

Elements of Literature 7th and 8th grade McDougal Littell

Act: a major unit of action in a drama or play – can be divided into scenes

Alliteration: repetition of consonant sounds at the beginning of words (Peter Piper Picked a Peck of Pickled Peppers)

Allusion: reference to famous person, place, event, or work of literature (with the amount of rain we are getting, perhaps an ark would be useful)

Analogy: comparison of two dissimilar things in order to clarify the less familiar

Analysis: breaking something down and discussing various elements

Anecdote: a brief account of an event in order to entertain or make a point

Antagonist: the force working against the protagonist (does not have to be human)

Audience: readers to whom a work is addressed

Author: the writer of a literary work

Author's perspective: the author's beliefs and attitudes expressed in their writing

Author's purpose: reason for creating their work – persuade? entertain? teach? inform? express an opinion?

Autobiography: nonfiction that tells the life of the author (whole life)

Ballad: a poem that tells a story

Bias: the author's preference for one side of an issue (favoritism)

Biography: the story of a person's life written by someone else (takes 2 people)

Cast of Characters: list of all characters in a play

Cause and effect: one event that brings about another effect

Character: a person, animal or imaginary creature in a literary work

Character development: how characters change in a work – static (stays the same) or dynamic (changes)

Characterization: how a character is created – physical – thoughts and actions – what other characters say – actual comments from the author

Chronological order: using time to show sequence

Clarifying: author will pause to make a point or clear up misunderstandings

Classic: a work of literature that has withstood the test of time

Climax: the turning point (most exciting sometimes); when the conflict is resolved

Comedy: a light and humorous work – designed to entertain

Comic relief: “a break” to relieve tension in a serious work

Comparison: identifying similarities and differences

Conflict: a struggle against opposing forces (**internal**: thoughts and feelings, **external**: physical elements) Man vs. Man; Man vs. Nature; Man vs. Self

Connecting – relating the content to experience

Connotation: feelings associated with a word (I like dogs. Vs. You are a dog.) Bomb vs ‘You the bomb!’

Context clues: hints or suggestions that help a reader understand (definition, synonym, example, comparison, contrast, or an expression that helps infer meaning)

Contrast: process of pointing out differences

Couplet: a rhymed pair of lines (Hickory Dickory Dock, the mouse ran up the clock)

Deductive order: a text is organized in a way that helps you deduce (conclude) the meaning or outcome

Denotation: the actual dictionary meaning (unlike connotation: “the feelings”)

Description: words that help a reader create scenes, events, and characters in their mind (imagery)

Dialect: a form of language spoken in a certain area (Southern – y'all)

Dialogue: words characters speak

Drama: (play) literature meant to be performed

Drawing conclusions: using available information to make an inference/educated guess

Epic poem: long narrative poem – has a hero and tells about ideals and values of a nation/group

Essay: short work of nonfiction that deals with a single subject

Evaluating: judging the worth of something or someone

Exaggeration: extreme overstatement

Exposition: where the plot of a story normally begins (learn the facts)

Extended metaphor: A figure of speech that compares two things in a long, exaggerated manner (Oh Captain! My Captain!)

Fable: brief tales that teach a lesson (The Boy Who Cried Wolf)

Fact (can be proven) and Opinion (is one’s thoughts, not necessarily true)

Falling action: occurs after the climax (resolution, denouement)

Fantasy: literature with at least one unreal element

Fiction: prose that tells an imaginary story

Figurative language: expressions that are not literally true (metaphor, personification, simile)

Flashback: interruption in a story to tell of a past event

Folklore: traditions, customs, and stories that are passed down within a culture (legends, folk tales, myths, and fables)

Foreshadowing: hints that suggest what is going to happen

Form: a work’s structure and organization (patterns)

Free verse: poetry that does not have a pattern of rhyme or rhythm

Generalization: broad statement that may or may not be true

Genre: ('john-rah'): the type or category of literature (poetry, fiction, non-fiction, drama)

Historical fiction: fiction based on true past events (Laura Ingalls Wilder)

Horror fiction: fiction meant to terrorize the readers

Humor: the quality that produces amusement (exaggeration, satire, sarcasm, amusing descriptions, irony, witty dialogue, etc.)

Hyperbole: extreme exaggeration (I have a ton of homework.)

Idiom: an expression whose meaning is not literal but proves a point (I need to break our date.)

Imagery: words that appeal to the reader's 5 senses: look, feel, sound, taste, smell

Inference: a logical guess based on evidence

Informative nonfiction: writing that provides factual information

Irony: a contrast between what is expected and what actually happens

Legend: a story handed down from the past about a specific person (hero)

Limerick: short, humorous poem with a rhyme scheme; usually sing-song

Main idea: the idea most important to the writer

Memoir: a type of autobiography about an author's personal experiences, not entire life (Barrack Obama's years in office)

Metaphor: comparison of two things that have some quality in common (he was a moose of a man) "Who knows if the moon's a balloon, coming out of a keen city in the sky..."

Meter: in poetry, the regular pattern of accented and unaccented syllables (not all poems have this)

Mood: the atmosphere or feeling a literary work conveys to readers

Moral: a lesson a story teaches – often stated at the end of a fable

Motivation: the reason why a character acts, feels, or thinks in a certain way

Myth: a traditional story (author usually unknown) that answers basic questions about the world. They attempt to explain human nature, the origin of the world, mysteries of nature, and social customs

Narrative: writing that tells a story (real or imagined)

Narrative poetry: poetry that tells a story "Paul Revere's Ride"

Narrator: the teller of a story (NOT the reader! NOT always the author!)

Nonfiction: writing that tells about real people, places and events (facts)

Novel: a work of fiction that tells a more complex story than a short story (setting, plot, and characters are developed in great detail)

Onomatopoeia: words whose sound suggest the meaning (*bang, hiss, meow*)

Oral history: stories of people's lives passed down by word of mouth – can be factual material or personal reactions

Paradox: a statement that seems to contradict itself, but is nevertheless true (love hurts/this is going to hurt me more than it hurts you)

Parallelism: using similar grammatical constructions to express ideas that are related or equal in importance

Paraphrasing: restating a text in the reader's own words

Personification: giving human qualities to something that is not human (The chair groaned under his weight.)

Perspective: the point of view from which a story is told; a way of regarding something

Persuasion: writing meant to sway readers' feelings, beliefs, or action.

Play: drama

Playwright: one who writes a play

Plot: the sequence of related events that make up a story: (typical to contain exposition, rising action, climax, falling action/resolution)

Poetry: a type of literature expressing ideas and feelings in compact, imaginative, and often musical language

Point of view: the perspective from which a story is told (first-person, third person)

Predicting: using what you know to guess what might happen

Primary source: a firsthand account of an event (diaries, journals, letters, speeches, news stories, photographs)

Propaganda: text that uses false or misleading information to present a point of view

Prose: the ordinary form of spoken and written language

Protagonist: the central character or hero in a narrative or drama

Questioning: raising questions while reading in order to understand characters and events (when readers look for their own answers as they read)

Radio play: drama written to be heard on the radio

Realistic fiction: imaginative writing set in the real, modern world

Repetition: when a sound, word, phrase, or line is repeated for effect or emphasis

Resolution: falling action in a plot's development

Rhyme: the repetition of sounds at the ends of words (types: end rhyme, internal rhyme)

Rhyme scheme: the pattern of end rhyme (ex. abab, abba, abcabc, etc.)

Rhythm: the pattern or flow of sound created by stressed and unstressed syllables

Rising action: the events in a story that move the plot forward – builds towards the climax

Satire: a literary technique in which ideas or customs are ridiculed for the purpose of improving society – can be witty, mildly abrasive, or bitterly critical

Scanning: searching through a writing for a particular piece of information

Scene: a section of a play presenting events that occur in one place at one time

Scenery: the backdrop used to create the setting for a play

Science fiction: prose writing that explores unexpected possibilities of the past or future using scientific data or theories

Script: the written version of a play/drama

Secondary source: information compiled from or based on other sources than the original

Sensory details: words and phrases that help readers see, hear, smell, taste or feel what the author is describing

Sequence: the order in which events occur

Setting: the time and place of the action in a story, poem, or play

Setting a purpose: establishing specific reasons to read a work

Short story: a brief work of fiction that can be read in one sitting

Simile: a comparison of two things that have something in common using *like* or *as*

Skimming: reading quickly to find a main idea or to get an overview of a work or passage

Spatial alignment: the arrangement of ideas and images in a graphic pattern to indicate their relationship

Speaker: the 'voice' that talks to the reader in a poem or work of fiction (NOT necessarily the author)

Specialized vocabulary: words unique to a specific subject or profession

Speech: a talk given in public

Stage: the level and raised platform on which entertainers perform

Stage directions: the instructions to actors, directors, and stage managers in a play (written on the script)

Stanza: the grouping of two or more lines in a poem (similar to a paragraph in prose)

Stereotype: a broad generalization or oversimplified view that can lead to unfair judgements

Story mapping: a visual organizer that helps the reader understand a work of literature

Structure: in nonfiction – may be chronological or spatial order, cause and effect, or compare and contrast; ideas may be presented using inductive or deductive reasoning

Style: a manner of writing; how something is said rather than what is said (elements that contribute include word choice, sentence length, tone, and figurative language)

Subject: the focus or topic of a literary work

Subplot: an additional, minor plot that involves a secondary conflict in the story; may or may not affect the main plot

Summarizing: briefly recounting main ideas of a writing in a person own words, while omitting unimportant details

Surprise ending: an unexpected twist in the plot at the end of a story

Suspense: a felling of growing tension or excitement

Symbol: a person, place, object, or action that stands for something beyond itself (ex. a flag)

Table of Contents: found in most nonfiction books, a section that shows the contents of the book; usually found in the beginning and used to find specific parts or an overview of material covered in the book

Tall tale: a humorously exaggerated story about impossible events

Text organizers: headings, tables of contents, and graphic elements such as charts, tables, time lines, boxes, bullets, and captions used to organize a text

Theme: the meaning, moral, or message about life or human nature communicated by a literary work

Tone: the writer's attitude toward his or her subject

Topic sentence: the sentence that expresses the main idea of a paragraph

Tragedy: a dramatic work that presents the downfall of a dignified character or characters who are involved in historically significant events

Turning point: also called the climax in a work of fiction

Urban legend: a contemporary story that is told in many versions around the world

Visualizing: forming a mental picture based on a written description

Voice: an author or narrator's distinctive style or manner of expression that can reveal a lot about their personality