

# THE FIVE ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS OF A STORY

## Attention ALL writers!

All stories, even Roald Dahl's wacky ones, have five basic but important elements. These five components are as follows: the characters, the setting, the plot, the conflict, and the resolution. These essential elements keep the story running smoothly and allow the action to develop in a logical way that the reader can follow.

### Characters

The characters are the individuals that the story is about. The author should introduce the characters in the story with specific information so that the reader can visualize each person. This is achieved by providing detailed descriptions of a character's physical attributes and personality traits like Roald Dahl does in *Danny the Champion of the World*. Every story should have a main character. The main character determines the way the plot will develop and is usually the person who will solve the problem the story centers around. However, the other characters are also very important because they supply additional details, explanations, or actions. All characters should stay true to the author's description throughout the story so that readers can understand and believe the action that is taking place—and perhaps even predict which character may do what next.

### Setting

The setting is the location of the action. An author should describe the environment or surroundings of the story in such detail that the reader feels that he or she can picture the scene. Unusual settings (such as a vast chocolate factory or a giant peach) make Roald Dahl's stories even more exciting!

### Plot

The plot is the actual story around which the entire book is based. A plot should have a very clear beginning, middle, and end—with all the necessary descriptions and suspense, called exposition—so that the reader can make sense of the action and follow along from start to finish.

### Conflict

Every story has a conflict to solve. The plot is centered on this conflict and the ways in which the characters attempt to resolve the problem. When the story's action becomes most exciting, right before the resolution, it is called the climax.

### Resolution

The solution to the problem is the way the action is resolved. Roald Dahl often resolves a conflict by having the main character carry out some inventive plan. For example, in *Fantastic Mr. Fox*, Mr. Fox finds a way to feed his family and the other starving animals, and in *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*, the fact that Charlie is the last child left means the day with Wonka—and Wonka's search—is over. It is important that the solution fit the rest of the story in tone and creativity and solve all parts of the conflict.

**Roald Dahl always said—  
Grab them by the throat with  
the first sentence.**



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