

# Elements of literature assignment

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Literary Analysis: Terms Many literature students are expected to be familiar with the basic terms listed below (and discussed in more depth in your text). Keep this study guide with your text. At the beginning of each reading assignment, write the elements of literature pertaining to the particular type of literature at the beginning of the short story or poem. After reading, define them in your text for class discussion, quizzes, and test preparation. To understand literature, it is necessary that you ask yourself certain questions, such as “ what is the theme of this story? or “ why does the author use this particular type of imagery? ” You are not necessarily reading for pleasure—although it is sincerely hoped you will derive pleasure from your assignments—but for the development of critical analysis skills, so observe the author’s style and intent carefully. Short Stories/Novel Theme—The idea or point of a story formulated as a generalization. In American literature, several themes are evident which reflect and define our society. The dominant ones might be innocence/experience, life/death, appearance/reality, free will/fate, madness/sanity, love/hate, society/individual, known/unknown.

Themes may have a single, instead of a dual nature as well. The theme of a story may be a mid-life crisis, or imagination, or the duality of humankind (contradictions). Character—Imaginary people created by the writer. Perhaps the most important element of literature. • Protagonist—Major character at the center of the story. • Antagonist—A character or force that opposes the protagonist. • Minor character—Often provides support and illuminates the protagonist. • Static character—A character who remains the same. • Dynamic character—A character who changes in some important way.

Characterization–The means by which writers reveal character. • Explicit

Judgment–Narrator gives facts and interpretive comment. • Implied

Judgment–Narrator gives description; reader make the judgment. Look for:

Connections, links, and clues between and about characters. Ask yourself

what the function and significance of each character is. Make this

determination based upon the character’s history, what the reader is told

(and not told), and what other characters say about themselves and others.

Plot–The arrangement of ideas and/or incidents that make up a story.

Causality–One event occurs because of another event. Foreshadowing–A

suggestion of what is going to happen. • Suspense–A sense of worry

established by the author. • Conflict–Struggle between opposing forces. •

Exposition–Background information regarding the setting, characters, plot. •

Complication or Rising Action–Intensification of conflict. • Crisis–Turning

point; moment of great tension that fixes the action. •

Resolution/Denouement–The way the story turns out. Structure–The design

or form of the completed action. Often provides clues to character and

action. Can even philosophically mirror the author’s intentions, especially if it is unusual.

Look for: Repeated elements in action, gesture, dialogue, description, as well

as shifts in direction, focus, time, place, etc. Setting–The place or location of

the action, the setting provides the historical and cultural context for

characters. It often can symbolize the emotional state of characters. Point of

View–Again, the point of view can sometimes indirectly establish the author’s

intentions. Point of view pertains to who tells the story and how it is told. •

Narrator–The person telling the story. • First-person–Narrator participates in

action but sometimes has limited knowledge/vision. Objective–Narrator is unnamed/unidentified (a detached observer). Does not assume character's perspective and is not a character in the story. The narrator reports on events and lets the reader supply the meaning. • Omniscient–All-knowing narrator (multiple perspectives). The narrator takes us into the character and can evaluate a character for the reader (editorial omniscience). When a narrator allows the reader to make his or her own judgments from the action of the characters themselves, it is called neutral omniscience. • Limited omniscient–All-knowing narrator about one or two characters, but not all.

Language and Style–Style is the verbal identity of a writer, oftentimes based on the author's use of diction (word choice) and syntax (the order of words in a sentence). A writer's use of language reveals his or her tone, or the attitude toward the subject matter. Irony–A contrast or discrepancy between one thing and another. • Verbal irony–We understand the opposite of what the speaker says. • Irony of Circumstance or Situational Irony–When one event is expected to occur but the opposite happens. A discrepancy between what seems to be and what is. • Dramatic Irony–Discrepancy between what characters know and what readers know. Ironic Vision–An overall tone of irony that pervades a work, suggesting how the writer views the characters. Poetry Allegory–A form of narrative in which people, places, and events seem to have hidden meanings. Often a retelling of an older story. Connotation–The implied meaning of a word. Denotation–The dictionary definition of a word. Diction–Word choice and usage (for example, formal vs. informal), as determined by considerations of audience and purpose. Figurative

Language–The use of words to suggest meanings beyond the literal. There are a number of figures of speech.

Some of the more common ones are:

- Metaphor–Making a comparison between unlike things without the use of a verbal clue (such as “ like” or “ as”).
- Simile–Making a comparison between unlike things, using “ like” or “ as”.
- Hyperbole–Exaggeration
- Personification–Endowing inanimate objects with human characteristics

Imagery–A concrete representation of a sense impression, a feeling, or an idea which appeals to one or more of our senses. Look for a pattern of imagery.

- Tactile imagery–sense of touch.
- Aural imagery–sense of hearing.
- Olfactory imagery–sense of smell.
- Visual imagery–sense of sight.
- Gustatory imagery–sense of taste.

Rhythm and Meter–Rhythm is the pulse or beat in a line of poetry, the regular recurrence of an accent or stress. Meter is the measure or patterned count of a poetry line (a count of the stresses we feel in a poem’s rhythm). The unit of poetic meter in English is called a “ foot,” a unit of measure consisting of stressed and unstressed syllables. Ask yourself how the rhythm and meter affects the tone and meaning.

Sound–Do the words rhyme? Is there alliteration (repetition of consonants) or assonance (repetition of vowels)? How does this affect the tone?

Structure–The pattern of organization of a poem. For example, a sonnet is a 14-line poem usually written in iambic pentameter. Because the sonnet is strictly constrained, it is considered a closed or fixed form. An open or free form is a poem in which the author uses a looser form, or perhaps one of his or her own invention. It is not necessarily formless.

Symbolism–When objects or actions mean more than themselves.

Syntax–Sentence structure and word

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order. Voice: Speaker and Tone–The voice that conveys the poem’s tone; its implied attitude toward its subject. Elements of Literature

Literature is a reflection of the society. A writer appeals to our feelings, emotions through various elements of literature, such as plot, character, theme, etc. Read more to know about the elements of literature. We can summarize literature in the words of Ezra Pound that great literature is simply language charged with meaning to the utmost possible degree. Every race has its own literature, for example, English literature, American literature, German literature, etc. Various types of literaturesuch as story, novel and drama delight us through the elements of literature. In literature, theme is important to reveal the story.

An author depicts the ups and downs of the protagonist with the help of characterization. The story progresses through various plots. There are prologues and epilogues in Shakespearean drama. Facts on Elements of Literature: Elements of literature denote the things that are used to make up a work of literature. There are different types and forms of literature. They are novel, drama, poetry, biography, non-fictional prose, essay, epic and short story. All these types of literature have some elements. To complete a piece of literature, a writer, dramatist or a novelist need to use certain elements like plot, character, theme, etc.

However, elements of fiction and elements of drama differ from elements of poetry. These elements are discussed below: Elements of Fiction and Drama : Literary types such as fiction; drama and short story have some elements. These include • Plot • Character • Setting • Theme • Structure •

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Point of view • Conflict • Diction • Foreshadowing Plot: Plot is the serial arrangement of incidents, ideas or events. In literature, the plot encompasses all the incidents and provides aesthetic pleasure. The story of the novel progresses through various plots and conflicts. Plots of dramas are divided into “ Acts” and “ Scenes”.

Drama has five essential parts. These are: • Introduction of the story where the characters and setting are introduced • Rising action • Climax • Falling action • Denouement Playwrights use dialogue to develop their plots. They reveal information about their characters such as their background and personality. Character: Character plays a pivotal role in a drama, novel, short story and all kinds of narratives. In drama, character reflects the personality of the protagonist and other related characters. The method of conveying information about characters in art is called characterization.

Characters can be fictional or based on real, historical entities. It can be human, supernatural, mythical, divine, animal or personifications of an abstraction. There are round characters, flat characters, stereotypical stock characters, etc. In Marlowe’s drama “ The Tragical History of Dr. Faustus”, Faustus is the main character of the play. Setting: It refers to geographical location of the story, time period, daily lifestyle of the characters and climate of the story. In a novel, the setting plays an important role. In short stories, sometimes it plays an important role, while for others it is not.

Settings of literary forms have been changing according to theme of the literary piece, for example, Shakespeare’s tragedies and comedies have the setting of palaces, castles whereas modern and post-modern dramas have

setting of houses of common people. There were supernatural elements in earlier literature and nowadays absurdity rules the literature. Setting can take place in a house, school, castle, forest, hospital or anywhere that the writers want to extend their scenes. Theme: Theme is another prime element of literature, which contains the central idea of all literary forms such as a novel, drama and short story.

It reflects innocence, experience, life, death, reality, fate, madness, sanity, love, society, individual, etc. Thus, it reflects the society as a whole, for example, the theme of Hardy's novel "The Mayor of Casterbridge" reflects the role of fate in our life. Likewise, in a drama, theme represents the brief idea of the drama. Structure: Structure is another important element of a drama, novel or short story. In dramas, there are plots and subplots. These also are divided into acts and scenes. Here the contrasting subplots give the main plot an additional perspective.

Likewise, novels have different chapters and scenes. Point of view: Point of view is another element of the narrative, through which a writer tells the story. Authors use first-person point of view or third-person point of view. First-person point of view indicates that the main character is telling the story, whereas the third-person point of view directs that the narrator is telling the story. A novel can be written in the first-person narrative, third-person narrative, omniscient point of view, limited omniscient point of view, stream of consciousness and objective point of view.

These points of view play an important role in the distinct structure of the story or a play. Conflict: Be it a short story, drama or novel, conflict is the



essential element of all these literary forms. A plot becomes interesting and intriguing when it has its share of inbuilt conflict and twists. Conflict can be internal conflict or external. It can take place between two men, between the character and his psychology, between the character and circumstances or between character and society. Use of language or diction: Diction is another essential element of drama.

A playwright exhibits the thoughts of characters through dialogue. “ Dialogue” has come from the Greek word “ dialogosa” which means “ conversation”. Shakespeare used this to portray the thoughts, emotions and feelings of the character. This also provides clues to their background and personalities. Diction also helps in advancing the plot. Greek philosophers like Aristotle used dialogue as the best way to instruct their students. Foreshadowing: Foreshadowing is another important element of literature that is applied as hints or clues to suggest what will happen later in the story.

It creates suspense and encourages the reader to go on and find out more about the event that is being foreshadowed. Foreshadowing is used to make a narrative more authentic. Elements of Poetry : Poetry is literature in a metrical form. However, free-verse became the popular style towards the modern and post modern age. Like fiction, it may not have plots, setting, etc, yet it has a structured method of writing. There are various kinds of poetry such as ballad, sonnet, etc. All these forms have some elements such as style, theme, rhyme, rhythm, metaphor, etc. that are described below:

**Style:** Style refers to the way the poem is written. Poems are written in various styles, such as free verse, ballad, sonnet, etc. , which have different meters and number of stanzas. **Symbol:** Symbol represents the idea and thought of the poem. It can be an object, person, situation or action. For example, a national flag is the symbol of that nation. **Theme:** Like other forms of literature, poetry has a theme of its own. Theme contains the message, point of view and idea of the poem. **Imagery:** Imagery is another important element that a poet often uses in poems that appeal to our senses. In the age of modernism, T.

S. Eliot used images of urban life in his poems. Wordsworth used nature as poetic images in his poems. **Rhyme and rhythm:** Rhyme is an element that is often used in poetry. It's a recurrence of an accented sound or sounds in a piece of literature. Poets and lyricists use this device in various ways to rhyme within a verse. There is internal rhyme, cross rhyme, random rhyme and mixed rhyme. It gives the poem flow and rhythm. It contains the syllables in a poem. Every poem has a rhythm in it. It's about how the words resonate with each other, how the words flow when they are linked with one another in a poem.

**Meter:** This is an important rhythmic structure of poetry. It is described as sequence of feet, each foot being a specific series of syllable types – such as stressed/unstressed and makes the poetry more melodious. **Alliteration:** Alliteration is another element used in poetry for the sound effect. It indicates two or more words with same repetition of initial letter, for example, “ dressy daffodils”. Here the sound of the letter ‘ d’ is repeated.

Simile: A simile is a figure of speech used for comparison in the poetry with the words ‘ like’ or ‘ as’, for example, “ as black as coal”.

Metaphor: Metaphor is used in poetry to make an implicit comparison. Unlike simile, here the comparison is implied, for example, ‘ Her laughter, a babbling brook’.

Onomatopoeia: This is one important element of poetry, which refers to words that sound like their meaning, for example, buzz, moo and paw. Element of literature includes all the elements that are essential to create a piece of literature. These elements help a writer to create splendid poetry, superb drama and soul-touching novel. These elements are used to form the structure of a literary piece. | |