

## Elements of Literature

### Plot

- Difference between plot and chronology; Plot is the sequence of events as presented by the author
- Pyramidal Plot Elements
  - Exposition-introductory material in a work of fiction
    - Creates tone and Gives setting
    - Introduces characters and often conflict
    - Supplies other facts necessary to understanding
    - Usually at beginning of the work
  - Conflict-struggle between two opposing forces
    - Four kinds
    - External
      - Man vs. man
      - Man vs. nature
      - Man vs. society
    - Internal
      - Man vs. himself
    - (Man vs. fate)
    - Often more than one type in a work, but one will dominate
  - Inciting incident: The catalyst: Event or force that gets the action in motion
  - Rising action: Development and complications
  - Climax: Moment of greatest emotional intensity
  - Crisis: Typically in middle, but in modern works often located near the end
    - Point where situation of the main character is certain to either worsen or improve
  - Falling action
    - All the events that follow the climax
  - Dénouement
    - French for “unknotting” - Final explanation/ unraveling of a plot (solution of a mystery, etc.)
- Key terms
  - Foreshadowing - use of clues about the events to come
  - Flashback - a section of a literary work that interrupts the sequence of events to relate an event from an earlier time

### Characterization

- Character - people, animals, etc., that perform the action in a story
  - Flat characters - aka two-dimensional or wooden characters
    - Characters that are not well developed, that are given only one or two characteristics
    - Stereotypes - stock characters
      - Easily recognized types or kinds of people Conventional characters
  - Round (rounded) characters - aka developed or three-dimensional characters
    - Characters that are complicated and exhibit so many traits that they seem like real people

- Static character - a character who remains basically the same *inside* throughout the story
  - Things happen *to* such a character without things happening *within*
  - Action serves to reveal the character
  - Sometimes a static character may *seem* to change as the reader finds out more about him, but this doesn't mean he's not static
- Dynamic character - a character who changes inside in some significant way
  - Action shows the character changing in response to the action
- Protagonist - the main character in a work
- Antagonist - the character or force in conflict with the main character

### Point of view

- p.o.v. - the perspective or vantage point from which a story is told
- Narrator - the speaker or character who tells the story
  - Different from the author, but the author's choice of narrator helps determine the p.o.v.
    - This decision affects what version of a story is told and how readers will react to it
  - Narrator always present in a story
- Three main points of view
  - First person - always limited
    - Told from the perspective of a character in the story ("I")
  - Third person limited - told by an outside narrator who doesn't know everything
    - If the author uses third person limited p.o.v. and restricts the presentation to the interior responses of one character, we have an interior monologue
  - Third person omniscient - told by an outside narrator who does know everything
  - (Second person - "you" - rarely used)

### Setting

- Setting—the time and place of the action in a story
- Four elements: location,
  - 2 - the occupations and daily manner of living of the characters
  - 3 - the time or period in which the action takes place (e.g., the epoch in history or the season of the year)
  - 4 - the general environment of the characters, such as religious, mental, moral, social, and emotional conditions

### Symbols

- Symbol - something that stands for itself and for something else
  - Ex. – flag = colored cloth *and* stands for a country; traffic sign = piece of metal attached to a pole *and* stands for a traffic law
- Combines a literal and tangible quality with an abstract or suggestive aspect
  - In this sense, all language is symbolic and so are many of the things we use in daily life
- Symbol is different from image
  - Image - a literal and concrete representation of something that can be known by one of the five senses

- Symbol does this *and* takes it further by making the image suggest something beyond itself
- Symbol is different from metaphor
  - Metaphor - invokes an object in order to illustrate an idea or demonstrate a quality
  - Symbol *embodies* that idea or quality
- Symbol is different from allegory
  - Allegory - a form of extended metaphor in which objects, people, and actions in a story are equated with meanings that lie outside the story itself
  - Allegory is a story with more than one level of meaning - a literal one and one or more symbolic levels
  - Universal symbol - aka conventional symbol
    - Widely known and accepted
    - E.g., a voyage symbolizing a life, flowing water representing time passing, a skull for death
  - Personal symbol - created by one author for a particular work
    - Only applies in that one novel
    - Example: *Moby-Dick*

## Tone

- Tone - the attitude an author takes toward his audience and subjects (esp. characters and situation)
  - Conveyed through the author's choice of words and details
  - May be determined by the writer's intent and comments
  - May be formal or informal, friendly or distant, personal or impersonal
  - Characters within a story may also convey a tone toward a situation or other characters (respectful, sympathetic, etc.)
    - Characters' attitudes are revealed through dialogue and actions
    - Characters' tone revealed through word choice and intent
- Style - an author's typical way of writing
  - Includes word choice, grammatical structure, sentence length, organization, etc.
- Voice - a combination of tone and style
  - Voice is an author's "signature"

## Irony

- Irony - the recognition of a reality different than appearance
- Three types
  - Verbal irony
    - Words are used to suggest the opposite of their usual meanings
  - Dramatic irony
    - Contradiction between what a character thinks and what the reader or audience knows to be true
  - Situational irony - aka irony of situation
    - An event occurs that directly contradicts the expectations of the reader or audience (surprise or twist endings)
- Irony is more easily detected in speech than in writing; Sarcasm is a type of irony, but literary irony is less harsh than sarcasm

**Theme**

- Theme - the main idea or truth about life an author tries to present
  - In nonfiction, it's the thesis or general topic of discussion
  - In fiction, an abstract concept made concrete through representation in person, action, and image
  - No proper theme is simply a subject or activity - theme implies a subject and a predicate
- Associated terms
  - Denotation - an objective, dictionary-style definition
  - Connotation - a definition loaded with emotional overtones
  - Moral - the lesson taught by a literary work

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