Literature Course

**Literature matters**

escapist:

* shallow characters, unvarying plots
* pure escape from everyday life
* author motivated by desire to make money
* reaffirms our views

imaginative:

* complex characters, innovative plots
* deeper meanings
* author motivated by creative expression
* challenges and broadens our views

**Title**

* Titles state a story’s theme, they reinforce a work’s central ideas
* Point to a key aspect of a story, emphasis to draw attention to a key concept
* Highlight a story’s irony , meaning the opposite of what is stated or suggested

**Setting**

* Location, where the events in a story take place
* Time, when the events of the story take place
* Culture, reflecting the social milieu in which the charaters act out of the events of the story including
* Religious values
* Social mores
* Political beliefs
* Philosophical outlook
* Physical surroundings, the outward environment or physical landmarks surrounding the events of a story

Purpose of setting is to establish three basic elements

* Mood , an atmosphere readers almost feel
* Motivation, characters and their actions can be influenced by the choice of setting
* Theme, (central ideas of a story) often **reflected** in a work’s setting

**Plot**

Classic plot structure

Exposition, background information, usually in the beginning.

Rising action, series of events involving conflict, which creates tension and suspense.

Climax, the peak of tension a turning point in the action.

Denouement, the conflict finds resolution.

Conclusion, a warp-up sometimes epilogue.



Chronology is the timeline of a story’s events

Linear time events move from past to present

Non-linear time, forward and backward movement of time (flashbacks)

Nonconventional



*Conflict*

Internal conflict, a struggle within a character. Psychological, emotional or spiritual turmoil.

External conflict, pits characters against:

* Other characters
* The community, its people, ideals or traditions
* Nations or other political structures
* Nature

*Revelation*

* Exposition, providing background information, usually in the beginning
* Flashbacks, providing background information. Different from exposition in that they take the form of an actual re-enactment of events, come from characters dreams, reveries or memories.
* Foreshadowing, an event or piece of dialog that hints at what is to come.
* Suspended revelation, authors withhold information to create suspense and surprise. Mystery plots are based on this technique.

**Character**

Learn about character

* Speech, what characters say reveals a lot about them
* Actions, focussing on critical moments in characters’ lives, the reader needs to interpret how they respond to those moments
* Appearance, their attire, hair, physical stature, physical condition
* Background and history, characters are shaped by their backgrounds, take in account their gender, race, family, social-economic class and religion.
* What others say about them, can be a valuable source of information

How do readers learn about characters

Direct, a narrator tells us directly about a character’s internal and external make up. The narrator may perch inside a character’s mind outside or both

Indirect, no narrator reader access characters externally, we know them only from their word actions or what other characters say about them.

Characters are made convincing by being consistent in behaviour and motivations. And cohesive in overall psychological makeup. Even erratic behaving characters should be cohesive (whole).

*Character development*

* Round characters, fully developed emotionally and psychological complex.
* Flat characters, one dimensional, little or no emotional or psychological depth.
* Stock characters, stereotypes even caricatures, no development.

The reader talks about a character in two ways

* As real people
* As fictional creations

**Viewpoint**

The story is being filtered by the narrators; view of reality, bias or prejudice and knowledge of events.

The narrator is telling the story, the reader knows only as much as the narrator knows or tells.

*The narrator 3rd person,* is external to the story, standing outside of the events and characters.

* Omniscient narrator, all knowing. Reveals the actions and thoughts of all characters.
* Limited omniscient narrator, limited of knowledge. Reveals the actions and thoughts of inly primary characters.
* Objective narrator, impersonal. Reveals only the characters’ actions and speech, not their inner thoughts.

*The narrator 1st person*, is the ‘’I’’ of the story. A character in the story who recounts the events from his or her perspective. Can be unreliable or even manipulative.

**Symbolism**

Symbols allow us to convey powerful words without using words. Symbols are fluid, their meaning can change over time, situation, culture or geography. They are used to; reinforce and enlarge meaning and to help to write economically.

* Symbols—objects, people, and events that stand for something other than themselves.
* Conventional—found in daily life.
* Literary—suggestive, fluid, not absolute.
* Archetype—age-old universal patterns.
* Allegory—absolute, one-to-one correspondence, connected with religious works.

**Irony**

Irony is the opposite of what is expected or intended. Authors use irony to:

* Create a degree of realism
* Add depth to their portrayal of life
* Create humor

The 4 uses of irony

* Verbal irony, what’s said is not what’s meant.
* Situational irony, what happens is the opposite of what’s expected or desired.
* Dramatic irony, reader knows things the characters do not.
* Cosmic irony, bad things happen to good people.

**Themes**

Theme is a story’s central idea(s). To get ot a story’s central idea start paying attention to:

* title and setting
* repetition of words, phrases, actions. They’re often repeated pointing to their importance and leading to thematic clues.
* characters who change or grow

Many stories have multiple themes. Not every story has a theme: horror, detective, and adventure-thriller stories may not have themes. A theme can oversimplify. Discerning its themes enlarges our understanding of a work but doesn't capture the totality of its richness and complexity.