

# Glossary of Literary Terms

## Literary Devices

allusion- reference to a work of literature, famous person, historical event

characterization- technique a writer uses to create and develop a character by what

- He/she does or says
- Other characters say about him/her or how they react to him/her
- The author reveals directly or through a narrator

dialect- speech that reflects pronunciation, vocabulary, and grammar typical of a geographical region

dialogue- conversation between two or more characters

flashback- interruption of the chronological order to present something that occurred before the beginning of the story

figurative language- language that conveys meaning beyond the literal meaning; also known as “figures of speech”

- Simile- comparison of two things using the words “like” or “as”
- Metaphor- comparison of two things essentially different but with some commonalities; does not use the words “like” or “as”
- Hyperbole- a purposeful exaggeration for emphasis or humor
- Personification- human qualities attributed to animal, object, or idea

foreshadowing- the dropping of important hints by an author to prepare the reader for what is to come and help the reader anticipate the outcome

Imagery- words or phrases that appeal to the reader’s senses

- Image- the representation of a particular thing
  - Abstract image- thought of apart from material objects
  - Concrete image- having a material existence

Irony- the contrast between expectation and reality

- Dramatic/situational- reader expects something to happen but something else does
- Verbal- character or narrator says one thing but means another

Point of view- perspective from which the story is told

- First-person- narrator is character in story; uses “I,” “we,” etc...
- Third-person- narrator outside story; uses “he,” “she,” “they,” etc...
- Third-person limited- narrator tells only what one character perceives
- Third-person omniscient- narrator can see into minds of all characters

Suspense- a feeling of excitement, curiosity, or expectation about the outcome

Symbol- person, place, or thing that represents something beyond itself, usually an abstract idea or feeling such as peace, love, contentment, etc...

Understatement- saying less than is actually true to create an emphasis

Miscellaneous terms

allegory  
anecdote  
contrast  
local color  
motif

realism/naturalism/romanticism  
repetition  
sarcasm  
satire  
stream of consciousness

## *Elements of Literature*

- Setting
- Theme
- Mood
- Tone
- Characters
- Plot

**I. Setting-** the time and place in which the story occurs, may include historical period, geographical location, descriptions

**II. Theme-** the message or insight about life or human nature presented by the author to the reader; the general truth the author is presenting; often not directly stated, but left to the reader to infer

**III. Mood-** the feeling or state of mind created by the author  
(excitement, anger)

**IV. Tone-** the writer's attitude toward his or her subject  
(humorous, admiring, sad)

## **V. Characters**

**character-** persons who appear in the story, they may perform action, speak to other characters, be described by the narrator, or be remembered by other characters

- **Static character-**one who does not change significantly
- **Dynamic character-**one who does change significantly
- **Round character-**one who is fully developed; the reader sees many complex sides of this person
- **Flat character-**a one or two dimensional character; usually there to advance the plot

**main character/protagonist/hero-** the one character most affected by the plot, the character that evolves throughout the story

**antagonist-** the person with whom the main character has the most conflict (bad guy, villain)

**parallel character-** a person whose role in the story is mostly important because of his/her likeness to another character, usually the main character

**foil character-** a person whose role in the story is important because of his/her difference from other characters

**narrator/viewpoint-** the voice telling the story

**minor character-** a person whose role in the story is not very important, or has little significance to the plot

**VI. Parts of the Plot-** the events of the story, in the order the story gives them

**conflict-** the struggle between two opposing people, forces, ideas, or beliefs which form the basis of the plot

- External conflict: a force outside the main character
- Internal conflict: a force within the main character

**exposition-** the 1<sup>st</sup> section of the plot in which the characters are introduced, the setting is described, any other necessary background is given, and *might* suggest conflict

**rising action-** 2<sup>nd</sup> section of plot, in which the main character begins to grapple with the story's main conflict, complications arise, and suspense builds

**climax-** point in the story in which the conflict is addressed, the main character wins or loses, the secret is revealed, the ending becomes inevitable

**falling action-** after the climax, containing events caused by the climax and contributes to the resolution- the writer explains how and why things turned out the way they did

**resolution-** final part of the plot, wraps up any loose ends, explains how everything worked out, answers remaining questions, or extends the story into the future