

LITERARY ELEMENTS



SETTING

WHEN AND WHERE A
STORY TAKES PLACE

PLOT

THE SEQUENCE OF
RELATED EVENTS
THAT MAKE UP A
STORY

THE PLOT OF A STORY CONSISTS OF 4 PARTS:

BASIC SITUATION (EXPOSITION)
CONFLICTS (COMPLICATIONS)
CLIMAX
RESOLUTION

BASIC SITUATION (EXPOSITION)

PRESENTS THE MAIN
CHARACTER AND HINTS OF
UPCOMING CONFLICT

CONFLICTS (COMPLICATIONS)

EVENTS IN THE STORY
THAT CAUSE PROBLEMS OR
CONFLICT--

INTERNAL OR EXTERNAL
STRUGGLES INVOLVING THE
MAIN CHARACTER

TYPES OF CONFLICT

EXTERNAL CONFLICT

WHEN A CHARACTER STRUGGLES
WITH AN OUTSIDE FORCE

INTERNAL CONFLICT

WHEN A CHARACTER STRUGGLES
WITH HIM OR HERSELF

CLIMAX

THE HIGH POINT OF THE
PLOT—IT USUALLY DECIDES
THE OUTCOME OF THE
STORY

RESOLUTION

THE LAST PART OF THE
PLOT—IT IS WHEN THE
PROBLEMS ARE SOLVED AND
THE STORY ENDS

TIMING OF EVENTS IN THE PLOT

CHRONOLOGICAL ORDER

PROLOGUE

EPILOGUE

FLASHBACK

FLASH-FORWARD

FORESHADOWING

SUSPENSE

CHRONOLOGICAL ORDER

THE ORDER IN WHICH
EVENTS OCCUR IN THE STORY

FLASHBACK

AN EPISODE FROM THE PAST
THAT SOMETIMES
INTERRUPTS THE PLOT

FLASH-FORWARD

AN EPISODE FROM THE
FUTURE THAT SOMETIMES
INTERRUPTS THE PLOT

PROLOGUE

AN EVENT(S) THAT IS
PRESENTED BEFORE THE
BEGINNING OF THE STORY—
IT CAN BE A FLASHBACK OR A
FLASH-FORWARD

EPILOGUE

AN EVENT(S) THAT IS
PRESENTED AFTER THE END
OF A STORY—IT IS USUALLY
A FLASH-FORWARD

FORESHADOWING

PRESENTING HINTS OR CLUES
AS TO WHAT MAY HAPPEN
LATER IN THE STORY

SUSPENSE

THE ANTICIPATION,
EXCITEMENT, OR ANXIETY
RELATING TO THE OUTCOME
OF A STORY

RELATED TERMS

PREDICTION

A TYPE OF INFERENCE; A GUESS
BASED ON EVIDENCE

INFERENCE

A CONCLUSION OR OPINION
BASED ON FACTS OR EVIDENCE

PROTAGONIST

- ❖ THE MAIN CHARACTER IN A LITERARY WORK (A DRAMA OR STORY)
- ❖ THE HERO OR HEROINE (SHERO)

ANTAGONIST

A CHARACTER OR FORCE IN A STORY THAT CONTENDS WITH OR OPPOSES THE MAIN CHARACTER, CAUSING CONFLICT(S)

POINT OF VIEW

THE VANTAGE POINT FROM
WHICH A WRITER TELLS A
STORY

FIRST PERSON POINT OF VIEW

WHEN A CHARACTER IS
TELLING THE STORY—IT IS
USUALLY TOLD BY THE MAIN
CHARACTER

THIRD PERSON POINT OF VIEW

WHEN THE AUTHOR TELLS
THE STORY—HE OR SHE CAN
SEE THE “WHOLE PICTURE,”
NOT JUST WHAT THE MAIN
CHARACTER SEES

CHARACTER

A PERSON OR PERSONALITY
IN A STORY, DRAMA, POEM,
OR NOVEL.

CHARACTER TRAITS

WORDS THAT CAN BE USED
TO DESCRIBE A CHARACTER'S
APPEARANCE OR PERSONALITY

WAYS THAT CHARACTERS ARE DESCRIBED: THE CHARACTER'S SPEECH

1ST PERSON NARRATION

THE MAIN CHARACTER TELLS
ABOUT HIM OR HERSELF OR
OTHER CHARACTERS AS HE OR
SHE TELLS THE STORY

WAYS THAT CHARACTERS ARE DESCRIBED: THE CHARACTER'S SPEECH

❖ DIALOGUE

CHARACTERS IN THE STORY
REVEAL THINGS ABOUT
THEMSELVES AS THEY TALK TO
EACH OTHER IN THE STORY

WAYS THAT CHARACTERS ARE DESCRIBED: THE CHARACTER'S SPEECH

❖ MONOLOGUE

A CHARACTER IS ALONE AND
IS TALKING TO THE
AUDIENCE OR READER

WAYS THAT CHARACTERS ARE DESCRIBED: THE CHARACTER'S SPEECH

❖ SOLILOQUY

A CHARACTER IS ALONE AND
IS TALKING TO HIM OR
HERSELF—USUALLY USED IN A
PLAY

WAYS THAT CHARACTERS ARE DESCRIBED

THE CHARACTER'S
APPEARANCE

WAYS THAT CHARACTERS ARE DESCRIBED

THE CHARACTER'S ACTIONS

WAYS THAT CHARACTERS ARE DESCRIBED

THE CHARACTER'S THOUGHTS

(SOMETIMES REVEALED IN A SOLILOQUY)

WAYS THAT CHARACTERS ARE DESCRIBED

HOW OTHER CHARACTERS
FEEL ABOUT OR ACT AROUND
THIS CHARACTER OR WHAT
THEY SAY ABOUT HIM OR HER

TYPES OF CHARACTERIZATION

❖ DIRECT CHARACTERIZATION

WHEN THE AUTHOR TELLS THE
READER *DIRECTLY* ABOUT THE
CHARACTER(S)

TYPES OF CHARACTERIZATION

❖ INDIRECT CHARACTERIZATION

WHEN THE AUTHOR TELLS THE READER *INDIRECTLY* ABOUT THE CHARACTER(S)—THE READER MAKES HIS OR HER OWN JUDGMENTS ABOUT THE CHARACTER(S)

MOTIVATION

THE CAUSES OR REASONS FOR
A CHARACTER'S BEHAVIOR IN
A STORY

IRONY

THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN
WHAT WE EXPECT OR WHAT
SEEMS SUITABLE OR
APPROPRIATE AND WHAT
ACTUALLY HAPPENS IN A
STORY

IRONY

THERE ARE 3 TYPES OF IRONY:

- ❖ VERBAL IRONY
- ❖ SITUATIONAL IRONY
- ❖ DRAMATIC IRONY

TYPES OF IRONY

❖ VERBAL IRONY

WHEN SOMEONE SAYS ONE
THING BUT MEANS THE
OPPOSITE

EX. SARCASM, DRY HUMOR

TYPES OF IRONY

❖ SITUATIONAL IRONY

WHEN AN EVENT OCCURS
THAT IS THE OPPOSITE OF
OR DIFFERENT FROM WHAT
WE EXPECT TO HAPPEN

TYPES OF IRONY

❖ DRAMATIC IRONY

WHEN WE KNOW WHAT WILL
HAPPEN TO A CHARACTER BUT
THE CHARACTER DOES NOT
KNOW

SATIRE

WRITING THAT RIDICULES THE SHORTCOMINGS OF PEOPLE OR INSTITUTIONS IN AN ATTEMPT TO BRING ABOUT A CHANGE—OFTEN USES EXAGGERATION OR HUMOR TO INVITE LAUGHTER AT SOMEONE'S EXPENSE.

EXS. OF SHORTCOMINGS—GREED, INJUSTICE, CRUELTY, STUPIDITY, DECEIT, ETC.

AMBIGUITY

WHEN THE AUTHOR OFFERS
SEVERAL CONFLICTING
MEANINGS AND LEAVES THE
READER TO SORT THEM OUT

THEME

THE CENTRAL IDEA OF A
STORY

UNIVERSAL THEME

IDEAS ABOUT LIFE THAT
OCCUR OFTEN IN
LITERATURE—THEY USUALLY
DEAL WITH BASIC HUMAN
NATURE OR CONCERNS

EX. GOOD VS. EVIL
LIFE OR DEATH
LOVE
BETRAYAL

ALLEGORY

A STORY IN WHICH
CHARACTERS, SETTINGS, AND
ACTIONS STAND FOR
(SYMBOLIZE) SOMETHING
BEYOND THEMSELVES

SYMBOL

AN ORDINARY OBJECT,
PERSON, OR ANIMAL TO
WHICH WE ATTACH A
MEANING

EX. EAGLE=BRAVERY, NOBILITY

LION=COURAGE

FOX OR WOLF=SLYNESS, DECEIT, TRICKERY

~~DONKEY=STUPIDITY~~

TONE

THE ATTITUDE A WRITER
TAKES TOWARD A SUBJECT,
CHARACTER, OR THE READER

MOOD

THE ATMOSPHERE CREATED BY
THE WRITER BY USING
CERTAIN WORDS, SETTINGS,
ETC.

VOICE

THE WRITER'S USE OF
LANGUAGE, WORD CHOICE,
AND TONE

ALLUSION

A REFERENCE A WRITER
MAKES TO ANOTHER
LITERARY WORK

COMPARE

FINDING SIMILARITIES
(THINGS THAT ARE THE
SAME) BETWEEN TWO OR
MORE THINGS

CONTRAST

FINDING DIFFERENCES
BETWEEN TWO OR MORE
THINGS

ASSONANCE

THE REPETITION OF
SIMILAR VOWEL SOUNDS
IN A SENTENCE OR A LINE
OF POETRY OR PROSE

CONSONANCE

THE REPETITION OF
SIMILAR CONSONANT
SOUNDS IN A SENTENCE
OR A LINE OF POETRY OR
PROSE

PARADOX

A SELF-CONTRADICTORY
STATEMENT THAT AT FIRST
SEEMS TRUE

EX. THE MORE YOU SPEND, THE MORE YOU
SAVE.

PARALLELISM

REPEATED SYNTACTICAL (THE
STRUCTURE OF SENTENCES)
SIMILARITIES INTRODUCED
FOR RHETORICAL (SPEAKING
AND WRITING) EFFECT

OVERSTATEMENT

TO STATE IN TERMS THAT
ARE TOO STRONG FOR THE
SITUATION

EX. HE OVERSTATED THE IMPORTANCE
OF LOSING HIS HOMEWORK BY SAYING
IT WAS A MATTER OF LIFE AND DEATH.

UNDERSTATEMENT

TO STATE IN TERMS THAT
ARE NOT STRONG ENOUGH
FOR THE SITUATION

EX. SHE UNDERSTATED THE IMPORTANCE
OF FAILING HER TEST BY SAYING THAT
THE GRADE WOULD BE DROPPED.

ALLITERATION

THE REPETITION OF
CONSONANT SOUNDS,
ESPECIALLY AT THE BEGINNING
OF WORDS

EX. SHE SELLS SEASHELLS BY THE
SEASHORE.

EPIC

A WORK OF LITERATURE
THAT COVERS A LONG
PERIOD OF TIME AND
USUALLY HAS HEROIC
CHARACTERS

FICTION

A WORK OF LITERATURE
THAT HAS BEEN MADE UP
OR INVENTED BY THE
AUTHOR

NONFICTION

A WORK OF LITERATURE
THAT IS TRUE AND
FACTUAL; IT IS NOT MADE
UP OR INVENTED

RHYME

THE MATCHING OF FINAL
VOWEL OR CONSONANT
SOUNDS IN TWO OR MORE
WORDS, USUALLY USED IN
POETRY

TYPES OF RHYME

❖ EXACT RHYME

WHEN THE FINAL SOUNDS OF
WORDS MATCH EXACTLY

EX. MOAN-GROAN; BELL-TELL; MOVING-
GROOVING

TYPES OF RHYME

❖ APPROXIMATE RHYME

WHEN THE FINAL SOUNDS OF WORDS DO NOT MATCH EXACTLY, BUT CLOSELY

EX. DOVE—COVE; AGAIN-RAIN; DAWN=-
MORN

TYPES OF RHYME

❖ INTERNAL RHYME

WHEN WORDS WITHIN THE
SAME LINE OF POETRY RHYME

EX. I LOVE THE WAY FLOWERS BLOOM IN MAY.

CONNOTATION

THE SUGGESTION OF A MEANING BY A WORD APART FROM THE THING IT EXPLICITLY NAMES OR DESCRIBES

❖ SOME WORDS HAVE POSITIVE CONNOTATIONS, SOME HAVE NEGATIVE, AND SOME ARE NEUTRAL

EX. PRETTY=POSITIVE
UGLY=NEGATIVE
TALL=NEUTRAL

DENOTATION

A DIRECT, SPECIFIC MEANING
OF A WORD AS DISTINCT FROM
AN IMPLIED OR ASSOCIATED
IDEA

ONOMATOPOEIA

THE USE OF WORDS TO
IMITATE THE SOUNDS THEY
DESCRIBE

EX. WHOOSH; BUZZ; HISS; POP

FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE

A FORM OF LANGUAGE USE IN
WHICH WRITERS AND
SPEAKERS CONVEY
SOMETHING OTHER THAN THE
LITERAL MEANING OF THEIR
WORDS

TYPES OF FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE

❖ HYPERBOLE

THE USE OF EXTREME EXAGGERATION TO EMPHASIZE A POINT

EX. I'VE TOLD YOU A MILLION TIMES NOT TO DO THAT!

TYPES OF FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE

❖ SIMILE

A FIGURE OF SPEECH INVOLVING A COMPARISON BETWEEN UNLIKE THINGS USING *LIKE*, *AS*, OR *AS THOUGH*

EX. "MY LOVE IS LIKE A RED, RED ROSE."

TYPES OF FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE

❖ METAPHOR

A FIGURE OF SPEECH INVOLVING A COMPARISON BETWEEN UNLIKE THINGS WITHOUT USING *LIKE*, *AS*, OR *AS THOUGH*

EX. "MY LOVE IS A RED, RED ROSE."

TYPES OF FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE

❖ IDIOM

AN EXPRESSION THAT CANNOT BE UNDERSTOOD FROM THE MEANINGS OF ITS INDIVIDUAL WORDS.

EX. IT HAS BEEN RAINING CATS AND DOGS ALL DAY.

DID YOU HEAR THAT FRED KICKED THE BUCKET?

FOIL

A CHARACTER WHO SERVES
AS A CONTRAST TO ANOTHER
CHARACTER AND/OR
PARALLELS THE MAIN
CHARACTER IN A PLAY OR
STORY

ARCHETYPE

A CONSTANTLY RECURRING
SYMBOL, MOTIF, OR TYPE OF
CHARACTER IN LITERATURE

EX. WISE OLD MAN, FAIRY GODMOTHER,
EVIL STEPMOTHER, VILLAINS, HEROES,
LOVESICK TEENAGER, ETC.

STEREOTYPE

AN IDEA THAT MANY PEOPLE HAVE ABOUT A THING OR A GROUP AND THAT MAY OFTEN BE UNTRUE OR ONLY PARTLY TRUE

EX. BLONDES ARE DUMB; REDHEADS HAVE FIERY TEMPER

IMAGERY

THE USE OF LANGUAGE THAT
APPEALS TO ONE OR MORE OF
THE FIVE SENSES

EX. A BLUE SWEATER, A TINKLING BELL, A
FUZZY PEACH

DICTION

THE SELECTION OF WORDS IN A
LITERARY WORK

EX. THE DICTION OF EDGAR
ALLAN POE IS VERY DIFFERENT
FROM THAT OF STEPHEN KING.

MYTH

A STORY OFTEN DESCRIBING THE ADVENTURES OF SUPERHUMAN BEINGS THAT ATTEMPTS TO DESCRIBE THE ORIGIN OF A PEOPLE'S CUSTOMS OR BELIEFS OR TO EXPLAIN MYSTERIOUS EVENTS (AS THE CHANGING OF THE SEASONS)

BLANK VERSE

A LINE OF POETRY OR PROSE IN
UNRHYMED IAMBIC PENTAMETER,
OFTEN FOUND IN POETRY BY
SHAKESPEARE

ASIDE

WORDS SPOKEN TO THE AUDIENCE BY A CHARACTER IN A DRAMA THAT ARE NOT SUPPOSED TO BE HEARD BY THE OTHER CHARACTERS ONSTAGE.

AN ASIDE IS USUALLY USED TO LET THE AUDIENCE KNOW WHAT ANOTHER CHARACTER IS THINKING.

DIALECT

- ❖ A REGIONAL VARIETY OF A LANGUAGE DIFFERING FROM STANDARD LANGUAGE
- ❖ A VARIETY OF A LANGUAGE USED BY THE MEMBERS OF A PARTICULAR GROUP OR CLASS

FREE VERSE

POETRY WITHOUT A
REGULAR PATTERN OF
METER OR RHYME.

POETRY

WRITING THAT USUALLY
INVOLVES RHYTHM AND
RHYME