

• 9th Grade Literary Terms

alliteration	the repetition of consonant sounds in words that are close to one another
allusion	a reference to a statement, person, place, event, or thing that is known from literature, history, religion, myth, politics, or some other field of knowledge
analogy	a comparison of two things to show that they are alike in certain respects
anecdote	a brief and sometimes witty story that focuses on a single interesting incident or event, often in order to make a point or teach a moral lesson
antagonist	the character or force that opposes or blocks the protagonist, or main character, in a narrative
assonance	the repetition of similar vowel sounds followed by different consonant sounds in words that are close together
atmosphere	the mood or feeling in a literary work
autobiography	a written account of a person's own life
ballad	a song or songlike poem, often from the oral tradition, that tells a story
biography	an account of a person's life written or told by another person
character	an individual on a story, play, or narrative poem
characterization	the process by which the writer reveals the personality of a character
climax	the point of greatest emotional intensity or suspense in a plot when the outcome of the conflict becomes known
conflict	a struggle or clash between opposing characters, forces, or emotions
connotation	all the meanings, associations, or emotions that a word suggests
couplet	two consecutive lines of poetry that rhyme
denotation	the literal, dictionary definition of a word

dialect	a way of speaking that is characteristic of a particular region or group of people
dialogue	a way of speaking that is characteristic of a particular region or group of people
diction	a writer's or speaker's choice of words
drama	a story that is written to be acted out in front of an audience
dramatic irony	irony that occurs when the audience or the reader knows something important that a character in a play or story does not know
dynamic character	a character that experiences a change over the course of a story
elegy	a poem that mourns the death of a person or laments something lost
epic	a long narrative poem that relates the great deeds of a larger-than-life hero who embodies the values of a particular society
epic hero	an epic's larger-than-life main character whose mighty deeds reflect the values admired by the society that created the epic
exposition	the part of the plot that introduces the characters, setting, and usually the narrative's major conflict
extended metaphor	a metaphor that is developed over several lines of writing or even through an entire poem or paragraph
external conflict	a character struggles against some outside force: another character, society as a whole, or some natural force
fable	a very brief story in prose or verse that teaches a moral or practical lesson about life
fiction	any form of narrative which contains events that are not factual but imaginary
figurative language	a word or phrase that describes one thing in terms of another and is not meant to be understood on a literal level
first-person point of view	the point of view where the narrator is a character in the story; it uses the pronoun "I" and the narrator can tell us

	his or her experiences but cannot reveal with certainty any other characters private thoughts
flashback	a scene in a narrative work that interrupts the present action of the plot to "flash backward" and tell what happened at an earlier time
folk tale	a story with no known author that originally was passed on from one generation to another by word of mouth
foreshadowing	clues that hint at what is going to happen later in the plot
free verse	poetry that serves to bind together several different narratives
idiom	an expression peculiar to a particular language that means something different from the literal meaning of the words
imagery	language that appeals to the senses
implied metaphor	a metaphor not explicitly stated or obvious
internal conflict	a struggle between opposing needs, desires, or emotions within a single character
internal rhyme	rhyme that occurs within lines
irony	a contrast or discrepancy between expectations and reality--between what is said and what is really meant, between what is expected and what really happens, or between what appears to be true and what really is true
legend	a story about extraordinary deeds, based to some extent on facts
metaphor	a figure of speech that makes a comparison between two seemingly unlike things without using the connective words like, as, than, or resembles
mood	the overall emotion created by a work of literature
motivation	the reasons that compel a character to act as he or she does
myth	an anonymous, traditional story that explains a belief, a custom, or a

	mysterious natural phenomenon
narrative	any work of literature, written or oral, that tells a story
nonfiction	prose writing that presents real events using either narrative or expository structures
ode	a complex, generally lengthy lyric poem on a serious subject
omniscient point of view	the person telling the story--the narrator--knows everything that's going on in the story
onomatopoeia	the use of a word whose sound limits or suggests its meaning
personification	a kind of metaphor in which a nonhuman thing or quality is talked about as if it were human
plot	the series of related events that make up a narrative, such as a story, a novel, or an epic
poetry	a kind of rhythmic, compressed language that uses figures of speech and imagery designed to appeal to our emotions and imaginations
point of view	the vantage point from which a writer tells a thought
protagonist	the main character in a work of fiction, drama, or narrative poetry
refrain	a repeated word, phrase, line, or group of lines
repetition	the intentional repeating of a sound, word, phrase, line, or idea in order to create a particular literary effect
resolution	all of the mysteries of the plot are unraveled
rhyme	the repetition of accented vowel sounds and all sounds following them in words that are close together in a poem
rhyme scheme	a pattern of end rhymes in a poem
setting	the time and place of a story, play, or narrative poem
short story	a short fictional prose narrative
simile	a figure of speech that makes a comparison between two seemingly

	unlike things by using a connective word such as like, as, than, or resembles
situational irony	occurs when what actually happens is the opposite of what is expected or appropriate
soliloquy	a long speech in which a character who usually is alone onstage expresses his or her private thoughts or feelings
sonnet	a fourteen-line lyric poem, usually written in iambic pentameter, that has one of several traditional rhyme schemes
speaker	the imaginary voice, or persona, assumed by the author of a poem
speech	a more or less formal address delivered to an audience or assembly or the written or printed copy of this address
stanza	a group of lines in a poem that forms a single unit
static character	a character who doesn't experience a change over the course of a story
style	the unique manner in which writers use language to express their ideas
suspense	the uncertainty or anxiety a reader feels about what will happen next in a story
symbol	a person, place, thing, or event that stands for both itself and for something beyond itself
theme	the central idea or insight of a work of literature
tone	the attitude a writer takes toward the reader, a subject, or a character
tragedy	a play, novel, or other narrative depicting serious and important events, in which the main character comes to an unhappy end
understatement	a figure of speech that consists of saying something with less force than is appropriate
verbal irony	irony which occurs when a writer or speaker says one thing but really means the opposite