

Name _____

Date _____

Story Structure

Story structure is the organizational framework of a narrative. Most stories follow a pattern: exposition introduces characters and setting; rising action builds tension through conflicts; climax represents the turning point of highest tension; falling action shows consequences of the climax; and resolution wraps up loose ends. Authors may use variations like flashbacks, multiple storylines, or circular structures to create different effects and engage readers.

Read the following short story and answer the questions.

The Lighthouse Keeper's Secret

Emma's summer vacation was turning out to be the most boring three months of her thirteen-year existence. When her parents announced they would be staying at her great-aunt's coastal cottage while her father worked remotely, Emma had imagined beach parties and new friends.

Instead, she found a tiny village where the average resident's age appeared to be at least seventy.

On her third day of mindless wandering, Emma discovered a narrow path leading to an abandoned lighthouse. A faded "No Trespassing" sign hung crookedly on the weathered door. Something about the peeling white paint and rusted metal intrigued her. When she pushed gently, the door creaked open.

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Inside, dust particles danced in sunbeams that streamed through salt-crusted windows. Emma climbed the spiral staircase, running her fingers along the cold stone wall. At the top, instead of finding an empty room as expected, she gasped at the sight of an elderly man arranging small objects on a table.

"I've been waiting for you," he said without turning around.

"Not many can see the path to the lighthouse anymore."

The man introduced himself as Henry, the last lighthouse keeper. He showed Emma his collection of unusual objects—seashells that hummed melodies when held to the ear, stones that glowed with an inner light, and a small brass telescope that revealed hidden doorways in familiar places.

"The lighthouse chose you," Henry explained, placing the telescope in her hands. "It needs a new keeper."

Over the following weeks, Emma learned the lighthouse's secrets—how to use the telescope to help lost travelers find their way home, how the light could be seen only by those who truly needed guidance. By summer's end, Emma understood her purpose. The village wasn't boring; it was magical, and now she was its guardian.

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1. Identify the exposition in this story and explain what information it provides.

2. What is the central conflict in the story, and at what point does the rising action begin?

3. Explain how the resolution of the story relates to the initial problem Emma faces.

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Story Structure-Answer Key

1. Identify the exposition in this story and explain what information it provides.

The exposition is the first paragraph, introducing Emma, her age, situation (summer vacation at great-aunt's coastal cottage), initial expectations (beach parties), and her problem (boredom in a village of elderly residents).

2. What is the central conflict in the story, and at what point does the rising action begin?

The central conflict is Emma's boredom and feeling out of place. The rising action begins when she discovers the lighthouse path and enters despite the "No Trespassing" sign, setting events in motion.

3. Explain how the resolution of the story relates to the initial problem Emma faces.

The resolution transforms Emma's initial problem of boredom into purpose. What started as "the most boring vacation" ends with Emma discovering magic in the village and becoming the lighthouse guardian with an important role.