

Basic Elements of Fiction

- Imagery** Are there passages where the writer should appeal more directly to the 5 senses? Should the imagery suggest or evoke ideas as much as it hits us in the face?
- Premise** Does the general “idea” of the story work? What is original about it? Formulaic? Does it surprise you or do you see the ending coming? Can you enhance the idea?
- Plot** Does the story follow a clear order? Are there any confusing shifts in time? Does the tale progress in a logical, cause-and-effect manner? Does it maintain consistent chronological or spatial order? Does the story adequately use transitions to shift from scene to summary? Do any scenes or summaries distract you from the plot’s direction?
- Conflict** Does the main character have a clear conflict to overcome? Does the story stay focused on the character’s interaction with this conflict, even if on a metaphoric level?
- Setting** Is the time and place clear from the beginning of the tale? Does it shift abruptly during the story? Can the atmosphere be more seductive or scary?
- Character** Are the characters realistic (not stereotypes)? Do their behaviors and dialogue ring true? Are the characters adequately effected by the events? Are they active or passive? Are they changed by this story, or do they remain static, unaltered?
- Viewpoint** Does the point-of-view help or hinder the story? How so? The narrator doesn’t die at the end, does he/she? Might choosing another viewpoint improve the story’s suspense?
- Style** Does the language use ever get in the way of the story? Does the writer’s voice sound unnatural? Could the language be more poetic?
- Tone** Does the language strike the right tone? Is the story consistent in its tone? Does it try to scare you or make you laugh? Is the author’s attitude clear? Is the author invisible? Or does she get in the way?