

# Glossary of Literary Terms

## **ACTION**

The events that take place in a literary work.

## **ALLEGORY**

An extended metaphor that presents objects, events, or characters in a narrative.

## **ALLUSION**

A small reference to a person, place, passage, or object in another literary work.

## **CHARACTER**

A person, human or non-human, in the story. Character may also refer to a person's traits and personality.

## **CONFLICT**

The struggle between conflicting forces. The conflict often provides the main **ACTION** and spotlights the literary **PLOT**.

## **CONTEXT**

Conditions beyond the literary work that may hold relevance to understanding the story's meaning.  
*Example: England's historical **context** in the 1600's gives the reader a greater understanding of Shakespeare's plays.*

## **FORM**

A literary work's structure or external appearance.

## **IMAGERY**

The use of images, descriptions, or figures of speech like **METAPHORS** and **SIMILES** to help the reader visualize a mood, concept, or **CHARACTER**.

## **INTERPRETATION**

The general idea or explanation of the literary work's meaning.

## **IRONY**

A technique in which a character or plot device is not as it would actually seem.

## **METAPHOR**

A comparison of two different things, revealing similar intriguing qualities which states the two are actually the same.

## **MOOD**

The atmosphere in a literary work meant to evoke certain feelings from a reader.

## **NARRATOR**

The speaker in a literary work of prose.

## **PLOT**

An account of the literary work's **ACTION**, as well as all other surrounding circumstances that moves the story along.

## **POINT OF VIEW**

The perspective of the story's **NARRATOR**. There are three different classifications:

### **1) First Person**

Speaker uses the pronoun "I".

### **2) Second Person**

Speaker uses the pronoun "You."

### **3) Third Person**

Speaker uses the pronoun(s) "He", "She", "It", or "They."

## **PROTAGONIST & ANTAGONIST**

The **protagonist** is the central character in a literary work that moves the **PLOT** forward. The **antagonist** moves against the story's plot.

## **SETTING**

The time, place, and **CONTEXT** in which the literary work's **ACTION** takes place.

## **SIMILE**

A figure of speech that compares two unlike things, usually using the words "as", "as if", or "like".

## **SYMBOL, SYMBOLISM**

Something that represents or stands for another thing. **SYMBOLISM** may convey many different meanings and dimensions, unlike **ALLEGORY**.

## **THEME**

The literary work's meaning or general idea.

## **TOPE**

The author's attitude towards the story and/or the story's readers.

## **VOICE**

The author's style, attitude, personality, and feelings towards the world around him/her.