

H.O. Short Story: Literary Terms & Devices

LITERARY ELEMENTS:	the basic items that make up a work of literature
LITERARY DEVICES:	literary techniques and methods employed to help the author get his or her point across. Not all literary devices will be used within one work.

ABSTRACTION:	a term that is applied to ideas that are philosophical and emotional, not concrete or tangible, yet the idea comes from experience. Examples: truth, liberty, freedom
ALLEGORY:	a story in which the characters and their actions represent general truths about human conduct. The characters in an allegory often represent abstract concepts, such as faith, innocence, or evil.
ALLITERATION:	the repetition of the same consonant sound at the beginning of words in a sentence or a line of poetry. Example: <i>thundering thoughts wing wildly</i>
ALLUSION:	a reference to a well-known fictional, mythological, or historical person, place, or event, outside the story. Allusions enrich a story by suggesting similarities to comparable circumstances in another time or place; complex ideas are brought to the readers' minds simply and easily. Example: the warrior had Olympian strength - Mt. Olympus is the home of the Gods in Greek Mythology

AMBIGUITY:	either a faulty, unclear expression, or a poetic device which deliberately uses a word or expression to indicate two or more distinct references, attitudes or feelings. The word has both connotations (secondary or associated significance) and denotations (primary definition or reference).
ANALOGY:	exploring a topic by explaining it in terms of another seemingly unlike but more commonplace and less complicated object, or experience. Analogy extends a metaphor . Example: sound waves are compared to concentric ripples being created when a stone is dropped in the still water of a pond
ANTAGONIST:	the character or force in opposition to the protagonist . Example: "The Joker" in Batman
ANTITHESIS:	strong contrast shown through the juxtaposition of opposing words, phrases, clauses, sentences, or ideas. Example: "Every sweet has its sour [...]"
APOSTROPHE:	the speaker is addressing an absent person or the dead, or an inanimate object, as if present. Example: O, beautiful rose! Thou art lovely!
ASIDE:	a remark made by one character in the presence of others, but assumed not to be heard by them (sometimes said directly to the audience).
ASSERTION:	a statement that is debatable, as opposed to fact. Sometimes it is explicitly stated while sometimes it is implicit .
ASSONANCE:	the repetition of similar stressed vowel sounds within words in nearby sentences or words. Example: the birds were hooting in the woodland

CHARACTERIZATION:	<p>the act of creating and developing a character. The development of a character can be done in several different ways such as through what the character says and does, and through what other characters say about him. Technically, it is done in two ways:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Direct Characterization states character traits outright. 2. Indirect Characterization reveals character traits through what the character thinks, says, does, description of appearance or by other characters' thoughts, actions, and statements.
CLICHÉ:	<p>a strikingly worded expression that is worn out from too much use. Example: two peas in a pod</p>
COMPARISON:	<p>an examination designed to expose similarities between two objects or ideas.</p>
CONCRETE TERMS:	<p>terms that represent, or try to evoke images or experiences of specific, tangible objects or entities. Concrete terms are usually thought of as opposed to abstractions or generalizations. Example: science attempts to describe things in concrete terms</p>
CONFLICT:	<p>a struggle between opposing forces that causes the action of the story.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. External conflicts have outside action such as man against man, man against nature, man against fate. 2. Internal conflicts occur inside the character's mind, such as man against himself or man against society. <p>Example: Joe the bank robber is having an external conflict with his partner Dave who wants more money while also having an internal conflict with himself about having to kill his lifelong friend Dave for his greed.</p>
CONNOTATION:	<p>the emotional associations that surround a word that go beyond its narrow, literal meaning. Example: the words "solo" and "alone" both mean to be by oneself. However, "solo" connotes independence and choice where "alone" connotes loneliness and isolation</p>

CONTRAST:	a device where two objects or ideas are put in opposition to one another to show or emphasize the differences between them. Example: Felix and Oscar of <u>The Odd Couple</u>
DENOTATION:	the literal, straightforward dictionary definition of a word that comes closest to the actuality for which the word stands.
DICTION:	word choice. Good diction is the careful selection of words to communicate a particular subject to a specific audience. Different types of diction include <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • formal: used in scholarly books and articles. • informal: used in essays in popular magazines. • colloquial: conversations between friends, including newly coined words and expressions. • slang: language shared by certain social groups. • dialect: language typical of a certain region, race, location, or social group that exhibits itself through unique word choice, pronunciation, and/or grammatical usage. • technical: words that make up the basic vocabulary of a specific area of study. Examples: legal or medical terms. • obsolete: words no longer in use.
DIDACTIC:	written specifically to teach or instruct the reader. Example: "The Tortoise and the Hare"
DYNAMIC CHARACTER:	a character who grows and changes as a result of the plot. Dynamic characters are usually protagonists .
EXPLICIT:	clear, precise, definitely stated, plain to see. A good writer who uses explicit nouns and verbs will not have to rely too heavily on adjectives and adverbs.
FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE:	language that uses nonliteral figures of speech (such as simile , hyperbole , and metaphor) to convey an idea in an imaginative way.
FLAT CHARACTER:	an undeveloped, simple character who shows only one personality trait. Example: Peter Pan is a flat character because his refusal to grow up is the only trait that is shown.

FLASHBACK:	a dramatic device where the author interrupts the main action of a story to present an incident that occurred at an earlier time.
FOIL:	a character with good qualities that contrasts the qualities of another character. Example: There is one character is a responsible person and another character is a very irresponsible person.
FORESHADOWING:	the hint in a narrative that lead to reader to anticipate and speculate about later events, developments, or situations, helping create suspense. Example: The title "Before the End of the Summer" foreshadows that something important will happen before the end of summer.
GENERALIZATION:	the abstraction of a general idea, principle, or pattern from the observation of particular objects, events, or experiences. A statement that is broad enough to cover or describe characteristics that are common to a variety of particular objects, events, or experiences. Example: We generalize that a person is honest if, under a variety of specific circumstances and temptations, he or she behaves in an honorable manner.
HUMOR:	a conjunction of incongruous (opposite) situations or images in a surprising manner that evokes amusement. Humor may range from lighthearted and harmless to critical and sarcastic. Pure humor, however, does not contain criticism and solely comes from the amusing surprises of its incongruities. Deadpan Humor: a purposely flat delivery of humor with no expression of amusement in the tone .
HYPERBOLE:	deliberate exaggeration used to produce heightened dramatic effects or humorous or ironic effects. Example: I waited forever by the phone.

IMAGERY:	<p>the use of words to produce mental images of specific sensory experiences (olfactory [smell], gustatory [taste], tactile [touch], visual, auditory [hearing], emotional).</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Literal Imagery (factual imagery) tries directly to evoke accurate images of actual objects or experiences. 2. Imaginative Imagery uses figurative language to create vivid imaginary images, in order by indirection to evoke and enhance images of actual objects or experiences.
IMPLICIT:	suggested or understood without being directly stated. To imply is to suggest rather than to state. An incident can imply an idea that would otherwise have to be stated.
INFERENCE:	an arrived at understanding or conclusion through deduction from evidence. (see organization) One infers from that which is implied or implicit.
IRONY:	<p>a term for situations and for written and spoken observations that suggest some sort of incongruity (discrepancy) between appearance and reality. There are three basic forms of irony:</p> <p>Verbal Irony: when the speaker means the opposite of what he or she literally says Example: to say "thanks" to someone who embarrassed you.</p> <p>Situational Irony: situations in which there is a discrepancy (an incongruity, an opposition) between what the reader expects or presumes to be appropriate and what actually occurs. Example: the shoemaker's children had no shoes.</p> <p>Dramatic Irony:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) a situation in which a character, or narrator, unconsciously reveals to the characters and to the audience or reader some knowledge contrary to the impression he or she wishes to make. 2) a situation in which the character, or narrator, acts and reacts in ignorance of some vital, external, contrary knowledge held by one or more of the other characters and by the audience or reader.
JUXTAPOSITION:	side by side placement of sentences or ideas to bring about a desired effect.

METAPHOR:	<p>a figure of speech in which something is identified with something else, showing the common qualities of both.</p> <p>Direct Metaphors: explicitly state that one thing is another. Example: "life is but a dream" - life is a rapidly changing fantasy, a sort of unreality</p> <p>Indirect Metaphors: the comparison is implicit. Example: Juliet describes the fading stars at dawn by saying, "Night's candles have burnt out," equating stars with burning candles.</p> <p>Extended Metaphors: sustain the comparison for several lines or throughout the entire work Example: President Lyndon B. Johnson's inaugural address pictured America as "the uncrossed desert and the unclimbed ridge...the star that is not reached and the harvest that's sleeping in the unplowed ground."</p>
METER:	<p>the regular pattern of accented and unaccented syllables. The line is divided into a number of feet.</p> <p>iambic: style of poetic feet that has one unaccented syllable followed by an accented syllable.</p> <p>iambic Pentameter: most common in English verse. It is five (penta) feet (meters) of one unaccented syllable followed by an accented syllable. Example: "Bűt sóft! Whăt líght thröugh yónděr wíndöw bréaks?"</p> <p>Blank Verse: unrhymed iambic pentameter. Example: Much of Shakespeare's writing is written in blank verse.</p> <p>Free Verse: poetry without a fixed meter</p>
METONYMY:	<p>literally means "name change." A figure of speech in which a word referring to one attribute of something is used to signify the whole of the thing.</p> <p>Examples: "the crown" is used to signify "the monarchy" "he's taken to the bottle" means "he's taken to drinking."</p>

MOOD:	<p>(sometimes referred to as Atmosphere) the emotional atmosphere experienced by the reader of a literary work. Mood is often suggested by the writer's choice of words, by the events in the work, or by the physical setting.</p> <p>Example: The mood of most horror films is eerie.</p>
MOTIF:	<p>a recurring idea that is woven like a design into a fabric of a literary work. It differs from a theme in that it is a concrete example of a theme.</p> <p>Example: a motif of birds (such as birds flying high, a boat named <i>The Lark</i>, the eagle a character sees in the mountains) underscore the theme of freedom.</p>
OBJECTIVE:	<p>impersonal; free from the author's feelings, attitudes & prejudices.</p>
ONOMATOPOEIA:	<p>(also known as Echoic) use of words that imitate the sound they describe.</p> <p>Examples: "zip" "buzz"</p>
ORGANIZATION:	<p>refers to the order in which a writer chooses to present his or her ideas to the reader. Five main types of organization may be used to develop paragraphs or essays:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deductive: begins with a general assertion and then presents specific details and examples in support of the generalization. • Inductive: begins with a number of examples and then concluding with a general truth or principle. • Chronological: arranged according to time sequence. • Spatial: begins at one geographical point and moves onward in an orderly fashion. Example: describe the front yard, then the entry hall, then the kitchen, etc. • Climactic: organizing ideas from one extreme to another. Example: from most dangerous to least dangerous

OXYMORON:	a figure of speech that infuses two contradictory or opposing ideas to make perfect sense. Example: "pretty ugly"
PARADOX:	a self-contradictory statement that may state a truth. Example: "The way to be safe is never to be secure."
PARALLEL CONSTRUCTION:	the expression of sequential or related thoughts using the same syntactical (grammatical) form. The principles of parallelism may be applied to words, phrases, clauses, sentences, paragraphs, and still larger units. Examples: "government of the people, for the people, by the people" "We talked, laughed, cried, shared."
PERSONIFICATION:	giving human characteristics to inanimate objects or ideas. Example: The sun smiled on our picnic.
PERSUASION:	type of writing (rhetoric) whose main purpose is to convince the audience to think, act, or feel a certain way. It involves appealing to reason (logos), to emotion (pathos), and/or to a sense of ethics (ethos).
PLOT:	the series of events or episodes that make up the action of a story. It can be broken into the following parts: Exposition: introduces setting, characters, basic situation Inciting Incident: introduces central conflict Rising Action: the complication of the action; action gains interest and force as opposing groups come into conflict Climax: highest point of emotional tension/suspense in the story Resolution: also called Falling Action--conflict is ended Dénouement: ties up loose ends after the resolution of the conflict
POINT OF VIEW:	the perspective, the vantage point from which the story is told. 1st person p.o.v.: character within tells the story (uses "I") 3rd person point of view: voice outside of the story tells the story Limited 3rd person: narrator knows only one character's internal state Omniscient 3rd person: narrator knows all the characters' internal states

POST HOC:	Latin for “after this,” a faulty conclusion based on poor reasoning where cause and effect is confused with chronology. Example: Just because Irving wakes up before the sun rises doesn’t mean that the sun rises because Irving wakes up.
PROTAGONIST:	usually the central or leading character; the opposing force in the conflict most responsible for bringing the conflict to an end.
PUN:	a play on words that are similar in sound but have different meanings, usually providing a humorous effect. Example: Smart fish swim in schools.
REPETITION:	the use of any element, such as a sound, word, clause, phrase or sentence more than once.
RHYTHM:	the patterns of sounds and pauses that are a feature of poetry, prose, and ordinary speech.
ROUND CHARACTER:	a character who shows varied traits, such as popularity and loneliness. They are complex and are more like real people than flat characters .
SARCASM:	a cutting remark, written or spoken, designed to make fun of, or hurt, its object. Sarcasm often employs irony and may be considered humorous .
SATIRE:	a humorous or witty method of criticizing characteristics and institutions of human society. Its purpose is to correct as well as to expose and ridicule; therefore, it is not purely destructive.
SETTING:	the time & place of a literary work. This can include the social, political, economic, and cultural environment as well.
SIMILE:	a nonliteral comparison between two unlike things, usually connected by the words "like," "as," or "seems." Example: "My love is like a red, red rose."
STATIC CHARACTER:	a character who remains constant in his or her beliefs, attitudes, behaviors, personality.
SUBJECTIVE:	personal; closely connected to an author's feelings, attitudes, prejudices, and personal reactions.
SUBPLOT:	a minor complication running through a story. The secondary plot has a direct relationship to the main plot contributing to its interest, complication, and struggle. Example: the television program <u>E.R.</u>

SYMBOL:	a specific object, incident, or person intended to represent some abstract idea. Example: a wedding ring symbolizes two people's unending love
SYNECDOCHE:	a form of metonymy in which a part is made to stand for the whole or a whole for the part. Example: The U.S. won three gold medals. (Instead of, The members of the U.S. boxing team won three gold medals.)
THEME:	the major underlying idea in a specific literary work.
THESIS:	the principal focus of an essay. It is usually phrased in the form of a question to be answered, a problem to be solved, or an assertion to be argued. An essay's thesis is its umbrella statement, the assertion at the highest level of generality under which all the essay's assertions fit.
TONE:	<p>the emotional attitude (usually of the author, speaker, or narrator) expressed toward his readers and his subject; his mood or moral view. A writer can be formal, informal, playful, ironic, and especially, optimistic or pessimistic. The readers' perception of tone is not always reliable because of the biases we may have and because the author may be disguising his or her real attitudes.</p> <p>Below are some adjectives to help you identify the tone of a passage:</p> <p>Admiring Advisory Affectionate Alarmed Amused Apprehensive Argumentative Arrogant Awed Awestruck Bewildered Bitter Boastful Candid Cautionary Challenging Concerned Critical Cynical Defensive Despairing Disappointed Eerie Friendly Fearful Frightening Gloomy Grateful Haughty Hopeful Humorous Indifferent Informed Instructive Intense Joyful Knowledgeable Melancholic Mocking Mysterious Nonchalant Nostalgic Objective Outraged Peaceful Reflective Resigned Satirical Sentimental Skeptical Surprised Suspenseful Thoughtful Understanding Urgent Wistful Wondering</p>
TRAGEDY:	a form of literature that depicts the downfall of the leading character whose life, despite its tragic end, represents something significant. The leading character (known as the tragic hero), suffers from what Aristotle called " hamartia ," a mistake in judgement on the part of the hero, frequently translated as " tragic flaw ." Reversal is the sudden downturn of events that occurs, and discovery is the revelation to the hero of an important fact.

UNDERSTATEMENT:	the representation of something as less than it really is, for ironic effect. Example: The government needs to address the small problem of poverty.
VERISIMILITUDE:	the quality in a story that would cause a reader to either believe that the story is true or could be true because it has the semblance of reality.