

# Literature Terms

1. **Setting:** the time and place of a story or play
2. **Conflict:** a struggle or clash between opposing characters or forces - the four main types of conflict include: man vs. man, man vs. self, man vs. nature, man vs. society
3. **Motif:** a prominent feature or element of a written work; a repeated symbol or theme or a central or dominant feature
4. **Theme:** a broad idea in a story, or a message or lesson expressed by a work. This message is usually about life, society, or human nature. Themes explore timeless and universal ideas.
5. **Diction:** the author's choice of words
6. **Detail:** facts, observations, reasons, and examples that a writer uses to develop a subject
7. **Figurative Language:** any language that is not used in a literal (*meaning exactly what it says*) way; a way of saying one thing and meaning another (*more than what it says on the surface*)
8. **Simile:** a figure of speech that makes a comparison between two unlike things, using an explicit word such as "like", "as", "resembles", or "than" – *"That test was like getting hit by a bus."* (While metaphors just imply the comparison, similes state it directly with comparison words.)
9. **Metaphor:** a comparison between two unlike things, in which one thing becomes another thing without the use of the words "like", "as", etc. – *"He's a beast on the court."* (While similes state the comparison directly, metaphors just imply it.)
10. **Personification:** a special kind of metaphor that gives human qualities to something which is not human, such as an animal, object, or idea - *"The tree sighed sadly in the cold breeze."*
11. **Hyperbole:** (pronounced High - per - bow -lee) is an exaggeration that is based on truth meant to add interest, humor, or emphasis - *"Coach had us run a million miles today at practice."*
12. **Symbol:** something that stands for itself and for something beyond itself as well *a lion may symbolize courage or nobility, a ring symbolizes a promise*

13. **Oxymoron:** a figure of speech in which words of opposite meaning are used together  
*"Jumbo shrimp", "soft rock", "expect the unexpected", "small crowd"*
14. **Verbal irony:** a type of irony - saying the opposite of what you mean (something like sarcasm, except that sarcasm is meant to hurt - verbal irony doesn't have to be mean-spirited)  
*"Jules cried out in frustration, 'I just love doing four hours of homework every night!'"*
15. **Situational Irony:** a type of irony - when events convey a reality different from and usually opposite to what is expected or appears to be true – *a professional pickpocket has his own pocket picked just as he was in the act of picking someone else's pocket*
16. **Dramatic Irony:** a type of irony - when the audience or the reader knows something important that a character in a play or story does not know
17. **Imagery:** language that appeals to the senses; these words and phrases, called images, help a reader mentally experience what the characters in the literary selection are experiencing by capturing what we see, hear, smell, touch, and taste
18. **Syntax:** the way that words and phrases are arranged in sentences – including choices of word order, sentence length, layout, and punctuation
19. **Tone:** the attitude that an author takes toward the audience, the subject matter, or the character; tone is the complex feeling that the writer creates for the reader
20. **Dialect:** a way of speaking that is characteristic of a particular region or group of people –  
*"Hey y'all!"*
21. **Local Color:** distinctive customs, attitude or culture of a certain place or time period, used in stories or plays to add realism
22. **Foreshadowing:** the use of indirect clues to hint at events that will occur later in the plot
23. **Suspense:** the uncertainty or anxiety that the author wants the reader to feel about what is going to happen next in a story
24. **Flashback :** a scene on a movie, play, short story, novel, or narrative poem that interrupts the present action of the plot to "flash backward" to an earlier time
25. **Point of View:** the viewpoint from which the writer has chosen to tell a story

26. **3<sup>rd</sup> person omniscient point of view:** occurs when the voice telling the story knows everything there is to know about the characters and their problems (*omniscient means "all knowing"*)
27. **3<sup>rd</sup> person limited point of view:** this point of view is when the narrator focuses on the thoughts and feelings of just one character, but the narrator is not a character in the story
28. **1<sup>st</sup> person point of view:** this narration technique is where one of the story's characters is actually telling the story, using the pronouns "I", "me", "my", etc.
29. **Onomatopoeia:** (pronounced on – oh – ma – toe – pee – ah) the use of a word whose sound imitates or suggests its meaning – "BAM!" "meow" "ker-plunk!"
30. **Alliteration:** the repetition of the same consonant sounds in words that are close together in a poem, or the repetition of consonant sounds that are very similar – "big bad Brutus the bully"
31. **Allusion:** a reference to a statement, person, place, events or thing that is known from literature, history, religion, sports, myth, politics, science, or pop culture
32. **Characterization:** the process of revealing the personality of a character through situations, dialogue, choices the character makes, etc.
33. **Antagonist:** a character who fights, struggles, or contends against another; the "bad guy"
34. **Protagonist:** the main character in a play, story, or novel; usually the "good guy"
35. **Foil:** a character who is used as a contrast to another character
36. **Flat character:** a type of character with one or two traits which can be described in a short phrase; a simple uncomplicated character (*opposite of round*)
37. **Round character:** a character that has many different character traits, sometimes contradictory ones; a complex character (*opposite of flat*)
38. **Dynamic Character:** a character that changes as a result of the story's events (*opposite of static*)
39. **Static Character:** a character that does not undergo important change in the course of the story. Remaining essentially the same at the end as he/she was at the beginning (*opposite of dynamic*)

40. **Satire:** a work that uses ridicule to make certain people, events, or institutions appear foolish
41. **Loaded Words:** words which arouse a strong emotional response, loaded with feelings (*like peace, patriotism, liberty*)
42. **Slogan:** a “catchy” saying that is easy to remember (*but usually over-simplified and inaccurate*)
43. **Pun:** a play on the multiple meanings of a word, or on two words that sound alike but have different meanings – *“He drove his expensive car into a tree and found out how the Mercedes bends.”*
44. **Blank verse:** poetry that is largely unrhymed
45. **Iambic meter:** when an unstressed syllable is followed by a stressed syllable – *as in the word pre-fer*
46. **Aside:** a piece of dialogue in a play intended for the audience and supposedly not heard by the other actors on stage
47. **Couplets:** two consecutive (*one right after the other*) lines of poetry that rhyme