

**Allegory:** a narrative in which ideas are made real (for example, Plato's "Allegory of the Cave"); characters stand for principles, attitudes, and other absolutes.

**Ambiguity:** the state of having more than one possible meaning.

**Antagonist:** the character or force whose opposition to the protagonist is the main source of conflict.

**Atmosphere:** the mood pervading a literary work, particularly created by the setting; helps establish the expectations and attitude of the reader.

**Character:** a person in a literary work (must be plausible and properly motivated).

**Characterization:** the art by which an author imbues a character with life; accomplished through the behavior and speech of the character, the reactions of other characters to a character, and the direct statements of the narrator about a character.

**Climax:** the turning point of the action; the moment when the action reaches its highest point of conflict or tension.

**Conflict:** the meeting of opposing forces; may be interior (i.e., two forces inside one character), exterior (i.e., between two or more characters, or between a character or group of characters and some other force, e.g., nature, God, etc.) or both.

**Denouement:** the unraveling of the action; follows the climax or occurs simultaneously with it.

**Dialogue:** conversation between two or more characters.

**Fiction:** a literary form, most often prose narrative, drawn from imagination rather than solely from fact.

**Foreshadowing:** the use of important clues to prepare the reader for what is to come.

**Flashback:** the depiction of an incident which occurred before the opening of a work; not merely a reference to the incident.

**Genre:** a category of literary work (e.g., fiction, drama, poetry).

**Image:** an expression which evokes an appeal to the senses.

**Imagery:** the production of sense appeal through the use of figurative language.

**Irony:** a literary device which presents a conflict between appearance and reality; may be intentional or unintentional on the part of a character, but always intentional on the part of the author.

**Dramatic Irony:** when the meaning or situation in a literary work is known or understood by the audience but not by the characters in the piece.

**Verbal Irony:** a statement which has the opposite of its original meaning.

**Monologue:** speech by one character to him/herself or the reader/audience; may be interior or exterior.

**Mood:** the atmosphere (e.g., pensive, reflective, comic, etc.) which prevails in a work; the attitude the reader gets from the work.

**Plot:** a series of intervening events, showing cause and effect, making up the total action of a work.

**Point of View:** the vantage point of the narrator from which the action is related; may be first person, third person limited, third person omniscient, or objective.

**Protagonist:** the main character in a work.

**Satire:** the ridiculing of customs or mores, usually comic in tone; may have a purgative or a corrective intent.

**Setting:** the time, place, and other circumstances which form the physical background of a work.

**Symbol:** a concrete object in a work which has more than its literal significance (i.e., also represents something abstract).

**Theme:** the fundamental idea explored in a literary work.

**Tone:** the attitude of the author toward the reader and the subject.