

LITERARY ANALYSIS

ELEMENTS OF PLOT

All fiction is based on conflict and this conflict is presented in a structured format called **PLOT**.

Exposition

The introductory material which gives the setting, creates the tone, presents the characters, and presents other facts necessary to understanding the story.

Foreshadowing

The use of hints or clues to suggest what will happen later in the story.

Inciting Force

The event or character that triggers the conflict.

Conflict

The essence of fiction. It creates plot. The conflicts we encounter can usually be identified as one of four kinds. (Man versus...Man, Nature, Society, or Self)

Rising Action

A series of events that builds from the conflict. It begins with the inciting force and ends with the climax.

Crisis

The conflict reaches a turning point. At this point the opposing forces in the story meet and the conflict becomes most intense. The crisis occurs before or at the same time as the climax.

Climax

The climax is the result of the crisis. It is the high point of the story for the reader. Frequently, it is the moment of the highest interest and greatest emotion. The point at which the outcome of the conflict can be predicted.

Falling Action

The events after the climax which close the story.

Resolution (Denouement)

Rounds out and concludes the action.

SYMBOLISM

A person, place or object which has a meaning in itself but suggests other meanings as well. Things, characters and actions can be symbols. Anything that suggests a meaning beyond the obvious.

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Some symbols are conventional, generally meaning the same thing to all readers. For example: bright sunshine symbolizes goodness and water is a symbolic cleanser.

CHARACTERIZATION

MAJOR CHARACTERS

Almost always round or three-dimensional characters. They have good and bad qualities. Their goals, ambitions and values change. A round character changes as a result of what happens to him or her. A character who changes inside as a result of what happens to him is referred to in literature as a **DYNAMIC** character. A dynamic character grows or progresses to a higher level of understanding in the course of the story.

Protagonist The main character in the story	Antagonist The character or force that opposes the protagonist.	Foil A character who provides a contrast to the protagonist.
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MINOR CHARACTERS

Almost always flat or two-dimensional characters. They have only one or two striking qualities. Their predominant quality is not balanced by an opposite quality. They are usually all good or all bad. Such characters can be interesting or amusing in their own right, but they lack depth. Flat characters are sometimes referred to as **STATIC** characters because they do not change in the course of the story.

Theme

The main idea or underlying meaning of a literary work. A theme may be stated or implied. Theme differs from the subject or topic of a literary work in that it involves a statement or opinion about the topic. Not every literary work has a theme. Themes may be major or minor. A major theme is an idea the author returns to time and again. It becomes one of the most important ideas in the story. Minor themes are ideas that may appear from time to time.

It is important to recognize the difference between the theme of a literary work and the subject of a literary work. The subject is the topic on which an author has chosen to write. The theme, however, makes some statement about or expresses some opinion on that topic. For example, the subject of a story might be war while the theme might be the idea that war is useless.

Four ways in which an author can express themes are as follows:

1. Themes are expressed and emphasized by the way the author makes us feel.. By sharing **feelings of the main character** you also share the ideas that go through his mind.

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2. Themes are presented in **thoughts and conversations**. Authors put words in their character's mouths only for good reasons. One of these is to develop a story's themes. The things a person says are much on their mind. Look for **thoughts that are repeated** throughout the story.

3. Themes are suggested through the characters. The main character usually illustrates the most important theme of the story. A good way to get at this theme is to ask yourself the question, **what does the main character learn** in the course of the story?

4. The **actions or events** in the story are used to suggest theme. People naturally express ideas and feelings through their actions. One thing authors think about is what an action will "say". In other words, how will the action express an idea or theme?

IMAGERY:

Language that appeals to the senses. Descriptions of people or objects stated in terms of our senses.