

LEXICAL-STYLISTIC CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SHORT STORY GENRE

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Abstract: This article explores the lexical-stylistic features of the short story genre, highlighting how language and style contribute to the unique characteristics of this literary form. Short stories are distinguished by their brevity, which necessitates precise and economical use of language. Authors often employ a rich variety of stylistic devices, such as imagery, symbolism, and narrative voice, to create vivid and impactful narratives within a limited word count. The analysis includes examining how these lexical-stylistic elements enhance thematic expression, character development, and emotional engagement. Understanding these features provides deeper insights into the artistry and effectiveness of short stories as a genre.

Keywords: short story genre, lexical-stylistic features, imagery, symbolism narrative voice, thematic expression, character development, emotional engagement, literary devices, brevity in literature.

Introduction. The short story is a distinct and powerful form of literature that relies on brevity and precision to convey complex narratives and profound themes. Unlike novels, which have the luxury of extensive word counts to develop plots and characters, short stories must achieve their impact within a much more constrained space. This necessitates a unique approach to language and style, where every word and stylistic choice must contribute meaningfully to the overall effect. This article examines the lexical-stylistic characteristics that define the short story genre, exploring how authors use language to create vivid, impactful, and resonant narratives.

One of the most defining features of the short story genre is its brevity. Authors must convey their narratives concisely, often within a few thousand words. This demands an economy of language, where each word must serve a specific purpose. Unnecessary details and digressions are avoided, ensuring that the narrative remains focused and compelling.

Due to the limited length, authors must be selective about the details they include. Each detail should be significant, contributing to character development, plot progression, or thematic depth. The careful selection of details allows for a rich, layered narrative that resonates with readers despite its brevity.

Imagery plays a crucial role in the short story genre, helping to create vivid and evocative scenes with minimal description. Authors use descriptive language to paint pictures in the reader's mind, enhancing the emotional and sensory experience of the story. Effective imagery can quickly establish mood, setting, and atmosphere, drawing readers into the narrative world.

Symbolism is another key stylistic device in short stories. Authors often use symbols to imbue their narratives with deeper meaning, allowing them to convey complex themes and ideas succinctly. Symbols can be objects, characters, or events that represent broader concepts, adding layers of interpretation and enriching the reading experience.

The narrative voice is a critical component of a short story's style. Whether first-person, third-person, or even second-person, the choice of narrative perspective influences how the story is told and how readers connect with the characters and events. The narrative voice can be intimate, detached, reliable, or unreliable, each choice shaping the reader's engagement with the story.

The perspective from which a story is told can significantly impact its interpretation. Limited perspectives, such as first-person or third-person limited, can create intimacy and immediacy,

while omniscient perspectives offer a broader, more detached view. The perspective can also affect how much information is revealed to the reader, influencing suspense and dramatic tension.

Given the limited space, short stories often focus on a single theme or a few closely related themes. This allows for a more concentrated exploration of ideas, where every element of the story – from character actions to setting – contributes to the thematic development. Themes in short stories are typically conveyed through implication and subtext, requiring readers to engage actively with the narrative to uncover deeper meanings.

Short stories frequently employ ambiguity and open-ended conclusions, inviting readers to interpret the story's meaning and implications. This open-endedness can provoke thought and discussion, making the narrative resonate long after the final word is read. Ambiguity allows authors to explore complex, nuanced themes without the need for explicit resolution, adding to the depth and richness of the short story.

Characterization in short stories must be swift yet profound. Authors often use a few well-chosen details to create memorable, relatable characters. Dialogue, internal monologue, and interactions with other characters are crafted to reveal significant aspects of personality and motivation quickly, allowing readers to form strong emotional connections with the characters in a short span.

The brevity of short stories often results in a more concentrated emotional impact. The limited word count means that stories must build tension, evoke emotions, and deliver their message swiftly. This intensity can lead to powerful, memorable reading experiences, where the emotional and psychological effects linger long after finishing the story.

The short story genre holds a unique and esteemed place in the literary world. Distinguished by its brevity and concentrated narrative, the short story is a form that demands precision and economy from its writers. Despite its concise nature, a well-crafted short story can offer deep insights, evoke powerful emotions, and leave a lasting impact on its readers. This article delves into the defining characteristics, historical evolution, notable examples, and the enduring appeal of the short story genre.

The most defining characteristic of the short story is its brevity. Typically ranging from 1,000 to 7,500 words, short stories must convey their narratives succinctly. This brevity necessitates a focused plot, where extraneous details are omitted, and every element serves a purpose. This concentrated storytelling can result in intense, impactful narratives that deliver their message with clarity and precision. Given the limited space, short stories often center around a small number of characters and a single, well-defined plot. Character development is achieved through precise, evocative details, and the plot usually revolves around a single event or series of closely related events. The constraints of the genre encourage writers to develop characters quickly and effectively, often through dialogue, brief descriptive passages, and suggestive actions.

Short stories frequently explore universal themes such as love, loss, identity, and human nature. Due to their brevity, these themes are often implied rather than explicitly stated, allowing for rich, layered interpretations. Symbolism and metaphor are commonly used to convey deeper meanings and add complexity to the narrative.

The language in short stories tends to be economical yet vivid. Writers must choose their words carefully to evoke images, emotions, and ideas without wasting space. This precision in language often results in a lyrical, poetic quality that distinguishes the best short stories.

The origins of the short story can be traced back to ancient oral traditions, fables, and parables. Early written examples include the tales of “One Thousand and One Nights” and the “Decameron” by Giovanni Boccaccio. These collections of short, self-contained stories were designed to entertain and instruct, laying the groundwork for the modern short story.

The short story began to take its modern form in the 19th century, particularly in the works of writers like Edgar Allan Poe, Nathaniel Hawthorne, and Guy de Maupassant. Poe, in particular, is credited with defining the short story as a distinct literary form, emphasizing its unity of effect and the importance of a single, cohesive impression.

The 20th century saw an explosion of short story writing, with contributions from authors like James Joyce, Katherine Mansfield, Ernest Hemingway, and Flannery O'Connor. This period solidified the short story's place in literary culture, with magazines and literary journals providing a platform for its dissemination. The genre continues to thrive in the 21st century, with contemporary writers exploring new themes and experimenting with form and style.

A classic example of psychological horror, Poe's "The Tell-Tale Heart" exemplifies the short story's ability to create intense emotional impact within a brief narrative. The story's focus on the narrator's descent into madness is achieved through Poe's masterful use of language and suspense.

Shirley Jackson's "The Lottery" is renowned for its shocking twist and social commentary. The story's concise, understated prose builds a seemingly ordinary setting, only to reveal a chilling, barbaric ritual, highlighting the dark undercurrents of human nature and societal conformity.

Hemingway's "Hills Like White Elephants" demonstrates his "iceberg theory" of writing, where the true meaning of the story lies beneath the surface. The dialogue-driven narrative explores a couple's complex conversation about an implied, unstated topic, showcasing Hemingway's skill in conveying depth through simplicity.

The short story genre's enduring appeal lies in its ability to deliver powerful, thought-provoking narratives within a compact form. Its brevity makes it accessible to readers with limited time, while its focus and intensity offer a satisfying literary experience. For writers, the short story provides a unique challenge, requiring precision and creativity to craft impactful tales.

The genre's flexibility also contributes to its lasting popularity. Short stories can experiment with style, structure, and subject matter, allowing for innovation and diversity. This versatility ensures that the short story remains a dynamic and evolving form, capable of reflecting the complexities of contemporary life.

The short story genre, with its distinctive characteristics of brevity, focus, and evocative language, continues to be a vital and influential form of literature. From its ancient origins to its modern manifestations, the short story has proven its ability to captivate and resonate with readers across generations. Its enduring appeal lies in its capacity to distill profound human experiences into a concentrated, compelling narrative form, making it a timeless and essential part of literary tradition.

Conclusion

The lexical-stylistic characteristics of the short story genre are defined by brevity, precision, and the effective use of literary devices such as imagery, symbolism, and narrative voice. These elements work together to create vivid, impactful narratives that resonate with readers despite their limited length. By mastering these techniques, authors can craft short stories that are rich in meaning and emotional depth, showcasing the unique power of this literary form. The short story genre's ability to convey complex themes and evoke strong emotions within a concise framework makes it a distinctive and enduring form of storytelling.

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