

## **FORMAL ELEMENTS OF LITERATURE**

**CHARACTERS:** The people who are involved in what happens in a story. Characters may be flat (simple, one-dimensional, static) or round (complex, dynamic, detailed). The main character can usually be labeled the protagonist or hero; he or she is often in conflict with the antagonist or villain.

**SETTING:** The physical details of the place, the time, and the social context that influence the actions of the characters. Often setting also evokes a mood or atmosphere, foreshadowing event to come.

**NARRATOR:** The dramatic voice of the person telling a story. A narrator can be reliable or unreliable and omniscient (all-knowing), limited omniscient (partly knowing) or objective (detached observation).

**TONE:** The way authors convey their unstated attitudes toward their subjects as revealed in style. Tone can be described as serious or comic, ironic or naïve, angry or funny, or any other emotional states that human beings can experience and find words to express.

**DICTION:** A writer's choice of language, including word phrases, and sentence structure. Diction is an important element of style. The same idea will leave a different impression on the reader when it is narrated in street slang, in the precise language of an old schoolteacher, or in the professional jargon of a social worker.

**IMAGERY:** A concrete representation of a sense impression, a feeling, or an idea that appeals to one or more of our senses. Types of imagery: tactile (touch), aural (hearing), olfactory (smell), visual (sight) and gustatory (taste).

**THEME:** A generalization about the meaning of a story.