

## Comp II notes

### **What is Literature and why we study it?**

Literature is a written form of communication that narrates a story, dramatizes a situation, expresses emotions, and analyzes and advocates ideas. It is a writer's need to convey personal vision to readers. We study literature to expand our knowledge base of the human struggle and drama from times past that we might not have otherwise known existed. Literature connects us to philosophies, religion, and cultures that we are a part of.

**Genre of Literature** includes prose fiction, nonfiction prose, poetry, and drama.

*Prose Fiction* (narrative) includes myths, parables, romances, novels, and short stories about subjects that are not real.

*Nonfiction Prose* includes essays, articles, and books that are concerned with reality.

*Poetry* is expressed in the form of haiku, prose, or epic, and each uses some prosody.

*Drama* is a written work that is presented to the delight and benefit for the audience in literature or as a performance piece. Aspects of drama include text, character, plot, structure, point of view, language, symbolism, and theme (meaning).

To read and respond actively to literature, we must comprehend what we are reading versus what we understood up to the point that we stopped reading. We then ask ourselves these six basic questions about the reading:

- 1) Who is or are the character(s) involved throughout the piece?
- 2) What is or are the character(s) doing or having done to him or her (them)?
- 3) Where is this taking place?
- 4) When is this happening? (time period, or season)
- 5) What are the results?
- 6) How can I relate this to my current knowledge base?

Literature Interpretation When a reader interprets literature, he or she attempts to determine its possible meanings. There are two schools of thought. 1) *A reader seeks the author's hidden intent between the lines.* 2) *The reader and his or her experiences are taken into consideration.* The second school of thought is a new concept that delves into the reality that reading should be interactive. The reader's interaction with the text creates meaning thus making the literary work come alive in the imagination of the individual reader. So determination of the work cannot be done without the reader's reaction to the context. The reader first looks at the facts. If the reader can follow the facts of the reading, then the plot of a story, the development of a poem, or the action of a play becomes clear. Factual details about a setting may be the character's names, ages, and appearances; the sequence of events; the emotions and attitudes of poem's speaker; a story's narrator; or characters in a story. The process of determining, then, is similar to a conversation in which both the reader and the text have a voice.

## Elements of Short Story

**setting:** time and place event occurs.

**character:** imagined people personified by the author through actions, speech, thoughts, attitudes, and background. Sometimes the reader is given a physical description.

**plot:** arrangements of events of a story. A logical series of events is called plausible or believable.

- *Exposition:* The opening scene introduces the protagonist and any background that assists the reader to follow the story as it unfolds.
- *In Medias Res:* Latin for “in the midst of things”, a narrative device that begins a story in the middle usually at an exciting or significant point and then explains the beginning and continues to the end.
- *Foreshadowing:* In plot construction, the arrangement of event and information provides a reader with a clue of what is to come so the end does not seem haphazard or contrived.
- *Stream of Consciousness:* A modern narrative device used to show a character’s imagistic perception in an attempt to show subjective and associative nature to capture the preverbal consciousness, especially through dialogue.
- *Flashback/Retrospect:* A scene relived in a character’s memory, including a scene or event that happened before the beginning of the story, related by the narrator to the reader to show something the happened previously to make sense of the present action.

**antagonist:** a person or group of people in conflict with the protagonist

**round character:** well-developed, closely involved in the action and responsive to it.

**flat character:** (static or stereotypical) remain unchanged

**dynamic character:** growing and changing in the course of the action

**foil character:** minor character whose role is to highlight the main character by presenting a contrast with him or her. In modern comedy, the "straight man" is seen as the foil for the performer.

**protagonist:** main character usually in a dramatic situation.

**stock character:** A common or stereotypical character that occurs frequently in literature. Examples of stock characters are mad scientists, managers, battle-scarred veteran, or strong-but-silent cowboy (also, known as Achetype)

**conflict:** two forces attempting to conquer or resist being conquered

- **external conflict:** conflicts outside an individual between two people or between two groups or even a person and his or her environment
- **internal conflict:** conflict within an individual between two opposing forces or desires such as reason versus emotion or fear versus hope
- **central conflict:** primary internal conflict within the protagonist that propels and accounts for the action in the story.

**climax:** the moment the outcome becomes inevitable resolution: outcome itself or conclusion point of view: angle from which the story is told

**narrator:** person telling the story

- *Participant/Observer:* A narrator that participates as a character within a story. (first person narrator)
- *Non-Participant/ Omniscient narrator:* Also called all-knowing narrator. A narrator who has the ability to move freely through the consciousness of any character. The omniscient narrator also has complete knowledge of all external events in a story.
- *Non-participant/ Limited Omniscient:* Also called third person limited point of view. A type of point of view in which the narrator sees into some but not all of the characters. Most typically the narrator see through the eyes of one major or minor character.
- *Non-Participant/Editorial Omniscient:* When an omniscient narrator goes beyond reporting the thoughts of his or her characters to make a critical judgment or commentary, making explicit the narrator's own thoughts or philosophies.
- *Stream of Consciousness:* narrative technique to show character focusing on imagistic perception.

**theme:** main or central idea

**imagery:** words or groups of words that refer to any sense experience (see, hear, smell, touch, taste, feel)

**symbol:** tangible object or visible character that hints at meanings beyond itself. (our flag represents our nation)

**irony:** results from the readers sense of some discrepancy

**sarcasm:** say the opposite of what is really meant

**allegory:** story with 2 parallel and consistent levels of meaning - one literal, one figurative the figurative offers a moral lesson

**rhetoric:** strategically organized and developed literary work guided to show how writing elements can further the writers intended effect on the audience

**synthesis:** requires one to draw connections among different ideas, seeking relationships and connections that tie them together.

**thesis:** central message of a written work

**antithesis:** direct opposite of thesis; marked contrast.

Four typical features of a modern realistic short story

- 1) Its plot is based on probability, illustrating a sequence of causally related incidents.
- 2) Its characters are recognizably human, and they are motivated by identifiable social and psychological forces
- 3) Its time and place are clearly established, with realistic rather than fantastic settings.
- 4) Its elements- plot, character, setting, style, point of view, irony, symbol, and theme work toward a single effect making the story unified.

Short Story Checklist

- 1) character,
- 2) conflicts
- 3) setting, plot
- 4) point of view,
- 5) style,
- 6) tone, and language (diction),
- 7) symbol and allegory,
- 8) theme

## Elements of Poetry

Poetry utilizes personification, symbolism, imagery, irony, metaphors, similes, syntax (word order), rhyme, meter, and theme.

### **Definitions:**

**Poetry:** composition in verse; lofty or Imaginative writing or artistic expression

**Epic:** a long narrative poem that records the adventures of a hero; typically epics chronicle the origins of a civilization or embody its central values

**Free verse:** poetry without a regular pattern of meter or rhyme

**lyric poem:** a type of poem characterized by brevity, compression, and the expression of feeling

**narrative poem:** a poem that tells a story

**image:** a concrete representation of a sense impression, a feeling or an idea, refers to the pattern of related details in a work. Images may be kinetic, perhaps suggesting actively, or synaesthetic in which, the image appeals to two or more senses simultaneously.

**iamb:** a unstressed syllable followed by a stressed one, as in the word –today

**ode:** a long stately poem in stanzas of varied length, meter, and form. Usually a serious poem on an exalted subject

**sonnet:** a fourteen-line poem in iambic pentameter

**villanelle:** a nineteen-line lyric poem that relies heavily on repetition. The first and third lines alternate throughout the poem, which is structured in six stanzas- five tercets and a final quatrain

**haiku:** Japanese lyric poem having 3 lines and 17 syllables

**meter:** the measured pattern of rhythmic accents in poems

**pentameter:** having five metrical feet

**rhythm:** the recurrence of accent or stress in lines of

**verse.** The pulse or beat in the line of prose, poetry, or music.

**quatrain:** a four-line stanza in a poem

**stanza:** a division or unit of a poem that is repeated in the same form with similar or identical patterns of rhyme or meter

**sestet:** A six line unit of verse constituting a stanza or section of a poem; the last six lines of an Italian sonnet

**sestina:** a poem of thirty-nine lines written in iambic pentameter. Its 6-line stanzas repeat in an intricate and prescribed order.

**tercet:** a three-line stanza

**tone:** the implied attitude of a poet toward the subject and materials of a poem  
**assonance:** the repetition of similar vowel sounds in a sentence or line of poetry as in " I rose and told him of my woe".

**epigram:** a brief witty poem often satirical

**foot:** a metrical unit composed of stressed and unstressed syllables, example: It was the best of times; it was the worst of times.

**elegy:** a lyric poem that laments or memorializes the dead

**aubade:** a love lyric in which the speaker complains about the arrival of the dawn, when he must leave his love

**allusion:** a reference to a person, event, or literary work outside a poem.

**blank verse:** a line of poetry or prose in unrhymed iambic pentameter

**connotation:** personal and emotional associations called by a word

**denotation:** dictionary definition of a word

**diction:** specifically selected words in any literary work

**open form:** a type of literary structure or form in poetry characterized by freedom from regularity and consistency in such elements as rhyme, line length, and metrical pattern.

**closed form:** a type of form or structure in poetry characterized by regularity and consistency in such elements as rhyme, line length, and metrical pattern

**visual poetry:** poems written in the shape of the poem's object.

**figurative language:** especially metaphor and simile

**syntax:** word order (sentence structure)

**aesthetic:** pertaining to the study of taste or beauty

### Figures of Speech

**Simile-** involves comparison between unlike things using like, as , or as though. ( My love is like a cool breeze on a hot day.)

**Metaphor:** comparison between essentially unlike things without like or as to designate the comparison. (My love is a red, red rose.)

**Synecdoche:** a figure of speech in which a part is substituted for a whole. (Lend me a hand.)

**metonymy:** a figure of speech in which a closely related term is substituted for an object or an idea. (We have always been loyal to the crown.)

**hyperbole:** exaggeration, (It took her an eternity to answer his proposal.)

**personification:** endowment of living qualities or animation to abstract concepts or inanimate objects (The ocean beckoned her to come join the chorus of minnows and sand crabs.)

**Prosody** refers to rhythms and sounds of poetry.

### Interpreting Poetry

Interpretation entails explaining and making sense of the poem. In order to interpret, we must involve our minds to commit four acts:

1) observation 2) connection 3) inference 4) conclusion

**Observation:** We hear rhyme and rhythm. We notice its pattern of organization. We envision the objects or experiences it describes. then we begin to formulate a sense of the poem's focus, emphasis, and point.

**Connections:** We begin to notice how our observations relate to one another.

**Inferences:** Once connections are made about the elements of the poem, we begin to infer (judge on the premises).

**Conclude:** to form a final decision

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\*\*Note: Our response to a poem is closely tied to our interpretation of it.

To evaluate a poem is to appraise it according to our own unique combination of cultural, moral, aesthetic values. Evaluation depends on our interpretation of the poem, our judgment of the poem's value (perhaps as a literary work), and on how well we understand it. Evaluation of the poem may also be linked to our initial experience of it, with our first impressions and pre critical reactions.

### Checklist for Poetry

Voice,  
Tone,  
Word choice, word order,  
Imagery,  
Figures of speech,  
Sound,  
Form,  
Symbol, allegory, and Allusion,

definitions came from \*DeYanni, R. (1994).

Literature: Reading fiction, poetry, drama, and the essay. New York: McGraw Hill



### Drama Terms and Definitions

**drama:** a prose or verse, composition especially one for performance by actors; play

**dramatic personae:** the character in a play

**complication:** an intensification of the conflict in a story or play

**gesture:** physical movement of a character during a play

**pathos:** a quality of a play's action that stimulates the audience to feel pity for a character

**props:** articles or objects that appear on stage during a play

**recognition:** the point at which a character understands his or her situation as it really is

**stage direction:** a playwrights interpretive commands that provide readers (or actors) with information about the dialogue, setting, and action of a play.

**closet drama:** a play meant to be read, not performed

**dialogue:** lines spoken between two or more characters

**monologue:** extended speech by a character to another character or characters

**soliloquy:** a speech in a play which is meant to be heard by the audience but not by the other characters on the stage. If there are no other characters on the stage, then the speech represents the characters thinking out loud.

**asides:** brief comments by an actor who addresses the audience but is assumed not heard by the other characters (Bill Cosby and Bernie Mac do this in their television shows.)

**plot:** structure of a play's action, order of incidents, arrangement and form.

**staging:** also known as blocking, includes positioning actors on stage, their nonverbal gestures and movements the scenic background, the props and costumes, lighting, and sound effects

**theme:** central idea of the play

## The Modern Theater (beginning in the 17th century)

### Types of Staging,

### Settings and types of drama

**Picture frame stage:** looks like a room with a missing 4th wall through which the audience views the play.

**Proscenium arch:** separates the audience from the play (surrounds the opening through which the audience views the performance) two of them were used in The Glass Menagerie (middle of the 19th century)

**Thrust stage:** juts out into the audience so the action may be viewed from the sides

**Arena theater:** the audience surrounds the stage area, which may or may not be raised. Use of the scenery is limited perhaps to a single piece of scenery standing alone in the middle of the stage. (also called **the stage in the round**)

**Environmental stage:** stage surrounds the audience or several stages are situated at various locations throughout the audience (outdoors in parks and on city streets) Some playwrights even have the actors as members of the audience for example a renaissance fair.

**box set:** a stage setting that gives the audience the allusion of looking into a room

**Surrealistic stage setting:** color and scenery were designed to mirror uncontrolled dream images. (ex. Dream a Little Dream with Corey Feldman)

**Expressionistic stage setting:** costumes and scenery were exaggerated and distorted to reflect the workings of a troubled and even unbalanced mind.

**Scrim:** a curtain that when illuminated from the front appears solid, but when it is lit from the back, it becomes transparent. One was used in The Glass Menagerie

### Irony in Drama

**dramatic irony**: (sometimes called tragic irony) depends on the audiences knowing something the protagonist does not yet realize (thus, experiencing simultaneously its own interpretation of the events and that of the protagonist) example: Oedipus, the king

**situational irony**: exists when what happens is at odds with what the story's situation leads readers to expect will happen

**cosmic irony**: exists when fate frustrates any effect a character might make to control or reverse his or her destiny. ( also called irony of fate)

### Kinds of Drama

**tragicomedies**: a play that contains elements of both comedy and tragedy for example: Merchant of Venice

**realism**: writing that stresses careful description of setting and the trappings of daily life (A Doll House by Ibsen) developed serious (sometimes tragic) themes and believable characters in the context of everyday contemporary life. Writers used this type of play to educate audiences about problems of the society in which they lived.

**tragedy**: treating a serious subject and involving persons of significance. Recants the downfall of an individual.

**melodrama**: contains laments of tragedy, but the protagonist, while suffering throughout the play, never reaches tragic status. There is always a happy ending.

**naturalism**: literature depicting life as a continuous struggle -tragic themes

**comedy**: play in which events end happily, fortunes are reversed for the better and community is drawn together often by the marriage of the protagonist at the end

**first comedies**: Greece in the 5th century B.C. satirized religious and social issues of the day.

**Old comedy**: a satirical bitter humor that diminishes a person, idea, or institution by ridiculing it or holding it up to scorn. Chief practitioner was Aristophanes

**New comedy**: Greek comedies of the fourth and third centuries that followed Old Comedies depends on outrageous plots, mistaken identities, young lovers, interfering parents, and convincing servants. Ultimately, the young lovers outwit everyone who stands in their way. developed by Plautus and Terence

**satire**: literary attack on folly or vanity by means of ridicule; usually intended to improve society

**farce**: comedy in which stereotypical characters engage in boisterous horseplay and slapstick humor Chekov's The Brute

**romantic comedy**: comedy in which love is the main subject and idealized lovers endure great difficulties until the inevitable happy ending is reached. example: Shakespeare's Much Ado About Nothing

**black comedy**: comedy that relies heavily the morbid and absurd; often so satirical they become ironic and tragic. Example: Catch 22 by Joseph Heller or The Sandbox by Edward Albee

### **Aristotle's Terms**

**catharsis**: the emotional reaction or "purgation" that takes place in audience while watching a tragedy. His theory stated that when we see a good tragedy, we feel both pity (for the protagonist) and fear (or revulsion from the action taking place on stage) because we recognize the potential for ourselves in similar action.

**hamartia**: tragic flaw in characters that eventually cause their downfall in Greek tragedy

**hubris**: tragic flaw of overwhelming pride that exists in the protagonist of a tragedy. Greek for excessive pride or over confidence --arrogance

### **Ancient Greek Theater**

Ancient Greek **dramatic presentations developed from religious rites to honor the gods or mark the coming of spring**. The theater was an open-air semi-circular construction designed in this fashion to enhance acoustics.

Seating was tiered, so the audience was looking down over the chorus who danced and chanted. The **characters in the play wore a stylized mask or persona to convey to the audience the particular character being portrayed** such as a king, a woman, or a wise old man (**female roles were played by men**). **The mouths of the masks were constructed to amplify the actor's voice and project it to the audience**. The actors also **wore kothernoi which were high shoes that elevated the actors above the stage**.

The ancient Greek tragedies were divided into five parts. **Part one was called the prologos. An actor would come out and give the background or explanations** that the audience needed to follow the rest of the drama. **The second part was called parodos in which the chorus entered and commented on the events presented in the prologos**.

This was followed by **several episodes in which characters spoke to one another and developed the central conflict**. Alternating with the episodes were **stasimon (choral odes) in which the chorus commented on the exchanges** during the preceding episodes. These choral **odes were divided into strophes or stanzas** that were recited or sung as the chorus moved in one direction across the orchestra pit and the **antistrophes that**

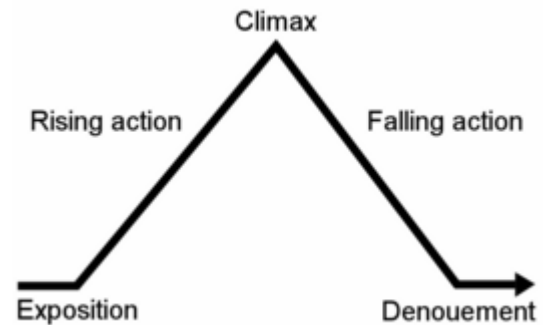
**were recited as the chorus moved in the opposite direction.** This chorus stood between the audience and the actors (functioning as an additional audience) often expressing moral, social, or political views of the community. Finally, the **exodos- the last scene of the play was where the conflict was resolved** and the actors left the stage.

#### The Elizabethan Theater

**The Elizabethan theater was rooted in religious pageants performed at medieval festivals during the 12th and 13th centuries. Mystery plays** were Old and New Testament stories reenacted. The church fathers encouraged these plays because the illiterate masses were able to comprehend the Bible. They were presented in the market square, or the church steps. Sometimes they were presented on movable wagons called pageants. **Morality plays** which developed in the 14th and 15th centuries allegorized the Christian way of life. Typically, characters (1500) was one of the best known morality plays dramatizing good and bad qualities of *Everyman* and showed his struggle to determine what was of value to him on his journey toward death. By the middle of the 16th century, mystery and morality plays lost their foothold to a new secular drama. Mystery and morality plays were considered Catholic associated; therefore, the Protestant clergy discouraged them, representing virtues and vices struggled or debated over the soul of man. The Globe Theater, where Shakespeare plays were performed, consisted of a large main stage that **extended out into the open-air yard** where **common people** known as **groundlings** stood. **Paying spectators were given stools** to sit on. These stools were placed **in two or three levels of galleries** that extended to the front of the stage. **There was no curtain** and the stage could be seen from three sides. **Musicians were seated in the music gallery, which was a balcony above the chamber.** The chamber was an upper curtained stage above the rear stage.

### Freytag's Pyramid

According to Freytag, every story worth telling has the following parts: exposition (inciting incident), rising action, climax (turning point), falling action, and denouement (resolution). Freytag's pyramid is used to show how stories move; it is a graphic plot chart. Sometimes a story can be more complicated than Freytag's pyramid, but most stories fit perfectly into the pyramid.



Let's look at each part of the pyramid...

**Exposition (inciting incident):** The exposition is like the set-up of the story. The background information that is needed to understand the story is provided, such as the main character, the setting, the basic conflict, and so forth.

The exposition ends with the inciting moment, which is the one incident in the story without which there would be no story. The inciting moment sets the rest of the story in motion.

**Rising Action:** Rising action is a series of events and actions that move the story to a climax. During rising action, the basic conflict is complicated by secondary conflicts, such as obstacles and challenges that frustrate the main character's attempt to reach their goal.

**Climax (turning point or complication):** The climax is the peak of the action and the turning point in the story. After the climax everything changes. Things will have gone badly for the main character up to this point; now, things will begin to go well for him or her. However, if the story is a tragedy, the opposite will happen after the climax; things that have been going good for the main character begin to go bad.

**Falling Action:** During the falling action, the conflict unravels with the main character either winning or losing. The falling action might contain a moment of final suspense, during which the final outcome of the conflict is in doubt.

**Denouement:** The story ends with the denouement, in which the main character is better off than at the beginning of the story. However, the tragedy ends with death and sadness, in which the protagonist is worse off than at the beginning of the story.