

Literary Devices: Definitions

TYPES OF WORKS

1. **Comedy:** a story that ends happily
2. **Drama:** a story that is written to be acted for an audience
3. **Tragedy:** a play or novel that depicts serious and important events; usually the main character comes to an unhappy end

ELEMENTS OF A STORY

1. **Dialogue:** conversations between two or more characters
2. **Plot:** series of events that make up a story; there are 5 parts to plot— exposition, conflict, complications, climax, resolution
3. **Setting:** the time, place, and atmosphere of a story
4. **Tone:** the attitude a writer takes toward a subject or character; conveyed through a writer's choice of words and details
5. **Theme:** the central idea or insight revealed by a work of literature; the message the writer wishes us to discover about a subject

CHARACTERS

1. **Character:** an individual in a story, poem, or play; always has human traits, even if the character is an animal
2. **Protagonist:** the main character who we focus our attention on or the person who sets the plot in motion; often, but not always, the hero in the story
3. **Antagonist:** the character that blocks the protagonist; often, but not always, the villain in the story
4. **Foil:** a character who serves as a contrast to another character; used to emphasize differences between two characters
5. **Static Character:** a character who does not change (mentally / physically) during the course of a story
6. **Dynamic Character:** a character who undergoes a change (mentally / physically) during the course of a story; change occurs as a result of the story's action.
7. **Flat Character:** a character who only has one or two personality traits; can be summed up in one phrase and the author does not describe them in great detail
8. **Round Character:** a character that is complex, interesting, and has many different traits

POINTS OF VIEW

1. **Omniscient Point of View:** the “all knowing” narrator; the narrator plays no part in the story, but can tell us what all of the characters are thinking and feeling as well as what is happening in other places
2. **Third Person Limited Point of View:** the narrator, who plays no part in the story, zooms in on the thoughts and feelings of just one character
3. **First Person Point of View:** the narrator is a character in the story; we hear and see only what the narrator hears and sees; writer uses “I”

TYPES OF CONFLICT

1. **Internal Conflict:** a struggle between opposing needs, desires, or emotions within a single character; often times the character is trying to decide “should I do _____ or should I do _____?”
2. **External Conflict:** a character struggles against an outside force, whether it is another character, society as a whole, or something in nature

TYPES OF IRONY

1. **Verbal Irony:** the speaker says one thing but means the opposite; ex: when friends are playing basketball and one keeps missing every shot, the other says, “Wow! I didn’t know I was playing with Michael Jordan!”
2. **Situational Irony:** what actually happens is the opposite of what is expected; ex: a fire station burns down, a millionaire wins the lottery
3. **Dramatic Irony:** the reader knows something important that a character does not know; ex: In *Romeo & Juliet*, the reader knows that Juliet isn’t really dead

STORYTELLING DEVICES

1. **Dialect:** a way of speaking that is characteristic to a particular region or group of people; used to bring characters to life
2. **Flashback:** a scene in a movie, play, short story, or novel that interrupts the present action of the plot to show events that have happened at an earlier time
3. **Foreshadowing:** the use of clues to hint at events that will occur later in the plot; arouses the reader’s curiosity and increases suspense
4. **Imagery:** language that appeals to the senses and creates a picture in the reader’s mind; appeals to the senses of sound, smell, touch, and taste

5. **Paradox:** a statement or situation that seems to be a contradiction, but is actually a truth. Paradoxes are designed to make a reader stop and think; ex: nobody goes to that restaurant, it's too crowded
6. **Suspense:** the uncertainty or anxiety we feel about what is going to happen next in a story
7. **Symbol:** a person, place, thing, or event that stands for both itself and something beyond itself; ex: the flag represents freedom, patriotism, etc.

FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE:

1. **Metaphor:** makes a comparison between two unlike things stating it as fact; ex: life is a highway
2. **Personification:** a type of metaphor in which a nonhuman thing or quality is talked about as if it were human
3. **Simile:** makes a comparison between two seemingly unlike things by using a connective word such as *like* or *as*; ex: he is as angry as a bear who can't find honey
4. **Hyperbole:** a figure of speech that uses exaggeration to express strong emotion or create a comic effect; ex: I'm so hungry I could eat a horse!
5. **Idiom:** an expression that means something different from the literal meaning of the words; ex: It's raining cats and dogs, she spilled the beans
6. **Onomatopoeia:** use of a word whose sound imitates or suggests the meaning; ex: buzz, splash, bang
7. **Alliteration:** repetition of the same or similar consonant sounds in words that are close together