

A GLOSSARY OF LITERARY TERMS

LITERARY DEVICES

Alliteration: The repetition of initial consonant sounds used especially in poetry to emphasize and link words as well as to create pleasing musical sounds. Example—the fair breeze blew, the white foam flew.

Allusion: A reference to a well-known person, place, event, literary work, or work of art to enrich the reading experience by adding meaning.

Anaphora: . In writing or speech, the deliberate repetition of the first part of the sentence in order to achieve an artistic effect. Eg. “I have a dream”.

Author’s Purpose: The writer’s reason for creating a particular work.

Author’s Argument: the main statement of a poem, an essay, a short story, or a novel that usually appears as an introduction or a point on which the writer will develop his work in order to convince his readers.

Cause/Effect: Cause is the reason something happens, effect is the result.

Chain Reaction: A series of events in which one event causes the next one. Eg. Dominoes falling.

Characterization: Techniques a writer uses to create and develop a character directly or indirectly.

Direct Characterization: The writer or the narrator tells you directly about the character.

Indirect Characterization the process by which the writer shows the character's personality through speech, actions and appearance.

Coherence: Coherence is a Latin word, meaning, “to stick together.” In a story, coherence is a literary technique that refers to logical connections, It makes sense when read or listened to as a whole

Compare/Contrast: Compare is to look for similarities; contrast is to look for differences.

Connotation: The feeling or memories associated with words.

Denotation: The literal or dictionary meaning of a word.

Context Clues: Words, phrases, or sentences that help you understand the meaning of difficult or strange words.

Dialect: Speech that reflects pronunciation, vocabulary, and grammar typical of a geographical region. Eg. yáll

Dialogue: The words a character speaks.

Fact: something that actually exists; reality; truth:

Flashback: Interruption of the chronological (time) order to present something that occurred before the beginning of the story.

Figurative Language: Language that has meaning beyond the literal meaning; also known as “figures of speech.”

- **Simile:** comparison of two things using the words “like” or “as,” e.g. “Her smile was as cold as ice.”
- **Metaphor** comparison of two things essentially different but with some commonalities; does not use “like” or “as,” e.g. “Her smile was ice.”
- **Hyperbole:** Use of extreme exaggeration for emphasis or humor.
- **Personification:** human qualities attributed to an animal, object, or idea, e.g. “The sun smiled.”

Free Verse: Poetry that does not conform to a regular meter or rhyme scheme. Poets who write in free verse try to reproduce the natural rhythms of spoken language.

Foreshadowing: Important hints that an author drops to prepare the reader for what is to come, and help the reader anticipate the outcome.

Generalization: Saying or writing something and saying it’s true all of the time when it’s true only some of the time.
Eg. All women are afraid of mice.

Idiom: A word or a phrase that is different from the actual meaning of the word. Eg. Don’t cry over spilt milk.

Imagery: Words or phrases that appeal to the reader's senses, seeing, hearing, tasting, touching, smelling.

Inference: An opinion you have based on evidence in the story.

Internal motivation: The force that leads you to achieve a goal because of personal satisfaction or desire. Eg. Participating in a competition

External motivation: The driving force that triggers you in achieving your goal. Such as: money

Humor: The quality of a literary or informative work that makes the character and/or situations seem funny, amusing, or ludicrous.

Hypothesize: Give an idea or explanation for something.

Irony: A technique that involves surprising, interesting, or amusing contradictions or contrasts.

Verbal irony: when what is said is the opposite of what is meant.

Situational irony: when an event occurs that is directly opposite of what you expect.

Dramatic irony: When the audience knows something, the character does not know.

Meter: is a unit of rhythm in poetry, the pattern of the beats. It is also called a foot. Each foot has a certain number of syllables in it, usually two or three syllables.

Objective Details: Details that are actual facts and true to life.

Onomatopoeia: The use of words that imitate sounds. Examples would be *hiss, buzz, swish, crunch.*

Opinion: a belief or judgment that rests on grounds insufficient to produce complete certainty, a personal view, attitude, or appraisal

Oxymoron: The close placement of words having opposite or near opposite meanings in order to create a unique description.

Eg. Pretty ugly, Jumbo shrimp, least favorite.

Paraphrase: Restate something using your own words.

Point of View: Perspective from which the story is told

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

Second-person: describes writing that is from the point of view of a narrative onlooker who is writing about you, the reader: "You went to school that morning."

Pun: Humorous play on words.

Refrain: A line or part of a line or a group of lines which is repeated in the poem, usually at the end of each stanza.

Reversal: An unexpected change in a story or character's situation.

Satire: Writing that comments humorously on human flaws, ideas, social customs, or institutions in order to change them.

Sarcasm: Expression that is personal and meant to hurt.

Soliloquy: A device often used in drama when a character speaks to himself or herself, relating thoughts and feelings, thereby also sharing them with the audience, giving off the illusion of being a series of unspoken reflections.

Structure: The organization of a story, which includes the setting, plot, and theme.

Style: The distinctive way that a writer uses language including such factors as word choice, sentence length, arrangement, and complexity, and the use of figurative language and imagery.

Summarize: Give a brief statement of the main points of (something).

Suspense: A feeling of excitement, curiosity, or expectation about what will happen.

Symbol: Person, place, or thing that represents something beyond itself, most often something concrete or tangible that represents an abstract idea.

Rhyme: The repetition of similar sounding words at the end of lines.

Rhyme Scheme: a poet's deliberate pattern of lines that rhyme with other lines in a poem or a stanza

Rhythm: is the repetition of a pattern of sounds in poetry.

Valid Conclusion: A deduction based on evidence and facts.

Invalid Conclusion: A deduction not based on facts or logic.

LITERARY FORMS

Articles: A piece of writing included with others in a newspaper, magazine, or other publication.

Autobiography: A writer's story of his or her own life.

Biography: A writer's account of some other person's life.

Comedy: Writing that deals with life in a humorous way, often poking fun at people's mistakes.

Drama: Also called a play, this writing form uses dialogue to share its message and is meant to be performed in front of an audience.

Essay: A short piece of nonfiction that expresses the writer's opinion or shares information about a subject.

Fable: A short story that often uses talking animals as the main characters and teaches an explicit moral or lesson.

Fantasy: A story set in an imaginary world in which the characters usually have supernatural powers or abilities.

Folktale: A story originally passed from one generation to another by word of mouth only. The characters are usually all good or all bad and in the end are rewarded or punished as they deserve.

Frame Story: A story set within a story, narrative, or movie, told by the main or the supporting character.

Free Verse: Poetry that has irregular lines and may or may not have rhyme.

Genre: How literature is categorized.

Historical Context: The moods, attitudes, and conditions that existed during a certain time.

Historical Fiction: A made-up story that is based on a real time and place in history, so fact is mixed with fiction.

Legend: A nonhistorical or unverifiable story handed down by tradition from earlier times and popularly accepted as historical.

Myth: A traditional story intended to explain some mystery of nature, religious doctrine, or cultural belief. The gods and goddesses of mythology have supernatural powers, but the human characters usually do not.

Narrative: Writing or speech that tells a story.

Narrative Poetry: Poetry that tells a story.

Novel: A book-length, fictional prose story. Because of its length, a novel's characters and plot are usually more developed than those of a short story.

Parable: A short story that is intended to teach a moral or a principle.

Playwright: A person who writes plays.

Poetry: A literary work that uses concise, colorful, often rhythmic language to express ideas or emotions. Examples: ballad, blank verse, free verse, elegy, limerick, sonnet.

Prose: A literary work that uses the familiar spoken form of language, sentence after sentence.

Realistic Fiction: Writing that attempts to show life as it really is.

Science Fiction: Writing based on real or imaginary scientific developments and often set in the future.

Screenplay: A play made for television.

Short Story: Shorter than a novel, this piece of literature can usually be read in one sitting. Because of its length, it has only a few characters and focuses on one problem or conflict.

Speech: A formal address or discourse delivered to an audience.

Stage Directions: An instruction written into the script of a play, indicating stage actions, movements of performers, or production requirements.

Stanza: An arrangement of a certain number of lines, usually four or more, sometimes having a fixed length, meter, or rhyme scheme, forming a division of a poem.

Tall Tale: A humorous, exaggerated story often based on the life of a real person. The exaggerations build until the character can accomplish impossible things.

LITERARY ELEMENTS

Action: Everything that happens in a story.

Antagonist: The person or force that works against the hero of the story. (See protagonist)

Character: One of the people (or animals) in a story.

Dynamic Character: A character who changes over the course of a story.

Static Character: A character who does not undergo a change over the course of a story.

Round Character: A character who is fully developed by the author.

Flat Character: A minor character who is not fully developed by the author.

Climax: The high point in the action of a story.

Conflict: A problem or struggle between two opposing forces in a story. There are four basic conflicts:

- **Person Against Person (Man vs. Man)** : A problem between characters.
- **Person Against Self(Man vs. Self)** A problem within a character's own mind.
- **Person Against Society(Man vs. Society)** : A problem between a character and society, school, the law, or some tradition.
- **Person Against Nature(Man vs. Nature)** : A problem between a character and some element of nature-a blizzard, a hurricane, a mountain climb, etc.

Dialogue: The conversations that characters have with one another.

Exposition: The part of the story, usually near the beginning, in which the characters are introduced, the background is explained, the setting is described, and the conflict is introduced.

Falling Action: The action and dialogue following the climax that lead the reader into the story's end.

Main Idea: What is piece of writing is mainly about.

Motif: A motif is a symbolic image or idea that appears frequently in a story. Motifs can be symbols, sounds, actions, ideas, or words.

Mood: The feeling a piece of literature is intended to create in a reader.

Moral: The lesson a story teaches.

Motivation: A reason that explains or partially explains a character's thoughts, feelings, actions, or speech.

Narrator: The person or character who actually tells the story, filling in the background information and bridging the gaps between dialogue. (See Point of View.)

Parallel Episodes: In literature, a parallel episode is a scene or chapter in which things that happened to a character earlier happen again in a different context or to a different character. Eg. three times the big bad wolf goes to a little pig's house and says, "ill huff and ill puff and ill blow you house down."

Parallelism: A **literary device** in which parts of the sentence are grammatically the same, or are similar in construction. It can be a **word**, a phrase, or an entire sentence repeated. King's famous 'I have a dream' repetition makes the speech compelling and rhythmic, as well as memorable.

Plot: The action that makes up the story, following a plan called the plot line.

Plot line: The planned action or series of events in a story. There are five parts: exposition, rising action, climax, falling action, and resolution.

Protagonist: The main character in a story, often a good or heroic type.

Resolution: The part of the story in which the problems are solved and the action comes to a satisfying end.

Rising Action: The central part of the story during which various problems or complications arise after a conflict is introduced.

Setting: The place and the time frame in which a story takes place.

Speaker: The imaginary voice assumed by the writer of a poem. The one describing the events in a poem.

Style: The distinctive way that a writer uses language including such factors as word choice, sentence length, arrangement, and complexity.

and the use of figurative language and imagery.

Subject: What the story is about.

Theme: The message about life or human nature that is “the focus” in the story that the writer tells.

Tone: Writer’s attitude towards the subject he’s writing about.

ADDITIONAL VOCABULARY

Article: A complete piece of writing, as a report or essay, that is part of a newspaper, magazine, or book.

Atlas: A book of maps.

Encyclopedia: A book that contains information on many subjects; or comprehensive information in a particular field of knowledge; usually arranged alphabetically.

Fiction: A literary work whose content is based on the imagination and not on fact.

Glossary: An alphabetical listing of difficult, technical, or foreign terms with definitions or translation; usually found at the end of a book.

Index: An alphabetical listing that gives page numbers or books where information can be found.

Mystery: A novel, story, or play involving a crime or secret activity and its gradual solution.

Nonfiction: True writing, based on factual information.

Periodical: Another word for magazine.

Reference: A type of book that provides information arranged for easy access.

Series: Several books related in subject, or dealing with the same characters.

Table of Contents: The part of a book which lists the chapters or contents within the book.