

Literary Terms for Literature Groups Unit: KEY

Literary Terms	Definitions
Protagonist	the central character in a literary work; the action usually revolves around the protagonist, who undergoes the main conflict (the good guy)
Antagonist	a person or force that opposes the protagonist, or central character, in a literary work (the bad guy)
Plot	describes the structure of a story; it shows the sequence of events and actions within a story
Exposition	the beginning of the story, the situation before the action starts
Rising Action	the series of conflicts and crisis in the story that lead to the climax
Climax	the turning point, the most intense moment—either mentally or in action
Falling Action	all of the action which follows the climax and leads up to the resolution
Resolution	the conclusion, the tying together of all of the ends
Conflict	the dramatic struggle between two forces in a story. Without conflict, there is no plot
Internal Conflict	conflict that exists within the mind of a character who is torn between opposing feelings or goals
External Conflict	conflict that exists when a character struggles against some outside force- exs. another person, society, nature, or fate
Character vs. Character	This type of conflict finds the main character in conflict with another character, human or not human
Character vs. Nature	This type of conflict finds the main character in conflict with the forces of nature, which serve as the antagonist
Character vs. Society	This type of conflict has the main character in conflict with a larger group: a community, society, culture, etc.
Character vs. Self	In this type of conflict, the main character experiences some kind of inner conflict
Mood	the emotions, or emotional quality, that the reader feels while reading.
Tone	the attitude that the author takes toward the audience, subject, or characters
Style	the specific way an author expresses himself or herself; it is an author's use of language within the writing; can be formal or informal, depending on the audience and purpose
Author's Purpose	the intention of the writer; the purpose may be to entertain, describe, explain, persuade, or a combination of these purposes
Character Motivation	the reasons that a character makes a decision or acts; central to the plot
Irony	a contrast between reality and what seems to be real; different types: situational and verbal