is faced

Falling Action or Denouement:

- What follows after the climax

- Completes any subplots (tertiary character romantic plots) or unanswered questions

- The author may not answer all – intentionally leaves the ending to the reader's imagination (open-ended story for interpretation, ex: Inception) or to conclude later (cliff-hanger "tune in for the next episode!")

1. PLOT

Resolution:

- The final paragraphs, scenes, of the story

- Brings the story to a close

- At this point, it is evident how our dynamic character has grown since the beginning of the story
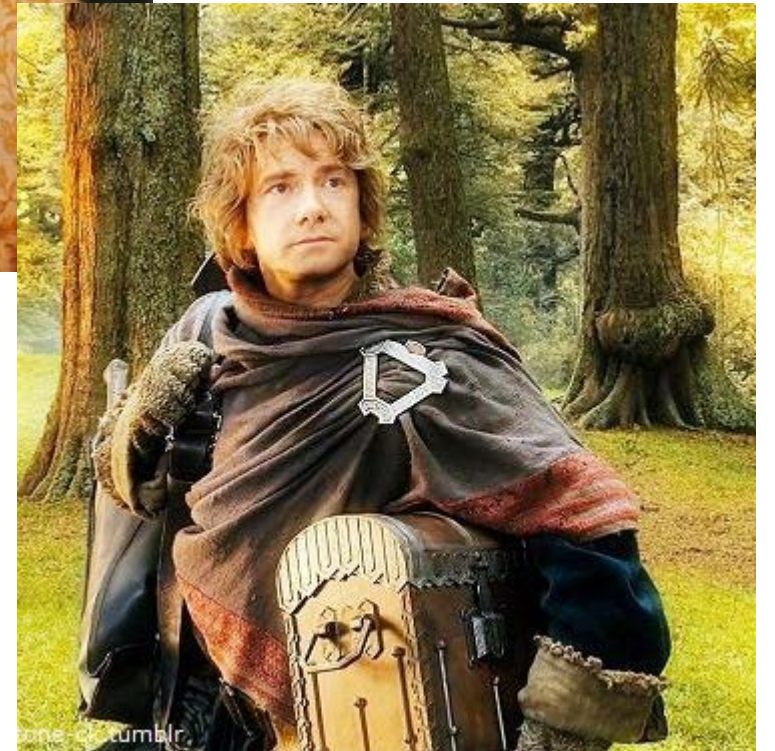
2. CHARACTER

1. Protagonist: the main character who dominates the plot of the story (action revolves around him/her/it)

2. Antagonist: the force or character in opposition to the protagonist (note: sometimes the antagonist is abstract – like in internal conflicts or may represent an idea of society)

3. Subordinate/secondary/minor character: acts as a contrast to other characters. Often in the story to reveal information

4. Stock / stereotyped character: usually a flat character, occurs so often in lit that the traits are easy to recognize (ex. Mad scientist, wicked witch or stepmother, the devout princess, etc)

5. Foil: two characters whose **traits** contrast or oppose each other. By contrast, this enhances the distinctive characteristics of another (ex. Their choices)

2. CHARACTER - PERSONALITY

Round Character

Many sides to their personality and increases in complexity throughout the story

The character is capable of contradiction (maybe they value good morals but have a tendency to be dishonest) and change with evidence of emotional and psychological development

Typically only one per story as this requires the most attention and development

Ex. Scout in To Kill a Mockingbird

Flat character

Opposite to the round

Secondary or stock characters (characters who do not have much time or development and are easy to recognize)

Exhibits strong defining characteristics and not very complicated

Does not mean they are dull or poorly written

May be symbolic

2. CHARACTER - DEVELOPMENT

Dynamic

The character undergoes substantial **internal** changes or **growth** due to plot development. The changes are key to the story's **themes**. Often not stated by the author (implied) but noticed through changes in thought, speech, behaviour.

Ex. Scout at the beg. Of TKMB is self-centered and narrow-minded, but by the end of the story she is empathetic.

Good plots often depend on a dynamic character's **growth** or **transformation**

Static

Simply put: **no significant development by the end of the story.**

Little change to character's morals, behaviour, ideas, personality, thinking

Don't undergo internal transformations or changes over the course of the story

However! This does not make them uninteresting! (Eg. Bellatrix Lestrange)

2. CHARACTER - PRESENTATION

1. Direct Characterization

    ■ The author tells the reader crucial information about the protagonist – no interpretation needed

    ■ Often given through the exposition or using another character

2. Indirect Characterization

    ■ The author <u>shows</u> the reader the character by the character's

        ■ Speech

        ■ Thoughts

        ■ Effects on others

        ■ Actions

        ■ Looks

2. CHARACTER - PRESENTATION

Note: Often authors will intertwine both direct and indirect characterization to create realistic and life-like characters

Stories are often written for the purpose of showing *human nature* through characters

2. CHARACTER – PHYSICAL AND ABSTRACT ANTAGONISTS

A physical antagonist is a living, breathing character in a novel standing in the way of the protagonists from achieving his or her goal. This does not mean they are all evil monsters. Some may stand in the way due to jealousy or misunderstanding (and, really, it is all based on perspective)

An abstract antagonist doesn't take physical form. Some protagonists face off against illness, grief, powers of a corrupt government, etc. Think of it this way – if your antagonist cannot physically kick your protagonist in the knee, he or she is probably *abstract*

But… a critical reader will notice that many *physical* antagonists represent *abstract* ideas….

2. CHARACTER – PHYSICAL AND ABSTRACT ANTAGONISTS

Some examples…

Physical Antagonist	Abstract Antagonist
A racist or intolerant character	Racism/intolerance in a community or in general
A character whose religious beliefs oppress your protagonist	A religion or all religions
A gov't official such as a dictator	A corrupt gov't
Your protagonist's evil boss	Corporations, capitalism, or the structure of companies
A character who works to make sure your character lives in poverty	Poverty or the economy in a community or in general

3. POINT OF VIEW

- The perspective from which the story is seen or told

- Establishes the relationship of author, reader, and protagonist

POV Type	Definition	Pronoun Use	Why it is important Pros/Cons	Novel Example
First Person				
Second Person				
Limited Omniscient				
Omniscient				
Objective				

3. PERSPECTIVE

Perspective Scavenger Hunt

You will complete the table (use pencil to make corrections) by building on previous knowledge (what you already know and the knowledge of your teammates) **and** by investigating novels with different perspective types

Task:

1. Within the room, find a novel/story for each perspective type

2. Note the pronouns used, consider why this perspective is important (what it does for the reader/audience, its pros and cons)

3. Write down a sample sentence from the story to demonstrate the perspective used

4. We will go over in our groups then as a class

Perspective Type	Definition	Pronoun
First Person Perspective	The narrator is a character in the story— reveals ONLY the thoughts and feelings of the narrator	I, Me, Myself, We, Us
Second Person Perspective	The reader is a character in the story (ex. Choose your own adventure)	You
Third Person Limited	the narrator is *not* a character but their knowledge is limited to that of one character. Follows the action and thoughts of one character	He, She, They
Third Person Omniscient	(All-knowing) Not a character in the story but follows the action, thoughts and feelings of *multiple* characters	He, She, They
Objective	Not a character in the story. Only reports the action and dialogue. Does not reveal the inner thoughts and feelings of characters unless they say it. Ex. A newspaper article or textbook page	He, She, They

4. THEME

Theme is: the central idea of a story that is usually **implied** rather than directly stated. It is a generalization about life that can apply to multiple stories

Theme is **not** the moral or plot of a story

4. THEME

How to find the theme:

1. Look at how the main character(s) has changed

2. Look at the central **conflict** and how the character(s) overcame that conflict

3. The story's title for clues

4. Consider 1-3 as a whole, not separately

Most importantly: use any strategies you've picked up to interpret the story, and **don't use any sources other than the story itself** – this will sway your thinking (plus, you're smarter than you think)

5. IRONY

A reversal of reasonable expectations (**not coincidence**)

1. Verbal Irony – when a contrast is evident between what a character says and what the character actually means (character says one thing but really means the opposite – sarcasm can many times be a strong example)

2. Dramatic Irony – the author/narrator shares information with the reader that other characters don't know (what is to come may be the opposite of what the character expects; the reader/audience knows more information than the character(s))

3. Situational irony – aka the irony of the situation. Occurs when a set of circumstances turns out differently from what is expected or considered appropriate (ex. A knight succumbing to his injuries from his armour; Bill Gates using an Apple computer)