

Glossary of Literary Terms

Analogy

A comparison made between two things to show how they are alike

Author's Message/Author's Central Message

(See Theme)

Character

One of the people (or animals) in a story

Dynamic Character

This is someone who changes in some important way as a result of the story's action

Static Character

This is someone who does not change much in the course of a story

Major Character

A main or important character that plays a large role in the story and is present throughout all, or almost all, of a story

Minor Character

A character that does not play a large role in a story

Conflict

A struggle between opposing forces or characters in a story

External Conflict

Conflicts that exist between two people, between a person and nature, or between a person and society

Internal Conflict

Conflicts that exist between opposing forces in a person's mind

Foreshadowing

Important hints that an author drops to prepare the reader for what is to come, and help the reader anticipate the outcome

Idiom

An expression that cannot be understood from the meanings of its individual words

Intertextuality

The shaping of a text's meaning by another text.

Irony

A technique that involves surprising, interesting, or amusing contradictions or contrasts.

Dramatic Irony

When the reader is aware of something that the characters are not aware of

Verbal Irony

When words are used to suggest the opposite of their usual meaning

Situational Irony

When an event occurs that directly contradicts expectations

Line of Thinking

A theory that the reader forms and gathers evidence to support.

Mood

The feeling a piece of literature is intended to create in a reader

Motif

A recurring image, word, phrase, action, idea, object, or situation used throughout a work, unifying the work by tying the current situation to previous ones

Motivation

The reason for a character's behavior

Plot

The action that makes up a story, following a plan called the plotline

Exposition

Introduces characters, situation, setting, and conflict

Rising Action

The central part of the story during which various problems arise after a conflict is introduced

Climax

That point in a plot that creates the greatest intensity, suspense, or interest

Turning Point

The event where the plot or the character changes significantly
The event that creates the falling action

The place where the author's message is revealed

Falling Action

The action and dialogue following the climax and turning point that lead the reader into the story's end

Resolution

The conclusion of the story, when all or most of the conflicts have been settled and the action comes to a satisfying end

Point of View

Perspective from which the story is told

First-Person

The narrator is a character in the story and uses "I", "We" etc.

Third-Person

The narrator is outside of the story and uses "He", "She", "They" etc.

Third-Person Limited

The narrator is not one of the characters in the story but the narrator can describe the experiences and thoughts of only one character in the story and uses "He", "She" etc.

Third-Person Omniscient

The narrator is not one of the characters in the story and is able to describe the experiences and thoughts of every character in the story and uses "He", "She", "They" etc.

Style

The distinctive way that a writer uses language including such factors as word choice, sentence length, arrangement, and complexity, and the use of figurative language

Suspense

A feeling of uncertainty and curiosity about what will happen next

Theme

The message(s) about life or human nature that writer tells (author's message)

Central Theme

The message about human life or human nature that the writer tells, which is the focus across the entire book and revealed at the turning point

