

Literary Elements



ELEMENT	DESCRIPTION	EXAMPLE FROM "THROUGH THE TUNNEL"
Protagonist	The main character of a story	Jerry is the protagonist or main character.
Antagonists	Forces that work against the protagonist: nature, other characters, settings, inner thoughts	Mother, boys who swim through the tunnel
Settings	Where and when a story takes place	The beach, rocks and tunnel, the villa
Plot	The events in a story—what happens to the protagonist makes up the plot.	Leaving mom and big beach for the rocks where boys dive and go through the tunnel. Training to have enough breath to go through the tunnel and making it through.
Climax	The high point of a story that occurs near the end of the story.	When Jerry makes it through the tunnel.
Denouement	A return to normalcy for the story that occurs after the climax.	In this story, Jerry doesn't "battle" his mom about not swimming because he no longer needs to return to the bay. He has accomplished his goal.
Conflicts	Tensions between characters or between a character and the settings or character and inner thoughts.	The conflict is between Jerry and his mother. He wants to break away; she's trying to not be overprotective, but the tension between them exists until the denouement.
Problems	Challenges the protagonist faces that he or she tries to resolve.	Jerry needs and wants to successfully swim through the tunnel and he has to figure out a way to develop longer breath control to make it through.
Resolution	The outcome or outcomes of trying to solve problems and deal with conflict.	Jerry makes it through the tunnel and knows this is an altering moment for him. He has met a great challenge, matured, and separated from dependence on his mom.
Themes	Ideas from a story that can be generalized to apply outside the story.	A theme in this story is that developing the strength to separate from a parent and gain independence requires making decisions independently, setting goals, and meeting goals.
Central Idea	A theme that's threaded through the entire piece.	A central idea in this story is that growing up and separating from parents can be emotionally and physically painful, but rewarding in the end.