Literary Terms

Allusion All	Literary Term	Definition/ Example
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Fiction	Made up; not real
Figure of Speech	A word or phrase that describes one thing in terms of another and is not meant to be taken literally. ex: "Falling in love" "Racking our brains"
Flashback	Interruption in the present action of a plot to show events that happened at an earlier time. Ex: In Anne Frank, the play starts off in November 1954 and then goes to July 1942 when the Franks and Van Daans go into hiding.
Foreshadowing	The use of hints or clues in a story to suggest what action is to come; hints by the author of what is the happen in the story. Ex: In "Flowers for Algernon" Algernon starts to lose his intelligence, foreshadowing that Charlie will also lose his intelligence.
Free Verse	Poetry without a regular meter or rhyme scheme.
Headline	The title of an article in a newspaper, magazine, or website. It's usually in larger font than the rest of the text.
Historical Fiction	Fiction (fake) story set in a REAL historical period ex: Soldier's Heart, Boy in the Striped Pajamas
Humor	Amusing elements of a text that maintain the reader's interest ex: "Turd Kind" (which is also an allusion) "C-R-E-T-I-N"
Hyperbole	An exaggeration ex: "I'm so hungry; I'm STARVING!" "It's so cold; I'm freezing."
ldiom	Expressions that mean something different from the literal meaning ex: "Break a leg" (good luck) "In a pickle" (in trouble)
Imagery	Descriptive words and phrases that appeal to one or more of the reader's five senses (sight, taste, smell, hearing, touch).
Inference	A guess about the text based on evidence and prior knowledge. ex: "Dear departed daughter" We realize, in <u>Freak the Mighty</u> , that Max's mother is dead because of this line.
Irony	A contrast between expectation and reality. • Verbal: A contrast between what is said or written and what is really meant. • Situational: What happens is very different from what was expected to happen. • Dramatic: When the reader or audience knows something a character does not.
Legend	A story of extraordinary deeds passed down from generation to generation. ex: King Arthur, Robin Hood
Limerick	A five line poem that is humorous or nonsensical
Literal Language	Language that conveys the exact meaning of what is being said.
Lyric Poem	A poem that expresses the feelings or thoughts of a speaker rather than telling a story.
Metamorphosis	A miraculous change from one shape or form to another.
Metaphor	An imaginative comparison between two unlike things in which one thing is said to be another thing. ex: The clouds are cotton balls in the sky.
Mood	The way the author wants you to feel when reading the work.
Motif	Any recurring element that has symbolic significance. Any object or idea that repeats itself throughout a literary work. ex: In Freak the Mighty: the constant reference to King Arthur
Myth	A story that explains something about the world and typically involves gods or supernatural forces. ex: Hercules, Medusa
Narrative	Writing that tells a story.
Narrative Poem	A poem that tells a story.
Narrator	The person telling the story.
Onomatopoeia	The use of words whose sounds imitate or suggest their meaning. ex: Buzz, Rustle, Boom, Tick Tock, Tweet
Oxymoron	A combination of two opposite or contradictory terms ex: jumbo shrimp; icy hot; genuine imitation

Personification	An object or animal is given human feelings, thoughts, behaviors or attitudes. Ex: The first rays of morning tiptoed through the meadow.
Playwright	The author of a play.
Plot	The series of events that make up a story. • Exposition (Introduction): tells what the conflict is and us who the characters are. • Initial Incident: the first real action of the story; comes right before a complication, thus it can not be the complication. • Rising Action: The events leading to the climax • Complicating Incident: a series of difficulties forming the central action in a narrative; these take place DURING the rising action • Climax: The turning point; the most exciting moment in the story. • Falling Action: The solving of the conflict • Resolution/ Denouement: When the conflict is resolved and the story ends.
Point-of-View	 The vantage point from which a story is told; who is telling the story First Person: The narrator is in the story. We only know, see, and feel what this character knows, sees, and feels. Second Person: When a story is narrated using the pronoun you (this is rarely used) Third Person Limited: The narrator is NOT in the story. The reader observes the actions through the eyes of only one character. The reader only knows one character's thoughts and feelings. Third Person Omniscient: The narrator is not in the story, but knows everything about all of the characters and problems, knows what all the characters are thinking and feeling.
Protagonist	Main character in the story. The conflict revolves around the protagonist. The protagonist struggles against the antagonist (the character/situation that opposes him/her). <i>ex: Dorothy in The Wizard of Oz</i>
Proverb	A short, popular saying that expresses some obvious truth. ex: "A friend is to be taken with his faults"- Portuguese
Pun	A humorous use of a word where it can have different meanings. ex: The shortest "knight" of the year.
Rhyme Scheme	A map of the rhymes in a poem. The first line in a poem is always labeled "A." Each line that rhymes with that first line is also labeled "A." Every time a line has a new rhyme, it is labeled with a new letter of the alphabet. ex: ABAB, AABB, ABBA
Setting	The time <i>AND</i> place of a story.
Simile	A comparison between two unlike things using the words like or as . ex: "She is as sweet as candy."
Stanza	"Paragraphs" in poetry.
Stereotype	A fixed idea about the members of a particular group of people that does not allow for any individuality.
Suspense	The uncertainty or anxiety a reader feels about what will happen next in a story, novel, or drama.
Symbol	A person, place, thing, or even that has meaning in itself and stands for something beyond itself as well. ex: Red= Anger, Apple= Teacher/Fall/Health, Sunshine=happy, US Flag= freedom, justice
Syntax	The order of words; sentence structure
Tall Tale	An exaggerated, far-fetched story that is obviously false, but is told as though it should be believed. ex: Johnny Appleseed
Text Structure	The way in which a piece of writing is put together (sequence/chronological, cause/effect, problem/solution, description, compare/contrast)
Theme	The lesson or moral in the story. The "Take Home Message"
Tone	The author's attitude towards his/her subject, characters, and audience. Sometimes called author's perspective or point-of-view. *Think Tone of Voice*
Tragedy	A play, novel, or other narrative in which the main character comes to an unhappy end.