“The Gift of the Magi” by O. Henry

Literary Analysis: Plot

The plot of a story leads the reader through a series of events. A well-developed plot is easy to follow and holds the reader’s attention. Limited by the story’s length, the writer must select events with particular care and describe them in a way that achieves a single, clear effect. The plot is traditionally divided into five parts: exposition, rising action, climax, falling action, and denouement.

The exposition provides background information and sets the scene for the conflict, a struggle between opposing people or forces that drives the action of the story. The introduction of the conflict marks the beginning of the rising action, in which the conflict intensifies until it reaches the high point, or climax of the story. After the climax, falling action takes the story to a resolution. The denouement shows how the situation turns out.

DIRECTIONS: As you read “The Gift of the Magi,” jot down events associated with the different parts of the plot on the following diagram. Create a plot diagram representing the different parts of the story.

Climax
Denouement
Exposition
Falling Action
Rising Action