

# Literary Terms

**Allusion** - is an indirect reference to a person, place, event, or artistic work. Allusions assume a level of familiarity on the part of the reader with the work, person, or event referenced.

**Analogy** - the illustration of one idea by a more familiar or accessible idea that is in some way parallel.

**Antagonist** - a person or character who actively opposes or is hostile to someone or something; an adversary.

**Characterization** - used to explain or describe characters - physical appearance, behavior, thought process, opinions/ideas, feelings/emotions, and how others in the story respond to the character's personality .

## Conflict

- **man vs. man** - the classic showdown between the protagonist, the main character of the story, and the antagonist, the character who tries to bring about his downfall.
- **man vs. nature** - the story's characters in a struggle against their external environment. This can involve adverse weather events like floods or blizzards, supernatural phenomena, disease outbreaks or isolated locations like deserted islands or remote mountains.
- **man vs. society** - the protagonist is at odds with a particular ideology or group. Willing to advocate what's right rather than what's popular, he often must suffer consequences from his position as he works to change the status quo
- **man vs. self** - Also known as internal conflict, person vs. self focuses on a character wrestling with a major decision.

**Dynamic Character** - characters are the people at the forefront of the story. These characters experience the most change throughout the stories. Villains who grow to have remorse, heroes who undergo tragedy. These characters will be the most developed. They will form friendships and serve major roles in the events of the story. Readers relate to dynamic characters because their traits are much more developed on emotional levels.

**Flashback** - a device in the narrative of a motion picture, novel, etc., by which an event or scene taking place before the present time in the narrative is inserted into the chronological structure of the work.

**Flat Character** - two-dimensional in that they are relatively uncomplicated and do not change throughout the course of a work.

**Foil Character** - share few or no values or traits. Maybe one character is lazy and boring, and his best friend is energetic and a go-getter. These are foil characters. Put them together, and they'll highlight each other's strengths and weaknesses. The most common foil characters are the heroes and villains, who stand for different values and want to achieve separate goals.

**Foreshadow** - Clues left by the author that hint at the progression of events.

**Hyperbole** - is an obvious and intentional exaggeration, such as "I read a million books this summer." This literary device is often used for dramatic or comedic effect.

**Irony** - the use of words to convey a meaning that is the opposite of its literal meaning, sometimes called verbal irony. Responding "How nice!" to unpleasant news is an example of verbal irony. There is also situational irony, in which actions have an effect that is opposite from what was intended, so that the outcome is contrary to what was expected, and dramatic irony, which occurs when a situation is understood by the audience but not grasped by the characters in the play.

**Metaphor** - a figure of speech in which a term is applied to something to which it is not literally applicable in order to suggest a resemblance, as in "She is a rose."

**Mirror Character** - share several qualities and are used to complement and highlight each other's traits. Common mirror characters embark on parallel plots, sometimes to achieve a single goal, which tests them and highlights their traits in different ways.

**Mood** - the atmosphere of a literary piece, as it creates an emotional situation that surrounds the readers. It can be developed through setting, theme, tone and diction.

**Onomatopoeia** - is defined as the formation of a word, as cuckoo, meow, honk, or boom, by imitation of a sound made by or associated with its referent.

**Oxymoron** - a figure of speech that produces an incongruous, seemingly self-contradictory effect, such as in the phrase "cruel kindness" or "to make haste slowly."

**Paradox** - is a statement or proposition that seems self-contradictory or absurd but may in reality express a truth or tension.

**Personification** - The attribution of human traits to nonhuman things. For example, Homer's "rosy-fingered dawn" and Emily Dickinson's "bashful flowers."

## **Plot**

- **Exposition** - characters and setting are introduced
- **Rising Action** - characters are faced with problems and characters must continually overcome problems
- **Climax** - The story reaches a critical turning point. Tension has reached its highest point
- **Falling Action** - Tension eases and things start to get worked out in the story
- **Resolution** - Everything gets worked out and the story ends

**Point of View** - the perspective from which a story is narrated (1st person, 2nd person, 3rd person limited, 3rd person omniscient)

**Protagonist** - the leading character or one of the major characters in a drama, movie, novel, other fictional text, or even a real situation. An advocate or champion of a particular cause or idea.

**Round Character** - are complex and undergo development, sometimes sufficiently to surprise the reader.

**Setting** - the place or type of surroundings where something is positioned or where an event takes place.

**Simile** - a figure of speech in which two unlike things are explicitly compared. That explicit comparison often takes the form of the word like or as. To build on the example in the previous slide, "she is like a rose" and "as thorny as a rose bush" are examples of simile.

**Static Character** - background characters who serve basic roles. Most likely they are strangers to the main cast. They don't have arcs, and readers usually won't grow attached to them.

**Suspense** - the intense feeling that an audience goes through while waiting for the outcome of certain events. It basically leaves the reader holding their breath and wanting more information.

**Symbolism** - Attach meaning to objects. Things represent other things, usually societal, emotional, or personal. Country flags, the American Eagle, the Holy Land, the Nile River, and more. These all contain meaning. People look at these "objects" and see their country, or pride, or life sustenance. There are thousands of meanings. Death,

freedom, sacrifice, love, repentance, forgiveness, mercy, help, savior, bravery, treachery... the list goes on and on.

**Theme** - A universal idea present in a text. For example, in Frankenstein, one of themes is monstrosity and what constitutes a “monster” or the quality of being “monstrous.”

**Tone** - the attitude or approach that the author takes toward the work’s central theme or subject. Works of literature can have many different types of tone, such as humorous, solemn, distant, intimate, ironic, arrogant, condescending, sentimental, and so on. Any emotion that humans can feel can be an example of tone in literature.