



Identifying and Analyzing Literary Devices

In order to fully interpret pieces of literature, you have to understand a lot about literary devices in the texts you read.

Read Closely and Carefully

- ➔ Resist the temptation to skim or skip any sections of the text.
- ➔ If there are any passages in the work that make you feel especially emotional, curious, intrigued, or just plain interested, **check that area again for any literary devices at play.**
- ➔ It's also a good idea to reread any parts you thought **were confusing** or that you didn't totally understand on a first read-through.



Memorize Common Literary Terms

- ➡ Language
- ➡ Plot
- ➡ Mood
- ➡ Setting
- ➡ Theme

- ➡ Point of View
- ➡ Narrator
- ➡ Conflict
- ➡ Characters



Language

- The most important literary element is language.
- Language is defined as a system of communicating ideas and feelings through signs, sounds, gestures, and/or marks.
- Writers can combine languages and dialects to help readers better understand the characters, setting, or even tone.



Plot

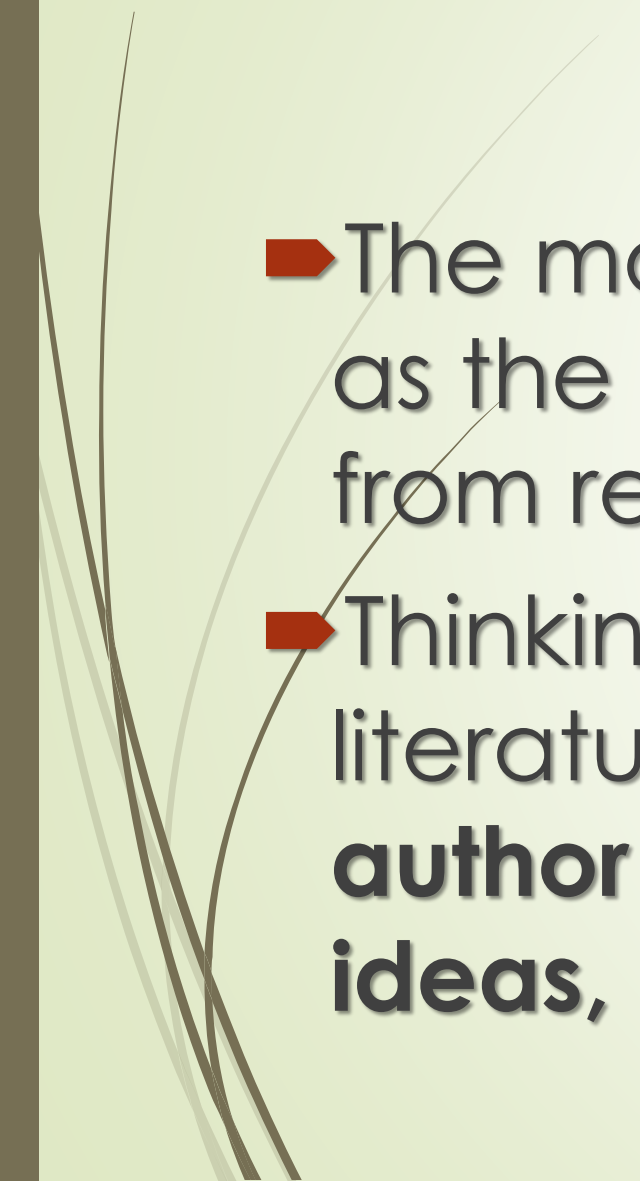
- Defined as the sequence of events that occurs from the first line to the last. **In other words, the plot is *what happens in a story*.**
- Most long-form literature, like a novel or a play, follows a pretty typical six element plot structure, also known as a plot arc.

- Beginning/Exposition
- Conflict
- Rising Action

- Climax
- Falling Action
- Resolution/Denouement

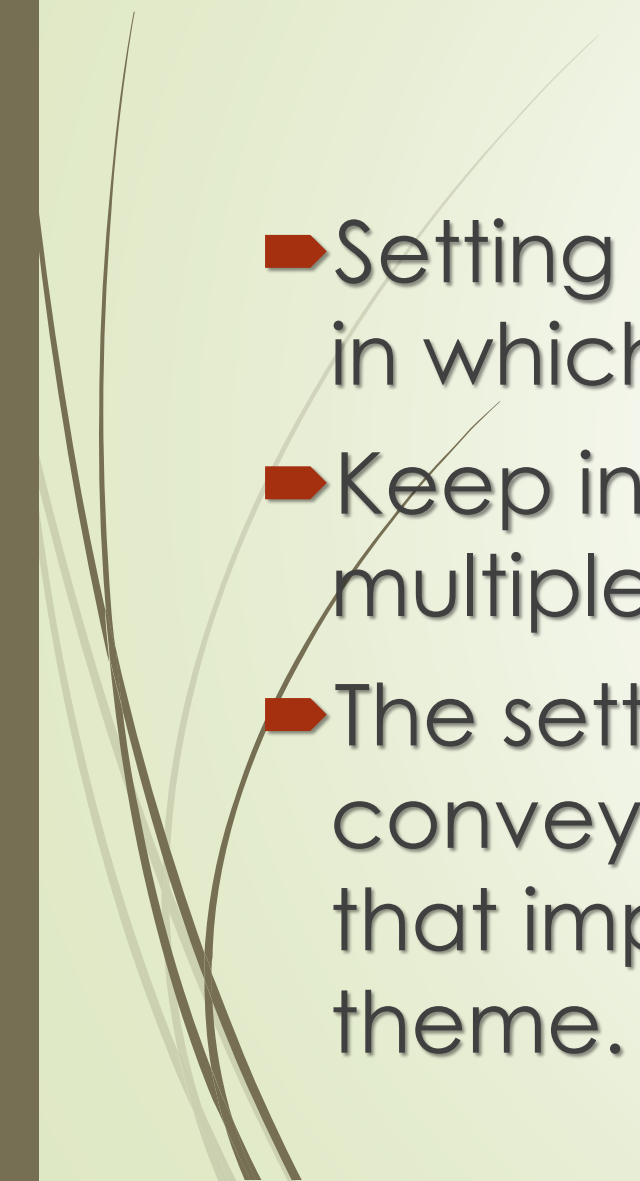


Mood

- ➡ The mood of a piece of literature is defined as the **emotion or feeling** that readers get from reading the words on a page.
 - ➡ Thinking about mood when you read literature is a **great way to figure out how an author wants readers to feel about certain ideas, messages, and themes.**
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Setting

- Setting is defined simply as the **time and location** in which the story takes place.
 - Keep in mind that longer works often have multiple settings.
 - The setting of a work is important because it helps convey important information about the world that impact other literary elements, like plot and theme.
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Theme

- All literary works have themes, or central messages, that authors are trying to convey.
- Sometimes theme is described as the main idea of a work...but more accurately, themes are *any* ideas that appear repeatedly throughout a text.
 - What does that mean?
 - That means that most works have multiple themes!
- When looking for a theme, **ask yourself what an author is trying to teach us or show us through their writing.**

Point of View

- Point of view is the position of the narrator in relationship to the plot of a piece of literature. **It establishes the narrator.**
- **In other words, point of view is the perspective from which the story is told.**
- **First person** point of view is told by one of the characters of the story from their perspective. "I," "you," and "my"
- **Second-person** point of view happens when the audience is made a character in the story. "you" and "your"
- **Third person limited:** this is when the narrator is removed from the story and tells it from an outside perspective. "he," "she," and "they"
- **Third person omniscient:** in this point of view, the narrator still uses third-person pronouns...but instead of being limited to one character, the narrator can tell readers what's happening with all characters at all times.



Narrator

- The narrator is the person who's telling the story.
- **All literature has a narrator, even if that narrator isn't named or an active part of the plot.**
- The narrator helps make sense of the plot for the reader.

Conflict

- Because conflict is a part of plot—and as we've already established, all literature has some sort of plot—that means conflict is a literary element, too.
- **Conflict gives a story purpose and motivates a story's plot.**
- Generally, conflict occurs between the protagonist, or hero, and the antagonist, or villain...but it can also exist between secondary characters, man and nature, social structures, or even between the hero and his own mind.
- It can be both *explicit* and *implicit*.

Characters

- **A piece of literature has to have at least one character, which can be a person, an object, or an animal.**
- **The protagonist of a work is its main character.** The plot circles around this person or object, and they are central to solving the conflict of the story.
- **Antagonists, on the other hand, are the characters that oppose the protagonist in some way.** (This opposition is what causes the conflict of the story!)
 - There can be multiple antagonists in a story, though usually there's one major character, animal, or object that continues to impede the protagonist's progress.



Intended Audience

- ➡ Knowing what kind of audience an author intended her work to have can help you figure out what types of literary devices might be at play.
- ➡ For example, if you were trying to analyze a children's book, you'd want to be on the lookout for child-appropriate devices, such as repetition and alliteration.



Take Notes!!

- **The most important strategy to utilize**, especially if you're reading and analyzing works for ELA class.
- Write down any passages, paragraphs, conversations, descriptions, etc., that jump out at you or that contain a literary device you were able to identify.
- Take notes directly in the book, if possible, with the use of sticky notes.
- **Use sticky notes or post-its to bookmark pages** that are interesting to you or that have some kind of notable literary device.