

Glossary of Literary Terms

novel – an extended prose (non / fiction) which represents characters in a significant action in their world

short story – a prose tale too short to be published on its own, normally concentrating on a single event with only one or two characters

theme – an observation of life which serves as the controlling idea in a literary work

symbolism – when a familiar object is used to represent the unfamiliar

plot – the pattern of cause and effect events which must be complete by the end of the literary work

characterization – the creation of believable personalities using techniques such as:

1. the character's appearance
2. the character's actions or thoughts / conversations
3. the aspects of setting which influence the character

conflict – a struggle between two opposing forces, namely the following:

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|-----------------------|----------------------------|
| 1. person vs. person | 4. person vs. fate |
| 2. person vs. nature | 5. person vs. self |
| 3. person vs. society | 6. person vs. supernatural |

setting – the environment of a story including

- 1) time
- 2) place
- 3) mood / atmosphere

prose – written language not arranged in poetic metre

poetry – a form of rhythmic language which is written to be more concentrated than prose or ordinary speech

simile – a comparison between two unlike things using *like* or *as* to make the comparison

metaphor – an implied comparison between two unlike things that speaks of one thing as if it were the other eg. a heart of stone

mood – a state of mind or feeling which sets the tone of a literary work eg. a poem about being alone on a cold, rainy day will evoke loneliness

personification – a figure of speech by which animals, abstract ideas, or inanimate things are referred to as if they were human eg. weeping willow

antagonist – the force opposing the hero (the villain)

protagonist – the main character in a play or written work (the hero)

archetype – a recurring symbol, theme, setting or character-type, for example:

1. a rose = beauty, love
2. the seasons = the life cycle
3. certain characters eg. evil stepmother, handsome prince

analogy – the illustration of an idea by means of a more familiar idea eg. learning how to ride a bike is **analogous** to a bird learning how to fly

climax – any moment of great intensity in a literary work, especially in drama

irony – when an intended meaning is the opposite, or when an outcome is contrary to what is expected eg. a cardiologist (heart surgeon) dies of a heart attack

hyperbole – exaggeration for the sake of emphasis in a figure of speech not meant literally eg. I've been waiting here for ages.

alliteration – the repetition of the same initial sounds of words eg. the slimy salamander slithered and slid stealthily and steadily south.

onomatopoeia - echoism; descriptive word that actually sounds like the action eg. tweet, purr, hiss