

How to Write a Short Story (Class 13 – Abitur Level)

What is a Short Story?

A **short story** is a fictional text that tells a meaningful event or experience. It should entertain the reader while exploring a theme, conflict, or change in a character.

Unlike an essay, a short story should:

- create a scene and atmosphere
- develop characters
- include a conflict or turning point
- engage the reader emotionally

Structure of a Short Story

1. Opening / Introduction

Purpose: Introduce the setting, characters, and situation.

Include:

- **When and where** the story takes place
- Main character(s)
- Initial situation

A strong opening should create interest.

Examples:

Starting with action:

The moment I opened the door, I knew something was wrong.

Starting with description:

The empty street was covered in snow, and not a single light was visible in the distance.

Starting with dialogue:

“You were never supposed to find this,” she whispered.

2. Development / Rising Action

Develop the story by introducing:

Conflict

The problem or challenge the character faces.

Examples:

- a difficult decision
- a secret
- a misunderstanding
- a personal struggle

Character Development

Show:

- thoughts
- emotions
- reactions
- changes

Instead of:

✗ *She was nervous.*

Write:

✓ *Her hands trembled as she reached for the envelope, unsure whether she wanted to know what was inside.*

3. Climax / Turning Point

The most important moment of the story.

It is where:

- the conflict reaches its highest point
- the character makes a decision
- something unexpected happens

Example:

As he opened the letter, he realised that everything he believed about his past was a lie.

4. Ending / Resolution

A good ending should:

- solve the conflict (completely or partially)
- show the effect of the events
- leave an impression on the reader

Possible endings:

Closed ending:

The problem is solved.

Open ending:

The reader must think about what happens next.

Twist ending:

An unexpected final revelation.

Language Techniques for a Strong Short Story

1. Show, Don't Tell

Do not simply state emotions.

✗ *Tom was angry.*

✓ *Tom slammed the door and refused to look at anyone.*

2. Use Descriptive Language

Include:

- senses (sight, sound, smell, touch)
- imagery
- atmosphere

Example:

The smell of old books filled the silent room, while the rain tapped softly against the window.

3. Use Different Sentence Structures

Short sentences:

→ create tension

The phone rang. Nobody moved.

Long sentences:

→ create description

As the sun slowly disappeared behind the mountains, she walked through the forest, remembering everything she had lost.

4. Use Dialogue Effectively

Dialogue should:

- reveal character
- create tension
- move the story forward

Example:

“You knew the truth all along, didn’t you?” she asked.

He looked away. “I was trying to protect you.”

Useful Story Expressions

Creating atmosphere:

- The silence was broken by...
- A strange feeling came over him/her...
- Little did she/he know that...

Introducing a change:

- Suddenly,...
- Without warning,...
- At that moment,...

Showing thoughts:

- She wondered whether...
- He could not understand why...
- A wave of fear/relief passed over him.

Ending:

- Years later, he/she still remembered...
- From that day onwards,...
- Nobody ever discovered the truth.

Short Story Checklist

- ✓ Clear setting and characters
- ✓ Interesting opening
- ✓ A central conflict
- ✓ Character development
- ✓ A climax/turning point
- ✓ Effective description
- ✓ Appropriate dialogue
- ✓ Logical ending
- ✓ Correct use of past tenses