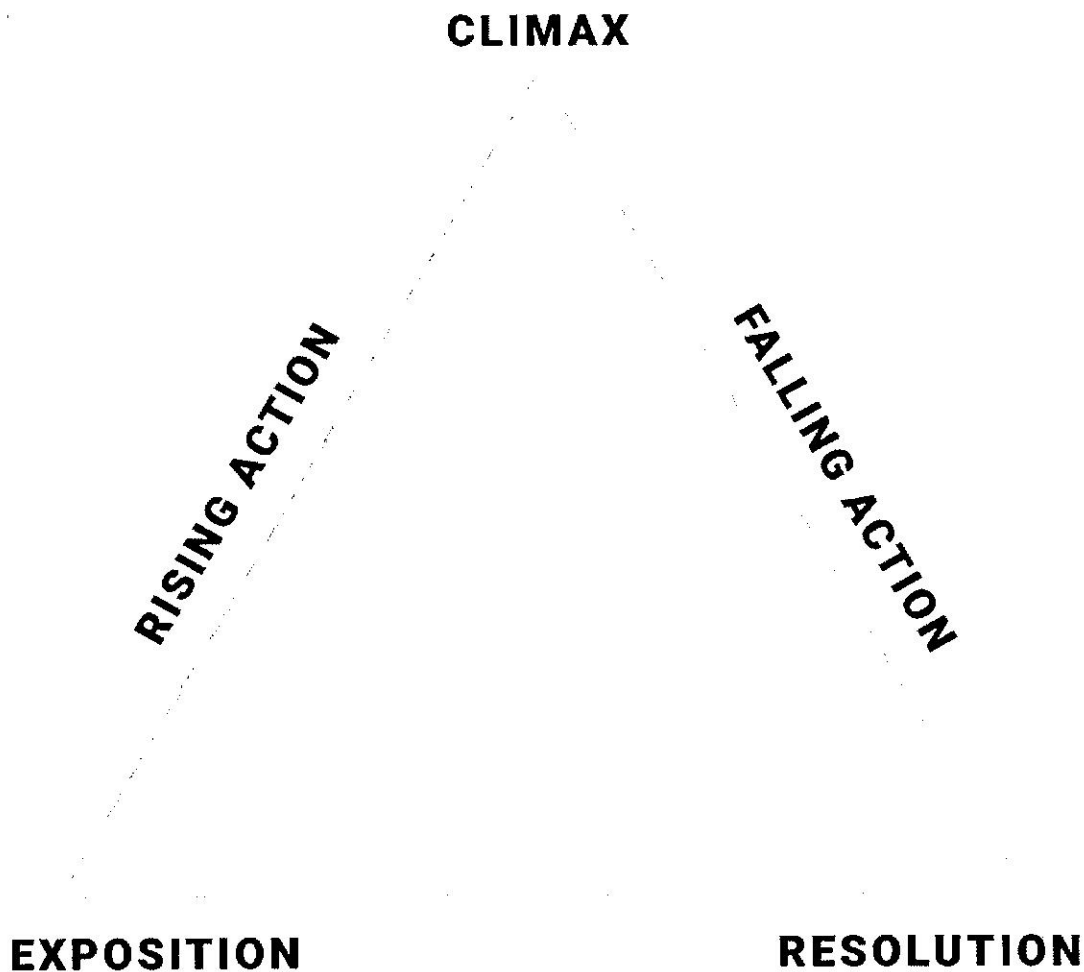


"I love short stories because I believe they are the way we live. They are what our friends tell us, in their pain and joy, their passion and rage, their yearning and their cry against injustice."

— Andre Dubus

Freytag's Pyramid



Keep this structure in mind as you're reading the short stories for class and even when you're watching films or reading novels outside of class. Though it's not always possible to see the exact moment where one part of the narrative shifts into the next, you will probably have a general idea of what part of the narrative you're in by figuring out what is going on in the story and how that relates to earlier or later events.

Exposition

The exposition functions as an introduction. It brings readers into the world of the story and introduces them to the main character. The exposition will often give background information and any necessary information about the setting.

Rising action

The rising action is where the story gains a direction. It changes from providing information to getting into the "meat" of the story by introducing a problem or conflict that must be resolved. The rising action brings readers into the main body of the story and gets the action going.

Climax

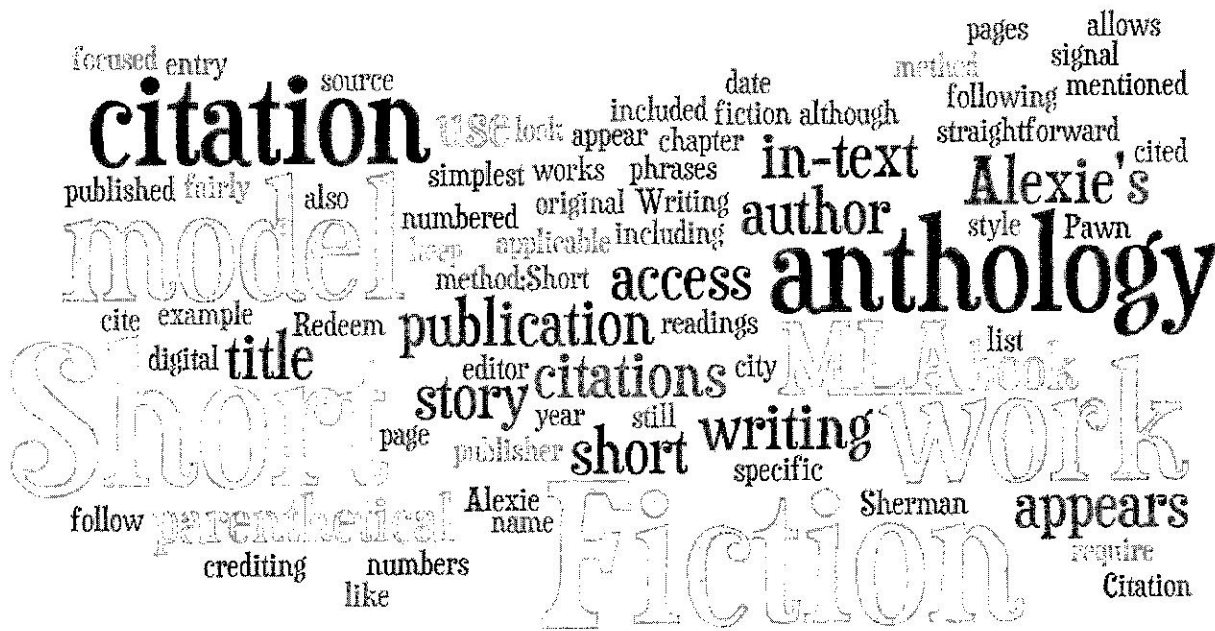
The climax is where the increasing tension caused by the problem and conflict comes to a head and must be directly confronted. Often, in this part of the narrative, the main character or protagonist will face an important choice. The response to this choice often dictates how the rest of the story will go. Note that during this part of the narrative, the confrontation between protagonist and antagonist (i.e., the character or object most directly in opposition to the protagonist's goals and desires) begins but is not resolved.

Falling action

The falling action continues the confrontation between the protagonist and antagonist. At this point, we will find elements such as the "ritual death," which is the part of a story in which everything seems to be going wrong for the protagonist, and the antagonist seems to be about to "win." During the falling action, readers will often find themselves wondering how things could possibly work out for the protagonist.

Resolution

Finally, after increasing tension and conflict, the narrative will hit a tipping point. Either the protagonist or antagonist will triumph, and the plot will move from its main body into its conclusion. In this case, resolution here refers to the dramatic tension of the story. The resolution will take us one way or another. Events are wrapped up, although not necessarily in a satisfying manner. Don't ignore the concluding sentences of short fiction. There are often important ideas included there that can strongly shape how you read the rest of the story.



Short fiction is fairly straightforward to cite, although it does require you to use the anthology model. For in-text citation, this model allows you to keep the citation focused on the author of the specific work you're writing about while still crediting the book in which it appears. As an example, if you are writing on Sherman Alexie's story "What You Pawn I Will Redeem," your in-text citations would use Alexie's name in the signal phrases and in the parenthetical citations. An MLA style parenthetical citation for the story mentioned above would look like this: (Alexie 91). The other page numbers included in some of the readings are numbered as they appear in the original book in which the chapter was published.

Alexie, Sherman. "What You Pawn I Will Redeem." *ENGL200: Composition and Literature*. New York: McGraw-Hill, 2011: 87-101. Web. 12 August 2014.

Effectively Mapping Your Ideas

You will be writing about the works you read at some point. Brush up on essay organization. Your essay should serve as a map and guide the reader to your understanding of the work.

The introduction is the place where the reader will begin his or her journey, but it may not be the place for you to start writing. A strong introduction can be difficult to write before you have written the main part of an essay. Instead, write a “placeholder” introduction to get started. When you’ve finished drafting out the essay, go back and revise the introduction to strengthen the hook and make certain that the introduction itself matches the content of the essay. Remember, the introduction sets the map for the essay itself. If the map you give in the introduction does not match the path of the essay, your readers will be very confused.

Another recommendation for writing is to start early and give yourself time to get feedback. A strong essay is not written in one draft. Even talented writers are in talented revisers. Therefore, draft out your essay as early as you can, and get as much feedback from anyone willing to lend you a fresh set of eyes. Your map has to be something that anyone can follow to reach the same conclusion.