

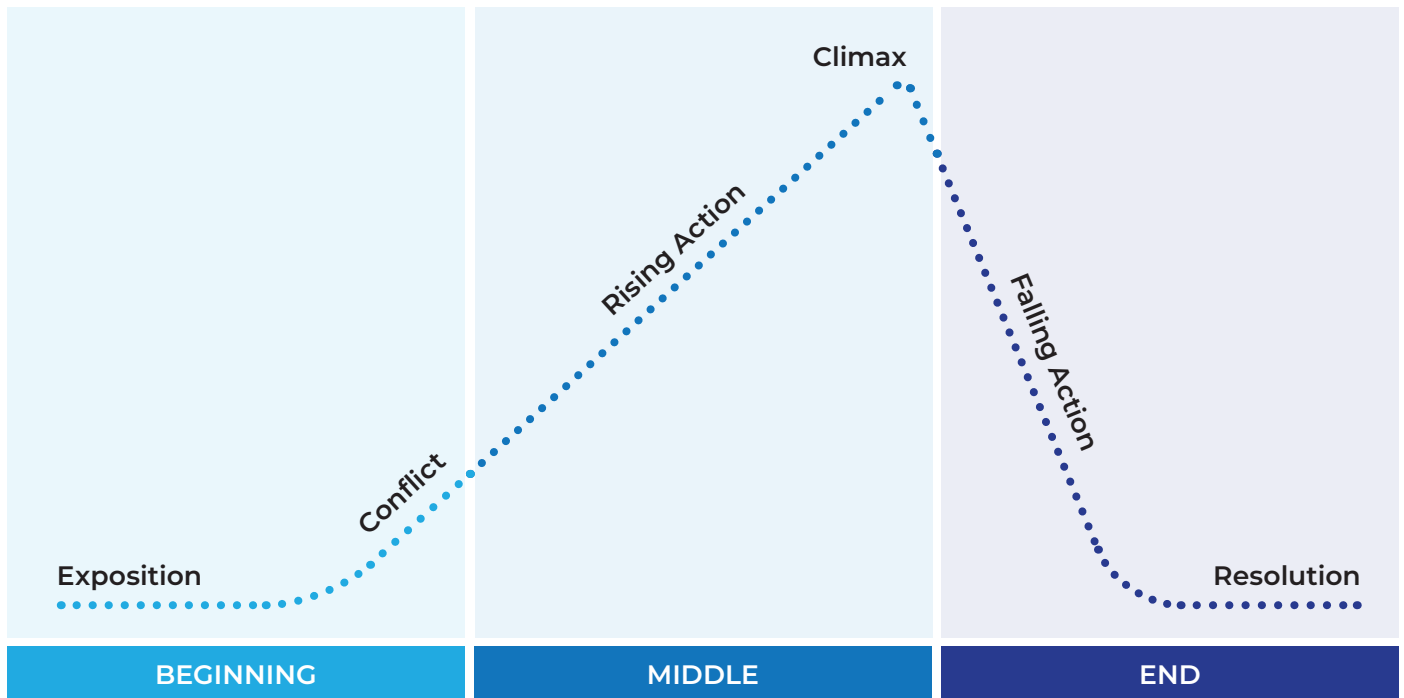
THE SHORT STORY

LITERARY ELEMENTS

The term **literary elements** refers to the different parts of a **literary**⁴ work. A list of important literary elements is written and explained below. As the students read the short stories in their workbooks, various examples of literary elements will be demonstrated.

PLOT

The plot of a short story is the narrative or sequence of events occurring in the literary piece. The story involves some type of conflict or discord. The different types of conflicts will be discussed in this introduction and the stories.



Above is the usual sequence of events in a story. It is helpful for students to have a copy of the diagram as they read each story.

Exposition

A story's exposition begins by introducing the story's characters and setting (time and place).

Rising Action

The action of the story continues; it develops the conflict. The conflict will heighten and become more complex, as will the characters' reactions to it.

Climax

The conflict is resolved, either by a change in the characters' attitudes or by the resolution of the problem.

Falling Action

The story winds down, and any small details are included to lead to the **resolution**. All questions are answered. *Sometimes an author may choose not to answer every question and leave certain points hanging.*

⁴ **literary**: concerning the writing, study, or content of literature, especially of the kind valued for quality of form



THE SHORT STORY

CHARACTER

Characters play an important role in the development of a story. They can be major or minor characters. Some play the role of the **protagonist**, or leading character of the story. Some play the role of the **antagonist**, someone or something that opposes the main character.

SETTING

The setting is the time and place where the story happens. Settings can vary within the same story. The setting provides the context of the story, gives structure to the story, and enhances the story's plot.

THEME

The story's theme is inferred by identifying its major points. It is the moral of the story or the message the author wishes to convey to the readers. It can be inferred by the author's language or word choices. Analyzing the characters and their reactions to a situation is another method that contributes to understanding the story.

There are many literary elements authors use when writing short stories. These elements will be added throughout both the teacher's and students' editions.

Examples of these literary elements will be pointed out throughout the chapters, and guided questions will be included in the students' edition to help the students identify the elements.

GLOSSARY

Please note that all the words explained in the text will be listed in the glossary at the end of the book. Students are only responsible for the words included in the review found in each chapter.



LESSON ONE

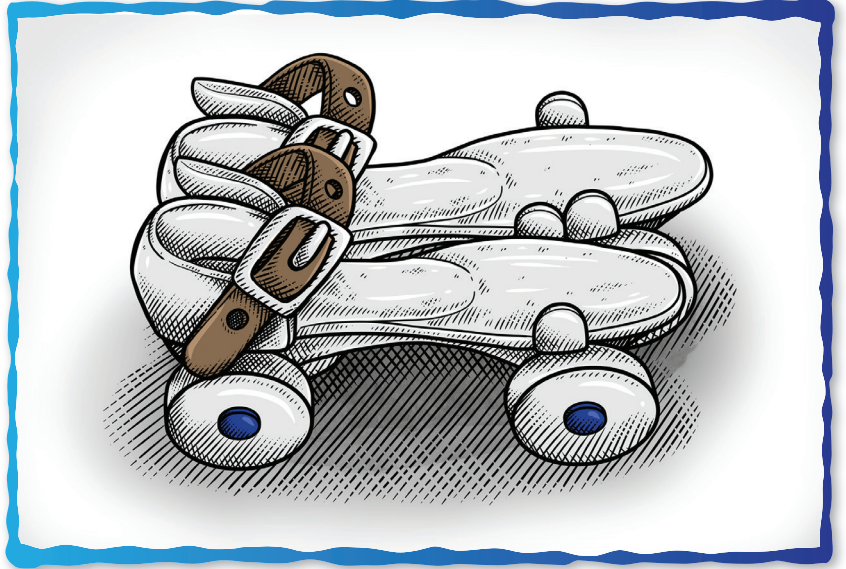
CHAPTER ONE

SILVER ROLLER SKATES

BY CHANA CHASSIA SHOFNOS
More of Our Lives (Targum Press)

LITERARY FOCUS

Conflict • Man Versus Fate



INTRODUCTION

“Polio is a highly infectious disease, mostly affecting young children, that attacks the nervous system and can lead to spinal and respiratory paralysis, and in some cases death.”

— World Health Organization

Polio was a very common and feared disease. In the mid-1950s, a vaccine was invented by Dr. Jonas Salk. The results were very effective, and by 1961, only 161 cases remained. Another vaccine was invented by physician and microbiologist Albert Sabin. This vaccine is given orally in a sugar cube. Through these vaccines, polio was eradicated in the United States.

The protagonist of the story suffered from polio before the vaccine was invented. She survived the disease but suffered damage to her legs. She was only able to walk by wearing heavy metal braces on her legs.

LITERARY FOCUS: Conflict • Man Versus Fate

In the time when the story takes place, students with special needs, such as those who suffered from the effects of polio, were not able to attend regular schools. Special schools were created for children with handicaps.



Explain the type of conflict of Man versus Fate.

Give three examples of the conflict of Man versus Fate.





LITERARY TERM

EXPOSITION: The exposition introduces the story. It gives information about the main character or protagonist and the story's setting of time and place.

SILVER ROLLER SKATES

Polio makes you different. And at age ten, who wants to be different?

I was ten years old with my reddish-blond hair tied neatly in pigtails with matching bows. Straight bangs were cut evenly across my forehead, and I had a freckled-face grin that could make even the grumpiest grouch smile. I looked like any other ten-year-old, except that peeking out from under my skirt were two long-leg metal braces. They were unattractively covered with brown leather straps, and attached to orthopedic shoes that would never be in style.

While my friends skipped along the sidewalks holding their jump ropes, I faithfully clutched my forearm crutches for support and **mobility**¹. These also allowed me to keep up with other kids in most situations. It was just a matter of working out the details. For example, in playing tag, I couldn't run as fast as they could, so I was allowed to use my crutch as an extension of my arm, and tag others with it. Believe me, it was very handy!

When it came to playing **Giant Steps**² I could swing through on those crutches and take steps as big as most giants could. **Stoop ball**³? Well, the gang stood standing up to throw the ball against the steps, while I sat on the sidewalk to do it. To this day, I can still say I was one of the best players because I could catch so well. Yes, it was very important for me to be like everyone else. Polio makes you different. And at age ten, being different is not the "in" thing to be.

Though I was bused to a "special" school for handicapped children, ironically there I was really quite "normal," for everyone else brought their "specialness" with them. Amid the wheelchairs, hearing aids, artificial limbs, canes, crutches, braces, and walkers, I was in no way different. We played and learned the same things most children did in school, with the appropriate **adaptations**⁴. In baseball, children in wheelchairs rode from base to base wheeling themselves or moving with "pushers." Those with crutches had "built-in" bats. Everyone participated in all activities in some capacity.



LITERARY TERM

PROTAGONIST: The protagonist of a story is the main character.



What information can be learned about the protagonist from the story's exposition?

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- 1 **mobility:** the ability to move easily
- 2 **Giant Steps:** children's game in which a leader calls individual players toward them
- 3 **Stoop Ball:** a game played by throwing a ball against a stoop (step on a sidewalk)
- 4 **adaptations:** modifications; adjustments





LITERARY TERM

SETTING: The setting is the time and place a story takes place.



What can be inferred from the exposition about the setting of the story?

However, the normalcy of attending a special school ended when I returned home to my friends in the neighborhood, where I then became “special.” My able-bodied friends were more significant to me, because even in the mind of a ten-year-old this neighborhood was a **microcosm**⁵ of the real world. Here, one had to face the challenges and unexpected events of life, without the protection of unconditional acceptance. For the most part, I met the challenges head-on. I was an integral part of “the gang,” socially well-adjusted and a loyal friend. Yes, I was different, but the difference didn’t alienate me from my friends – until that fateful summer.

School was over and the long-awaited three-month vacation had begun. Daylight saving time allowed for plenty of time to do more of everything, and ten-year-olds are very busy people! No more indoor activities designed for rain days, or endless hours of Monopoly, Scrabble, or Go Fish. Summer was the time when every kid on the block got new sneakers for running, jumping, climbing, or swinging. Except for the new sneakers, I was no different. I loved being outdoors.

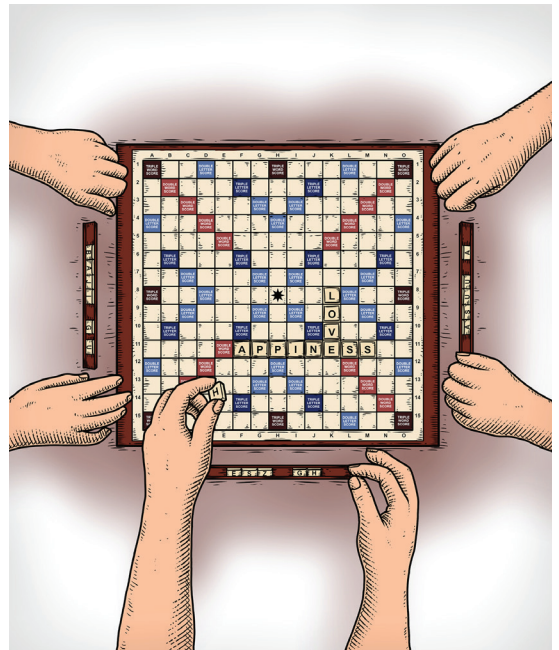
Kids often go through periods of doing a favorite activity on a regular basis. Whether it be hopscotch, bike riding, or jumping rope, they do it like clockwork, every day. This can go on for days, even weeks. That summer it happened to the gang, too.

I had just finished lunch and scrambled down the stairs of the back porch, slamming the screen door behind me as usual. Upon reaching the front yard I saw them. They were all there. Barbara, Arlene, Nancy, Helen, and Janie, and they were all **roller skating**!

READING CHECK

In what manner does the protagonist (main character) compensate for her disability?

A



READING CHECK

What activity does the protagonist want to do above all activities?

B

5 **microcosm:** a small scale of something bigger



They each had a pair – you know the kind – the silver metal ones that attached to your shoes and could be adjusted and tightened with a turn of the special “skate key.” That key was proudly worn around one’s neck hanging from a handmade braid of colored lanyard. The **only** thing I wanted to do more than run barefoot through the grass, ice skate, ride a two-wheeler, and **canter**⁶ on a horse, was to roller-skate!



What type of external conflict is the protagonist facing? Explain your answer.



LITERARY TERM

RIISING ACTION: The action of the story continues; it develops the conflict. The conflict will heighten and become more complex, as will the characters’ reactions to the conflict.

I watched the gang with mixed emotions: **vicarious**⁷ joy – they were having so much fun – and stabbing pangs of envy: if only I could roller-skate too. It looked so easy: right, left, together, slide. I hardly noticed the crashing noise of five pairs of metal skates clanging on the pavement; it was all rhythm to me. Right, left, together, slide, one, two, three, hold.... I watched them every day after lunch. Every day after lunch you could tell that the gang was outside: that familiar rhythm of the clanging skates was **audible**⁸ to all. I watched them for a week, two, maybe more. Of course we did other things together, but they were “into” roller-skating, at least once a day. Right foot slide, left foot up. Now switch... left, right, together, slide. Right, left, together slide. Faster, faster together, slide.

That freedom of movement and speed was all that I wanted. I never told them how left out I felt. After all, I was always there with them, watching, cheering, and applauding their tricks and antics. They never noticed my pain at being different. I wouldn’t let them. But the hurt never went away.

When I told my mother I wanted to roller-skate, she understood. I mean, who wouldn’t? But what could she do? I was different. When I asked her to buy me a pair of roller skates, she got concerned; this was getting a bit out of hand. You have to know my mother. She was always the first one to encourage me in whatever I wanted to do. Independence was the goal. When it came to doing those awful exercises that I hated, she **persevered**⁹ with me. There was no such word as “can’t” in our house. It was always, “It’s hard, but keep trying.”

READING CHECK

C

Why do the friends not realize that the main character felt left out?



- 6 **canter:** a type of horse gait
7 **vicarious:** experienced in one’s imagination through the actions of another
8 **audible:** able to be heard
9 **persevered:** continued doing an act even if difficult



So why wouldn't she buy me a pair of roller skates? Was she afraid I'd fall and really hurt myself? Was she afraid I'd fail and become depressed? Was she reluctant to spend money for something that would never get used? I couldn't figure it out. I kept nagging her; it just wasn't fair. I held back the tears of anger, I was more determined than ever to try to skate like everyone else. I mean, it was bad enough that I was already ten years old. Those kids had all been skating since age five or six. Why couldn't Mom understand I just had to do this?

She never said "no" outright – it must have been too hard for her to give a definite refusal; after all, independence fostered self-esteem. Still, it was a conflict; she'd just give me this look, appear to be thinking about it, and then do her best to avoid the issue. I know she told Dad about it. The roller skates had become the major topic in our home. I really don't know how it happened, but one day, she finally agreed. I had pushed through her resistance. I was ecstatic.



What type of conflict is the mother facing? Explain your answer.



LITERARY TERM

MINOR CHARACTER: A minor character is not as important as a major character but still plays an important role in the story. They help the action continue, sometimes by supporting the protagonist and sometimes by opposing the protagonist.



What does the reaction of the protagonist's mother show us about the protagonist's character?

How do the actions of the mother help move the plot along?

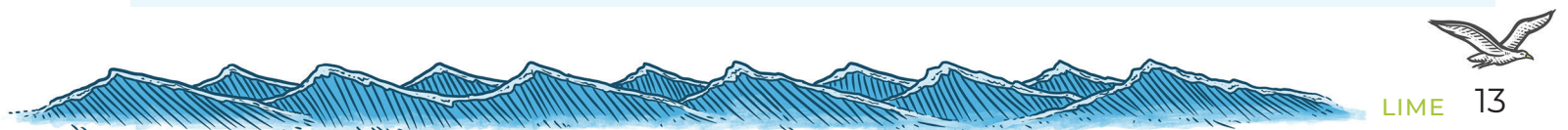
We walked into Jack's Hardware Store together, and Mom told Jack we wanted to buy me a pair of **ball-bearing roller skates**¹⁰. You should have seen the look on Jack's face! He had been a family friend for years, so I guess nothing surprised him too much. But this time, he looked at me with raised eyebrows and then gave my mother one of those looks that said, "Okay, Mrs. Willner, if that's what you want. Where there's a Will-ner there's a way!"

READING CHECK

What is Jack's reaction to Mrs. Willner's request?

D

¹⁰ **ball-bearing roller skates:** a type of roller skate that has a steel ball to cause it to move





He pulled out a red, white, and blue shoe box of “Speed-King” skates, hoisted me onto the counter, and put on my braced feet the shiniest silver metal ball-bearing skates I’d ever seen. As Jack took out the key to adjust them, I already envisioned the pin and white lanyard braid chain I would make to carry the **prestigious**¹¹ key.

The skates were tightened to a perfect fit. “Okay, Jack, we’ll take them.” I could hardly wait to get home. I had the plan all figured out. Down to the cellar I went – to practice! Now, our cellar was not a **renovated**¹² basement playroom like most people had, with wood paneling and linoleum floors. Ours was a real cellar with a rough cement floor, cracks, and natural inclines. It was the closest thing to an outdoor sidewalk that you could imagine. I decided this was the perfect place to learn to roller-skate. I wouldn’t dare go outside and be seen by others until I was able to skate like everyone else. It would be too embarrassing – a ten-year-old who couldn’t skate. Besides, if I really couldn’t learn (and I had to admit there was a slight chance I wouldn’t succeed) then no one would ever know I failed. They would just think I couldn’t skate; after all, I was different.

READING CHECK

E

Why was the basement the perfect place to learn to roller skate?

LITERARY ANALYSIS

Describe the new setting of the story. Why does the protagonist choose this setting?



I started to practice with one skate, just to get the feel of it. Boy, was it slippery! Ball bearings really do make you go fast. Right foot forward, crutches together, push, slide. Not bad, I could sense the rhythm. After a few laps around the cellar with one skate, it was time to try two. Every once in a while, Mom would call downstairs and ask how it was going. She knew not to come down until I was ready.

¹¹ **prestigious**: inspiring admiration and respect

¹² **renovated**: restored or repaired



Two skates, now this was tricky. Slowly... slowly, right foot forward, crutches together, push slide. Left foot forward, *crash!* Not so simple! Many crashes later I began to worry, and the pain from my scraped elbows kept reminding me I was different. Getting up from a fall with my stiff leg braces attached to rolling wheels was an amazing feat in itself, not to mention exhausting. I couldn't maintain my balance on either leg alone, even with the crutch for support. Sliding on two legs together was better, but still something was wrong. Even my back was tired and my arms were getting sore. And then it hit me. When you wear skates, you're at least four inches taller. My crutches were too short!

F

READING CHECK

What difficulties does the protagonist face as she tries to skate on two feet?

In a minute I had both crutches adjusted to the new height. Wow! What a difference! Not having to bend over, my back was now straight and not strained. The longer crutch leg gave me better **leverage**¹³ for balance and push-off. Right foot forward, crutches together, push, slide. Left foot forward, crutches together, push, slide. Both feet together, crutches, push slide. Crutches, push, slide.

G

READING CHECK

How does the main character resolve her problem?



LITERARY TERM

CLIMAX: The climax of the story is when the conflict is resolved.

"I've got it!" It was a week later. The crashes decreased, and I called Mom down for a sneak preview. She agreed, smiling with tears in her eyes, that I was ready for my outdoor debut.



LITERARY TERM

FALLING ACTION: The falling action is when the story is winding down. It may contain small details which lead to the resolution.

I knew the gang would be surprised and delighted – and they were! I'll never forget that summer: the kid on crutches was roller-skating. Boy, was I different!



LITERARY TERM

RESOLUTION: The resolution is the end of the story, showing what happens to the protagonist after the conflict is solved.

THEME: The theme is the moral of the story or the message the author wishes to convey to the readers. It is usually not stated explicitly but inferred throughout the story.



LITERARY ANALYSIS

What is the theme or purpose of the story Roller Skates?

¹³ **leverage:** an advantage or power gained by using a lever



LESSON ONE

REVIEW

THINKING CRITICALLY ABOUT THE STORY

1. How did the protagonist's bout with polio affect her both physically and emotionally?

2. Would her friends have treated her differently had the protagonist not been able to teach herself how to roller-skate? Explain your answer.

3. What role does the mother play in developing her daughter's character? Use a quote from the story to support your answer.

LITERARY DEVICES

Demonstrate below where each literary section of the story begins. Explain your choices.

Exposition



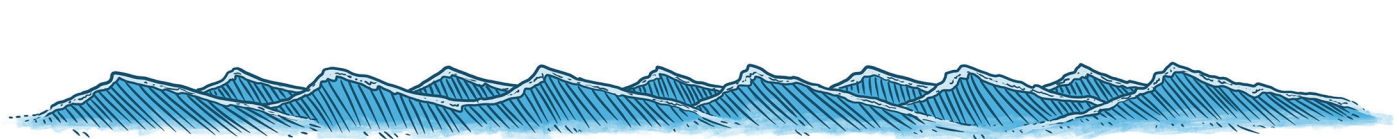
Conflict

Rising Action

Climax

Falling Action

Resolution



REFLECTIONS ON THE STORY

Imagine you are one of the protagonist's friends. Write a paragraph describing your feelings when the protagonist roller skates with you for the first time.

Handwriting practice lines consisting of multiple sets of three horizontal dotted lines for writing.

