

UNIVERSITY OF BISKRA
FACULTY OF LITERATURES AND FOREIGN LANGUAGES
DEVISION OF ENGLISH

Module: Literary Text

Teacher: Ben Abderrezak Abdelnacer

Lesson: *Plot*

The story is a chronological sequence (arranged in time) of events/episodes. The plot of a story need not be chronologically sequenced. The plot can rearrange the elements of the story such that (for instance) the end is narrated before the beginning. In such an instance, the plot uses the device of *flashback*. To give another example, in a detective tale, the initial action in the story is not disclosed to the reader until nearly the end, thereby producing the element of *suspense*.

The plot explores the causal connection (the link of cause to effect) between the episodes of a story.

E.M. Forster illustrated the difference between Plot and Story thus:

Story: The King died, and then the Queen died. (the question that propels the story forward is what happened next?)

Plot: The King died, and then the Queen died of grief. (The question addressed by the plot is why? how is the second event caused by the first?)

What are the constituents of Plot?

Exposition/Introduction is the information needed to understand what will happen during the time frame of a story. It usually consists of background information.

Complication is the catalyst that begins the major conflict.

Conflict: The conflict is the essence of any story; it is the conflict which creates the plot. The conflicts we encounter can usually be identified as one of two kinds:

- a) **External conflict/ the conflict is with the surrounding environment.**
- Man versus man
 - Man versus nature
 - Man versus society

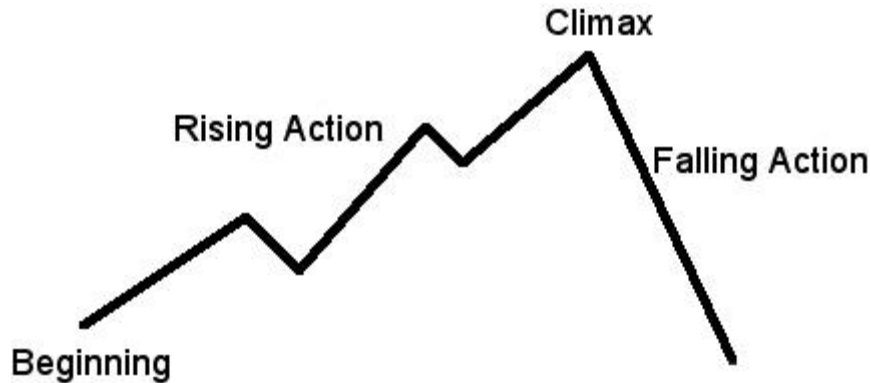
b) Internal conflict/ the conflict inside the protagonist of the story.

- Man versus himself

Climax or crisis is the turning point in the story that occurs when characters try to resolve the complication.

Resolution is the tying up of the loose ends of the story, the ending or outcome.

Epiphany: a moment of startling, sudden insight gained by the main character as a result of the unfolding of events in the story



C. Plot Techniques

1. Suspense: Frequently involves dilemma. e.g. Caught in a bad situation with a choice in a boating accident, you can save either your mother or your husband from drowning.

2. Flashback: The author waits until the story is moving and then flashes back to reveal biographical data or deep psychological reasons why a character acts as s/he does. It focuses more on why things happen, rather than on what happens.

3. Foreshadowing: The outcome of a conflict is often hinted at or "foreshadowed" before the climax and resolution. These clues are usually very subtle; you don't realize they are foreshadowing clues until you've finished the story.

Questions to ask:

- 1) Why did the author arrange the story elements the way she did? What effect did she wish the story to produce?
- 2) How does the plot control our emotional response and prepare us for reversals or surprises?
- 3) Is the plot probable?