The Elements of Literature
A Guide to Literary Explication

1. **Setting**: the ________ and ________ in which events occur.

   (_________ and _________)

2. ____________ : type of literature

   There are 3 main categories of genres:
   ___________, ___________, and ____________.

   2a. **Prose**: the usual form of writing including everything EXCEPT poetry, songs, or dramas

   **Examples of types of prose:**

   **Fiction**: untrue, or “fake” stories; includes novels, novellas, short stories
   - **Realistic fiction**: fiction that is plausible
   - **Historical fiction**: a blend of historical events/people with fictitious events/people
   - **Science fiction**: fiction based on futuristic science

   **Nonfiction**: a true story (really happened); includes autobiography, memoir, biography, personal narrative, essays, articles, texts, journals, diaries and letters
   - **Autobiography**: a true, life story about oneself told by oneself
   - **Biography**: a true, life story about someone else’s life - the author and subject are different people

   2b. **Poetry**: composed of lines organized into stanzas

   2c. **Drama**: a play; a story meant to be acted out; written with stage directions and characters’ names followed by their dialogue
3. __________________ (____): the perspective from which a story is told. 
   
   **POV** is the author’s choice of narrator. 
   This choice determines how much information the reader is given. 
   
   **There are four types of POV:** 
   First person, second person, third person limited and third person omniscient 
   
   3a. ___________ **person** is when the narrator is a character in the story. He/she tells the story based on what he/she thinks, hears, and experiences. First person uses the pronouns I, me, and my {The story does NOT have to be nonfiction.} 
   
   3b. ___________ **person** is when the story is an event in which you as a reader participate. Second person uses the pronoun “you.” 
   Example: “You go to the mall. You see a man. What do you do?” 
   
   3c. ___________ **person limited** is when the narrator is NOT a character in the story, but he/she presents the story from the perspective of ONE of the main characters. The reader doesn’t know anything that the character doesn’t know. 
   
   3d. ___________ **person omniscient** is when an “all-knowing” narrator tells the story and can see into more than one character’s thoughts and feelings. The narrator is NOT a character from the story. 
   The reader views the events of the story through the eyes and minds of more than one character. 
   
4. **Characters:** 
   
   ___________ **Characters** remain the same emotionally throughout the course of the work. 
   
   ___________ **Characters** change emotionally throughout the course of the work.
the main character; the story revolves around this person or animal.

the person or thing that is bothering or antagonizing the protagonist; the villain or the negative force or influence (such as weather or technology)

5. Characterization: the ways that the author tells the reader about a character

➢ physical appearance
➢ speech
➢ ⬢ inner thoughts
➢ through the reactions and attitudes others have towards the character

6. ____________________: the problem(s) in the story

Internal conflict: inside the character - emotional

External conflict: outside the character - physical
There are Seven Types of Conflicts

➢ 6a. ________________________________: two or more characters have a physical fight or verbal argument

➢ 6b. ________________________________: internal conflict; when a character struggles internally with an emotional problem such as being worried, being afraid, feeling insecure, feeling jealous, etc...

➢ 6c. ________________________________: when a character battles against a force of nature, such as rain, tornadoes, earthquakes, extreme wind, or lack of food.

➢ 6d. ________________________________: when a character is struggling against a man-made object or thing, such as a computer, a robot, etc...

➢ 6e: ________________________________: when a character is struggling against ghosts, aliens, or other magical or fantastical beings or phenomena

➢ 6f: ________________________________: when a character is struggling against the rules or beliefs of society. Society is a large group of people who hold the same beliefs.

   Examples: women in the military; people’s struggles with body image

➢ 6g: ________________________________: when a character is confronted with an unfamiliar situation that causes a problem; the character doesn’t know what he or she is up against.
7. _____________: the message, moral or lesson of a piece of literature

8. _____________: the sequence of events in a story; these events follow the story volcano

**Story Volcano**

**Exposition**: the setting and the beginning atmosphere of the story including an introduction to the character

**Rising action**: how the problem is revealed

**Climax**: the turning point; plot hangs in the balance

**Falling Action**: how the problem(s) is/are resolved

**Denouement**: the result of the problem (solution or lack of solution)
9. **Literary/Poetic Technique**: device used in literature to make the story more descriptive

**Examples**: alliteration, allusion, anthropomorphism, flashback, foreshadowing, hyperbole, idiom, irony, metaphor, onomatopoeia, personification, simile, symbolism etc.

➢ _________________: when two or more words within a line of poetry or a sentence begin with the same consonant sound

   **Example**: I traveled wearily weak and winded.

➢ **Allusion**: when a story references a famous work such as using a quote from an historical document, a well-known play like Shakespeare, a line from a famous song, etc...

➢ **Anthropomorphism**: animals can talk, act, and **REASON** like people; they are basically “morphed” into humans (not physically); this usually is seen in fantasy literature

➢ _________________: a scene in a story that interrupts the current events to reveal events that occurred in the past.

➢ _________________: when an author gives hints or clues about upcoming events

➢ _________________: an exaggeration not meant to be literally

   **Example**: I am so hungry I could eat a horse.

➢ _________________: an expression that has a meaning other than what the words suggest. Idioms are called figures of speech. Each culture has its own idioms.

   **Example**: “Break a leg” is an idiom that means “good luck” although the words do not indicate that meaning. Another example: “piece of cake”
➢ the opposite of what is expected

Irony includes literary techniques that involve surprising, interesting, or amusing contradictions.

**Examples:** a model has an ugly baby; a dancer has a klutzy kid

**Verbal Irony:** words are used to suggest the opposite of their usual meanings

**Example:** He is so cute. (said when referring to someone you think is ugly.)

**Dramatic Irony:** (similar to suspense) the reader knows information that the character does not know.

**Example:** A character thinks that the detective is on his side, but the reader knows the detective is working with the enemy.

**Irony of Situation:** when something completely unexpected happens; an unexpected twist

➢ when a word imitates a natural sound

**Examples:** chirp, buzz, plop

➢ when a nonhuman or inanimate object is given human characteristics

**Examples:** The wind whistled.
The flower felt the sun on its petals.

➢ when two unlike things are compared directly.

**Example:** During the football game, he was a ferocious lion, attacking anything in his path.
➢ When two unlike things are compared using the words “like” or “as”

Example: The Olympic athlete ran like the wind

➢ One thing stands for, or represents, a larger concept or idea

Examples: Dove = peace
Flag = freedom, liberty, etc...
