


Literary Terms

**The elements within a story or novel
the author uses to reveal the message
of the story.**



AMBIGUITY

- An element of uncertainty in a text, in which something can be interpreted in a number of different ways. Often, ambiguity provides complexity because it gives the reader an opportunity to make a variety of valid interpretations.
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ANTAGONIST

- The character or force that blocks the protagonist.
 - The antagonist is often but not always the villain in the story.
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CHARACTER- person in a story, poem or play

- ❑ Static-character who does not change much in the course of the story.
 - ❑ Dynamic-character changes as a result of the story's events.
 - ❑ Flat-character has only one or two traits, and these can be described in a few words; no depth given, one dimensional
 - ❑ Round-character is realistic, has many different character traits, which can be contradicting
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CHARACTERIZATION- the process of revealing the personality of a character

- **Direct**-author tells us directly what the character is like.
 - **Indirect**-readers have to use their judgment to form an opinion about the characterization using the details and evidence given by the author. The author can reveal the personality indirectly by...
 - Letting us hear the character speak.
 - Describing how the character looks and dresses.
 - Letting us listen to the character's inner thoughts and feelings.
 - Revealing what other characters in the story think or say about the character.
 - Showing us what the character does – how he or she acts.
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CONFLICT- struggle or clash between opposing characters or forces.

- **External-** a character struggles against an outside force. This outside force can be another character, society, or something in nature.
 - **Internal-** takes place entirely within a character's own mind. An internal conflict is a struggle between opposing needs or desires or emotions within a single person.
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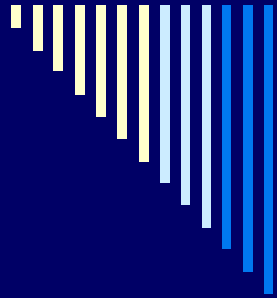
DICTION / VOICE

- **Diction-** A writer's or speaker's choice of words. Diction is related to an author's style which could be described simple, down-to-earth, slang, ornate, or romantic. Pay attention to the word choice within a text.
 - **Voice-** the writer's or speaker's distinctive use of language in a text. Voice is created by a writer's tone and choice of words. Often, a writer's voice is so strong, you can recognize their voice in other works of literature.
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FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE

- Language that involves some sort of imaginative comparison between seemingly unlike things.
 - The three most important are:
 - Metaphor: a comparison between two unlike things not using like or as
 - Simile: a comparison between two unlike things using like or as
 - Personification: when a nonhuman thing or quality is given humanlike characteristics
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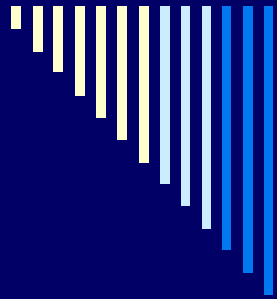
FLASHBACK / FLASH-FORWARD

- Flashback- an interruption in the present action of a plot to flash backward and tell what happened at an earlier time
 - Flash-forward- an interruption in the present action of the plot to shift into the future
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FORESHADOW

- Hints given by the author to help the reader make predictions or determine what will happen next in a text.
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IRONY- contrast between expectation and reality

- **Verbal**-a writer or speaker says one thing but really means something completely different.
- **Dramatic**-occurs when the audience or the reader knows something important that a character in a play or story does not know.
- **Situational**-occurs when there is a contrast between what would seem appropriate and what really happens or when there is a contradiction between what we expect to happen and what really does take place.



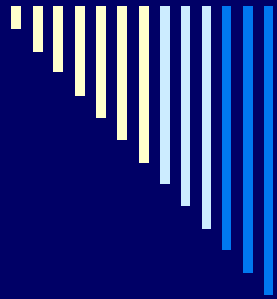
MOOD

- a story's atmosphere or the feeling it gives to the reader
 - the setting of a story supports the mood
 - a story set on a wintry night, howling wolves, unforgiving frost, will convey a mood of uneasiness.
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NARRATION / POINT OF VIEW

- **Narrator-** the voice telling a story
 - **Unreliable narrator-** does not always know what is happening in the story, he or she may be lying or telling us only part of the story.
 - **Point of view-** vantage point from which a writer tells a story.
 - **Omniscient-** all knowing
 - **First Person-** one of the characters is telling the story
 - **Third Person Limited-** a narrator who plays no part in the story but only reveals the thoughts of the other characters
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PLOT- is the overall story itself.

- **Exposition-** includes the setting and the introduction of the characters.
- **Rising Action-** includes the complications leading to the climax.
- **Climax-** the highest point of the story, when the story changes.
- **Falling Action-** includes the moments leading to the resolution.
- **Resolution-** the end.



PROTAGONIST

- The main character in fiction or drama. The focus remains on this person and he or she sets the plot in motion.
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SUSPENSE

- Uncertainty or anxiety the reader feels about what is going to happen next.
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SYMBOL

- Person, place, thing, or event that stands for itself and for something beyond itself.
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THEME

- The central idea of a work of literature. Remember, it is what the author wants you to know about a particular subject in the text.
 - A theme is something that is expressed in at least one complete sentence. It is not one word or a short phrase.
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TONE

- Attitude a writer takes toward a subject, a character, or the audience. Tone is conveyed through a writer's choice of words and details. Tone can be humorous or affectionate, etc.
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