



A

Glossary of Literary Terms



Your Name: _____

Period: _____

Honors English 9 and English 11

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LITERARY ELEMENTS: the basic items that make up a work of literature.

LITERARY DEVICES: literary techniques and methods employed to help the author get his or her point across. Not all literary devices will be used within one work.

ABSTRACTION: a term that is applied to ideas that are philosophical and emotional, not **concrete** or physically tangible, yet the idea comes from experience.
Examples: love, liberty, freedom

ALLEGORY: a story in which the characters and their actions represent general truths about human conduct. The characters in an allegory often represent abstract concepts, such as faith, innocence, or evil.

ALLITERATION: the repetition of the same consonant sound, especially at the beginning of words in a sentence or a line of poetry. This repetition can reinforce meaning, unify ideas, and/or supply a musical sound.
Example: *thundering thoughts wing wildly*

ALLUSION: a reference to a well-known fictional, mythological, or historical person, place, or event, outside the story. Allusions enrich a story by suggesting similarities to comparable circumstances in another time or place; complex ideas are brought to the readers' minds simply and easily.
Example: the warrior had Olympian strength - Mt. Olympus is the home of the Gods in Greek Mythology

AMBIGUITY: either a faulty, unclear expression, or a poetic device which deliberately uses a word or expression to indicate two or more distinct references, attitudes or feelings. The word has both **connotations** (secondary or associated significance) and **denotations** (primary definition or reference).

ANALOGY: exploring a topic by explaining it in terms of another seemingly unlike but more commonplace and less complicated object, or experience. Analogy extends a **metaphor**, and can make writing more vivid, imaginative, or intellectually engaging.
Example: Sound waves are compared to concentric ripples being created when a stone is dropped in the still water of a pond.

ANAPHORA: regular repetition of the same word or phrase at the beginning of successive phrases or clauses.
Example: "We shall fight in the trenches. We shall fight in the oceans. We shall fight in the sky."

<u>ANTAGONIST:</u>	the character or force in opposition to the protagonist. Example: "The Joker" in <i>Batman</i>
<u>ANTITHESIS:</u>	strong contrast shown through the juxtaposition of opposing words, phrases, clauses, sentences, or ideas. Example: "Every sweet has its sour ..."
<u>APOSTROPHE:</u>	The speaker is addressing an absent person or the dead, or an inanimate object, or a personified abstraction , as if present. The effect may add familiarity or emotional intensity. Example: O, beautiful rose! Thou art lovely!
<u>ASIDE:</u>	a remark made by one character in the presence of others, but assumed not to be heard by them (sometimes said directly to the audience). Example: a TV character who stops, looks directly into the camera, and talks directly to the audience.
<u>ASSERTION:</u>	a statement that is debatable, as opposed to fact. Sometimes it is explicitly stated while sometimes it is implicit .
<u>ASSONANCE:</u>	the repetition of similar stressed vowel sounds within words in nearby phrases or words. Example: The cat ran after the alligator.
<u>CHARACTERIZATION:</u>	the act of creating and developing a character. The development of a character can be done in several different ways such as through what the character says and does, and through what other characters say about him. Technically, it is done in two ways: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <i>Direct Characterization</i> states character traits outright. Example: He was a big, tall man. 2. <i>Indirect Characterization</i> reveals character traits through what the character thinks, says, does, description of appearance or by other characters' thoughts, actions, and statements. Example: He ducked his head carefully as he passed through the doorway.
<u>CLICHÉ:</u>	a strikingly worded expression that's worn out from overuse. Example: two peas in a pod
<u>COMPARISON:</u>	an examination designed to expose similarities between two objects or ideas.
<u>CONCRETE TERMS:</u>	terms that represent, or try to evoke images or experiences of specific, tangible objects or entities that exist physically and can be experienced through the senses. Concrete terms are usually thought of as opposed to abstractions or generalizations . Example: Science tries to describe things in concrete terms.
<u>CONFLICT:</u>	a struggle between opposing forces that causes the action of

CONFLICT:
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the story.

1. *External conflicts* have outside action such as man against man, man against nature, man against fate.
2. *Internal conflicts* occur inside the character's mind, such as man against himself or man against society.

Example: Abe the bank robber is having an external conflict with his longtime partner Sal who wants more money while Abe also is having an internal conflict with himself about having to kill his best friend Sal because of his greed.

CONNOTATION:

the emotional associations that surround a word that go beyond its narrow, literal meaning into ideas and attitudes.

Example: the words "solo" and "alone" both mean to be by oneself. However, "solo" connotes independence and choice where "alone" connotes loneliness and isolation

CONTRAST:

a device where two objects or ideas are put in opposition to one another to show or emphasize the differences between them.

Example: Felix and Oscar of *The Odd Couple*

DENOTATION:

the literal, straightforward dictionary definition of a word that comes closest to the actuality for which the word stands.

DICTION:

word choice. Strong diction is the careful selection of words to communicate a particular subject to a specific audience.

Different types of diction include

formal: used in scholarly books and articles.

informal: used in essays in popular magazines.

colloquial: conversations between friends, including newly coined words and expressions.

slang: language shared by certain social groups.

dialect: language typical of a certain region, race, location, or social group that exhibits itself through unique word choice, pronunciation, and/or grammatical usage.

technical: words that make up the basic vocabulary of a specific area of study. Examples: legal or medical terms.

obsolete: words no longer in use.

DIDACTIC:

written specifically to teach or instruct the reader.

Example: "The Tortoise and the Hare"

DYNAMIC CHARACTER:

a character who grows and changes as a result of the *plot*.

Dynamic characters are usually *protagonists*.

EXPLICIT:

clear, precise, definitely stated, plain to see. A good writer who uses explicit nouns and verbs will not have to rely too heavily on adjectives and adverbs.

FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE:

language that uses nonliteral *figures of speech* (such as *simile*, *hyperbole*, *metaphor*, *personification* and *understatement*) to convey an idea in an imaginative way.

FLAT CHARACTER: an undeveloped, simple character who shows only one personality trait.
Example: Peter Pan is a flat character because his refusal to grow up is the only trait that is shown.

FLASHBACK: a dramatic device where the author interrupts the main action of a story to present an incident that occurred at an earlier time.

FOIL: a character with good qualities that contrasts the qualities of another character further exaggerating each extreme.
Example: There is one character is a responsible person and another character is a very irresponsible person.

FORESHADOWING: the hint in a narrative that lead to reader to anticipate and speculate about later events, developments, or situations, helping create suspense.
Example: The title "Before the End of the Summer" foreshadows that something important will happen before the end of summer.

GENERALIZATION: the ***abstraction*** of a general idea, principle, or pattern from the observation of particular objects, events, or experiences. A statement that is broad enough to cover or describe characteristics that are common to a variety of particular objects, events, or experiences.
Example: We generalize that a person is honest if, under a variety of specific circumstances and temptations, he or she behaves in an honorable manner.

HUMOR: a conjunction of *incongruous (opposite)* situations or images in a surprising manner that evokes amusement. Humor may range from lighthearted and harmless to critical and ***sarcastic***. Pure humor, however, does not contain criticism and solely comes from the amusing surprises of its *incongruities*.
Deadpan Humor: a purposely flat delivery of humor with no expression of amusement in the ***tone***.

HYPERBOLE: deliberate exaggeration used to produce heightened dramatic effects or humorous or ironic effects.
Example: I waited forever by the phone.

IMAGERY: the use of words to produce mental images of specific sensory experiences (olfactory [smell], gustatory [taste], tactile [touch], visual, auditory [hearing], emotional).
1. *Literal Imagery* (factual imagery) tries directly to evoke accurate images of actual objects or experiences.
2. *Imaginative Imagery* uses ***figurative language*** to create vivid imaginary images, in order by indirection to evoke and enhance images of actual objects or experiences.

IMPLICIT: suggested or understood without being directly stated. To imply is to suggest rather than to state. An incident can imply an idea that would otherwise have to be stated.

INFERENCE:

an arrived at understanding or conclusion through **deduction** from evidence. (see **organization**) One infers from that which is implied or **implicit**.

IRONY:

a term for situations and for written and spoken observations that suggest some sort of **incongruity** (discrepancy) between appearance and reality. There are three basic forms of irony:

Verbal Irony: when the speaker means the opposite of what he or she literally says
Example: to say "thanks" to someone who embarrassed you.

Situational Irony: situations in which there is a discrepancy (an incongruity, an opposition) between what the reader expects or presumes to be appropriate and what actually occurs.
Example: the shoemaker's children had no shoes.

Dramatic Irony: 1) a situation in which a character, or narrator, unconsciously reveals to the characters and to the audience or reader some knowledge contrary to the impression he or she wishes to make.
2) a situation in which the character, or narrator, acts and reacts in ignorance of some vital, external, contrary knowledge held by one or more of the other characters and by the audience or reader.

JUXTAPOSITION:

side by side placement of words, sentences or ideas to bring about a desired effect (often used with **contrast**).

METAPHOR:

a figure of speech in which something is identified with something else, showing the common qualities of both. Metaphors make writing more vivid, imaginative, thought-provoking, and meaningful.

Direct Metaphors: **explicitly** state that one thing is another.
Example: "life is but a dream" - Life is a rapidly changing fantasy, a sort of unreality.

Indirect Metaphors: the comparison is **implicit**.
Example: Juliet describes the fading stars at dawn by saying, "Night's candles have burnt out," equating stars with burning candles.

Extended Metaphors: sustain the comparison for several lines or throughout the entire work.
Example: President Lyndon B. Johnson's inaugural address pictured America as "the uncrossed desert and the unclimbed ridge...the star that is not reached and the harvest that's sleeping in the unplowed ground."

METER:

the regular pattern of accented and unaccented syllables. The line is divided into a number of *feet*.

Iambic: style of poetic feet that has one unaccented syllable followed by an accented syllable.

Iambic Pentameter: most common in English verse. It is five (penta) feet (meters) of one unaccented syllable followed by an accented syllable.
Example: "Būt sóft! Whät líght thröugh yónděr wíndöw bréaks?"

Blank Verse: unrhymed iambic pentameter.
Example: Much of Shakespeare's writing is written in blank verse.

Free Verse: poetry without a fixed meter

METONYMY:

literally means "name change." A figure of speech in which a word referring to one attribute of something is used to signify the whole of the thing.

Examples: "the crown" is used to signify "the monarchy"
"he's taken to the bottle" means "he's taken to drinking."

MOOD:

(sometimes referred to as *atmosphere*) the emotional atmosphere experienced by the reader of a literary work. Mood is often suggested by the writer's choice of words, by the events in the work, or by the physical setting. Frequently, mood **foreshadows** events.

Example: The mood of most horror films is eerie.

MOTIF:

a recurring idea that is woven like a design into a fabric of a literary work. It differs from a **theme** in that it is a concrete example of a theme.

Example: a motif of birds (such as birds flying high, a boat named *The Lark*, the eagle a character sees in the mountains) underscore the theme of freedom.

OBJECTIVE:

impersonal; free from the author's feelings, attitudes & prejudices.

ONOMATOPOEIA:

(also known as *echoic*) use of words that imitate the sound they describe.

Examples: "zip" "buzz"

ORGANIZATION:

refers to the order in which a writer chooses to present his or her ideas to the reader. Five main types of organization may be used to develop paragraphs or essays:

Deductive: begins with a general assertion and then presents specific details and examples in support of the **generalization**.

Inductive: begins with a number of examples and then concluding with a general truth or principle.

Chronological: arranged according to time sequence.

Spatial: begins at one geographical point and moves onward in an orderly fashion.

Example: describe the front yard, then the entry

ORGANIZATION:
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hall, then the kitchen, etc.
Climactic: organizing ideas from one extreme to another.
Example: from least dangerous to most dangerous

OXYMORON:

a figure of speech that infuses two contradictory or opposing ideas to make perfect sense.
Example: "pretty ugly"

PARADOX:

a self-contradictory statement that may state a truth.
Example: "The way to be safe is never to be secure."

PARALLEL STRUCTURE:

(also referred to as *parallelism*) the expression of sequential or related thoughts using the same syntactical (grammatical) form. The principles of parallelism may be applied to words, phrases, clauses, sentences, paragraphs, and still larger units. The effects are numerous, but frequently, they act as an organizing force to attract the reader's attention, add emphasis and **organization**, or simply provide musical **rhythm**.
Examples: "It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness..."
"Government *of the people, for the people, by the people*"
"We talked, laughed, cried, shared."

PERSONIFICATION:

giving human characteristics to inanimate objects or ideas, making them appear more vivid to the reader.
Example: The sun smiled on our picnic.

PERSUASION:

type of *argumentation* (see **rhetorical modes**) whose main purpose is to convince the audience to think, or feel a certain way, and urges some form of action. It involves appealing to reason with a well-supported argument; true propositions supported by evidence; logical reasoning (*logos*), to emotion (*pathos*), and/or to the credibility of speaker, his expertise/conscience/morals/ standards. and or historical precedence (*ethos*).

PLOT:

the series of events or episodes that make up the action of a story. It can be broken into the following parts:

Exposition: introduces setting, characters, basic situation

Inciting Incident: introduces central conflict

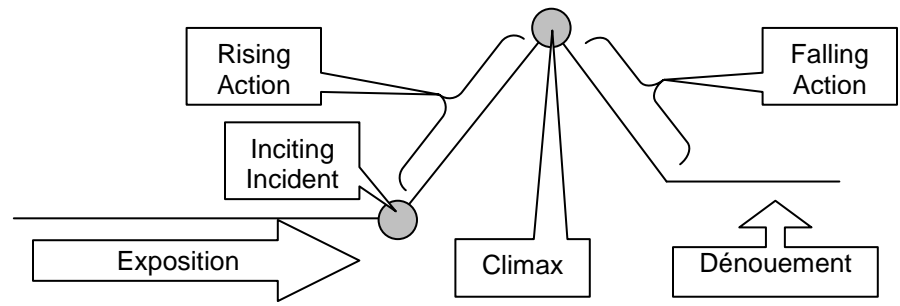
Rising Action: the complication of the action; action gains interest and force as opposing groups come into conflict

Climax: highest point of emotional tension/suspense in the story

Resolution: also called *Falling Action*--conflict is ended

Dénouement: ties up loose ends after the resolution of the conflict

PLOT:
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POINT OF VIEW:

the perspective, the vantage point from which the story is told.
1st person p.o.v.: character within tells the story (uses "I")
3rd person p.o.v.: voice outside of the story tells the story
Limited 3rd person: narrator knows only one character's internal state
Omniscient 3rd person: narrator knows all the characters' internal states

PROTAGONIST:

usually (but not always) the central or leading character; the opposing force in the conflict most responsible for bringing the **conflict** to an end.

PUN:

a play on words that are similar in sound but have different meanings, usually providing a **humorous** effect.
Example: Smart fish swim in schools.

REPETITION:

the use of any element, such as a sound, word, clause, phrase or sentence more than once. Well done repetition links and emphasizes ideas while allowing the reader the comfort of recognizing something familiar.

RHYTHM:

the patterns of sounds and pauses that are a feature of poetry, prose, and ordinary speech.

RHETORICAL MODES:

(also referred to as *modes of discourse*) the term describes the variety, the conventions, and the purposes of the major kinds of writing. The four most common and their purposes are:

Exposition: its purpose is to explain and analyze information by presenting an idea, relevant evidence, and appropriate discussion.

Argumentation: its purpose is to prove the validity of an idea, or point of view, by presenting sound reasoning, discussion, and argument that thoroughly convince the reader.

Description: its purpose is to re-create, invent, or visually present a person, place, event, or action so that the reader can picture that being described. Descriptive writing may be straightforward and **objective** or highly emotional and **subjective**.

Narration: its purpose is to tell a story or narrate an event, usually using the tools of descriptive writing.

ROUND CHARACTER:

a character who shows varied traits, such as popularity and loneliness. They are complex and are more like real people than

<u>ROUND CHARACTER:</u> (CONT'D)	flat characters. Example: Scout in <i>To Kill A Mockingbird</i> is a round character.
<u>SARCASM:</u>	a cutting remark, written or spoken, designed to make fun of, or hurt, its object. Sarcasm often employs irony and may rarely be considered humorous .
<u>SATIRE:</u>	a humorous or witty method of criticizing characteristics and institutions of human society. Its purpose is to correct as well as to expose and ridicule; therefore, it is not purely destructive.
<u>SETTING:</u>	the time & place of a literary work. This can include the social, political, economic, and cultural environment as well.
<u>SIMILE:</u>	a nonliteral comparison between two unlike things, usually connected by the words "like," "as," or "seems." Example: "My love is like a red, red rose."
<u>STATIC CHARACTER:</u>	a character who remains constant in his or her beliefs, attitudes, behaviors, personality.
<u>SUBJECTIVE:</u>	personal; closely connected to an author's feelings, attitudes, prejudices, and personal reactions.
<u>SUBPLOT:</u>	a minor complication running through a story. The secondary plot has a direct relationship to the main plot contributing to its interest, complication, and struggle. Example: the television program <i>E.R.</i>
<u>SYMBOL:</u>	a specific concrete object, incident, or person intended to represent some abstract idea. Example: a wedding ring symbolizes two people's unending love
<u>SYNECDOCHE:</u>	a form of metonymy in which a part is made to stand for the whole or a whole for the part. Example: The U.S. won three gold medals. (instead of saying, The members of the U.S. swim team won three gold medals)
<u>SYNTAX:</u>	The way an author chooses to join words into phrases, clauses, and sentences. Syntax is similar to diction , but you can differentiate them by thinking of syntax as the groups of words while diction refers to the individual words.
<u>THEME:</u>	the major underlying idea in a specific work. In literary works, the themes are often implicit while nonfiction expository and argumentative writing typically states the theme explicitly .
<u>THESIS:</u>	the principle focus of an essay. It is usually phrased in the form of a question to be answered, a problem to be solved, or an assertion to be argued. An expository piece's thesis is its umbrella statement, the assertion at the highest level of generality under which all the essay's assertions fit.

TONE:

the emotional attitude (usually of the author, speaker, or narrator) expressed toward his readers and his subject; his mood or moral view. A writer can be formal, informal, playful, ironic, and especially, optimistic or pessimistic. The readers' perception of tone is not always reliable because of the biases we may have and because the author may be disguising his or her real attitudes.

Below are only a few adjectives to help you identify the tone of a passage:

Admiring	Defensive	Mocking
Advisory	Despairing	Mysterious
Affectionate	Disappointed	Nonchalant
Alarmed	Eerie	Nostalgic
Amused	Fearful	Objective
Apprehensive	Friendly	Outraged
Argumentative	Frightening	Peaceful
Arrogant	Gloomy	Reflective
Awed	Grateful	Resigned
Awestruck	Haughty	Satirical
Bewildered	Hopeful	Sentimental
Bitter	Humorous	Skeptical
Boastful	Indifferent	Surprised
Candid	Informed	Suspenseful
Cautionary	Instructive	Thoughtful
Challenging	Intense	Understanding
Concerned	Joyful	Urgent
Critical	Knowledgeable	Wistful
Cynical	Melancholic	Wondering

TRAGEDY:

a form of literature that depicts the downfall of the leading character whose life, despite its tragic end, represents something significant. The leading character (known as the *tragic hero*), suffers from what Aristotle called "*hamartia*," a mistake in judgement on the part of the hero, frequently translated as "*tragic flaw*." *Reversal* is the sudden downturn of events that occurs, and *discovery* is the revelation to the hero of an important fact.

UNDERSTATEMENT:

the representation of something as less than it really is, for *ironic* effect.

Example: The government needs to address the small problem of poverty.

VERISIMILITUDE:

the quality in a story that would cause a reader to either believe that the story is true or could be true because it has the semblance of reality.

