**English 2201**

**Examinable Literary Terms**

**Alliteration** – is the repetition of consonant sounds at the beginning of a word, to intensify the beat. Example: sweet smell of success, do or die, safe and sound.

**Allusion** – is a reference to another work of [literature](http://web.cocc.edu/lisal/literaryterms/elements_of_literature.htm/t_blank#What) (song, movie, novel etc.) within writing.

Example: In the movie “Reeves says “This is not Kansas Dorothy”. This is an allusion to the movie “Wizard of Oz”.

**Analogy** – Comparison between two pairs, where one difficult comparison is explained with reference to a simpler, but similar comparison.

**Antagonist** – is the [character,](http://web.cocc.edu/lisal/literaryterms/elements_of_literature.htm/t_blank#Character) force, or collection of forces in fiction or drama that opposes the [protagonist](http://web.cocc.edu/lisal/literaryterms/i_z.htm/t_blank#Protagonist) and gives rise to the [conflict](http://web.cocc.edu/lisal/literaryterms/elements_of_literature.htm#conflict) of the story; an opponent of the protagonist. Although the antagonist often acts against the protagonist, they do not have to be a villain; they can simply just be the character acting against the protagonist.

**Atmosphere –** Atmosphere is the [mood](http://web.cocc.edu/lisal/literaryterms/elements_of_literature.htm/t_blank#Mood) or persistent feeling implied by a literary work. An author establishes atmosphere partly through description of [setting](http://web.cocc.edu/lisal/literaryterms/elements_of_literature.htm/t_blank#Setting) and partly by the objects chosen to be described.

**Characterization –** is the method a writer uses to reveal the personality of a character in a

literary work: Methods may include by what the character says about himself or herself; by what others reveal about the character; or the character’s actions. (direct/indirect characterization)

**Direct Characterization**

The author comes right out and tells the reader what a character is like.

# Indirect Characterization

The author provides clues about the character through:

1. what the character says;
2. what the character does;
3. the character’s name;
4. the character’s appearance/surroundings;
5. what other people say about the character;
6. how other people act toward the character; 7. how animals react to the charge.

**FLAT Characters**

are undeveloped, usually showing only one trait.

# ROUND Characters

are realistic, with numerous traits developed.

**Climax –** the decisive moment in a drama, the climax is the turning point of the play to which the rising action leads. This is the crucial part of the drama, the part that determines the outcome of the conflict.

**Complication –** is a complicating factor or occurrence as in the plot of a story or in the unfolding of events. Example: A complication in *MSND* would be when Puck put the lotion on the wrong Athenian’s eyes, causing much conflict.

**Conflict –** is the struggle within the plot between opposing forces. The protagonist engages in the conflict with the [antagonist,](http://web.cocc.edu/lisal/literaryterms/t_blank#Antagonist) which may take the form of a character, society, nature, or an aspect of the protagonist’s personality. (Three types are external, internal, and inter-personal)

**Connotation –** are associations and implications that go beyond the literal meaning of a word, which derive from how the word has been commonly used and the associations people make with it. Example: The word eagle connotes ideas of liberty and freedom that have little to do with the word’s literal meaning.

**Denotation –** is the literal meaning of a word, the dictionary meaning. Opposite of [connotation.](http://web.cocc.edu/lisal/literaryterms/a_c.htm/t_blank#Connotation) Example: "Good night, sweet prince, and flights of angels sing thee to thy rest" of which the literal meaning would be sleep.

**Dialogue –** is the conversation between [characters](http://www.uncp.edu/home/canada/work/allam/general/#character) in a drama or [narrative.](http://www.uncp.edu/home/canada/work/allam/general/#narrative)

**Diction –** isa writer’s choice of words, phrases, sentence structures, and figurative language, which combine to help create meaning.

**Epiphany – (**in [fiction)](http://web.cocc.edu/lisal/literaryterms/elements_of_literature.htm/t_blank#Elements) when a [character](http://web.cocc.edu/lisal/literaryterms/elements_of_literature.htm/t_blank#Character) suddenly experiences a deep realization about himself or herself; a truth that is grasped in an ordinary rather than a melodramatic moment.

**Extended Metaphor –** the same [metaphor](http://web.cocc.edu/lisal/literaryterms/i_z.htm/t_blank#Metaphor) is continued over several lines or through the entire

**Figurative Language –** isa type of language that varies from the norms of literal language, in which words mean exactly what they say. (simile, metaphor, personification).

**Flashback –** is action that interrupts to show an event that happened at an earlier time which is necessary to better understanding

**Foreshadowing –** is the use of hints or clues to suggest what will happen later in the piece.

**Hyperbole –** is an exaggeration or overstatement.

**Imagery –** is a word or group of words in a literary work which appeal to one or more of the senses: sight, taste, touch, hearing, and smell. The use of images serves to intensify the impact of the work.

**Irony –** takes many forms. In **irony of situation**, the result of an action is the reverse of what the actor expected. In **dramatic irony**, the audience knows something that the characters in the drama do not. In **verbal irony**, the contrast is between the literal meaning of what is said and what is meant.

**Juxtaposition –** placing things side by side for the purposes of comparison (often to contrast). Comparison of things or ideas. Authors often use juxtaposition of ideas or examples in order to make a point.

**Literal Meaning –** means exactly what it says; a rose is the physical flower.

**Metaphor –** A comparison between two unlike things. The metaphor can be stated or implied.

**Mood** – is the atmosphere or feeling created by a literary work, partly by a description of the objects or by the style of the descriptions. A work may contain a mood of horror, mystery, holiness, or childlike simplicity, to name a few, depending on the author's treatment of the work.

**Motif** – an idea running through literary works, such as the damsel in need of rescue (in Cinderella, Snow White, and Sleeping Beauty)

**Narrator –** is the teller of a story. The narrator may be the author or a [character](http://www.galegroup.com/free_resources/glossary/glossary_bc.htm#character) in the story through whom the author speaks.

**Onomatopoeia –** is a literary device wherein the sound of a word echoes the sound it represents.

Example: crunch, drip, boom

**Oxymoron –** is a combination of contradictory terms (usually 2 words side by side that are opposites). Example: In *Romeo and Juliet*, "O brawling love! O loving hate!" are examples of oxymorons.

**Paradox** – is a situation or a statement that seems to contradict itself, but on closer inspection, does not.

**Plot** - the imitation of an action; the arrangement of the incidents; the action imitated should be a whole – having a beginning, a middle and an ending.

Characters + Actions = Theme

(Conflict will be present)

**Parody** – an imitation of a poem, song, whatever, where the style is the same but the theme is ludicrously different; a feeble imitation (i.e. “The Pints of Snails”)

**Personification –** is a figure of speech in which something nonhuman is given human characteristics.

**Point of View –** isa way the events of a story are conveyed to the reader, it is the "vantage point" from which the [narrative](http://www.uncp.edu/home/canada/work/allam/general/#narrative) is passed from author to the reader. The point of view can vary from work to work, in first person – the narrator is telling things from his or her own perspective, or in the third person, telling things from the perspective of an onlooker. If the speaker knows everything including the actions, motives, and thoughts of all the characters, the speaker is referred to as omniscient (all-knowing). If the speaker is unable to know what is in any character's mind but his or her own, this is called limited omniscience.

**Protagonist –** is the hero or main character in a story, who acts against the [antagonist.](http://web.cocc.edu/lisal/literaryterms/a_c.htm/t_blank#Antagonist) Although the protagonist is often the hero or heroin, they do not have to be heroic.

**Pun –** is a play on words wherein a word is used to convey two meanings at the same time.

**Purpose –** what the writer wants to accomplish with a particular piece of writing or what the character’s goals are.

**Rhetorical Question –** is a question intended to provoke thought, but not an expressed answer,

in the reader. It is most commonly used in oratory and other persuasive [genres](http://www.galegroup.com/free_resources/glossary/glossary_fh.htm#genre). Example: Bugs Bunny typically asks, "What’s up, doc?" He isn’t actually inquiring how you are, it is more of a greeting.

**Satire –** is a work that uses ridicule, humor, and wit to criticize and provoke change in human nature and institutions. There are two major types of satire: "formal" or "direct" satire speaks directly to the reader or to a [character](http://www.galegroup.com/free_resources/glossary/glossary_bc.htm#character) in the work; "indirect" satire relies upon the ridiculous behavior of its characters to make its point

**Setting –** is the time, place, and circumstance in which the action of a [narrative](http://www.galegroup.com/free_resources/glossary/glossary_no.htm#narrative) takes place. The

elements of setting may include geographic location, [characters](http://www.galegroup.com/free_resources/glossary/glossary_bc.htm#character)' physical and mental environments, prevailing cultural attitudes, or the historical time in which the action takes place.

**Simile –** is a figure of speech that takes the form of a comparison between two unlike quantities for which a basis for comparison can be found, and which uses the words "like" or "as". Example: Shakespeare’s "My love is like a red, red rose…"

**Suspense –** is a literary device in which the author maintains the [audience's](http://www.galegroup.com/free_resources/glossary/index.htm#audience) attention through the buildup of events, the outcome of which will soon be revealed. It results primarily from two factors: the reader's identification with and concern for the welfare of a convincing and sympathetic character, and an anticipation of violence.

**Symbolism –** is a device in literature where an object represents an idea.

**Theme –** is a central idea or statement that unifies and controls the entire work. The theme can take the form of a brief and meaningful insight or a comprehensive vision of life; it may be a single idea.

**Thematic Statement** - A thematic statement is a general sentence that captures the main idea conveyed by the work

**Title (significance) –** is how the title relates to the work and what new insights can be gained into the work when one considers the title (eg. Is it symbolic? Related to theme? Create suspense? Hint at thesis? Identify topic of essay? Etc.).

**Tone –** expresses the author's attitude toward his or her subject. Since there are as many tones in literature as there are tones of voice in real relationships, the tone of a literary work may be one of anger or approval, pride or piety-the entire gamut of attitudes toward life's phenomena.