**Literary Terms 101**

The words “literary terms” refer to a whole bunch of words that English teachers, professors and critics use to talk about literature. It’s like all the special words that scientists use to describe sciency stuff or mathematicians have for mathy stuff…but for LITERATURE. It’s AWESOME!!!!

Just like you need formulas to do certain kinds of math problems, you need literary terms to do certain kinds of reading (or writing about reading). The following list includes the ones you are expected to know even if you AREN’T an English major. There are lots more, but those are for the super literature nerds (you know, the cool people).

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| **Word** | **Definition** |
| **Allegory** | A story or character that represents a very specific lesson or moral |
| **Alliteration** | When several words start with the same consonant in the same line or sentence |
| Archetype | A type of character that is universally recognizable  |
| **Assonance** | When several words in a sentence or line contain the same vowel sound |
| Character Types | **Static Character**Remains unchanged the whole book**Dynamic character**Changes in response to experience**Flat character**Caricature or defined by a single trait**Round character**Fully developed with complexities like real people**Protagonist**Central character/hero, the one who goes through the narrative arc**Antagonist**Character pitted against the protag.**Foil**Character who is either very like or very unlike the protagonist in a way that highlights something about the protagonist |
| Comedy | A work that begins badly and ends well; purpose may be only to entertain or entertain with a serious purpose. Classically, it concerned the working class. |
| Conflict | The central struggle in a narrative work. There are four types:Man vs. ManMan vs. SocietyMan vs. HimselfMan vs. Nature |
| **Enjambment** | A line of poetry that ends at a seemingly “unnatural” point |
| Epiphany | Moment when a character suddenly recognizes a greater truth or reads between the lines |
| Flashback | A literary device authors use to make characters experience the backstory (can be in memory, dream, etc.) |
| **Hyperbole** | Extreme exaggeration |
| **Imagery** | Writing that activates the readers’ senses |
| Irony | Discrepancy between what is said and what is meant |
| Satire | Humor with a political purpose, usually uses an exaggerated situation that mimics one in reality |
| **Juxtaposition** | When two images or situations are put right next to each other to highlight their differences |
| **Metaphor** | Comparison between two dissimilar things by identifying one as the other (often NOT explicit) |
| Motif | Use of repetition (of an image, idea, etc) to highlight themes or other unifying elements of a work |
| **Personification** | When an author gives human characteristics to non-human things |
| Mood | The ambiance an author creates to elicit an emotional response from the reader |
| Point of View | Perspective of the character telling the story**1st person**One person tells the story using “I” or “we”**3rd person**A narrator tells the story using “she” or “he” or “them”**2nd person**The narrator tells the story TO the reader – using “you” “your” etc. (rare) |
| **Simile** | A comparison using “like” or “as” |
| **Symbol** | A single object or person that stands for another thing or concept (unlike metaphor, which is usually not a single thing) |
| Theme | The central idea or message of a work |
| **Tone** | The attitude of the author (think like tone of voice) |
| Tragedy | A work that starts happy and ends badly, usually because of a predictable and unavoidable character flaw. Classically, it involved royalty. |
| Voice | The distinct way in which an author makes certain character talk/sound |

YOUR JOB:

This is going to be SO FUN. You need to choose 15 of the above 26 literary terms and either find an example of it in literature (that you can quote directly) or write an example on your own.

The terms highlighted in BOLD are the ones we’ll be using most often in this unit, as they are most often found in poetry. (Allegory is bolded because of the bible).