

Name: _____

English 9 Literary Terms - Review List for Final Exam

BASIC LITERARY ELEMENTS

The following terms refer to basic elements of all fiction.

plot	The sequence of events in a story.
theme	A main idea or central message in a literary work.
setting	The time and place in which a story takes place.
conflict	A struggle between opposing forces.
climax	The turning point of a story.
protagonist	The main character in a work (the character whose fate we are most invested in).
antagonist	The person or force that opposes the protagonist to create the story's main conflict.
characterization	An author's means of expressing information about a character's personality, life history, values, physical traits, and the like.
point of view	The person or entity through which the reader experiences the story; the "angle" from which the story is told.

HINTS, INFORMATION, AND EXPECTATIONS

The following terms refer to devices that writers use to engage the reader by providing information about the main action of the story or by manipulating the reader's experience of what happens.

flashback	A scene in a literary work that occurs before the main action of the story.
foreshadowing	Clues or hints given by an author about future events.
motif	A repeating idea, image or subject that supports the meaning of a work of literature.
situational irony	The contrast between what a reader or character expects and what actually happens.

POETIC DEVICES

The following literary devices are especially present in poetry.

imagery	vivid language that engages any of the five senses (writing that makes you imagine the sight, sound, smell, feel, or taste of something as you read)
oxymoron	language that combines contradictory words or ideas (such as “sick health” or “jumbo shrimp”)
alliteration	the repetition of consonant sounds at the beginning of words (“Peter picked peppers.”)
personification	when inanimate objects or ideas are described as if they are living by giving them human (or animal) qualities (for example, “silence crept into the classroom”)
allusion	a reference to a well-known literary work, person, or event (such as the Bible or a Greek god like Apollo or Poseidon).
metaphor	a figure of speech in which unlike things are compared to each other (“They are vipers.”)
simile	a figure of speech in which unlike things are compared to each other using the words “like” or “as” (“sick as a dog.”)
repetition	when a writer repeats a sound, word, phrase, or line for effect or emphasis
onomatopoeia	a word whose sound imitates or suggests its meaning
hyperbole	an extreme exaggeration (“I told you a million times...”)
symbol	a thing, character, or object used to represent an idea or something greater than itself.

DRAMA TERMS

The following terms refer to devices that writers use to engage the reader by providing information about the main action of the story or by manipulating the reader's experience of what happens.

tragedy	a drama which deals with a serious or somber theme and which ends in disaster for the protagonist(s.)
dialogue	a conversation between characters (the characters make short remarks to each other, rather than giving long speeches).
soliloquy	a long speech in which a character, alone on stage, presents his or her innermost thoughts to the audience.
monologue	a lengthy speech by a character on stage, which is made to other characters.
aside	a brief remark spoken by a character that is not intended to be heard by all other characters on stage (you can think of this as a "side comment").
dramatic foil	a character who contrasts with another in order to highlight the other's traits. For example, a serious character might have a comedic friend as a foil, highlighting his serious nature.
tragic flaw	a weakness in a tragic hero that helps to bring about the character's downfall and/or death in a tragedy.
dramatic irony	a device in which the audience or reader knows more about the events of the plot than the characters. (For example, in "On the Sidewalk Bleeding" the reader knows that Andy will die before he realizes it himself.)

The Structure of a Shakespearean Tragedy

- Act 1:* The **exposition**, which introduces the characters, setting, and conflict.
- Act 2:* **Rising action**, when the conflict introduced in the exposition intensifies like a pot beginning to boil.
- Act 3:* The **climax**, which is the turning point of the story. This is when the pot boils over and the outcome of the story is determined. In a tragedy, this means that the downfall of the tragic hero is now inevitable.
- Act 4:* **Falling action**, when the conflict starts to unravel and the action moves toward the end.
- Act 5:* The **resolution**: this is the final outcome of the story (the downfall of the tragic hero).