



**Literary  
Element  
AND Definition  
Cards**

**FOR USE AS CLASSROOM  
Labels/DECORATION**

# Simile

COMPARING TWO THINGS  
USING "like" OR "as."

WALKS like a DUCK  
AS STRONG AS AN OX

# Metaphor

COMPARING TWO THINGS  
WITHOUT USING

"like" or "as."

He is a walking encyclopedia

## Direct Metaphor

Comparison is  
clearly and explicitly expressed.

## Implied Metaphor

Doesn't tell the reader  
directly that one thing is another

## Extended

## Metaphor

a metaphor developed  
over several lines of writing.

"The ROAD NOT Taken" (two roads as life choices)

"ROMEO and JULIET" (JULIET as the sun)

## MIXED METAPHOR

COMBINING TWO OR MORE SEPARATE  
METAPHORS (Cliches)

TO MAKE A NEW METAPHOR

THAT NOW HAS A DIFFERENT MEANING.

"SO NOW WHAT WE ARE DEALING WITH IS THE RUBBER  
MEETING THE ROAD, AND INSTEAD OF BITING THE BULLET  
ON THESE ISSUES, WE JUST WANT TO PUNT."

(CHICAGO TRIBUNE,

CITED BY *THE NEW YORKER*, AUGUST 13, 2007)

## PERSONIFICATION

WHEN **NONHUMAN** THINGS  
ARE GIVEN

human qualities.

# HYPERBOLE

AN exaggeration used  
to express strong emotion or  
to create a comedic effect.

EX. ...a thousand times goodnight

# PUN

A play on the multiple meanings  
of one or two words that sound

alike but have different meanings  
ex. the bicycle was two tired  
Santa's helpers are subordinate clauses

# ONOMATOPOEIA

A word whose sound imitates  
or suggests its meaning

ex. buzz, pop, hum

# Alliteration

The repetition of the same  
or similar consonant sounds  
in words close together.

EX. COURAGEOUS CAPTAIN OF COMPLIMENTS

# ASSONANCE

THE REPETITION OF SIMILAR  
VOWEL SOUNDS IN  
WORDS CLOSE TOGETHER.

EX. LONG SONG

# IDIOM

AN EXPRESSION THAT MEANS  
SOMETHING DIFFERENT FROM

its literal meaning

# PARADOX

A statement or situation  
that seems to be a  
contradiction but reveals  
a truth

# OXYMORON

When opposite ideas  
are combined.  
(+ -)



EX. new tradition, holy crap

# Allusion

a figure of speech where the author refers to another place, event, or literary work by way of a passing reference. It is up to the reader to make a connection to the subject being mentioned.

# Allegory

a symbolism device where the meaning of a greater, abstract, concept is conveyed with the aid of a more

corporeal object or idea used as an example.  
It suggests a meaning  
via metaphoric examples.

# POINT OF VIEW

the viewpoint from  
which the story is told.

1<sup>st</sup> person point of view:

a character WITHIN the story tells the story.

3<sup>rd</sup> person limited point of view:

a character NOT IN the story tells the story, and the  
reader sees the thoughts of ONE character.

3<sup>rd</sup> person omniscient point of view:

a character NOT IN the story tells the story, and the  
reader sees the thoughts of MORE THAN ONE character.

# CONFLICT

a struggle between opposing forces.

internal conflict:  
a struggle within

oneself, one's mind, one's heart.  
external conflict:

a struggle between outside forces,

# Irony

the difference between appearance and reality.

Situational irony:

reader and characters are surprised by the  
outcome/actions.

Dramatic irony:

reader knows more than characters know.

Verbal irony:

opposite of what is meant is said.

# MOOD

the feeling or atmosphere  
the author creates in a story.

# FLASHBACK

a literary device in which an earlier episode, conversation, or event is inserted into the chronological sequence of a narrative.

# TONE

the reflection of the writer's or speaker's attitude towards his subject, communicated through words and details that express a particular emotion/opinion; the attitude of the author, evident from the diction, use of symbolism, irony, and figures of speech.

(can be described as playful, sad, happy, humorous, etc.)

## **Direct Characterization**

the author or narrator makes direct statements about a character's traits.

## **Indirect Characterization**

the author or narrator reveals a character's traits through his or her actions and speech.

# **FORESHADOWING**

the use of clues to hint  
at future events in a  
story.

# Theme

the main idea or message of a literary  
work.

A theme is NOT the subject of the work,  
but an insight about life or human nature +  
that can be applied to  
the story, other stories, real life, etc.

# Protagonist

the central character in a

literary work around whom  
the main conflict revolves.

# Antagonist

a person or force in  
society or nature  
that opposes the protagonist  
in a literary work.

# SYMBOL

an image with significance  
beyond literal definition;

Point of View

Theme

Irony

Flashback

Antagonist

Protagonist

Conflict

Plot

Setting

Short Stories

Novels

Author

Poet

Novelist

Playwright



Plot Outline  
Exposition  
Rising Action  
Climax  
Falling Action  
Resolution

Drama  
Aside  
Soliloquy  
Monologue  
Stage Directions

Stanza  
Line  
Prose  
Poetry