Literary Terms and Techniques

**Literary Terms**

* Metaphor:
  + a comparison of 2 things that are not alike.
  + Ex. I am a sailboat. Tossing to and fro.
* Simile:
  + a comparison using “like” or “as”.
  + Ex. Life is like a box of chocolates.
* Personification:
  + when objects, ideas or animals are given human qualities
  + The wind screamed like a newborn baby.
* Alliteration:
  + a repetition of the same first sound
  + terrific tale, super storm
* Assonance:
  + the repetition of similar vowel sounds within consecutive words
  + Through the blue sky
* Consonance:
  + The repetition of similar consonant sounds within consecutive words
  + Take this stick
* Rhyme scheme
  + Duh
* Onomatopoeia:
  + Using sounds words, such as “woof” and “roar”
* Antithesis:
  + An opposition or contrast of ideas
  + Ex. Setting foot on the moon may be a small step for a man but a giant step for mankind
* Ambiguity:
  + Vague in context and difficult to interpret
* Understatement:
  + Restraint or lack of emphasis in expression
* Hyperbole:

Exaggeration

Ex. I’ve told you a million times

* Irony:
  + Occurs when a statement or situation means something different from what is expected.
* Dramatic Irony:
  + Reader or audience sees a character’s mistakes or misunderstandings, but the character does not
* Verbal Irony:
  + The writer says one thing, but means another
* Situational Irony:
  + When there is a great difference between what is expected and what happens
* Mood
  + The overall feeling
* Tone
  + The author’s “tone of voice”; the author’s own attitude toward his or her characters, setting, conflict, etc
* Sarcasm
  + Use of praise to ridicule someone
* Satire
  + Literary tone used to ridicule human weakness or vice, often to make change or improvement
* Universal theme
  + What is the central message? What are you supposed to get from the piece of literature?
* Symbolism
  + When an object is representative of an abstract idea or concept

Parts of stories:

* Plot
  + The events that happen in a piece of writing
* Point of view
  + First (I) or Third Person (He, She, Bob)
  + Limited (they know some things) or Omniscient (they know everything)
* Stream of consciousness
  + Most personal point of view, the character’s actual thoughts and feelings
* Setting
  + Time and place
* Conflict
  + Internal
    - Man v. himself
  + External
    - Man v. Man
    - Man v. Society
    - Man v. Nature
* Complication/Crisis
* Climax
  + Highest point in action
* Resolution
  + conclusion

**Short Story Techniques:**

**Antagonist:**

Counterpart to the main character and source of a story’s main conflict.

**Protagonist:** The main character in a story, the one with whom the reader is meant to identify. The person is not necessarily “good” by any conventional moral standard, but he/she is the person in whose plight the reader is most invested.

**Dialogue**

A literary composition in the form of a conversation between two people Ex. "he has read Plato's Dialogues in the original Greek".

**Surprise Ending**

A conclusion that violates the expectations of the reader but in a way that is both logical and believable.

**Suspense**

Uncertainty or anxiety the reader feels about what is going to happen next in a story.

**Foil:**

A character who is meant to represent characteristics, values, ideas, etc. which are directly and diametrically opposed to those of another character, usually the protagonist.

**Foreshadowing**

The use of hints and clues to suggest what will happen later in a plot.

**Flashback**

A flashback is an interruption in the chronological sequence of events in the plot. It narrates a scene that occurred earlier.

**Theme**

The main idea or meaning of a text. Often, this is an insight about human life revealed in a literary work; central idea of a work of literature.

**Style**

A way of expressing something (in language or art or music etc.) that is characteristic of a particular person or group of people or period; Ex. "all the reporters were expected to adopt the style of the newspaper."

**Tragic flaw**

The single characteristic (usually negative) or personality disorder which causes the downfall of the protagonist.