

EPISD
A Student's Guide to Literary Elements and Terminology
A List of "Good Stuff"

- I. **Prose**: the ordinary form of spoken or written language with no regular rhythmic pattern or rhyme and written in sentences and paragraphs
- A. **Fiction**: imagined and invented literary compositions which may be based on history or fact but which do not claim to be factually true
1. **Short Story**: a short work of prose fiction designed to produce a single dominant effect with usually concentrates on a single character in a single situation at a single moment (30,000 words or less)
- a. **Setting**: the time and place of the action
- b. **Characters**: the individuals represented in the story: a character always has human traits even if the character is an animal or a god (as in Greek and Roman myths)
- **Classifications of characters**
- i. **Protagonist**: the principal or central character, the one whose conflict set the plot in motion*
- ii. **Antagonist**: the character or force that blocks the protagonist
- iii. **Dynamic** character: one who changes in some important way as result of the story's action
- iv. **Static character**: one who does not change much in the course of the story
- v. **Round character**: one who has more dimension to his personality; is more complex and multifaceted (like real people)
- vi. **Flat character**: one who has only one or two personality traits: one dimensional
- *most protagonists are dynamic, rounded characters
- ** For more character information visit the following link
<http://learn.lexiconic.net/characters.htm>
- c. **Plot**: the arrangement of events to achieve the intended effect
- **Exposition**: the basic situation in which the setting, character, and usually the major conflict are introduced
- **Conflict**: a struggle or clash between opposing characters, forces, or emotions
- a. **Elemental or physical**: an individual against the physical world
- b. **Social**: an individual against and individual or an individual against society

- c. Internal or psychological: a struggle between opposing needs, desires, or emotions within a single character
- **Incident**: a short even dealing with a single action: connected together, they become episodes in a plot; incidents are usually complication of the basic situation
 - **Climax**: the action leads to a crisis, a point of the greatest intensity and emotional response from the reader; something happens to decide the outcome of the conflict; the point of highest interest; the moment that brings about a change in the situation or in the main character or both
 - **Resolution** (or denouement): the final outcome or result of the story's situation; the unraveling of the main dramatic complications; the ending
- d. **Point of view**: the vantage point from which the story is told ("the narrator")
- **First-person point of view**: the narrator is a character in the story; uses the pronoun *I*; this character tells us his/her own experiences and thoughts but cannot reveal any other character's private thoughts
 - **Third-person omniscient ("all-knowing") point of view**: the narrator knows everything that is going on in the story; a godlike observer who can tell us what all the characters are thinking and feeling
 - **Third-person limited point of view**: the narrator is outside the story (like the omniscient narrator) but tells the story from the vantage point of only one character
- e. **Theme**: the main idea that the author wants to convey about human experience or the human condition. Theme is **not** the same as the subject of a work. Most themes are implied and not directly stated in works of literature.
- f. **Tone**: the attitude of the writer toward his subject, the reader or a character. Tone is conveyed through the writer's diction or choice of words), details, language, syntax (sentence structure), or imagery (mental pictures which appeal to the senses).
- g. **Other Techniques**
- **Suspense**: the quality of tension or anxiety in the plot which keeps reader interest
 - **Foreshadowing**: the use of clues to hint at what will happen later in the plot
 - **Flashback**: a scene that interrupts the present action of the plot to flash backward "to tell what happened at an earlier time"

- **Atmosphere:** the overall effect created by the setting and descriptive details to gen an emotional response from the reader
 - **Mood:** the emotional response experienced by the reader
 - **Symbol:** something that stands for or represents another thing, especially an object used to represent something abstract, e.g., a dove as a symbol for peace; a snake as a symbol of evil
2. **Novel:** a long fictional prose narrative with a more or less complex plot (more than 50,000 words)
 3. **Novella:** a short novel (30,000-50,000 words)
- B. Nonfiction:** prose writing that deals with real people, real events, and real places
- a. *Biography:* a story of a person’s life written by someone else
 - b. *Autobiography:* a story of a person’s life written by the person him- or herself
 - c. *Essay:* a short piece of nonfiction prose that examines a single subject from a limited point of view
 - d. *History:* an account of recorded events from the past, usually with explanation and analysis
 - e. *Journalistic writing:* newspaper and magazine writing
- II. **Poetry:** words arranged in a rhythmic pattern with accents and with the words carefully selected for sound, meaning, and imagery so as to express in the best way the ideas and emotions of the writer, usually written in line and stanzas (See “Poetry Terminology” for details.)

POETRY TERMINOLOGY

- A. **Definition:** words arranged in a rhythmic pattern with accents and with the words carefully selected for sound, meaning, and imagery so as to express in the best way ideas and emotions (usually written in lines and stanzas)
- B. **Rhythm** is shown through metric pattern, except in free verse. The accents of the syllables in the words fall at regular intervals, like the beats in music.
 - a. The four most used metric patterns:

Technical Name	# of syllables per “foot”	/ = accented ∪ = unaccented
Iambic	2	∪ / a way
Trochaic	2	/ ∪ Know it
Anapestic	3	∪ ∪ /

Let us in

Dactylic

3

/ u u
Vic to ries

2. **Meter** is the “beat” of “poetic feet.” The number of feet in a line is expressed like this:

One foot	monometer
Two feet	dimeter
Three feet	trimeter
Four feet	tetrameter
Five feet	pentameter
Six feet	hexameter
Etc.	

Example: u / u / u / u /
The stag / at eve / had drunk / his fill

C. **Melody** is produced by sound devices.

1. **Rhyme**: two or more words having the same sound on their last accented vowel (ex. Lame-same); usually placed at the ends of lines. Rhyme scheme uses letters for identification (ex. abba, abba).
 - a. Single rhyme = love – dove
 - b. Double rhyme = napping – tapping
 - c. Triple rhyme = mournfully – scornfully
 - d. Imperfect (near or slant) rhyme occurs when two words are alike in some sounds but do not rhyme exactly = love – Jove
 - e. Internal rhyme occurs when the last syllables are accented = “once upon a midnight dreary, while I pondered weak and weary”
 - f. Masculine rhyme: the last syllables are accented - rake – sake
 - g. Feminine rhyme: more than one syllable is rhymed and the accent is not on the last syllable = weather – heather
2. **Assonance**: the repetition of similar vowel sounds followed by different consonant sounds. Ex: harp – altar; fury – fused

3. **Onomatopoeia**: a sound is produced and the word means that sound. Ex: drip, hiss, hoot, meow, clang, buzz
4. **Alliteration**: words beginning with the same consonant sound. Ex: soft summer sun; bright bragging heat

D. **Imagery** uses words and details that appeal to the five senses (sight, hearing, smell, touch, and taste). Imagery is produced through the use of figures of speech:

1. **Simile**: two unlike things compared using the words “like” or “as”

Example: “Does it dry up / like a raisin in the sun.”

2. **Metaphor**: two unlike things are directly compared with the one stated to be the other so that the reader must know in his own mind of the comparison. Ex: “I am soft silt / In an hourglass...”

3. **Personification**: giving human qualities to nonhuman things or qualities. Ex: “The trees danced in the breeze.”

4. **Apostrophe**: the address of some abstract quality or object, an absent or dead person, or something nonhuman as if it were present and capable of responding. Ex: “O World! Tell me thy pain.”

5. **Allusion**: a reference to a statement, person, place, event, or thing, politics, sports, science, or pop culture. Ex: “First you act like Santa and now you are a Scrooge.”

6. **Hyperbole** or overstatement: saying more than is true. Ex: He wore his fingers to the bone.

7. **Understatement** (a form of irony): saying less than is true. Ex: Losing his job means that he can sleep late.

8. **Irony**: a contrast or discrepancy between what is expected and what really happens, between what is said and what is really meant, or what appears to be true and what really is true. Ex: “War is kind.”

9. **Antithesis**: a contrast of ideas expressed in a grammatically balanced statement. Ex: “And wretches hang that jurymen may dine.”

10. **Metonymy**: something closely related to a thing or suggested by it is substituted for the thing itself. Ex: “the crown” = the king; “the bench” = the judge

11. **Synecdoche**: a part of a thing stands for the whole. Ex.: All hands on deck.