

RECIPE FOR A SHORT STORY

Essential Ingredients:

character & plot (conflict)--series of conflicts & scenes
suspense
climax
satisfactory conclusion

How to Mix:

A. Beginning:

1. introduce main characters
2. give setting in time and place
3. establish mood
4. prepare the reader for action to come
5. set plot into motion

B. Middle:

1. suspense
2. tension
3. character development
4. theme
5. plot--continuation of all set forth in the beginning (foreshadowing)
6. incidents of increasing intensity leading to climax
7. climax (point at which readers will be fairly sure of outcome)

C. End:

1. brevity
2. character growth (solution)
3. wrapping up of loose ends
4. emotional lift for reader
5. avoidance of contrived or surprise ending (most readers do not want to be fooled completely)

APPLE PIE CUTTING FORMULA: (for length)

2 parts introduction

7 parts middle

1 part conclusion

Scenery is setting

Scene is: unit of plot

action that takes place within a story

a series of scenes leads to a climax

purpose--to arouse emotion within reader

average number of scenes for short story--3 or 4

Component Parts of a Scene:

collision

reason for collision

conflict (man vs. nature

man vs. man

man vs. himself)

outcome

hook

18 CHECKPOINTS FOR YOUR STORY

1. What are your motives for writing the story?
2. Does the story have a theme?
3. Is the story currently marketable?
4. Does it contain an element of strong conflict?
5. Can your reader identify with the protagonist?
6. Will the story utilize the lure of the "familiar?"
7. Is the story currently in style?
8. Does it have a good opening?
9. Is antecedent action (flashbacks) cut to minimum?
10. Does it contain a double-barreled problem?
11. Is your story free from predictability?
12. Does your story have a dark moment?
13. Have you refrained from using coincidence as an easy solution?
14. Have you stayed in proper viewpoint throughout the story?
15. Does your story give the readers their money's worth of emotion?
16. Has something "changed" in your story?
17. Is the story well-tailored? Did you:
 - a. use distinguishable names
 - b. avoid use of "said"
 - c. avoid dependence on "pet words"
 - d. avoid passive voice
 - e. break the - "ly" habit
 - f. use effective figures of speech?
18. Will your story make a good first impression?