

Glossary of Literary Terms

Word	Definition
Antagonist	Adversary or opponent; character who is creating a problem for the main character in a story
Climax	Point of greatest emotional intensity in a plot when the outcome is made known to the reader; the turning point in the story
Conflict	Struggle between two opposing individuals or forces— person against nature; person against person; person against society; or person against himself
Deus ex machina	Character or happening that unexpectedly intervenes to change the course of events in a story
Exposition	The part of a plot that provides information about setting and what has happened before the story begins
Falling action	Events that follow the climax
Foreshadowing	Clues that hint at what will happen later in the story
Irony	Contrast between what is said and what is really meant—between what is expected to happen and what actually takes place
Metaphor	Figure of speech in which one thing is spoken of as if it were another (Example: “All the world’s a stage”)
Paradox	Statement or situation which appears to be contradictory or false
Plot	Sequence of events that make up a story
Point of view	Narrator or person whose voice tells the story. There are three common points of view: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>1st person</u> - a character in the work is telling the story (readers see and hear only what this character, “I,” sees and hears) • <u>3rd person omniscient</u>- an all-knowing narrator who can get into the minds of all characters • <u>3rd person limited</u> – tells the story from only one person’s point of view
Protagonist	Main character in a story, usually one who is trying to accomplish something; the central character about whom the reader is most concerned
Resolution	Final results or end of the story when the conflict is resolved
Rising action	Series of events in the plot which lead up to the turning point or climax
Satire	Literary form that pokes fun at human behavior
Setting	Time and place in which the events of the story occur
Simile	Comparison of two unlike things using “like” or “as” (Example: “I wandered lonely as a cloud” or “My love is like a red, red rose.”)
Suspense	A sense of uncertainty or anxiety about what will happen
Theme	Central insight about life that the story reveals; author’s message to the reader
Voice	Narrator or point of view from which the story is told