

# A P LITERARY TERMS

**ALLEGORY** story or poem in which characters, settings, and events stand for other people or events or for abstract ideas or qualities.

**EXAMPLE:** *Animal Farm*; Dante's *Inferno*; *Lord of the Flies*

**ALLITERATION** repetition of the same or similar consonant sounds in words that are close together.

**EXAMPLE:** "When the two youths turned with the flag they saw that much of the **regiment** had crumbled away, and the dejected **remnant** was coming slowly back." –Stephen Crane (Note how regiment and remnant are being used; the regiment is gone, a remnant remains...)

**ALLUSION** reference to someone or something that is known from history, literature, religion, politics, sports, science, or another branch of culture. An indirect reference to something (usually from literature, etc.).

**ANTAGONIST** Opponent who struggles against or blocks the hero, or protagonist, in a story.

**ANTHESIS** literally means "opposite," is a rhetorical device in which two opposite ideas are put together in a sentence to achieve a contrasting effect. **Antithesis** emphasizes the word in the same line. An **antithesis** is a figure of speech that refers to the juxtaposition of opposing or contrasting ideas.

**ANTIHERO** Central character who lacks all the qualities traditionally associated with heroes. may lack courage, grace, intelligence, or moral scruples.

**ARCHETYPES** - An archetype, also known as "universal symbol," may be a character, a theme, a symbol, or even a setting. Many literary critics are of the opinion that archetypes – which have a common and recurring representation in a particular human culture, or entire human race – shape the structure and function of a literary work.

**ARCHETYPAL (CHARACTER)** – a character that seems to represent universal patterns of human nature.

**CATHARSIS** an emotional discharge through which one can achieve a state of moral or spiritual renewal, or achieve a state of liberation from anxiety and stress protagonist cannot avoid, usually occurring as a result of his hubris. **Catharsis** – feelings of pity and fear felt by the audience, for the inevitable downfall of the protagonist

**CHARACTERIZATION** the process by which the writer reveals the personality of a character.

**INDIRECT CHARACTERIZATION** the author reveals to the reader what the character is like by describing how the character looks and dresses, by letting the reader hear what the character says, by revealing the character's private thoughts and feelings, by revealing the characters effect on other people (showing how other characters feel or behave toward the character), or by showing the character in action. Common in modern literature

**DIRECT CHARACTERIZATION** the author tells us directly what the character is like: sneaky, generous, mean to pets and so on. Romantic style literature relied more heavily on this form.

**STATIC CHARACTER** is one who does not change much in the course of a story.

**DYNAMIC CHARACTER** is one who changes in some important way as a result of the story's action.

**FLAT CHARACTER** has only one or two personality traits. They are one dimensional, like a piece of cardboard. They can be summed up in one phrase.

**ROUND CHARACTER** has more dimensions to their personalities---they are complex, just a real people are.

**COMEDY** in general, a story that ends with a happy resolution of the conflicts faced by the main character or characters.

**CONCEIT** a figure of speech in which two vastly different objects are likened together with the help of similes or metaphors. **Conceit** develops a comparison which is the unquestionable. Metaphysical texts offer comparisons of unlikely things and are loaded with **conceits**, paradoxes, irony, and They are argumentative, intellectual, realistic and rational in their approach.

**CONFLICT** the struggle between opposing forces or characters in a story.

**EXTERNAL CONFLICT** conflicts can exist between two people, between a person and nature or a machine or between a person a whole society.

**INTERNAL CONFLICT** a conflict can be internal, involving opposing forces within a person's mind.

**DIALECT** a way of speaking that is characteristic of a certain social group or of the inhabitants of a certain geographical area.

**DICTION** a speaker or writer's choice of words.

**DIDACTIC** form of fiction or nonfiction that teaches a specific lesson or moral or provides a model of correct behavior or thinking.

**EXPLICATION** act of interpreting or discovering the meaning of a text, usually involves close reading and special attention to figurative language.

**FABLE** a very short story told in prose or poetry that teaches a practical lesson about how to succeed in life.

**FARCE** a type of comedy in which ridiculous and often stereotyped characters are involved in silly, far-fetched situations.

**FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE** Words which are inaccurate if interpreted literally, but are used to describe. Similes and metaphors are common forms.

**FLASHBACK** a scene that interrupts the normal chronological sequence of events in a story to depict something that happened at an earlier time.

**FOIL** A character who acts as contrast to another character. Often a funny side kick to the dashing hero, or a villain contrasting the hero.

**FORESHADOWING** the use of hints and clues to suggest what will happen later in a plot.

**IMAGERY** the use of language to evoke a picture or a concrete sensation of a person, a thing, a place, or an experience.

**IRONY** a discrepancy between appearances and reality.

**VERBAL IRONY** occurs when someone says one thing but really means something else.

**SITUATIONAL IRONY** takes place when there is a discrepancy between what is expected to happen, or what would be appropriate to happen, and what really does happen.

**DRAMATIC IRONY** is so called because it is often used on stage. A character in the play or story thinks one thing is true, but the audience or reader knows better.

**JUXTAPOSITION** poetic and rhetorical device in which normally unassociated ideas, words, or phrases are placed next to one another, creating an effect of surprise and wit. Ezra Pound: "The apparition of these faces in the crowd;/ Petals on a wet, black bough." **Juxtaposition** is also a form of contrast by which writers call attention to dissimilar ideas or images or metaphors.

Martin Luther King: "Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere."

**LOCAL COLOR** a term applied to fiction or poetry which tends to place special emphasis on a particular setting, including its customs, clothing, dialect and landscape.

**METAPHOR – EXTENDED METAPHOR** An extended metaphor is a metaphor that is developed in great detail. The amount of detail can vary from that of a sentence or a paragraph, to encompassing an entire work. In an extended metaphor, the author takes a single metaphor and employs it at length, using various subjects, images, ideas and situations. They are commonly used in poetry, as well as prose.

**MOOD** An atmosphere created by a writer's diction and the details selected.

**MOTIF** a recurring image, word, phrase, action, idea, object, or situation used throughout a work (or in several works by one author), unifying the work by tying the current situation to previous ones, or new ideas to the theme. Kurt Vonnegut uses "So it goes" throughout Slaughterhouse-Five to remind the reader of the senselessness of death.

**OXYMORON** a figure of speech that combines opposite or contradictory terms in a brief phrase. "Jumbo shrimp." "Pretty ugly." "Bitter-sweet"

**PARABLE** a relatively short story that teaches a moral, or lesson about how to lead a good life.

**PARADOX** a statement that appears self-contradictory, but that reveals a kind of truth.

**KOAN** is a paradox used in Zen Buddhism to gain intuitive knowledge: “What is the sound of one hand clapping?”

**PARODY** a work that makes fun of another work by imitating some aspect of the writer’s style.

**PERSONIFICATION** a figure of speech in which an object or animal is given human feelings, thoughts, or attitudes.

**PLOT** the series of related events in a story or play, sometimes called the storyline.

### **Characteristics of PLOT:**

**EXPOSITION** introduces characters, situation, and setting

**RISING ACTION** complications in conflict and situations (may introduce new ones as well)

**CLIMAX** that point in a plot that creates the greatest intensity, suspense, or interest. Also called “turning point”

**RESOLUTION** the conclusion of a story, when all or most of the conflicts have been settled; often called the denouement.

**POINT OF VIEW** the vantage point from which the writer tells the story.

**FIRST PERSON POINT OF VIEW** one of the characters tells the story.

**THIRD PERSON POINT OF VIEW** an unknown narrator, tells the story, but this narrator zooms in to focus on the thoughts and feelings of only one character.

**OMNISCIENT POINT OF VIEW** an omniscient or all knowing narrator tells the story, also using the third person pronouns. This narrator, instead of focusing on one character only, often tells us everything about many characters.

**OBJECTIVE POINT OF VIEW** a narrator who is totally impersonal and objective tells the story, with no comment on any characters or events.

**PROTAGONIST** the central character in a story, the one who initiates or drives the action. Usually the **hero** or **anti-hero**; in a **tragic hero**, like John Proctor of The Crucible, there is always a **hamartia**, or **tragic flaw** in his character which will lead to his downfall.

**PUN** a “play on words” based on the multiple meanings of a single word or on words that sound alike but mean different things.

**ROMANCE** in general, a story in which an idealized hero or heroine undertakes a quest and is successful.

**SATIRE** a type of writing that ridicules the shortcomings of people or institutions in an attempt to bring about a change.

**STEREOTYPE** a fixed idea or conception of a character or an idea which does not allow for any individuality, often based on religious, social, or racial prejudices.

**STREAM OF CONSCIOUSNESS** a style of writing that portrays the inner (often chaotic) workings of a character’s mind.

**STYLE** the distinctive way in which a writer uses language: a writer’s distinctive use of diction, tone, and syntax.

**SUSPENSE** a feeling of uncertainty and curiosity about what will happen next in a story.

**SYMBOL** a person, place, thing, or event that has meaning in itself and that also stands for something more than itself.

**SYNECDOCHE** a figure of speech in which a part represents the whole. “If you don’t drive properly, you will lose your wheels.” The wheels represent the entire car.

**TALL TALE** an outrageously exaggerated, humorous story that is obviously unbelievable.

**THEME** the insight about human life that is revealed in a literary work.

**TONE** the attitude a writer takes toward the subject of a work, the characters in it, or the audience, revealed through diction, figurative language, and organization.

**TRAGEDY** in general, a story in which a heroic character either dies or comes to some other unhappy end.

**UNDERSTATEMENT** a statement that says less than what is meant.

**Example:** During the second war with Iraq, American troops complained of a fierce sand storm that made even the night-vision equipment useless. A British commando commented about the storm: “It’s a bit breezy.”

**UNITY** Unified parts of the writing are related to one central idea or organizing principle. Unity is dependent upon coherence.

**VERNACULAR** the language spoken by the people who live in a particular locality.