

LITERARY TERMS FOR FICTION – SHORT STORY – POETRY GRADE TEN

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The Five Main Literary Forms:

ESSAY: a prose composition that presents ideas, facts, or opinions in a formal style.

PLAY: a work in either prose or verse that tells a story through dialogue.

SHORT STORY: a narrative that focuses on one important event in the life of its central character.

NOVEL: a longer narrative that presents several related episodes in the life of its central character or characters.

POEM: a rhythmical expression of strong feeling.

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ABSTRACT: Language that lacks focus or is unclear

ALLITERATION: Repetition of initial consonant sounds in adjacent words.

"The fair breeze blew, the white foam flew, the furrow followed free."

Bora Bora Body Butter

ALLEGORY: An extended narrative that carries a second meaning along with the surface story. For example, *Moby Dick* has a rich symbolic structure accompanying the surface narrative.

ALLUSION: A direct reference to a proper noun; the reference is usually mythological but could be legendary, religious, historical, or literary; the use of the name recalls a particular idea, emotion, tradition, insight, moral or ethical stance.
"Every man has his Waterloo." (This is an allusion to Napoleon's defeat at Waterloo.)
"The Edmonton Oilers' defence is their Achilles' heel." (This is an allusion to the Greek god Achilles, whose only vulnerable spot was his heel.)

ANTAGONIST: A character or object that opposes the protagonist (not necessarily an evil or bad person/thing) BUT one that prevents the protagonist from achieving what they want - presents a conflict

ANTITHESIS: A statement where sharply opposing ideas are expressed within a balanced grammatical structure
"To err is human, to forgive divine."

ASIDE: In drama, a brief remark directed to the audience and not heard by the other characters.

ASSONANCE: The intentional repetition of an internal vowel sounds.

Weak as the reed – weak – feeble as my voice –
Oh, oh, the pain, the pain of feebleness.

- From "The Fall of Hyperion" by John Keats

CACOPHONY: A mixture of harsh, discordant, and unpleasant sounds which are used to jar the reader to attention. The opposite term is Euphony.

CHARACTERIZATION: A method for presenting the **special qualities or features** of a character in a literary work.

CHARACTER FOIL: **A character who serves as a contrast to another character.**
A muscle bound jock compared to the wimpy intellectual.

CHARACTER SKETCH: A description of a character's moral and behavioral qualities using nouns, adjectives, and specific examples and quotations from the story. It does not normally describe the character's physical appearance or dress.

CLIMAX: THE INSTANT CONFLICT ENDS; A TURNING POINT; THE CHOICE IS MADE OR THE ACTION IS TAKEN.

CLICHE: Language that has been overused to the point that it has lost its meaning and become boring. (nothing special)
"Have a nice day"

CONCLUSION: *The long term effect; the author's or composers final comment*

CONCRETE: Language that is clear, focused and descriptive

CONFLICT: **A struggle between two forces:**
Internal (man vs self,
External (man vs any opposing force) Environment, Society,
Supernatural
Physical (man vs. man)

CONSONANCE: The repetition of internal consonant sounds or end consonant sounds in words. Note the repetition of the "n" sound in the

following lines from "The Windhover" by Gerard Manley Hopkins:
*I caught this morning morning's minion, kingdom of daylight's
dauphin, dapple-dawn-drawn Falcon, in his riding
Of the rolling level underneath him steady air. . .*

CONTRAST: Finding differences in moods, meaning, characters, situations, etc.

COUPLET: A pair of successive lines of poetry, especially a pair that rhyme and have the same number of syllables. Each of William Shakespeare's sonnets concludes with a rhymed couplet.

*And yet, by heaven, I think my love as rare
As any she belied with false compare.*
- from "Sonnet 130" by William Shakespeare

DENOUEMENT: **The falling action – the immediate impact of the climax**

DICTION: Author's specific choice of words/use of language.

DYNAMIC CHARACTER: A character who "develops" or "changes" into another aspect of themselves. This character undergoes a permanent change in some aspect of character, personality, or outlook. Most often a MAIN character.

EPIPHANY: A moment of significant realization and insight experienced by the protagonist. A "eureka" moment.

ELLIPSIS: the **three** little dots(periods) that indicate missing letters or words.

EUPHEMISM: Expressing a disagreeable or unpleasant fact in a more pleasing manner.
Death = the deceased is at rest.
= the loved one has gone to a better place.

FLAT CHARACTER: A minor character who has only one apparent quality; one who is UNDEVELOPED

FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE: Writing or speech characterized by the use of simile, metaphor, personification and other figures of speech. A writer uses figurative language mainly to compare seemingly dissimilar

things and to clarify for the reader the images he or she is trying to present.

FORESHADOWING: *A hint of what is going to happen next in the story*

HYPERBOLE: Over exaggeration for (humorous) effect; an overstatement.
She waited an eternity for him. OR He laughed his head off.

IMAGERY: The use of language to appeal to one or more of the senses: taste, touch, sight, smell, or hearing. Concrete details and figures of speech that help the reader to form vivid sense impressions of what is being described.

INTRODUCTION: The first significant part of a story/essay, which must capture the reader's attention. It will introduce characters, settings and establishes mood or intention and in the case of an essay states the thesis.

IRONY: A strange twist of events. A literary device which reveals concealed or contradictory meaning.

VERBAL – when someone says something opposite to what they mean. An example would be sarcasm.

DRAMATIC – when the author shares with the reader (or viewer) something not known by a character.

SITUATIONAL – when the opposite of what ought to happen occurs. More subtle and effective than verbal and dramatic irony.

METAPHOR: A comparison of two unlike objects. More subtle than a simile because the comparison is suggested or implied.
"Your room is a garbage dump"

MONOLOGUE: A written or oral composition in which only one person speaks.

MOOD: Emotional feeling created and that which the reader "gets" from a piece of writing. (or acting)

MOTIVATION: *This is what causes a character to do what he or she does.*

NARRATIVE: *A story. Narratives may be fictional or non-fictional and incorporate such styles as novels, short stories, anecdotes, autobiographies, biographies and essays.*

NARRATOR: The story or writing is shaped by his or her viewpoint. The STORYTELLER.

ONOMATOPOEIA: **Words that imitate noise.**

"Over the cobbles he clattered and clashed in the dark inn yard."

OXYMORON: An expression which combines two apparently contradictory words.
"sweet sorrow" "freezer burn" "plastic glasses"

PARADOX: A statement which appears to be contradictory but contains an element of truth. "Cowards die many times before their deaths"

PARODY: **A comic or satirical imitation of a selection of writing by imitating or ridiculing its style and content.**

PERSONIFICATION: Application of human qualities to nonhuman things.
"The sun smiled down." OR "The sky openly wept."

PLOT: *The organization of incidents which consists of episodes and conflict. Plots usually have rising and falling action, a climax, denouement and conclusion.*

POINT OF VIEW: THINK: WHOSE HEAD ARE YOU GETTING INTO?
The perspective from which the story is told

First person narrative: the main character tells his/her own story. The audience knows only what one character thinks or feels from a vantage point "**inside**" the story. This is the "**I**" point of view.

Limited omniscient: refers to the main character as "**he**" or "**she**," and shows us only what one character thinks and feels – from the perspective of someone "**outside**" the story.

Omniscient: reveals the minds of several characters, knowing and telling all from an all seeing/all knowing GOD-LIKE perspective from "**outside**" the story.

3rd person/objective - the facts. The narrator remains unbiased. None of the inner thoughts or workings of the characters are revealed.

PROSE: Ordinary language. How we normally speak or write.

PROTAGONIST: **The main character or main focus of the story (not just the**

good guy") - The one WITH THE PROBLEM TO SOLVE

PUN: A play on words

REPETITION: Occurs when the poet or writer repeats words, phrases or devices. It is a simple but effective device which contributes to rhythm or emphasis. It is a most effective device for precise emotional responses such as anger, fear, sorrow, defiance.

RHYME: SIMILARITY OF SOUND IN WORDS. More specific types of rhyme include end rhyme and internal rhyme (assonance/consonance). RHYME SCHEME is a pattern of rhyming lines in a poem. Letters of the alphabet are used to describe a rhyme scheme to show which lines rhyme with which other lines.

RHYTHM: Refers to the patterns of accented and unaccented syllables. Rhythm is achieved through repetition.

ROUND CHARACTER: **A complex, many-sided character. The physical, mental and emotional characteristics are known; usually an important or major character.**

SATIRE: Literature which blends criticism and humour and holds up human vices and foibles to ridicule and scorn. Satire creates amusement in the reader in order to inspire correction of the faults being satirized.

SETTING: WHERE the story takes place, WHEN it happens (in time) and the MOOD (feeling) of the story.

SIMILE: A direct comparison of two unlike objects using like, as, or than.
"Your face is a book where men may read strange matters."

SOLILOQUY: An oral contemplation that makes the audience or reader aware of the character's inner thoughts and gives information concerning the other participants in the action. The audience or reader is the only outsider aware of the speech.

SONNET: A poem of fourteen lines written in iambic pentameter with a *specific rhyme scheme*. Two principal sonnet forms include the Petrarchan sonnet (Italian sonnet) 8 lines and 6 lines and the Shakespearean sonnet (English sonnet) consisting of three quatrains and a concluding rhyming couplet, usually with the rhyme scheme *abab cdcd efef gg*.

STANZA: A group of two or more lines which make up a unit of a poem and contain a unity of thought and form.

STATIC CHARACTER: *One who remains the same throughout the story.*

STOCK CHARACTER: A STEREOTYPE. Represents a group or class. The appearance, speech and actions are predictable in a cultural or social sense.

STREAM OF CONSCIOUSNESS: Interior Monologue. The character's thoughts are set down in a long, rambling dialogue whereby he/she discusses the external forces that affect him and the mind of the character becomes the stage on which most of the action occurs. You are "inside" the protagonists' mind. A modern technique of novel or short story.

SYMBOLISM: Something that stands for something else – an act, word, or real object that represents more than itself.

LITERARY SYMBOL: ONE THAT IS AGREED UPON BY CULTURE.
Spring is a traditional symbol of life and rejuvenation, whereas autumn is a traditional symbol of decay and disintegration. OR A dove which represents Peace.

ARBITRARY SYMBOL: individual or "unique" to a particular piece of literature.

THEME: The idea about human life that the literary work sets out to express. The underlying meaning.

THESIS: The **main idea** of a piece of writing which will be maintained in an essay or defended in an argument.

TONE: The writers attitude or point of view toward his or her subject and audience. Tone creates mood.

UNIVERSALITY: A story that is broad enough to be applied to most people at any time or place. Stories having universality reveal human nature or common truths of experience. Universality is also taken by some critics to be a criterion for measuring the worth or success of a story.

VERSE: Poetic language that contains a beat or rhythmical structure.