

# GLOSSARY OF



# NARRATIVE CONVENTIONS

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*Narrative conventions are the common elements, devices or techniques used in most narratives (stories).*

Convention	Explanation & Effect
<p><b>Setting</b></p> <p><i>The time and place in which a story is set.</i></p>	<p><b>Time setting:</b> This is literally the time in which a story is set: it can refer to the time of day or season, or a time in history, such as the Second World War.</p> <p><b>Place setting:</b> This is where a story is set: it might be a general geographical location, such as a particular country or planet, or a more specific locational setting, such as a school, courtroom or family kitchen.</p> <p>Settings can significantly influence the themes explored or the characters present in the narrative; alternatively, they can provide a neutral backdrop to the story.</p>
<p><b>Plot Development</b></p> <p><i>What happens in a story, to whom, when.</i></p>	<p>The <b>plot</b>, or the <b>structural development</b> of a story, typically includes the following stages:</p> <p><b>Exposition (Orientation):</b> The opening of a narrative, where the reader or viewer is introduced to important characters, the setting and is given some hints about the plot to come.</p> <p><b>Complication (Rising Tension):</b> Where a point of conflict or a complication occurs, which upsets the status quo.</p> <p><b>Climax:</b> This is the turning point that marks a change, for better or worse, for the protagonist.</p> <p><b>Falling Tension:</b> This is the part of the story from the moment after the climax to the conclusion. At this point, the conflict between the protagonist and antagonist unravels.</p> <p><b>Conclusion (Denouement):</b> All the 'loose ends' are tied up, all the major questions answered; the story has reached a satisfactory conclusion. If there are any issues that are not satisfactorily resolved at this point, it is because the author wishes the reader to continue to ponder them.</p>
<p><b>Conflict</b></p> <p><i>The opposition or struggle between characters or forces in a text.</i></p>	<p>There are <b>four</b> common types of conflict:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <b>Man against man:</b> This involves stories where characters are against each other- this is external conflict. The conflict may be direct opposition (such as in a fight) or it may be a more subtle conflict between the intentions and desires of two or more characters.</li> <li>2. <b>Man against society:</b> Where a character stands against a man-made institution, such as slavery, bullying, or dominant social conventions. In such stories, characters are forced to make moral choices or are frustrated by social norms in being able to achieve their own desires.</li> <li>3. <b>Man against nature:</b> Where a character must struggle against their environment or a specific force of nature.</li> <li>4. <b>Man against himself:</b> This is an internal conflict, where a character must overcome their own nature (often their weaknesses or intrinsic values) or choose between two or more paths (such as good and evil; logic and emotion).</li> </ol> <p>The tension created by this conflict gives rise to drama and action in the story; also, by identifying commonly experienced conflicts in a novel, we can often discover its themes.</p>

<p><b>Plot Devices</b></p>	<p><b>Flashbacks</b> occur when a linear story is intercut with memories of a past event, which provides a “back story” and informs the main story.</p> <p><b>Foreshadowing</b> is a technique whereby the author gives hints or clues about events that will occur later in the story.</p> <p><b>Reflective Codas</b> are the ‘tacked on’ bit at the end of a story where a character, now older and wiser, reflects on the events of the main narrative.</p>
<p><b>Point of View</b></p> <p><i>The author’s choice of narrator, and the relation of the narrator to both the reader and the fictional world they describe.</i></p>	<p><b>First Person:</b> Where the story is presented from the perspective of a character within the story- usually the protagonist. This gives the reader/viewer access to the protagonist’s thoughts, feelings and experiences; however, this means that the reader/viewer is only informed of things that the protagonist knows and sees. The use of pronouns such as “I”, “me” (first person singular), “we” or “us” (first person plural) indicate this point of view.</p> <p><b>Second Person:</b> Where the story is told as if the narrator is addressing the reader: it is identified by the use of “you” as the main pronoun.</p> <p><b>Third Person Omniscient:</b> Where the narrator of a story is not a character within it, but is an outside entity. The narrator knows everything about every character and has unlimited knowledge of time, people, places and events within the story. Third Person Omniscient can be identified by the use of “they”, “them”, “he” and “she”.</p> <p><b>Third Person Limited:</b> Where the narrator of a story is not a character within it, but is an outside entity. However, in contrast to the Third Person Omniscient point of view, where the narrator knows everything about every character, the reader only has access to <u>one</u> character only. It cannot describe anything that is not known to or seen by the focal character; the narrator effectively ‘sits on the shoulder’ of the protagonist.</p>
<p><b>Characters</b></p>	<p>There are a number of terms used to describe the characters within a story, but the two most common are:</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">The <b>protagonist</b>: the central character of the story.</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">The <b>antagonist</b>: the character who opposes the main character.</p> <p>Characters “hook” us into a story by giving us a human element to relate to- through characters, authors can <b>explore different themes and ideas</b>.</p> <p>Characters can also <b>represent certain social groups</b> or sets of values. For example, a poor family might represent the struggle of the working class in society.</p>
<p><b>Characterisation</b></p> <p><i>The method an author uses to acquaint the reader with the characters.</i></p>	<p>There are two types of characterisation:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <b>Direct characterisation</b>, where the author tells the reader explicitly about the personality of a character (e.g. “<i>Sally was painfully shy</i>”).</li> <li>2. <b>Indirect characterisation</b>, where the author gives the reader information about the character, from which they can make assumptions about their personality (e.g. “<i>While the rest of us laughed and chatted, Sally sat silently and stared at her shoes.</i>”)</li> </ol> <p>Characters can be constructed <b>indirectly</b> through their:</p> <p><b>Appearance:</b> What a character looks like tells us a lot about their personality, preferences, values and attitudes. Clothing, hairstyles and posture can all be seen as symbols of particular meanings.</p> <p><b>Behaviour:</b> How a character behaves also tells us a lot about them. For example, their walk, gestures and mannerisms will tell us if they’re shy or confident.</p>

	<p><b>Dialogue:</b> What the character says (and how they say it) also reveals their values and attitudes, emotions, culture, race and level of education.</p> <p><b>Thoughts/Feelings:</b> Accounts of a character’s thoughts and feelings are particularly useful in determining their private beliefs, insecurities and fears.</p> <p><b>Relationships &amp; interactions:</b> a character’s personality is often brought out through the connections that they have with other characters.</p>
<p><b>Character Development</b></p>	<p><b>Character development</b> is the way a character grows and changes over the course of the story- this is often brought about by <b>internal conflict</b>.</p>
<p><b>Themes &amp; Messages</b></p> <p><i>The central ideas or topics explored by the text.</i></p>	<p>A <b>theme</b> is a central subject that the text is about; it can be summed up into a few words. For example, <i>relationships, cultural difference, the loss of innocence, environmental destruction and human nature</i> are all examples of themes.</p> <p>A <b>message</b> is what the text says about that subject; it can only be explained in a full sentence or statement. For example, “<i>childhood ends when innocence is lost</i>” and “<i>human nature is cruel and savage</i>” are examples of messages in stories.</p> <p>A story may have <b>several</b> themes. Themes often explore universal ideas (such as human nature, death, growing up and love) and are usually <b>implied</b> rather than stated explicitly.</p>
<p><b>Symbols &amp; Motifs</b></p>	<p><b>Symbol:</b> A person, place, event, or object which has a meaning in itself but suggests other meanings as well.</p> <p><b>Motif:</b> A recurring element in the story that has symbolic significance.</p> <p>The use of <b>symbolism</b> lends meaning and depth to a piece of fiction, and encourages the reader to consider the story on another level. Symbols are also often used to convey themes in the text.</p>
<p><b>Descriptive Language</b></p>	<p><b>Imagery:</b> The use of vivid or figurative language to describe a scene, person or action; ideally, imagery should create a “picture” in the mind of the reader.</p> <p><b>Sensory imagery:</b> This is imagery that stimulates the reader’s senses: sight, smell, taste, hearing and touch.</p> <p><b>Figurative language:</b> Where the meaning of a phrase or sentence is different to its literal meaning, often in order to compare or emphasise something. Figurative language includes devices such as:</p> <p><b>Simile:</b> Where two things are compared using “like” or “as” (e.g. “<i>music is like medicine for the soul.</i>”)</p> <p><b>Metaphor:</b> Where two things are directly compared (e.g. “<i>music is medicine for the soul.</i>”)</p> <p><b>Personification:</b> Where a non-human thing is given human characteristics (e.g. “<i>The piece of cake called out to me.</i>”)</p> <p><b>Hyperbole:</b> An extreme exaggeration used to make a point (e.g. “<i>I have a million things to do.</i>”)</p> <p>Descriptive language engages the reader by making the words on the page come to life; moreover, by doing so, it is more likely to invoke the reader’s emotions. When reading a text, think about how language techniques have shaped your understanding of the text’s meaning (for example, dark and bleak imagery might be used to shape your perception of a character, event or issue and position you to react in a particular way).</p>

<b>Mood</b>	Mood is the <b>atmosphere or feeling</b> in a story, which is often created through the use of descriptive language and imagery. For example, a story might create a sombre, serious, exhilarating or menacing mood/atmosphere.
<b>Tone</b>	<p>Tone describes the <b>way the ‘voice’ of a text is delivered</b>. For example, the tone in a passage of writing could be friendly or angry or persuasive.</p> <p>When we discuss the “tone” of stories, we are typically referring to the tone of the narrator. Therefore, this depends on the point of view from which the story is told. If third person point of view is used, the tone will generally be neutral; however, in first person, the tone can vary widely as it depends on the character who is telling the story.</p>
<b>Style</b>	<p>“Style” describes the ways in which aspects of a text (such as words, sentences, images) are arranged in a distinct manner. Style can distinguish the work of <b>individual authors</b> (e.g. J.K. Rowling’s style from J.R.R. Tolkien’s) as well as the work of a <b>particular period</b> (for example, the distinct style of 16<sup>th</sup> century Elizabethan drama), or of a particular <b>type of text</b> (for example, poems and newspaper articles are written in very different styles).</p> <p>When determining the style of a prose writer, you might like to consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What kind of language has been used? Is it colloquial or formal?</li> <li>Is the language descriptive or blunt?</li> <li>Does the author write literally or figuratively/symbolically?</li> <li>Is there an overriding mood or tone through the story?</li> <li>Is there a unique point of view that has been used? etc.</li> </ul>
<b>Voice</b>	<p>As well as an author’s voice, texts often contain <b>‘multiple voices’</b>. These are the views, positions, ideas and perspectives of other individuals or groups. It is important to recognise the various voices in a text, how they relate to one another, and how the creator of a text uses these to shape audience response.</p> <p>In a story, these voices are often articulated by different <b>characters</b>- these characters will promote different values, attitudes and perspectives.</p>