

Literary Terms

You are responsible for all of these terms plus any we add. You may/can/will be quizzed at any time.

TERM	MEANING
metaphor	a comparison between two things <i>You are the wind beneath my wings.</i>
simile	a comparison between two things using “like” or “as” <i>You smell like my momma’s old, nasty tennis shoe.</i>
hyperbole	a deliberate exaggeration <i>He is so stupid he thought a quarterback was a refund!</i>
fiction	not true/ a made up story
nonfiction	a true story
foreshadow	a hint of what is to come later in the story
climax	the most exciting part of the story
pun	a play on words <i>The ram charged up the hill because he did not see the ewe turn.</i>
alliteration	repeating consonant sounds at the beginning of words <i>Peter Piper picked a peck of pickled peppers.</i>
flashback	when a character remembers something that happened earlier or before the story started
setting	when and where a story takes place
Character Types	
protagonist	the main character – usually, but not always, the good guy - <i>Batman</i>
antagonist	a character that goes against the main character (usually a bad guy) - <i>The Joker</i>
dynamic	a character that changes - <i>Anakin Skywalker</i>
static	a character that does not change - <i>Yoda</i>
round	a character that we know a lot about - <i>Peter Parker</i>
flat	a character that we do not know a lot about - <i>Betty Brant</i>

Point of View

- 1st Person** the narrator is a part of the story. "I" is used.
I fell asleep in class while the teacher was talking.
- 2nd Person** the reader is the narrator and character in the story. "You" is used. Rarely used
You fell asleep in class while the teacher was talking.
- 3rd Person limited** the narrator is not a part of the story and knows one character's thoughts and actions. He, she, and it are used a lot along with people's names.
The student, bored with the class, fell asleep while the teacher was talking.
- 3rd Person omniscient** the narrator is not a part of the story and knows everyone's thoughts and actions. He, she, and it are used a lot along with people's names.
The student, bored with the class, fell asleep. The teacher thought about hitting him with a ruler, but decided to fail him instead. Meanwhile, right outside the door, the principal was watching and wondering why the teacher would not wake the student up.

Irony

- Situational Irony** when something unexpected happens (sometimes this is just called irony)
In an effort to look cool in front of Nelson, Bart Simpson pushes Ralph into the mud and steals his lunch money. In return, Nelson pushes Bart into the mud and steals the money from him.
- Dramatic Irony** when the reader knows something the character does not
We saw the killer climb into the closet, but the babysitter did not.
- Verbal Irony** what is said and what is meant are too different things
"I love to be kept waiting in the cold rain," said a dripping wet, mad Mrs. Alford to Mr. Alford who was 30 minutes late to pick her up.

free verse a style of poetry that has no set rhyme or meter

rhyme scheme tracking the rhyming sounds of the last line in a poem by assigning letters

I've never seen a purple cow, A
And I never hope to see one, B
But I can tell you anyhow, A
I'd rather see than be one. B

imagery describing something using the five senses
The warm, toasty fire crackled as I warmed my hands.

unreliable narrator a narrator that cannot be trusted to tell what is really happening

onomatopoeia a sound spelled out
Bang! Pow! Thwipp! ZZZZZZZZ!

conflict	a struggle between a character and another character, society, self, or nature
paradox	an apparent contradiction that is actually true <i>The silence was deafening.</i>
symbolism	using one thing to represent something else <i>A wedding ring is only a circle of metal, but it symbolizes a marriage.</i>
archetype	a symbol that remains the same in all time periods and cultures <i>Every culture in the world and throughout time saw the color white as a symbol of goodness and purity</i>
allegory	a story where everything is symbolic
oxymoron	a phrase that has two seemingly opposite words side by side <i>bitter sweet jumbo shrimp serious fun</i>
dialect	spelling words as they are pronounced, not how they should be spelled <i>I hain't gots no money. I'm just goin to da sto for fun.</i>
mood	the way the writer makes you feel <i>Think about going out on a date and wanting to set the mood.</i>
tone	the way the writer feels about something <i>If several people are killed by the government, a news reported may choose to use the word massacred if he was against the killings or he may choose to use the word executed if he thought it was the right thing to do.</i>
epic	a long poem about a hero
personification	giving something that is not human, human qualities
allusion	a reference to another story, historical event, movie, song, TV show, etc. <i>You're about to enter the ocean when your little brother starts humming, "da-dum.....da-dum....da-dum," obviously a reference to Jaws.</i>
theme	a main idea of a story <i>One of the themes in Star Wars is the good wins over evil.</i>
soliloquy	when one character is on stage revealing their innermost thoughts
couplet	two lines of poetry that are back to back and rhyme
aside	when a character says something on stage, but other people on stage cannot hear what was said – a stage whisper
hubris	excessive self pride leading to a main character's downfall

idiom	a common saying in which the words alone words do not indicate the meaning also a particular style unique to an individual <i>It's raining cats and dogs</i>
connotation	the implied meaning of a word
denotation	the dictionary meaning of a word
deus ex machina	a plot device whereby a seemingly unsolvable problem is suddenly and abruptly resolved by the contrived and unexpected intervention of some new event, character, ability or object.
utopia	a perfect society. A utopian novel is one about a utopia. The word literally means 'nowhere' <i>An example of a utopian novel is Brave New World.</i>
dystopia	an attempt at a utopia that turns disastrously wrong. A dystopian novel is about such a society. <i>An example of a dystopian novel is 1984.</i>
tragic hero	the protagonist in a tragedy – it is important that the tragic hero makes a choice that brings the disaster upon them <i>Othello allows his jealousy to cause the events of the play.</i>
tragic flaw	the character trait that causes the protagonist to become a tragic hero <i>Romeo's tragic flaw was his hastiness and not thinking ahead.</i>
MacGuffin	an object, person, or idea that everyone is trying to obtain in a story – it often drives the plot <i>the ring in Lord of the Rings</i>
motif	A recurrent image, word, phrase, represented object, or action that tends to unify the literary work
parody	taking an existing story, movie, current event, historical event, etc. and exaggerating it for humorous effect. <i>The movie Scary Movie parodies slasher horror movies</i>
satire	the use of humor, exaggeration, or ridicule to expose and criticize people's stupidity or vices, particularly in the context of politics and topical issues. The focus here is to change someone's viewpoint on an issue. <i>Most articles in The Onion is satire on current events.</i>
rhetorical device	any style of writing that forces the reader to consider the matter from a different point of view. <i>There are many types of rhetorical devices – the rhetorical question is one most people are familiar with</i>