

Literary Terms



- **Allusion** - an indirect reference to something. Ex: The cartoon and caption made an allusion to the presidential campaign. (Allusion is different from illusion, which is a deception or erroneous perception of reality.)
- **Anecdote** - a brief account of an interesting or humorous event or episode. People tell stories using anecdotes to develop characters and advance the plot.
- **Antagonist** - a character (or even a force of nature) in a story that is in opposition to the protagonist or hero. The conflict between the antagonist and protagonist makes up the story's action or plot.
- **Climax** - the point of highest interest in a narrative; the place where the plot or action reaches its most important point and the resolution becomes inevitable.
- **Conflict** - a complication or opposition that the protagonist must face. The conflict develops through the antagonist, through fate, through certain events, or through some aspect of the protagonist's own personality.
- **Connotation** - an implied or suggested meaning to a word or words (as opposed to its literal meaning or denotation).
- **Dialogue** - a conversation between characters in a play or a narrative.
- **Expose** - an exposure or revelation of facts. An expose is typically an investigative report that exposes something discreditable.
- **Expository writing** - writing that explains material or gives background information to a reader.
- **Fable** - a short, often humorous narrative that presents a moral. The characters in a fable are often animals that represent specific traits or values.
- **Figurative language** - words that are literally inaccurate but are used to describe or define something. Usually this language makes use of metaphors or similes to compare or equate something to another.
- **First-person narration** - the telling of a story by a narrator who was involved in or directly observed the story's action. This narrator, who refers to him/herself as "I" and becomes a character in the story, shapes the reader's perception of the characters and events.
- **Foreshadow** - words, images, or events in a story that suggest or anticipate future events -- ones that are central to the story's plot.
- **Genre** - a type or category of literary work, such as novel, play, poem, etc.
- **Imagery** - the use of images, often figurative ones, to help convey an overall sensory impression. For example, a writer might include the sounds, smells, and sights of a big city to convey an image of Manhattan, NY.
- **Irony** - the reader's awareness of a reality that differs from either the reality that the characters perceive (dramatic irony) or the literal meaning of the author's words (verbal irony).
- **Metaphor** - a comparison of two different things that is achieved by a figurative equation of those things. EX: "Love is a rose" and "War is hell" are metaphors that give certain qualities to the things being discussed.
- **Narration** - the dramatic telling of events that comprise the story's action or plot.
- **Narrative** - a sequence of events that is usually connected in storytelling.

- **Novel** - a long fictional work of prose narrative.
- **Novella** - a short novel. A work of prose fiction whose length is somewhere between that of a short story and a novel. Approximately 50 – 125 book pages.
- **Parody** - a humorous imitation of another (usually serious) work.
- **Plot** - a series of events that forms the action in a narrative.
- **Parable** - a short narrative that tries to answer a difficult moral question or teach a moral truth.
- **Poetry** - literature written in meter or verse. It is characterized by language chosen for its sound and suggestive power and by such literary techniques as structured meter, rhyme, and metaphor.
- **Point of View** - the perspective from which an author lets the reader view the action of a narrative; the author's choice of who tells the story.
- **Prose** - ordinary speech or writing as distinguished from poetry or verse.
- **Protagonist** - the main character or hero of a narrative.
- **Satire** - a work in which human vice or folly is ridiculed or attacked, usually through irony or wit. Satire is not the same as parody (which imitates another work or type of work).
- **Setting** - the place and time in which a story takes place.
- **Simile** - a figurative comparison of one thing to another using connecting words such as like or as. EX: He is as blind as a bat.
- **Style** - the author's habitual manner of expression. An author's style is the result of choices about vocabulary, organization, imagery, pace, and recurring themes.
- **Symbol** - a person, event, or thing that stands for some other idea.
- **Tale** - a short story or a report of events, often involving remote places and times.
- **Theme** - the central or unifying idea that is developed in a work of fiction.
- **Tone** - the expressions of the author's attitude toward the subject matter.