

GLOSSARY OF SELECTED LITERARY CONVENTIONS

Literary texts fall into several different genres all of which are characterized by their own purpose, together with those conventions that are proper to the genre. The conventions used in a specific literary text include, for example, literary techniques and elements, as well as rhetorical devices.

Students will be asked to discuss literary devices and, therefore, may identify either the **elements** or **techniques** that contribute to the power of the writing. Students should also be able to explain how the element or technique is crafted by the author to achieve his purpose.

LITERARY ELEMENTS are particular characteristics of a whole text. The elements help structure a text.

- Plot – the structure and sequence of events in a story
- Theme – the main idea or message in a literary work (Theme should be expressed in a complete sentence. An idea represented by a single word or phrase is a **motif**.)
- Character – the people or players in a literary work who have a specific role or function in the plot
- Setting – the time and place of a literary work that help define the situation in a literary work
- Conflict – the struggle, obstacle or dilemma that drives the action in the literary work
- Climax – the emotional high point of a literary work
- Turning Point – the point in a literary work at which the action turns for or against the main character
- Mood – the atmosphere or emotional climate created by the literary work; the feeling created by the text
- Point of View – the person or narrative voice through which a story is told (not to be confused with **viewpoint**, which is a writer's or character's feelings, opinions or perspectives) POV may be third person omniscient, third person limited, or first person narrator or observer
- Tone – the attitude or emotional state of the narrative voice (not the author or characters) as revealed through the language of the literary work

LITERARY TECHNIQUES are specific constructions or language choices used by the author to convey meaning and achieve the author's purpose.

Alliteration – the repetition of consonant sounds in close proximity in a line of poetry or prose

Allusion – a reference to a person, place or thing that has a literary, historical, artistic, geographical, mythological, or scriptural significance

Characterization – the writer's means of conveying a character's personality, background, appearance, values

Dialogue – the quoted conversation of two or more people providing details about the characters and their situation

Irony – verbal: words that are intended to mean the exact opposite of what is stated (not to be confused with **sarcasm**, which is a tone of voice often accompanying verbal irony)
– situational: an unexpected turn of events, the opposite of what would be a conventional or appropriate outcome
– dramatic: an awareness of information by the audience and one character or more on stage not shared by another character

Enjambment – in poetry, the continuation of a sentence from one line to the next

Foreshadowing – hinting by the author of events to come in a literary work

Imagery – the use of sensory details to stimulate thought and feeling

Metaphor – a figure of speech in which two things are compared without the use of *like* or *as*

Hyperbole – a figure of speech employing obvious exaggeration

Paradox – the juxtaposition of two seemingly contradictory ideas that contain some truth

Parallelism – use of similar language, structures, events or ideas in different parts of a text for the purpose of emphasis or comparison and contrast

Personification – a figure of speech in which a non-human object is described as human

- Rhyme – the repetition of similar or duplicate sounds in two or more words at the end of or within a line of poetry
- Rhythm – the regular pattern of stressed and unstressed beats or sounds in poetry or prose
- Repetition – the use of a specific word, structure or phrase several times to emphasize a particular idea
- Simile – a figure of speech comparing two things using *like* or *as*
- Symbolism – the use of specific objects or images to represent abstract ideas