

## 30 Essential Literary Terms

**Dear Student:** Please keep this sheet in your notebook throughout the school year. Thanks! Mrs. Wendel

Protagonist	the main character
Antagonist	the force that contends with or opposes the main character
Static Character	a character in a piece of literature whose basic personality or behavior remains constant throughout the story
Dynamic Character	a character in a piece of literature whose basic personality or behavior undergoes a change in the course of the story
Setting	the time, place, and chief circumstances in which the events of a story occur
Exposition	the beginning of the story; in a plot diagram of a story it is where the line starts off
Rising Action	those events that lead to a point in the action

Climax	the point of highest interest or dramatic intensity
Falling Action	all the action that follows the climax and leads to the story ending
Resolution	it is the ending—the part in which the problems are solved
Physical Conflict	Person vs. person or person vs. nature
Social Conflict	Person vs. society
Psychological Conflict	Person vs. self or person vs. unknown
Symbol	any object, person, or action which signifies something more abstract or general
Theme	a statement that expresses the basic meaning of the story; it unifies the story and states the author's message about life

Allusion	a reference in literature to a familiar person, place, thing, or event
First Person Narration	the narrator is a character who can reveal only his/her own thoughts and feelings
Third Person Objective Narration	the narrator is an outsider who can report only what he/she sees and hears
Third Person Limited Narration	the narrator is an outsider who can see into the mind of one of the characters
Omniscient Narration	the narrator is an all-knowing outsider who can enter the minds of all the characters
Plot	a story's series of events
Mood	the feeling the author creates for the reader
Foreshadowing	the dropping of important hints by the author to prepare the reader for what is to come and to help him/her anticipate the outcome

Flashback	when the action in the story goes back in time (this can be mentally or physically for the story's characters, but the reader is still witnessing these past events out-of-sequence in terms of the overall story)
Personification	a figure of speech which gives human qualities to an animal or non-living thing
Hyperbole	a figure of speech using absurd overstatement for poetic, comic, or imaginative effect
Onomatopoeia	a figure of speech in which the sound of the words is suggestive of their meaning
Imagery	language that appeals to the senses (sight, sound, smell, taste, and touch); vivid description
Simile	a figure of speech that compares 2 different things using "like" or "as"
Metaphor	a figure of speech that compares 2 different things without using "like" or "as"