

# LITERARY TERMS NOTES

**Theme** - The underlying message about life that an author is trying to communicate to readers

## **Examples:**

Finding Nemo - father/son relationships can be complicated and challenging

Hunger Games - a government with too much power has the potential to become corrupt

**Inference** - a conclusion reached on the basis of evidence and reasoning

*Remember the guy who crashed on his bike? The SUV driving through the woods?*

**Subtext** - The underlying, or implicit, meaning, usually of a particular line or passage rather than an entire work

Example:

“A storm is passing through” meant either explicitly (a real storm is passing through) or implicitly (something bad is happening in my life)

**Narrative Point-of-View (POV)** - the perspective from which a story is told; who is telling the story?

**1st Person POV** - The narrator is a character in the story and the story is told from his/her perspective

Example: **I** went to see a horror film with my friends. **We** were skeptical, but it was good.

**3rd Person Limited POV** – The narrative voice is outside of the story's action, and the narrator is not a character in the story; this type of narrator has **limited** knowledge of characters' inner thoughts and feelings

Example: Two friends went to see a horror film. **They** were skeptical, but it ended up being good.

**3rd Person Omniscient POV** - The narrator knows the thoughts, feelings, emotions, etc., of every character.

*Omniscient - all-knowing*

Example: Steve felt profound sadness that his Amazon package had not arrived. His neighbor Wendy felt great sympathy for him and brought him dinner to make him feel better.

**Protagonist** - The central, leading, or main character in a story; the protagonist is the character most closely followed by the reader

*Is not always a “good” character*

Example: Katniss Everdeen is the protagonist of *The Hunger Games*

**Antagonist** - Oppresses the protagonist and creates conflict; the antagonist's actions usually propel a story forward

*Does not always have to be a human character*

Example: President Snow and the Capitol are examples of antagonists in *The Hunger Games*

**Exposition** - Introduces background information about events, settings, characters, or other elements of a work to a reader.

*Without exposition, nothing would make sense. This often occurs a great deal at the beginning of a story, but must also occur throughout a story.*

Example: We learn about Katniss Everdeen's family and their life in District 12 early in *The Hunger Games*. We also learn about the Capitol and all the other districts.

**Conflict** - A story's central issue or struggle that drives the action, usually creating tension between the protagonist and antagonist

*There are two types: internal and external conflict*

Example Internal Conflict: Katniss Everdeen does not know whether or not she wants to side with the Rebels.

Example External Conflict: The Capitol oppresses those who live in the districts.

**Rising Action** - In a story's plot, a series of relevant incidents that create suspense, interest, and tension.

*Includes all decisions, character's traits and flaws, and background circumstances that together create turns and twists leading to a climax.*

Example: Katniss Everdeen steps in for her sister and volunteers to go to the games.

**Climax** - The point in a story when the conflict or tension hits the highest point. At this point, rising action turns to falling action. Everything that occurs after the climax occurs as a result of the climax.

Example: The climax of the first *Hunger Games* book is when Peeta and Katniss refuse to kill one another at the end of the games.

**Falling Action** - Occurs right after the climax; the main conflict of the story begins to be resolved through the events of falling action.

*Falling action occurs as a **result** of the climax*

Example: After Peeta and Katniss both win the games, Katniss must deal with the Capitol's anger toward her.

**Resolution** - the unfolding or solution of the story's central conflict; a story's conclusion; occurs toward the end of a story

Example: Katniss and Peeta are both crowned victors, despite the Capitol's anger toward them, and are made very wealthy. (In this case, much is left open to encourage readers to move on to the next book)

**Setting** - Where and when a story takes place; historical context, weather, geographical location, social status, etc., all affect a story's setting.

*A story may have many different settings, or have one primary setting*

Example: *The Hunger Games* is set in a dystopian future America where a central Capitol controls 12 outlying and largely oppressed, impoverished districts.

**Tone** - The attitude of an author towards a subject, often conveyed through word choice (diction) and details.

Example: What is the author's **tone** when describing President Snow?

**Mood** - The feeling or atmosphere a writer creates in a story

*Mood is closely related to and influenced by tone, diction, and setting*

Example: Dense fog shrouded the tall, narrow trees, and shadows made strange shapes on the forest floor.

**Diction** - A writer's specific word choices. Diction is closely related to tone and mood, helping to establish both.

*Diction may be described in countless ways and with different adjectives (angry, funny, gloomy), but is often discussed as either formal or informal.*

Example:

I would like to request your presence at the meeting.

You've gotta come to our meeting.

**Symbolism** - The use of symbols to represent ideas and qualities that are different from their literal meanings



**Imagery** - Detailed, descriptive language that appeals to the five senses (sight, sound, touch, smell, taste)

Example: It was dark and dim in the forest. The wind whispered through the trees. The clean scent of fresh rain hung in the air.

**Characterization** – The ways in which an author develops a character and conveys an understanding of that character's nature and identity to readers.

**Direct Characterization:** Author explicitly reveals details about a character

**Indirect Characterization:** Details about a character are revealed through that character's actions, words, thoughts, etc.

**Irony** - When an outcome is the opposite of what you'd expect

*There are three main types of irony (verbal, dramatic, situational) that we will talk about more specifically later in the year*

Example: An English teacher fails a spelling test. A pilot who is desperately afraid of heights. Etc.