**LITERARY ELEMENTS/TECHNIQUES**

**(In Alphabetical Order)**

* **Allegory-** A form of extended metaphor in which objects, people, and/or actions in a narrative are equated with the meanings that lie outside the narrative itself. The underlying meaning has moral, social, religious, or political significance. Also, characters, figures, or events in the narrative are often personifications/symbols of abstract ideas such as charity, greed, or envy.
  + *Example: “In the story, the old man’s bloody hands were an allegory for the blood on Christ’s hands as he was nailed to the cross.”*
* **Alliteration-** The repetition of consonant sounds at the beginning of two or more words which are near each other.
  + *Example: “Lizzy leaned over the leathery lizard.”*
* **Allusion-** A reference to a well-known work of literature, a famous person, or an actual historical event.
  + *Example: “Her parents were meaner than the parents of Hansel and Gretel.”*
* **Anachronism**- Something that’s placed in the wrong time period. The representation of someone as existing or something as happening in a different chronological, proper, or historical order than would be expected. Something that is out of its proper or chronological order.
  + *Example: ”A Greek myth mentioned Burger King in their story, which obviously did not exist in ancient Greek times.”*
  + *Example 2: “Michael Jackson married Cleopatra.”*
* **Antagonist-** The person (or force) that opposes a main character.
  + *Example: “The antagonist of the story ruined the character’s life.”*
* **Body Paragraph-** The “meat” of the essay or story that contains all the important information. It has a topic sentence that states the main idea that is usually the first or second sentence, and has supporting sentences including details and examples that explain and support the topic sentence. All of the sentences are about only one topic (the topic sentence). It often contains a concluding sentence that brings the paragraph to a logical conclusion.
* **Character-** A person or animal in a work of fiction.
  + *Example: “One of the characters in the story died at the end.”*
* **Characterization-** The techniques a writer uses to create and develop a character, and show his/her personality.
  + *Example: “The character’s words and actions characterized Juan as being very resolute, determined, and stubborn.”*

Methods of characterization:

* + **1.** When the author describes what the character looks like.
    - *Example: “Angel has a mass of curly dark brown hair and chocolate brown eyes. Ms. Lingenfelter is medium height and has long silvery hair.”*
  + **2.** How the character describes him/herself or another character in terms of how he/she acts, feels, or thinks- a direct quote from the character about the character.
    - *Example: Zeus said, “I am dishonest and I feel angry. I want to hurt people.” OR Hera said, “Zeus is an angry, evil, and cheating husband.”*
  + **3.** How the author describes the character in terms of how they say the character acts, feels, or thinks- an indirect quote from the author about the character.
    - *Example: “Zeus cheated on his wife many times.”*
  + **4.** A direct quote from the author about the character- a direct quote from the author about the character.
    - *Example: “Zeus was a dishonest and angry god.”*
* **Clarifying-** A reading comprehension strategy in which the reader tries to understand what the author is saying in his/her own words.
  + *Example: When the author writes, “Romeo, Romeo, wherefore art thou Romeo?” he means in modern English, “Romeo, Romeo, where are you, Romeo?”*
* **Complication-** Difficulties that cause problems for the characters; a barrier or burden that gets in the way of something getting accomplished.
  + *Example: “The complication in ‘Romeo and Juliet’ is that they are from two rivaling families and therefore their love can’t be consummated.”*
* **Conclusion-** The ending paragraph of a story or essay. It is a summary of what you/the author just wrote about, “wraps things up” in different words than the introduction, often with fewer words. It has no or very few details and examples (like the introduction). It often includes final comments, suggestions, opinions, and/or predictions.
* **Conflict-** The struggle or problem between opposing forces that is the basis of the plot of a story.
  + *Example: “The conflict in the movie Titanic is that the ship hit an iceberg and started sinking.”*
  + **Internal Conflict-** “Man vs. Self-” the conflict the person has within themselves and nobody else.
  + **External Conflict-** “Man vs. man/nature/society/others-” the conflict the person has with the outside world.
* **Connecting-** When the reader relates (connects) what’s going on in the story to his/her own life.
  + *Example: “In the story Titanic, I could relate to the theme of lost love, as I also lost my first love.”*
* **Dialect-** Specific pronunciation, grammar, or vocabulary of a language that characterizes a particular region or social group of people. The everyday language spoken by a people as distinguished from the literary language. Often it is not the standard “correct” form of the language.
  + *Example: “Let’s us go, we ain’t got no time!” (Actual southern USA dialect)*
  + *Example 2: “The dialect of people in New York City is often characterized by dropping the ‘r’s’ at the end of words.”*
* **Dialogue-** The conversation between two or more characters, often indicated by quotation marks.
  + *Example: The girl said, “Hi!” and the boy responded, “How are you?”*
* **Dynamic Character**- A character that changes a lot throughout the story.
* **Evaluating-** Breaking down something to understand it better; judging the value of something.
  + *Example: “We evaluated ‘Romeo and Juliet” to understand why the main characters committed suicide at the end.”*
* **Fiction-** Writing that comes from a writer’s imagination.
  + *Examples: Short stories, novels, plays, poetry.*
  + **Historical Fiction-** Realistic fiction that takes place at some time in history that could have feasibly happened at that time. In other words, fiction that takes place in an actual setting in the past, that refers to actual people and events from that time period and place.
  + *Example: “The story takes place in Washington, D.C. in the 1860s, when Abraham Lincoln was president.”*
* **Figurative Language-** Language that communicates ideas beyond the ordinary, literal meanings of words.
  + *Example: “She showered me with honey—flavored love.”*
* **Flashback-** Something that happened at an earlier time in a story that is inserted into the present action that the author is describing.
* **Foreshadowing-** Clues or hints the author gives which prepare the reader for what will happen later in the story.
  + *Example: “Jimmy Valentine was a good man- that is, until he owned the shoe business.”*
* **Form-** The external aspect or structure of words with regard to their inflections, pronunciation, spelling, grammar, or organization.
* **Genre-** The type of literature, movie, or other form of entertainment or communication.
  + *Examples: “fiction, nonfiction, horror, romance, romantic comedy, comedy, action, suspense, science fiction, fantasy, animated, drama, sorrow, mystery, ‘chick flick,’ play, etc.”*
* **Haiku-** A Japanese lyric verse form (poem) that traditionally has 3 unrhymed lines of five, seven, and five syllables, traditionally invoking an aspect of nature or the seasons.
  + *Example:* Old pond . . .

A frog leaps in

Water’s sound

* **Hero**- The character in the story who is admired, who gets through a hard time and comes out on top, who achieves something, and/or who saves somebody or something from something bad.
  + *Example: “The heroes of the story ‘Romeo and Juliet’ are Romeo and Juliet even though they commit suicide in the end.”*
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* **Hyberbole-** (A figure of speech)- An exaggeration made for emphasis or humorous effect.
  + *Example: “Jeanna cried a river when she heard the sad news.”*
* **Iambic Pentameter-** A line of verse consisting of 5 metrical emphases, each containing an unstressed syllable followed by a stressed syllable or a short syllable followed by a long syllable, as in ‘delay.’
  + *Example: “Your force | to break, | blow, burn | and make | me new.”*
* **Imagery-** Whenthe author gives you an image/picture of what is happening in the story and/or what something looks like using descriptive language, especially adjectives. In other words, words that appeal to the reader’s senses (sight, smell, touch, taste, and sound).
  + *Example: “Her brilliant ebony-colored eyes shone and were framed by long, dark eyelashes surrounded by a creamy, coffee-colored complexion.”*
* **Inciting Force/Initiating Event-** The point at which something happens to establish the conflict or to get the action going.
  + *Example: “Norma pushed the button on the time machine that caused her to go back in time.”*
* **Introduction-** The general overview of what you will write about in your essay. It contains the thesis statement of your essay, which is the main idea of your whole essay. It often has an attention-grabbing sentence as the first sentence, which draws the reader in and makes the reader want to read MORE, which often has a quote, asks a question, and/or is very interesting. It has no or very few details and examples. It can list all the topic sentences (partial or full) of all body paragraphs, but doesn’t have to.
* **Irony-** When something happens that you wouldn’t expect- the opposite of what is normal, regular, or expected. It is the contrast between what is expected and what really happens:
  + *Example: “A man wins the lottery and dies the next day.”*
  + **Situational irony-** When the situation in the literature is ironic.
  + *Example: “Only ten people showed up at the prom.”*
* **Melody-** The rhythm of a poem as it sounds when it is read outloud; its musical quality. Iambic pentameter, rhyming, syllables, intonation, and meter can affect melody.
  + *Example: “The melody of the poem ‘Roses are Red’ is simple but poignant.”*
* **Meter-** The measured arrangement of words in poetry, as by rhythm, syllables, or the number of syllables.
  + *Example: “The meter in ‘Roses are Red’ is 4 syllables and 4 lines.”*
* **Metaphor-** (A figure of speech)-The comparison of two or more things NOT using “like” or “as.”
  + *Example: “Angel is a monster.”*
  + *Example 2: “Her hair is a ray of golden sun.”*
* **Mood-** The feeling that the readers have about the story after reading it; the feeling, opinion, or attitude that the author gives the reader.
  + *Example: “The mood that the author conveys in the suicide scene in ‘Romeo and Juliet’ is quite depressing and melancholy.”*
* **Narrative-** A story of an event that happened in chronological order. An account of an event or series of events that tell a story, whether true or imaginary.
  + *Example: The short stories we have read in class.*
* **Narrator-** The teller of the story; either a character in the story or an outside “voice” created by the writer.
  + *Example: “The narrator of the movie ‘Titanic’ was the old woman.”*
* **Nonfiction-** Any work of literature that is a true story and/or based on real information or information that could be applied to real life.
  + *Examples: Biographies, autobiographies, speeches, expository/informative text, memoirs, instructional texts (‘how to’), historical accounts, etc.*
* **Onomatopoeia-** (A figure of speech)- Words that suggest by their sounds the object or idea being named.
  + *Examples: “The bee ‘buzzed,’ the fire ‘crackled,’ the bacon ‘sizzled.’”*
* **Personification-** When the author gives human qualities to an inanimate object, non-human living thing, animal, or idea.
  + *Example: “The sky breathed anger during the fierce storm.”*
  + *Example 2: “The table shivered while students were jumping up and down.”*
  + *Example 3: “The moon watched over the people.”*
* **Plot-** The series of events in a story; what happens in the story.
  + *Example: “A former ‘safe cracker’ gets out of prison, falls in love, does not reveal his past, goes straight, and opens a business. A child gets accidentally locked in a safe, so the man gets his safe cracking tools, opens the safe, and saves the child. However, now he must face the possibility that his wedding is off after his fiancé discovers the truth.”*
* **Plot structure-** The basic pattern of events in a story:
  + **Exposition-** The beginning of a story. The information the author provides to the reader about the setting and plot of the story at the beginning; the story’s background.
    - *Example: “Jimmy is released from prison.”*
  + **Rising Action-** Suspense builds.
    - *Example: “He turns his life around.”*
  + **Climax–** The turning point in the story, the point at which everything has built up to the strongest, most intense point in the story, and then everything changes after that. Climax = highest, strongest, most intense point.
    - *Example: “Jimmy opens a safe in which a child is trapped.”*
  + **Falling Action-** The resolution**;** the effects of the climax are shown.
    - *Example: “The child is alive and well.”*
  + **Resolution-** The ending and often when the problem is fixed.
    - *Example: “Everyone knows Jimmy is a former criminal and safe cracker and he worries about his marriage.”*
* **Poetry/Poems-** Writing which is not written in sentences and paragraphs. Often contains rhyme, and is usually written in stanzas.
  + *Example: “Dreams” by Langston Hughes.*
* **Point of view-** The perspective from which the story is told (first person, second person, or third person):
  + *Example: First person point of view uses “I” and “me.”*
  + **First Person-** When the story uses “I, me, myself, mine,” and the author talks about him/herself.
  + **Second Person-** When the author writes directly to another person using “you, yourself, your, yours, etc.”
  + **Third Person-** When the story uses “He, she, they, her, them, others, people, etc.” to talk about other character/s.
  + **Third Person Omniscient (All-knowing)-** When the narrator knows everything that’s going to happen but the characters don’t.
* **Prediction-** A guess about what’s going to happen in the future. In the context of literature, it’s a reader’s guess about what’s going to happen in the story and/or what he/she will read about.
  + *Example: “The reader made a prediction about the ending of the story based on the summary on the back of the book.”*
* **Prose-** Writing in sentences and paragraphs (not poetry).
  + *Example: Essays, short stories, plays, novels, biographies, textbooks.*
* **Protagonist-** The main character in the story, the hero/ine, the most important person who faces a problem or conflict.
  + *Example: “Jimmy Valentine in ‘Retrieved Information’ chooses to reveal his prison record in order to save a child.”*
* **Purpose-** The author’s reason for writing something. It answers the question: what does the author want to express to the reader? Why is he/she writing it?
  + *Example: “The purpose of a daily newspaper is to inform its readers about recent events that happened in the city.”*

Main vocabulary for purpose questions:

* **To narrate-** To tell a story.
* **To entertain-** To amuse, to hold the attention of something with something fun.
* **To persuade/convince-** To make the reader have the same opinion as the author does; to make the reader do what the author wants the reader to do.
* **To describe-** To explain or show in detail how something looks or how something is.
* **To explain-** To write more details about, to define, to offer reasons for or the cause of something.
* **To inform-** To give information/facts about something.
* **Questioning-** When the reader questions himself, the teacher, or someone else about what he/she is reading to make better sense of it or elaborate on the text.
  + *Example: “I use questioning strategies while reading by writing the question in the right-hand column next to what I just read. Then I read it again, and try to guess the answer to the question.”*
* **Satire-** A literary work that makes fun of a time period, event in history, or a general thing. Irony and sarcasm is used to attack or expose some kind of stupidity or bad decisions on the part of humanity or just certain characters.
  + *Example: “’Scary Movie’ was a satire of American horror films.”*
  + *Example 2: “’Austin Powers’ was a satire of the 60s in Great Britain and America and of James Bond movies.”*
* **Setting-** Where and when the story takes place. The time and place in which the action occurs.
  + *Example: “The story’s setting was a small town in China over a one-year period.”*
* **Short Story-** A work of fiction that can be read in one sitting.
  + *Example: “’The Tale of Two Hearts’ by Edgar Allan Poe.”*
* **Simile-** (A figure of speech)- The comparison of two or more things using “like” or “as.”
  + *Example: “The sun is like fire on my skin,” or “The sun is as hot as fire on my skin.”*
  + *Example 2: “Her hair is like a ray of golden sun streaming on my face.”*
* **Summarize/Summary-** When the plot/events/information in an entire text is shortened to a few words or sentences. A summary usually contains the main idea or basic plot of a text but few, if any, details.
  + *Example: “The summary of fiction novels is usually on the back or sides of the book.”*
* **Suspense-** A feeling of excitement, curiosity, or expectation about the outcome of a story that is usually created by the author.
  + *Example: “Will his wedding be cancelled? I wonder!!?? I want to read more to find out!”*
* **Stereotype-** A broad and unfair generalization about a particular ethnic, racial, political, social, or religious group.
  + *Example: “All Native Americans are stupid.”*
* **Structure-** The way a text is organized or set up.
  + *Example: Different forms of literature: poetry, prose, business letters vs. friendly letter, essays, etc. have different structure.*
* **Symbol-** Something that represents someone of something else. A person, place, or thing that stands for something beyond itself. The act of something conveying/portraying/representing something different than what it is.
  + *Example: “The American flag is a symbol of the American government and of patriotism.”*
  + *Example 2: “A heart is a symbol for love.”*
  + *Example 3: “The author symbolized purity and peace by having all the characters dressed in white.”*
  + *Example: “Lady Macbeth’s bloodstained hands were a symbol of guilt and death.”*
* **Theme-** The topic of the story that recurs throughout; the important message or insight about life or human nature that the writer presents to the reader.
  + *Example: “The theme of many stories is human greed.”*
* **Title (significance) –** An identifying name given to a book, play, film, song, or other work. It often contains the main or controlling idea of the piece.
* **Tone-** The feeling that the author has about what he/she is writing. The implied attitude of the author toward his topic or characters.
  + *Example: “The tone of that poem was very sad because it was about death.”*
  + *Example: “The author of ‘A Retrieved Reformation’ is sympathetic toward Jimmy Valentine.”*
* **Vernacular**- The standard native language of a country or locality. A variety of everyday language specific to a social group or region.
  + *Example: “The African American vernacular is generally not supported by mainstream Caucasian teachers in American schools.”*
* **Visualize-** When the reader makes a mental image of what he/she is reading.
  + *Example: “When I was reading the ‘Romeo and Juliet’ death scene, I clearly visualized a room aglow with soft yellow candles.”*
* **Voice-** A writer’s unique use of language that allows a reader to “hear” a human personality in his or her writing.
  + *Example: The comedian Bill Cosby’s voice in his book “Parenthood” always reflects his funny, sarcastic personality by using frequent satire and jokes.*
* **Word choice (diction) –** The choice and use of words in speech or in writing. Also: the degree of clarity and distinctness of pronunciation in speech or singing; enunciation.
  + *Example: “The writer’s diction conveyed his high level of education through his use of very technical, difficult words.”*