

## English 12 Literary Terms Definitions Master List

1. **Fiction**—Literature in which situations and characters are invented by the writer
2. **Nonfiction**—Prose writing about real people, places, and events; presents information considered true
3. **Genre**—A category or type of literature characterized by a particular form or style
4. **Plot**—The sequence of events in a literary work
5. **Exposition**—The introduction of the characters, setting, or the situation at the beginning of the story
6. **Rising Action**—The part of the plot that complications to the conflict and increases reader interest
7. **Climax**—The point of greatest emotional intensity, interest, or suspense, in the plot of a narrative
8. **Falling Action**—In a play or story, the action that typically follows the climax and reveals its results
9. **Resolution**—The part of the plot that concludes the falling action by revealing or suggesting the outcome of the conflict. THE END.
10. **Setting**—The time and place in which the events of a story, novel, or play occur
11. **Mood/Atmosphere**—The feeling or emotional quality of a literary work
12. **Character**—An individual in a literary work
13. **Theme**—The main idea or message of a literary work
14. **Protagonist**—the central character in a literary work around whom the main conflict revolves. “Good Guy”
15. **Antagonist**— A person or force in society or nature that opposes the central character in a literary work. “Bad Guy”
16. **Round Character**—A character who exhibits varied and sometimes contradictory traits. Has several sides to his personality.
17. **Flat Character**—A character about whom only one personality trait is revealed
18. **Stereotype**—A flat character of a familiar and often-repeated type. Has no individuality.
19. **Dynamic Character**—A character who develops and changes in the course of a literary work
20. **Static Character**—A character who remains the same from the beginning to the end of a literary work
21. **Conflict**—A general term for the struggle between opposing forces
22. **External Conflict**—A conflict that occurs when a character struggles against some outside force, such as another character, nature, society, fate, etc.
23. **Internal Conflict**—A conflict that exists within the mind of a character who is torn between different courses of action
24. **Characterization**—A general term indicating the methods an author uses to reveal a character’s personality
25. **Direct Characterization**—Characterization in which the author or narrator makes a direct statement about a character’s personality
26. **Indirect Characterization**—Characterization in which the author or speaker reveals a character’s personality through the character’s own words, thoughts, and actions, and through the words, thoughts, and actions of the other characters
27. **Irony**—A general term indicating a contrast between appearance and reality
28. **Situational Irony**—Irony that occurs when the actual outcome is the opposite of what was expected
29. **Verbal Irony**—Irony that occurs when a person says one thing and means another
30. **Dramatic Irony**—Irony that occurs when the reader knows something that a character does not
31. **Point of View**—A general term referring to the relationship of the narrator to the story. Point from which the writer tells the story.
32. **First Person Point of View**—Point of view in which the narrator, referred to as “I,” is a character in the story
33. **Limited Third Person Point of View**—Point of view in which the narrator reveals the thoughts, feelings, and observations of only one character, referring to that character as “he” or “she”
34. **Third Person Omniscient Point of View**— An “all-knowing” narrator; the narrator is not a character in the story, but someone who stands outside the story and comments on the action
35. **Foreshadowing**—An author’s use of clues that hint at events that will occur later in the plot
36. **Narrator**—The person who tells a story; a speaker, character in the story, outside observer, or the author
37. **Blank Verse**—Unrhymed iambic pentameter
38. **Iambic Pentameter**— A rhythm pattern with five units, or feet, each of which has an unstressed syllable followed by a stressed syllable
39. **Metaphor**—A figure of speech that compares or equates two or more things that have something in common
40. **Simile**—A figure of speech using “like” or “as” to compare seemingly unlike things
41. **Onomatopoeia**—The use of a word or phrase that imitates or suggests the sound of what the word describes
42. **Hyperbole**—A figure of speech in which great exaggeration is used for emphasis or humorous effect

43. **Oxymoron**—A figure of speech that is a combination of seemingly contradictory words
44. **Assonance**—The repetition of similar vowel sounds within non-rhyming words, especially in a line of poetry
45. **Personification**—A figure of speech in which an animal, object, force of nature, or idea is given human qualities or characteristics
46. **Line**—In a poem, a word or a row of words that may or may not form a complete sentence
47. **Stanza**—In a poem, a group of lines forming a unit
48. **Speaker**—Similar to the narrator in a work of prose; the voice that communicates with the reader of a poem
49. **Allusion**—A reference in a work of literature to a character, place, or situation from another work of literature, art, music, or from history
50. **Ballad**—A song or poem that tells a story
51. **Lyric Poetry**—Poetry that expresses a speaker's personal thoughts and feelings
52. **Alliteration**—The repetition of consonant sounds at the beginnings of words
53. **Repetition**—A literary device in which sounds, words, phrases, lines, or stanzas are used more than once for emphasis in a poem or other literary work
54. **Haiku**—A Japanese form of poetry that has three lines and seventeen syllables
55. **Rhyme**—Words that sound alike; the repetition of the same stressed vowel sounds and any succeeding consonant sounds in two or more words
56. **Rhyme Scheme**—The pattern that end rhymes form in a stanza or poem
57. **Rhythm**—The pattern of sound created by the arrangement of stressed and unstressed syllables; its measurement is meter
58. **Figurative Language**—Language used for descriptive effect, often to imply idea indirectly
59. **Free Verse**—Poetry that has no fixed pattern or meter, rhyme, line length, or stanza arrangement
60. **Imagery**—The word pictures that writers use to help evoke an emotional response in readers
61. **Meter**—A regular pattern of stressed and unstressed syllables that gives a line of poetry a predictable rhythm
62. **Foot**—The basic unit of meter
63. **Parallelism**—The use of a series of words, phrases, or sentences that have similar grammatical form
64. **Tone**—A reflection of a writer's or speaker's attitude toward a subject of a poem, story, or other literary work
65. **Drama**—A story written to be performed by actors in front of an audience
66. **Farce**—A type of comedy that provokes laughter by placing one-dimensional (flat) characters in ridiculous situations
67. **Act**—A major division of a play
68. **Scene**—A subdivision of an act in a play
69. **Stage Directions**—In a play, written instructions that explain how characters should look, speak, move, and behave
70. **Aside**—In a play, a short comment made by a character that is heard by the audience or another character, but not by the other characters onstage
71. **Soliloquy**—A long speech delivered by a character who is alone on stage
72. **Monologue**—A long speech delivered by a character while other characters are onstage, expressing the character's thoughts and emotions
73. **Dialogue**—Conversation between/among characters in a play
74. **Tragedy**—A serious play in which a main character suffers a downfall
75. **Comedy**—A type of drama that deals with light and amusing subjects or with serious and profound subjects in a light, familiar, or satirical manner.
76. **Comic Relief**—A short, funny episode that interrupts an otherwise serious or tragic work of drama
77. **Foil**—A character who provides a strong contrast to another character
78. **Pun**—A humorous play on two or more meanings of the same word or on two different words with the same sound
79. **Analogy**—A comparison based on a similarity between things that are dissimilar.
80. **Symbol**—An object, person, place, or experience that represents something else; usually abstract in nature
81. **Epic**—A long narrative poem focusing on a great and serious subject as experienced through the actions of a heroic figure
82. **Epic Simile**—An extended comparison using "like" or "as" to compare two seemingly unlike things; also called a Homeric simile
83. **Flashback**—A literary device in which an earlier episode, conversation, or event is inserted into the chronological sequence of a narrative
84. **Hero**—The main character in a literary work; the character's character or deeds inspire the admiration of the reader
85. **Archetype**—an original model after which similar things are patterned.
86. **Legend**—A story handed down from the past through the oral tradition and commonly believed to be based on historical events and an actual hero
87. **Myth**—A traditional story of an anonymous origin that deals with goddesses, gods, heroes, and supernatural beings and events
88. **Oral Tradition**—Literature that passes from one generation to the next by word of mouth
89. **Anecdote**—A brief account of an interesting or humorous incident

90. **Autobiography**—The account of a person's life written by that person from the first person point of view
91. **Biography**—The account of a person's life written by someone other than the subject
92. **Connotation**—The unspoken or unwritten meanings associated with a word beyond its dictionary definition
93. **Denotation**—The literal or dictionary definition of a word
94. **Dialect**—A variation of a standard language spoken by a group of people, often within a particular geographical region
95. **Fable**—A short, usually simple tale that demonstrates a moral and sometimes uses animal characters
96. **Moral**—A practical lesson about right and wrong conduct; similar to theme
97. **Parable**—A simple story pointing to a moral or religious lesson
98. **Parody**—A literary or musical work that imitates the style of some other work in a satirical or humorous way