

Katherine Anne Porter

“THE GRAVE”

SETTING

The story is told in a flashback*.

What is the setting of the flashback, and what is the setting of the frame* (or at least of the “half-frame”)?

SETTING is “the physical, and sometimes spiritual, background against which the action of a narrative (novel, drama, short story, poem) takes place.” It includes (1) geography (country / city/region), (2) time (day/night, season, century/year/era, historical and social conditions and values), and (3) society (class, beliefs, values of the characters).

CHARACTER

How much can you tell about Miranda and Paul?

CHARACTER is established through (1) direct exposition (comment by the author directly to the reader, although this is nearly always filtered through a narrator or other character, whose reliability you must always question), (2) dialogue (what the character says or thinks), and (3) action (what the character actually does).

CENTRAL or DOMINATING IDEA

What is the central idea, the subject, the general topic of the story?

CENTRAL IDEA/TOPIC (sometimes called “theme”) is the general area of an author’s concern in a story, the topic under discussion. It is usually an abstract idea or concept.

SYMBOL

Find at least three symbols in the story and tell for what each stands.

SYMBOL is ‘something which is itself and yet stands for or suggests or means something else..., a figure of speech which combines a literal and sensuous quality with an abstract or suggestive aspect.’

THEME

Identify the theme of the story and state it in one sentence.

THEME (sometimes called “thesis”) is “an attitude or position taken by a writer with the purpose of proving or supporting it.” The topic is the subject about which a writer writes; the theme is what the writer says about the topic.

Definitions are adapted from C. Hugh Holman, *A Handbook to Literature*, Indianapolis: The Odyssey Press, 1972, Print.