

Know the full meaning, use, and spelling of each term below. These terms apply to the short stories, novels, and plays we will read throughout the year, so please **KEEP THIS LIST** after the test.

**PLOT:** The actions and events in a literary work that “tell” the story or play and enable the story/play to unfold – the plan or arrangement of a story’s events.

**PROTAGONIST:** The pivotal character, the one who takes the lead in the story or play, strives toward a goal, struggles with some problem, and moves the story/play forward.

**ANTAGONIST:** The character or force opposing the protagonist, whose will is as strong as the protagonist’s, and who attempts to stop the protagonist from reaching his goal. The protagonist’s adversary or opponent.

**FORESHADOWING:** Supplying or “planting” clues or hints in the early parts of a literary work which will make some later action credible and understandable.

**RISING ACTION:** The complications that lead up to the climax of the story or play.

**CLIMAX:** The highest point in the story or play. The culminating of the action and the moment of the most intense strain, anxiety, or suspense – a turning point that usually arrives late in the story or play.

**DENOUEMENT:** The end of the story or play with the solution or resolution of the problems (or, in a tragedy, the catastrophe) The denouement restores order to the story or play, unifies and completes the course of action after the climax. The denouement is also known as the “falling action”.

**SUSPENSE:** The tension or excitement felt by the reader as they become involved in the story or play – the reader’s building eagerness and curiosity to know “what will happen” by the end of the story or play.

**IRONY:** Irony is a contrast between the expected and the reality. Situational irony occurs when an event takes place that turns out to be the opposite of that one expects – when the outcome is in contrast to one’s reasonable expectations. (It was ironic that the fireboat burned and sank.) Verbal irony is saying one thing but meaning the opposite, as in sarcasm. Dramatic irony- audience knows something actor doesn’t.

**DIALOGUE:** The talk or “discussion” between characters that reveals the action and conflict of the story/play. Dialogue is the words spoken by characters.

**CHARACTERIZATION:** The techniques used by the writer to develop characters and make them believable. The four methods of characterization are:

- a) Through the writer’s physical description and name of the character
- b) Through a character’s own words, thoughts, feelings, or actions
- c) Through the words, thoughts, feelings, or actions of other characters
- d) Through the narrator’s direct comments “telling” about the character

**SETTING:** The time and place of the story or play; the specific or general time (day/ season/ year/ time period) as well as the place (room/ residence/city/country, etc) of the story's action. (often, the time and place setting is not directly stated for the reader, but must be inferred from the story, based on the characters' activities, clothing, language, and ect.)

**POINT OF VIEW:** The narrative method or kind of narrator used in a literary work. With a first-person point of view the narrator is a character who tells the story in his/her own words. In the third-person point of view, the story is told by a narrative voice outside the story, not by one of the characters. A third person point of view is either objective (limited to what an outsider might see and hear) or omniscient (all-knowing, able to see into the character's mind and heart.) the way the reader views the story is usually directly influenced by the author's choice for point of view.

**SYMBOL:** A person, place, or thing that represents or "stands for" something else. Symbolic items have a significance or meaning beyond their usual, literal sense, such as a heart to represent love or a flag to represent patriotism.

**CONFLICT:** The struggle between two opposing forces. Typical conflicts include the external: Man versus Man; Man versus Nature; Man versus Society and the internal: Man versus Himself.

**IMAGERY:** Words and phrases that create sensory experiences for the reader/viewer. Sensory images appeal to one or more of the five senses: sight, hearing, smell, taste, and feel.

**DICTION:** The language of the story or play, the actual words or vocabulary selected by the author. The specific choice of words and level of diction affect the story/play. Diction could be formal or informal, colloquial (slang), regional, technical, ect.

**FLASHBACK:** An event, experience, or conversation from the past that interrupts the present in the story or play's chronology, usually providing the reader/audience with useful information about the present situation (of plot or character)

**MOOD:** The atmosphere or feeling that a writer creates for the reader/audience. A work's mood could be exciting, mysterious, depressing, dreamlike, humorous, threatening, ect. Mood is the overall sensation or impression that comes fro the author's diction (word choice).

**THEME:** The message or "moral" of the story or play – the central idea or "lesson" the work has to teach. Theme is not the work's subject matter, but is an essential message that can be honed down to one sentence; it has no mention of character or events, but is the "message" the author wants you the reader to take away with you, after completing the story. (Most stories and plays have more than one valid theme.)

