

Literary Terms and Devices

Alliteration	Repetition of the same or similar consonant sounds in words that are close together
Allusion	Reference to statement, person, place or an event from literature, history, religion, mythology, politics, sports, science or pop culture
Analogy	A comparison and finds points of similarity between two dissimilar things, often extending beyond a single sentence
Antagonist	The opponent who struggles against or blocks the hero, or protagonist in a story
Autobiography	When a person writes his/her own life story
Biography	An account of a person's life written or told by another person
Climax	The turning point of the story that is usually the point of greatest emotional intensity, interest, or suspense in the plot of a literary work
Connotation	All the meanings, associations, or emotions that a word suggests; the definition society associates with a word rather than the actual dictionary definition
Denotation	The actual dictionary definition of a word, as opposed to the meaning attached by society
Denouement	Another word for a story's resolution; when the story's problems are all resolved and the story ends
Dialect	A way of speaking that is characteristic of a particular region or of a particular group of people (e.g. a southern or mid-western accent)
Diction	A writer or speaker's specific choice of words based on his/her purpose for writing (e.g. formal, conversational, slang, technical language, etc.)
Direct characterization	When the writer describes a character directly through actions or words
Dramatic irony	A type of irony wherein the audience or reader knows what is going to happen but the characters do not
Dynamic character	A character who changes significantly as a result of events in the story
End rhyme	Rhyme in the end word or syllable of a line of poetry
English sonnet (Shakespearean)	Fourteen line poem usually written in iambic pentameter that is set up with three four-line units (quatrains) that concludes with a couplet; most common rhyme scheme is abab, cdcd, efef, gg
Epic poetry	Narrative poem that tends to be very long
Exposition	The events at the beginning of a story that introduce the characters, the setting, and set up the conflict or situation
Extended metaphor/conceit	A metaphor that is extended or developed as far as the writer wants to take it
External conflict	A struggle between a character and an outside force
First person	Point of view wherein one character serves as narrator and tells the story – uses the pronoun "I"
Flashback	Scene in a movie, play, literature or narrative poem that interrupts the present action of the plot to "flash" backward and tell what happened at an earlier time
Flat character	A character who has only one or two traits; can be described in a few words
Foil	Character that is used to contrast another character (a bad character makes a good character look better or vice versa)
Foreshadow	The use of clues to hint at events that will occur later in the plot
Hyperbole	A figure of speech that uses incredible exaggeration or overstatement for effect
Imagery	Language that appeals to the senses (sight, sound, touch, taste, smell)
Indirect characterization	Using your own judgment or making an inference to decide what a character is like based on details the writer gives us (often through other characters' observations)
Internal conflict	A struggle between opposing needs or desires within a character's own mind