

Literary Elements

Plot—Pattern of events in a story.

- a. Exposition—introductory material which presents the characters, setting, and tone of a play or story.
- b. Inciting Incident—hooks the reader into the action and swings it or spins it in another direction.
- c. Rising Action—tension building to the climax of a story or a play.
- d. Climax—the moment when the conflict is at its most intense.
- e. Falling Action—tension lessens as the story moves to its conclusion.
- f. Denouement—resolution of a conflict

Setting—the time and place in which a story happens.

Character—a person portrayed in a literary piece such as a story or play.

Characterization—representation of a character or characters, especially by imitating or describing actions, gestures, or speeches; description of qualities or peculiarities.

Conflict—the issue to be resolved in a story; the problem.

- a. man vs. man
- b. man vs. nature
- c. man vs. society
- d. man vs. self
- e. man vs. fate

Resolution (or Denouement)—the culmination of a fictional plot that resolves the conflict or leaves them satisfactorily unresolved.

Point of View—perspective that the story is told from

- a. 1st person – may be a major or minor character in the story that is telling the story from their own perspective (the use of the pronoun I).
- b. 3rd person Objective – not told by a character in the story; reports only what can be seen and heard; unspoken thoughts and feelings not reported.
- c. 3rd person Limited – not told by a character in the story; tells thoughts and feelings of only one character
- d. 3rd person Omniscient – not told by a character in the story; all-knowing; able to reveal thoughts and/or feelings of any character; able to describe viewpoints of any character.

Theme—a general idea or insight about life that a writer wishes to express.

Tone—the attitude a writer takes toward a subject or character.

Mood—prevailing emotions of a work; how the reader feels after their experience with the literary piece.

Style—in writing, the distinctive, individual manner in which a writer uses words, constructs sentences, incorporates non-literal expressions, and handles rhythm, timing, and tone.

Archetype—an image, symbol, character type, plot line that occurs frequently enough in literature, religion, myths, folktales, and fairy tales to be recognizable as an element of universal literary experience and thus to evoke a deep emotional response.

Flashback—action that interrupts to show an event that happened at an earlier time which is necessary for better understanding.

Suspense—the author maintains the audience’s attention through the buildup of events, the events of which will soon be revealed.

Figurative Language—language that states something that not literally true in order to create effect.

- a. **metaphor**—comparison of two unlike things using the verb “to be.”
- b. **Simile**—comparison of two unlike things using “like” or “as.”
- c. **Idiom**—a style or manner of expression peculiar to a given group of people.
- d. **Personification**—giving human qualities to animals or objects.
- e. **Paradox**—reveals a kind of truth which at first seems contradictory. Example: Stone walls do not a prison make.

Imagery—a word or groups of words in a literary work which appeal to one or more of the senses.

Foreshadowing—words, gestures, or other actions that hint at future events or outcomes in a literary work.

Symbolism—the practice of representing things by means of symbols or of attributing symbolic meanings or significance to objects, events, or relationships.

Irony—Incongruity between what might be expected and what actually occurs.

- a. **dramatic irony**—achieved when an audience has something that the characters on stage do not have.
- b. **Situational irony**—the result of an action is the reverse of what the character expected.
- c. **Verbal Irony/Sarcasm**—a form of wit that is a cutting often ironic remark that intended to wound.

Diction—choice and use of words in speech or writing.

Analogy—the inference that certain resemblances imply further similarities.

Playwright—one who writes plays.

Theater—a stage or building where plays, operas, films, etc. are performed.

Stage—an area or platform on which plays are performed.

Act—a main division of a drama.

Scene—a division of a play usually part of an act.

Dialogue—conversation between characters in a play, film, or literary piece.