

Alphabetical Glossary of Literary Terms

Allusion: a reference to a well-known person, place, event, literary work, or artwork, often used to help make a comparison.
Antagonist: a character or a group of characters which stand in opposition to the protagonist
Autobiography: a form of non-fiction in which the writer tells their own life story
Biography: a form of non-fiction in which the writer tells the life story of another person
Character: the people who move the story along and the reason many readers stay with a story. Often includes a hero and a villain (protagonist & antagonist).
Climax: a very exciting section of the story where the main conflict is resolved
Comedy: a story that is written for humor or irony
Conflict: the part of a story that involves a struggle between two opposing forces — usually a protagonist and an antagonist
Dialogue: words that the characters speak
Direct Characterization: the writer directly states the character's traits or characterization
Drama: a type of fiction characterized by performance of actors
Dynamic Character: a character who changes over the course of the story
External Conflict: a problem or struggle between a character and an outside force. Usually character vs. character, character vs. nature or character vs. society.
Fable: a brief story, usually with animals or mythical characters that teaches a moral lesson
Fiction: writing that tells about <i>imaginary</i> characters and events
Flashback: part of the story that interrupts the sequence of events in order to relate an earlier incident or set of events
Foreshadowing: when the author uses hints or clues to allude to future events without directly stating that they will happen
Genre: A classification of literature such as fiction, drama, poetry, etc.
Hyperbole: use of extreme exaggeration
Imagery: words used to evoke pictures in the minds of the readers, often using the 5 sense to create a vivid description.
Indirect Characterization: the writer allows the reader to draw his/her conclusions as to what a character is like base on appearances, words, actions and interactions through the story.
Internal Conflict: a problem or struggle within a character (character vs. self)
Irony: a figure of speech in which words are used in such a way that their intended meaning is different from the actual meaning of the words. It may also be a situation that ends up in quite a different way than what is anticipated.

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Mood: the feeling an author creates within his writing which determines how the reader feels about the text while reading

Narrator: the speaker or character who tells the story

Non-fiction: writing that tells about *real* people, places, objects or events

Novel: a longer work of fictional prose

Oxymoron: the close placement of words having opposite or near opposite meanings in order to create a unique description.

Parable: a short tale that illustrates truth, a belief that appeals to all people of all civilizations

Plot: these are the sequence of events in the story from the beginning until the end.

Poetry: a type of literary art form where writers use figurative language and other poetic devices to convey their point to the reader

Point of View: the perspective from which the story is told (first person, second person, or third person).

Protagonist: the central character of the story, often considered the “good guy” or “hero”

Pun: a humorous play on words

Resolution: how the story ends, occurring in the falling action of a story’s plot.

Science fiction: a form of fiction where characters and events are often set in the future where science and technology far surpasses the present.

Setting: the time and location of the events in a story

Short Story: a fictional narrative story usually written in prose; often shorter in length and focuses on one event, character, or incident.

Static Character: a character who does not undergo a change over the course of a story

Suspense: a literary device used to give the reader a feeling of anticipation that something risky or dangerous is about to happen

Symbol(ism): anything that represents something else.

Theme: the central idea of the story which is sometimes abstract (greed, love, coming of age, etc).

Tone: the attitude of the author toward the subject he/she is writing about. This is shown through the words that are used to express how the author feels about the topic.

Tragedy: writing that often involves human suffering, including death, in the story