



# Basic Literature Guide

## *Types of Writing:*

---

**Genre-** The type or category to which a piece of literature belongs.

***These are the most well-known genres in literature:***

- **Short Story-** A piece of fiction that tells a story written in prose; it is usually short in length and focuses on one character, event or incident.
- **Novel-** a fictional narrative that is of book length. It usually has characters and events that resemble reality.
- **Novella-**A fictional narrative that is longer than a short story but shorter than a novel.
- **Poetry-** A type of literature art-form where the writer uses poetic devices to get the message of their work across to the reader.
- **Drama-**A type of fiction which is set up by a script that is performed by actors on stage.
- **Fiction-**A type of narrative that is written about imaginary characters and events.

- **Non-Fiction**- A type of narrative literature where the characters and events are real.
  - **Biography**- A type of literature written about someone by another person.
  - **Autobiography**- A type of literature written by someone about his/her own life.
  - **Fable**- A fictional story where the main characters are non-human, such as animals/mythical creatures but possess the qualities that humans have. There is usually a moral/lesson to be learned from the events that unroll within the story.  
Eg. Aesop's Fables- "The Tortoise and the Hare"
  - **Science Fiction**- A type of literature where the characters and events are set in a future time/place where science and technology are more advanced than the present time.
  - **Tragedy**- A type of narrative that deals with subjects such as human suffering, pain and death in the story.
  - **Comedy**- A type of story that contains humor in it and is intended to entertain an audience.
- 

## ***Elements of a Story:***

---

**Exposition**- *The essential background information at the beginning of a story that helps readers to better understand the context of the story.*

**Setting**- If refers to the time and place that a story takes place. It can be directly stated or suggested by the author. It is the background for the story and helps us to better understand the events throughout the story.

Questions that help you determine the setting:

- a. When does the story occur (year, historical events- etc.)
- b. Where does it occur?
- c. Why is the main character presented in this setting?
- d. How does the setting affect the main character?
- e. How does the setting help create conflict/complications?
- f. How does the setting influence the actions of the characters?

**Characterization**- It is the manner in which an author develops characters and their personalities. An author develops characters in several ways: by telling us directly about the character, having them think/speak/act in a particular way, interactions between other characters in the story; as well as other characters' opinions of them.

**Protagonist**- It is the main character in a piece of literature.

Eg. Hamlet in the play ``Hamlet``.

**Antagonist**- This refers to any force/person/obstacle that stands in the way of the main character as s/he tries to resolve the conflict in the story.

**Narrator**- The person who is telling the story.

**Point of view**- The perspective from which the narrator tells the story.

The most common points of view are:

---

-1<sup>st</sup> person point of view- the narrator is a character in the story  
(use of 'I' 'me' 'my')

-3<sup>rd</sup> person point of view- the narrator is outside of the story (use of  
'he' 'she' 'they' 'names')

*\*Point of View can be **limited** (we cannot get into the minds of the characters) or **omniscient** (we are 'all-knowing' of the thoughts/feelings of the characters as they act)*

---

**Plot**- The sequence of events that take place from the beginning to the end of the story.

**Conflict** -The struggle between two or more opposing forces (person vs. person; nature; society; self; fate/God).

**Rising action**- *The series of conflicts and complications in a story before the conflict is resolved.*

**Climax**- *It is the highest point of tension in the story. It is here that the main conflict is about to be resolved.*

**Falling action**- *The results or effects of the climax in the story*

**Resolution/denouement**- *The end of a piece of literature when loose ends are tied up and questions are answered.*

**Motif**- A recurring feature of a story that is related to the theme  
(i.e. recurring dreams, music, visions, etc.)

**Theme** - It is the main idea of a literary work summed up in one sentence.

Theme differs from the subject of a piece of literature in that it involves a

statement or opinion about the subject. The best way to arrive at the theme is to ask yourself: "What is the author trying to tell us through the story?" For example, while the subject of a story might be money, the actual theme might be "money is the root of all evil".

**Mood** - The feelings that the reader feels while reading the text. This is created by the way the author uses words in the text to make the reader feel emotions such as fear, happiness, sadness, hate, anger etc.

**Tone** - It is the attitude that the author holds in the text. This is usually felt by the author's descriptions or word choice in the story.

---

## *Literary Devices:*

---

**Allusion** - A situation when an author refers to something that is well-known outside the text such as: another piece of literature, artwork, person, place or time. This adds to the meaning of the text and allows the reader to make connections between the text and the outside world.

**Alliteration** - The repetition of the initial consonant sounds of words: "Peter Piper picked a peck of pickled peppers".

**Assonance** - The repetition of vowel sounds in a series of words: E.g. "Anna's apples," "the pond is long gone"

**Imagery** - The use of language that is used to create pictures in the mind of the reader. Imagery is not limited to visual, but may also include the other senses-sight, smell, sound, taste and touch.

**Figurative Language** - Any language that represents one thing in terms of something else. (non-literal language). *It includes simile, metaphor, personification, hyperbole, symbol)*

**Personification** - A figure of speech in which non-human things are given human characteristics e.g. "the evil green monster which we call greed..."

**Simile** - A direct comparison of dissimilar objects using "like" or "as":  
e.g. "I wandered lonely as a cloud"

**Metaphor** - An indirect comparison between two different things to show that they have something in common. E.g. "She is a pig."

**Hyperbole** - The use of extreme exaggeration to add meaning, e.g. "Her eyes were as wide as saucers..."

**Onomatopoeia** - The use of a word whose sound imitates its meaning: e.g. "shhh" or "hiss" etc.

**Oxymoron** - A phrase that consists of two words that are contradictory: e.g. "living dead"

**Diction** - An author's word choice to create a specific effect.

**Dialogue** - This refers to the words of conversation between characters in a piece of writing. It is ONE of the most common ways that authors reveal their characters to the reader. [THINK INFERENCE...]

**Symbol/symbolism** - The use of one thing (object, person, place) to stand for something else. E.g. a pearl may stand for \$/wealth

**Irony** - Any situation where the words that are used mean the opposite of what they are supposed to mean. There are three (3) main types of irony:

- *Dramatic*... when the reader or audience knows something a character does not E.g. the reader knows the gun in the murderer's pocket is really plastic...
- *Situational*... when there is a difference between what is expected and what actually happens. E.g. the necklace stolen from the queen's house was a fake...
- *Verbal*... when the speaker says one thing but means the opposite e.g. sarcasm

**Flashback**- A method of returning to the past (in the story) for the purpose of making the present clearer. Flashbacks are usually created through storytelling or a character's visions/dreams.

**Foreshadowing**- When the author gives us hints to what will come next without actually stating what will happen.

**Suspense** - A technique where the author creates a build-up of excitement that keeps the reader guessing what will happen next. This is usually referred to the "keeping you on the edge of your seat" feeling.