

Introduction to Literary Theory



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CONTENTS

	Introduction	4
Lecture 1.	Literary Theory – Science of Literature	5
Lecture 2.	Traditional Literary Criticism	10
Lecture 3.	Formalism and New Criticism	10
Lecture 4.	Structuralism and Poststructuralism	12
Lecture 5.	New Historicism and Cultural Materialsim	14
Lecture 6.	Ethnic Studies and Postcolonial Criticism	15
Lecture 7.	Gender and Cultural Studies	17
Lecture 8.	Theme and Idea	19
Lecture 9.	Plot	21
Lecture 10.	Setting	23
Lecture 11.	Characters and Point of View	24
Lecture 12.	Conflict	28
Lecture 13.	Literary Forms (Kinds) and Genres	33
Lecture 14.	Literary Devices	40
Lecture 15.	Imagery	45
	Glossary	49
	References	67

INTRODUCTION

"Literary theory" is the body of ideas and methods we use in the practical reading of literature. By literary theory we refer not to the meaning of a work of literature but to the theories that reveal what literature can mean.

Literary theory is a description of the underlying principles, one might say the tools, by which we attempt to understand literature. All literary interpretation draws on a basis in theory but can serve as a justification for very different kinds of critical activity. It is literary theory that formulates the relationship between author and work; literary theory develops the significance of race, class, and gender for literary study, both from the standpoint of the biography of the author and an analysis of their thematic presence within texts.

Literary theory offers varying approaches for understanding the role of historical context in interpretation as well as the relevance of linguistic and unconscious elements of the text. Literary theorists trace the history and evolution of the different genres - narrative, dramatic, lyric - in addition to the more recent emergence of the novel and the short story, while also investigating the importance of formal elements of literary structure. Lastly, literary theory in recent years has sought to explain the degree to which the text is more the product of a culture than an individual author and in turn how those texts help to create the culture.

LECTURE 1. LITERARY THEORY – SCIENCE OF LITERATURE.

Plan:

1.1. Definition of the word "Literature".

1.2. What is Literary Theory?

Basic notions: literature, culture, fine writing, culturally relative definition, imaginative, literariness, poeticity, ordinary language, literatura, litera, literary theory, critical theory, cultural theory.

1.1. Definition of the word "Literature".

The quest to discover a definition for "literature" is a road that is much travelled, though the point of arrival, if ever reached, is seldom satisfactory. Most attempted definitions are broad and vague, and they inevitably change over time. In fact, the only thing that is certain about defining literature is that the definition will change. Concepts of what is literature change over time as well.

Simon Ryan & Delyse Ryan

There have been various attempts to define "literature." Definitions of literature have varied over time; it is a *"culturally relative definition."* In Western Europe prior to the 18th century, literature as a term indicated all books and writing. A more restricted sense of the term emerged during the Romantic period, in which it began to demarcate *"imaginative"* literature. Contemporary debates over what constitutes literature can be seen as returning to the older, more inclusive notion of what constitutes literature. Cultural studies, for instance, takes as its subject of analysis both popular and minority genres, in addition to canonical works.

The value judgement definition of literature considers it to exclusively include writing that possesses a literary quality or distinction, forming part of the so-called belles-lettres ('fine writing') tradition. This is the definition used in the Encyclopædia Britannica 11th Edition (1910-1911) when it classifies *literature* as "the best expression of the best thought reduced to writing." However, this

has the result that there is no objective definition of what constitutes "literature"; anything can be literature, and anything which is universally regarded as literature has the potential to be excluded, since value-judgements can change over time.

The formalist definition is that the history of "literature" foregrounds poetic effects; it is the "*literariness*" or "*poeticity*" of literature that distinguishes it from ordinary speech or other kinds of writing (e.g. "journalism"). Jim Meyer considers this a useful characteristic in explaining the use of the term to mean published material in a particular field (e.g. "scientific literature"), as such writing must use language according to particular standards. The problem with the formalist definition is that in order to say that literature deviates from ordinary uses of language, those uses must first be identified; this is difficult because "*ordinary language*" is an unstable category, differing according to social categories and across history.

Etymologically, the term derives from Latin "literatura" ("litteratura") - "learning, a writing, grammar," originally "writing formed with letters," from "litera" ("littera") - "letter". In spite of this, the term has also been applied to spoken or sung texts.

1.2. What is Literary Theory?

"*Literary theory*," sometimes designated "*critical theory*," or "theory," and now undergoing a transformation into "*cultural theory*" within the discipline of literary studies, can be understood as the set of concepts and intellectual assumptions on which rests the work of explaining or interpreting literary texts. Literary theory refers to any principles derived from internal analysis of literary texts or from knowledge external to the text that can be applied in multiple interpretive situations. All critical practice regarding literature depends on an underlying structure of ideas in at least two ways: theory provides a rationale for what constitutes the subject matter of criticism - "the literary" - and the specific aims of critical practice - the act of interpretation itself. The structure of ideas that enables criticism of a literary work may or may not be acknowledged by the

critic, and the status of literary theory within the academic discipline of literary studies continues to evolve.

Literary theory and the formal practice of literary interpretation runs a parallel but less well known course with the history of philosophy and is evident in the historical record at least as far back as Plato's meditation on the relationship of words and the things to which they refer. Plato's skepticism about signification, i.e., that words bear no etymological relationship to their meanings but are arbitrarily "imposed," becomes a central concern in the 20th century to both "Structuralism" and "Poststructuralism." However, a persistent belief in "reference," the notion that words and images refer to an objective reality, has provided epistemological support for theories of literary representation throughout most of history. Until the 19th century, "Art", in Shakespeare's phrase, held "a mirror up to nature" and faithfully recorded an objectively real world independent of the observer.

Modern literary theory gradually emerges in Europe during the 19th century. In one of the earliest developments of literary theory, German "higher criticism" subjected texts to a radical historicizing that broke with traditional scriptural interpretation. "Higher," or "source criticism," analyzed ancient tales in light of comparable narratives from other cultures, an approach that anticipated some of the method and spirit of 20th century theory, particularly "Structuralism" and "New Historicism." In France, the eminent literary critic Charles Augustin Saint Beuve maintained that a work of literature could be explained entirely in terms of biography, while novelist Marcel Proust devoted his life to refuting Saint Beuve in a massive narrative in which he contended that the details of the life of the artist are utterly transformed in the work of art. This dispute was taken up anew by the French theorist *Roland Barthes* in his famous declaration of the "Death of the Author." Perhaps the greatest 19th century influence on literary theory came from the deep epistemological suspicion of Friedrich Nietzsche: that facts are not facts until they have been interpreted. Nietzsche's critique of

knowledge has had a profound impact on literary studies and helped usher in an era of intense literary theorizing that has yet to pass.

Attention to the etymology of the term "theory," from the Greek "theoria," alerts us to the partial nature of theoretical approaches to literature. "Theoria" indicates a view or perspective of the Greek stage. This is precisely what literary theory offers, though specific theories often claim to present a complete system for understanding literature. The current state of theory is such that there are many overlapping areas of influence, and older schools of theory, though no longer enjoying their previous eminence, continue to exert an influence on the whole. The once widely-held conviction (an implicit theory) that literature is a repository of all that is meaningful and ennobling in the human experience.

While literary theory has always implied or directly expressed a conception of the world outside the text, in the 20th century 3 movements: *Frankfurt School*, *"Feminism,"* and *"Postmodernism"* - have opened the field of literary studies into a broader area of inquiry.

Frankfurt approach to literature require an understanding of the primary economic and social bases of culture since its aesthetic theory sees the work of art as a product, directly or indirectly, of the base structure of society.

Feminist thought and practice analyzes the production of literature and literary representation within the framework that includes all social and cultural formations as they pertain to the role of women in history.

Postmodern thought consists of both aesthetic and epistemological strands. Postmodernism in art has included a move toward non-referential, non-linear, abstract forms; a heightened degree of self-referentiality; and the collapse of categories and conventions that had traditionally governed art. Postmodern thought has led to the serious questioning of the so-called metanarratives of history, science, philosophy, economic and social reproduction. Under postmodernity, all knowledge comes to be seen as "constructed" within historical self-contained systems of

understanding. Frankfurt, feminist, and postmodern thought have brought about the incorporation of all human discourses (that is, interlocking fields of language and knowledge) as a subject matter for analysis by the literary theorist. Using the various poststructuralist and postmodern theories that often draw on disciplines other than the literary—linguistic, anthropological, psychoanalytic, and philosophical—for their primary insights, literary theory has become an interdisciplinary body of cultural theory. Taking as its premise that human societies and knowledge consist of texts in one form or another, cultural theory (for better or worse) is now applied to the varieties of texts, ambitiously undertaking to become the preeminent model of inquiry into the human condition.

Literary theory is a site of theories: some theories, like "Queer Theory," are "in;" other literary theories, like "Deconstruction," are "out" but continue to exert an influence on the field. "Traditional literary criticism," "New Criticism," and "Structuralism" are alike in that they held to the view that the study of literature has an objective body of knowledge under its scrutiny. The other schools of literary theory, to varying degrees, embrace a postmodern view of language and reality that calls into serious question the objective referent of literary studies. The following categories are certainly not exhaustive, nor are they mutually exclusive, but they represent the major trends in literary theory of this century.

Questions:

1. Define the notion of "literature".
2. What is the role of learning literature?
3. What subjects are related to the theory of literature?
4. Give information about myths and folklore.
5. What are the main differences between the Eastern and the West Europe literary criticism?
6. What are the basic movements in modern theory of literature?

LECTURE 2. TRADITIONAL LITERARY CRITICISM.

Basic notions: Traditional literary criticism, Formalism, form, content, defamiliarization, New Criticism, Structuralism, Poststructuralism, deconstruction, genealogy, New Historicism, Cultural Materialism, text, context, Ethnic Studies, Postcolonial Criticism, double consciousness, the Orient, Gender Studies, feminism, Cultural Studies.

Academic literary criticism prior to the rise of "New Criticism" tended to practice traditional literary history: tracking influence, establishing the canon of major writers in the literary periods, and clarifying historical context and allusions within the text. Literary biography was and still is an important interpretive method in and out of the academy. Perhaps the key unifying feature of traditional literary criticism was the consensus within the academy as to the both the literary canon (that is, the books all educated persons should read) and the aims and purposes of literature. What literature was, and why we read literature, and what we read, were questions that subsequent movements in literary theory were to raise.

LECTURE 3. FORMALISM AND NEW CRITICISM.

Basic notions: Traditional literary criticism, Formalism, form, content, defamiliarization, New Criticism, Structuralism, Poststructuralism, deconstruction, genealogy, New Historicism, Cultural Materialism, text, context, Ethnic Studies, Postcolonial Criticism, double consciousness, the Orient, Gender Studies, feminism, Cultural Studies.

"Formalism" is, as the name implies, an interpretive approach that emphasizes literary form and the study of literary devices within the text. The work of the Formalists had a general impact on later developments in "Structuralism" and other theories of narrative. "Formalism," like "Structuralism," sought to place the study of

literature on a scientific basis through objective analysis of the motifs, devices, techniques, and other "functions" that comprise the literary work. The Formalists placed great importance on the *literariness* of texts, those qualities that distinguished the literary from other kinds of writing. Neither author nor context was essential for the Formalists; it was the narrative that spoke, the "hero-function," for example, that had meaning. Form was the content. A plot device or narrative strategy was examined for how it functioned and compared to how it had functioned in other literary works. Of the Russian Formalist critics, *Roman Jakobson* and *Viktor Shklovsky* are probably the most well-known.

The Formalist adage that the purpose of literature was "to make the stones stonier" nicely expresses their notion of literariness. "Formalism" is perhaps best known by Shklovsky's *concept of "defamiliarization."* The routine of ordinary experience, Shklovsky contended, rendered invisible the uniqueness and particularity of the objects of existence. Literary language, partly by calling attention to itself as language, estranged the reader from the familiar and made fresh the experience of daily life.

The "*New Criticism*," so designated as to indicate a break with traditional methods, was a product of the American university in the 1930s and 40s. "New Criticism" stressed close reading of the text itself, much like the French pedagogical precept "explication du texte." As a strategy of reading, "New Criticism" viewed the work of literature as an aesthetic object independent of historical context and as a unified whole that reflected the unified sensibility of the artist. *T.S. Eliot* expressed a similar critical-aesthetic philosophy in his essays on *John Donne* and the metaphysical poets, writers who Eliot believed experienced a complete integration of thought and feeling. New Critics like *Cleanth Brooks*, *John Crowe Ransom*, *Robert Penn Warren* and *W.K. Wimsatt* placed a similar focus on the metaphysical poets and poetry in general, a genre well suited to New Critical practice. "New Criticism" aimed at bringing a greater intellectual rigor to literary studies, confining itself to careful scrutiny of the text alone and the formal structures of paradox, ambiguity,

irony, and metaphor, among others. "New Criticism" was fired by the conviction that their readings of poetry would yield a humanizing influence on readers and thus counter the alienating tendencies of modern, industrial life. Perhaps the enduring legacy of "New Criticism" can be found in the college classroom, in which the verbal texture of the poem on the page remains a primary object of literary study.

LECTURE 4. STRUCTURALISM AND POSTSTRUCTURALISM.

Basic notions: Traditional literary criticism, Formalism, form, content, defamiliarization, New Criticism, Structuralism, Poststructuralism, deconstruction, genealogy, New Historicism, Cultural Materialism, text, context, Ethnic Studies, Postcolonial Criticism, double consciousness, the Orient, Gender Studies, feminism, Cultural Studies.

Like the "New Criticism," "*Structuralism*" sought to bring to literary studies a set of objective criteria for analysis and a new intellectual rigor. "Structuralism" can be viewed as an extension of "Formalism" in that both "Structuralism" and "Formalism" devoted their attention to matters of literary form (i.e. structure) rather than social or historical content; and that both bodies of thought were intended to put the study of literature on a scientific, objective basis. "Structuralism" relied initially on the ideas of the Swiss linguist, Ferdinand de Saussure. Like Plato, Saussure regarded the signifier (words, marks, symbols) as arbitrary and unrelated to the concept, the signified, to which it referred. Within the way a particular society uses language and signs, meaning was constituted by a system of "differences" between units of the language. Particular meanings were of less interest than the underlying structures of signification that made meaning itself possible, often expressed as an emphasis on "langue" rather than "parole." "Structuralism" was to be a metalanguage, a language about languages, used to decode actual languages, or systems of signification. The work of the "Formalist"

Roman Jakobson contributed to "Structuralist" thought, and the more prominent Structuralists included *Claude Levi-Strauss* in anthropology, *Tzvetan Todorov*, *A.J. Greimas*, *Gerard Genette*, and *Roland Barthes*.

The philosopher Roland Barthes proved to be a key figure on the divide between "Structuralism" and "Poststructuralism." "*Poststructuralism*" is less unified as a theoretical movement than its precursor; indeed, the work of its advocates known by the term "*Deconstruction*" calls into question the possibility of the coherence of discourse, or the capacity for language to communicate. "Deconstruction," "*Semiotic theory*" (a study of signs with close connections to "Structuralism," "*Reader response theory*" in America, "*Reception theory*" in Europe), and "*Gender theory*" informed by the psychoanalysts *Jacques Lacan* and *Julia Kristeva* are areas of inquiry that can be located under the banner of "Poststructuralism." If signifier and signified are both cultural concepts, as they are in "Poststructuralism," reference to an empirically certifiable reality is no longer guaranteed by language. "Deconstruction" argues that this loss of reference causes an endless deferral of meaning, a system of differences between units of language that has no resting place or final signifier that would enable the other signifiers to hold their meaning. The most important theorist of "Deconstruction," Jacques Derrida, has asserted, "There is no getting outside text," indicating a kind of free play of signification in which no fixed, stable meaning is possible. "Poststructuralism" in America was originally identified with a group of Yale academics, *the Yale School of "Deconstruction:"* J. Hillis Miller, Geoffrey Hartmann, and Paul de Man. Other tendencies in the moment after "Deconstruction" that share some of the intellectual tendencies of "Poststructuralism" would include the "Reader response" theories of Stanley Fish, Jane Tompkins, and Wolfgang Iser.

Michel Foucault is another philosopher, like Barthes, whose ideas inform much of poststructuralist literary theory. Foucault played a critical role in the development of the postmodern perspective that knowledge is constructed in concrete historical

situations in the form of discourse; knowledge is not communicated by discourse but is discourse itself, can only be encountered textually. Following Nietzsche, Foucault performs what he calls "*genealogies*," attempts at deconstructing the unacknowledged operation of power and knowledge to reveal the ideologies that make domination of one group by another seem "natural." Foucauldian investigations of discourse and power were to provide much of the intellectual impetus for a new way of looking at history and doing textual studies that came to be known as the "New Historicism."

LECTURE 5. NEW HISTORICISM AND CULTURAL MATERIALISM.

Basic notions: Traditional literary criticism, Formalism, form, content, defamiliarization, New Criticism, Structuralism, Poststructuralism, deconstruction, genealogy, New Historicism, Cultural Materialism, text, context, Ethnic Studies, Postcolonial Criticism, double consciousness, the Orient, Gender Studies, feminism, Cultural Studies.

"New Historicism," a term coined by *Stephen Greenblatt*, designates a body of theoretical and interpretive practices that began largely with the study of early modern literature. "New Historicism" in the USA had been somewhat anticipated by the theorists of *"Cultural Materialism"* in Britain, which, in the words of their leading advocate, Raymond Williams describes "the analysis of all forms of signification, including quite centrally writing, within the actual means and conditions of their production." Both "New Historicism" and "Cultural Materialism" seek to understand literary texts historically and reject the formalizing influence of previous literary studies, including "New Criticism," "Structuralism" and "Deconstruction," all of which in varying ways privilege the literary text and place only secondary emphasis on historical and social context. According to "New Historicism," the circulation of literary and non-literary texts produces relations of social power within a

culture. New Historicist thought differs from traditional historicism in literary studies in several crucial ways. Rejecting traditional historicism's premise of neutral inquiry, "New Historicism" accepts the necessity of making historical value judgments. According to "New Historicism," we can only know the textual history of the past because it is "embedded," a key term, in the textuality of the present and its concerns. Text and context are less clearly distinct in New Historicist practice. Traditional separations of literary and non-literary texts, "great" literature and popular literature, are also fundamentally challenged. For the "New Historicist," all acts of expression are embedded in the material conditions of a culture. Texts are examined with an eye for how they reveal the economic and social realities, especially as they produce ideology and represent power or subversion.

Louis Montrose, an innovator and exponent of "New Historicism," describes a fundamental axiom of the movement as an intellectual belief in "the textuality of history and the historicity of texts." "New Historicism" draws on the work of Levi-Strauss, in particular his notion of culture as a "self-regulating system." The Foucauldian premise that power is ubiquitous and cannot be equated with state or economic power and Gramsci's conception of "hegemony," i.e., that domination is often achieved through culturally-orchestrated consent rather than force, are critical underpinnings to the "New Historicist" perspective. Equally, "New Historicism's" lack of emphasis on "literariness" and formal literary concerns brought disdain from traditional literary scholars. However, "New Historicism" continues to exercise a major influence in the humanities and in the extended conception of literary studies.

LECTURE 6. ETHNIC STUDIES AND POSTCOLONIAL CRITICISM.

Basic notions: Traditional literary criticism, Formalism, form, content, defamiliarization, New Criticism, Structuralism, Poststructuralism, deconstruction, genealogy, New Historicism, Cultural Materialism, text, context, Ethnic Studies, Postcolonial

Criticism, double consciousness, the Orient, Gender Studies, feminism, Cultural Studies.

"Ethnic Studies," sometimes referred to as *"Minority Studies,"* has an obvious historical relationship with *"Postcolonial Criticism"* in that Euro-American imperialism and colonization in the last 4 centuries, whether external (empire) or internal (slavery) has been directed at recognizable ethnic groups: African and African-American, Chinese, the subaltern peoples of India, Irish, Latino, Native American, and Philipino, among others. "Ethnic Studies" concerns itself generally with art and literature produced by identifiable ethnic groups either marginalized or in a subordinate position to a dominant culture. *"Postcolonial Criticism"* investigates the relationships between colonizers and colonized in the period post-colonization. Though the two fields are increasingly finding points of intersection - the work of bell hooks, for example — and are both activist intellectual enterprises, "Ethnic Studies and "Postcolonial Criticism" have significant differences in their history and ideas.

"Ethnic Studies" has had a considerable impact on literary studies in the USA and Britain. In W.E.B. Dubois, we find an early attempt to theorize the position of African-Americans within dominant white culture through his concept of *"double consciousness,"* a dual identity including both "American" and "Negro." Dubois and theorists after him seek an understanding of how that double experience both creates identity and reveals itself in culture. Afro-Caribbean and African writers — Aime Cesaire, Frantz Fanon, Chinua Achebe - have made significant early contributions to the theory and practice of ethnic criticism that explores the traditions, sometimes suppressed or underground, of ethnic literary activity while providing a critique of representations of ethnic identity as found within the majority culture. Ethnic and minority literary theory emphasizes the relationship of cultural identity to individual identity in historical circumstances of overt racial oppression. More recently, scholars and writers such as Henry Louis

Gates, Toni Morrison, and Kwame Anthony Appiah have brought attention to the problems inherent in applying theoretical models derived from Euro-centric paradigms (that is, structures of thought) to minority works of literature while at the same time exploring new interpretive strategies for understanding the vernacular (common speech) traditions of racial groups that have been historically marginalized by dominant cultures.

Though not the first writer to explore the historical condition of postcolonialism, the Palestinian literary theorist Edward Said's book "Orientalism" is generally regarded as having inaugurated the field of explicitly "Postcolonial Criticism" in the West. Said argues that the concept of "*the Orient*" was produced by the "imaginative geography" of Western scholarship and has been instrumental in the colonization and domination of non-Western societies. "Postcolonial" theory reverses the historical center/margin direction of cultural inquiry: critiques of the metropolis and capital now emanate from the former colonies. Moreover, theorists like Homi K. Bhabha have questioned the binary thought that produces the dichotomies — center/margin, white/black, and colonizer/colonized - by which colonial practices are justified. Like feminist and ethnic theory, "Postcolonial Criticism" pursues not merely the inclusion of the marginalized literature of colonial peoples into the dominant canon and discourse. "Postcolonial Criticism" offers a fundamental critique of the ideology of colonial domination and at the same time seeks to undo the "imaginative geography" of Orientalist thought that produced conceptual as well as economic divides between West and East, civilized and uncivilized, First and Third Worlds.

LECTURE 7. GENDER AND CULTURAL STUDIES.

Basic notions: Traditional literary criticism, Formalism, form, content, defamiliarization, New Criticism, Structuralism, Poststructuralism, deconstruction, genealogy, New Historicism, Cultural Materialism, text, context, Ethnic Studies, Postcolonial

Criticism, double consciousness, the Orient, Gender Studies, feminism, Cultural Studies.

Gender theory came to the forefront of the theoretical scene as feminist. Feminist gender theory followed slightly behind the reemergence of political feminism in the USA and Western Europe during the 1960s. Feminism of the so-called "second wave" had as its emphasis practical concerns with the rights of women in contemporary societies, women's identity, and the representation of women in media and culture. These causes converged with early literary feminist practice, characterized by Elaine Showalter as "gynocriticism," which emphasized the study and canonical inclusion of works by female authors as well as the depiction of women in male-authored canonical texts.

Feminist gender theory is postmodern in that it challenges the paradigms and intellectual premises of western thought, but also takes an activist stance by proposing frequent interventions and alternative epistemological positions meant to change the social order. In the context of postmodernism, gender theorists were led by the work of Judith Butler. Gender theory achieved a wide readership and acquired much its initial theoretical rigor through the work of a group of French feminist theorists that included Simone de Beauvoir, Luce Irigaray, Helene Cixous, and Julia Kristeva.

Much of the intellectual legacy of "New Historicism" and "Cultural Materialism" can now be felt in the *"Cultural Studies"* movement in departments of literature, a movement not identifiable in terms of a single theoretical school, but one that embraces a wide array of perspectives - media studies, social criticism, anthropology, and literary theory - as they apply to the general study of culture. "Cultural Studies" arose quite self-consciously in the 80s to provide a means of analysis of the rapidly expanding global culture industry that includes entertainment, advertising, publishing, television, film, computers and the Internet. "Cultural Studies" became notorious in the 90s for its emphasis on pop music icons and music video in place of canonical literature, and extends the ideas of the Frankfurt School

on the transition from a truly popular culture to mass culture in late capitalist societies, emphasizing the significance of the patterns of consumption of cultural artifacts. "Cultural Studies" has been interdisciplinary, even antidisciplinary, from its inception; indeed, "Cultural Studies" can be understood as a set of sometimes conflicting methods and approaches applied to a questioning of current cultural categories. Stuart Hall, Meaghan Morris, Tony Bennett and Simon During are some of the important advocates of a "Cultural Studies" that seeks to displace the traditional model of literary studies.

Questions:

1. Define the characteristic features of Traditional Literary Criticism.
2. Define the characteristic features of Formalism and New Criticism.
3. Define the characteristic features of Structuralism and Poststructuralism.
4. Define the characteristic features of New Historicism and Cultural Materialism.
5. Define the characteristic features of Ethnic Studies and Postcolonial Criticism.
6. Define the characteristic features of Gender Studies.
7. Define the characteristic features of Cultural Studies.

LECTURE 8. THEME AND IDEA.

Plan:

8.1. The term "Composition".

8.2. Theme and Idea.

Basic notions: composition, structure, narrative, theme, thematic concept, subject, idea.

8.1. The term "Composition".

The term **composition** (from Latin "com" - "with" and "ponere" - "to place"), in written language, refers to the collective body of important features established by the author in their creation of literature. Composition relates to narrative works of literature, but also relates to essays, biographies, and other works established in the field of rhetoric.

In narratives (primarily fiction), composition includes, but is not limited to:

- Outline, the organisations of thoughts and/or ideas which is used to determine organisational technique
- Plot, the course or arrangement of events
- Theme, the unifying subject or idea
- Dialogue, a reciprocal conversation between two or more persons
- Characterisation, the process of creating characters
- Setting, the time and location in which the composition takes place
- Description, definitions of things in the composition
- Style, specifically, the linguistic style of the composition
- Setting tone or mood, conveying one or more emotions or feelings through words
- Voice, the individual writing style of the author
- Tone, which encompasses the attitudes toward the subject and toward the audience

8.2. Theme and Idea.

In contemporary literary studies, a **theme** is the central topic a text treats. Themes can be divided into two categories: a work's thematic concept is what readers "think the work is about" and its thematic statement being "what the work says about the subject". The most common contemporary understanding of theme is an idea or point that is central to a story, which can often be summed in a single word (e.g. love, death, betrayal). Typical examples of themes of this type are conflict between the individual and society; coming of age; humans in conflict with technology; nostalgia; and the

dangers of unchecked ambition. A theme may be exemplified by the actions, utterances, or thoughts of a character in a novel. An example of this would be the theme loneliness in John Steinbeck's "Of Mice and Men", wherein many of the characters seem to be lonely. It may differ from the thesis — the text's or author's implied worldview. A story may have several themes. Themes often explore historically common or cross-culturally recognizable ideas, such as ethical questions, and are usually implied rather than stated explicitly. An example of this would be whether one should live a seemingly better life, at the price of giving up parts of one's humanity, which is a theme in Aldous Huxley's Brave New World. Along with plot, character, setting, and style, theme is considered one of the components of fiction.

The *idea* of a literary work is the underlying thought and emotional attitude transmitted to the reader by the whole poetic structure of the literary text. All the layers of poetic structure (direct, metaphorical and symbolic) pertain to the expression of the idea. Idea can also be defined as the underlying meaning of the story rarely interpreted in only one way.

Questions:

1. How do you understand the word "composition"?
2. What is included into the composition of a literary work?
3. What is the theme of a literary work?
4. What is the idea of a literary work?

LECTURE 9. PLOT.

Basic notions: composition, structure, narrative, theme, thematic concept, subject, idea.

Plot is a literary term defined as the events that make up a story, particularly as they relate to one another in a pattern, in a sequence, through cause and effect, how the reader views the story, or simply by coincidence. One is generally interested in how well this

pattern of events accomplishes some artistic or emotional effect. An intricate, complicated plot is called an imbroglio, but even the simplest statements of plot may include multiple inferences, as in traditional ballads. In other words, a plot is the gist of a story, and composed of causal events, which means a series of sentences linked by "and so." A plot highlights all the important points and the line of a story. Ansen Dibell writes, "Plot is built of significant events in a given story - significant because they have important consequences." Consequently, it also has the same meaning as storyline. The plot is the narrative and thematic development of the story - that is, what happens and what these events mean. Plot is a series of events that depend on one another, not a sequence of unrelated episodes.

The plot traditionally moves through five distinct stages: Exposition-Complication (Rising Action)-Crisis (Climax)-Falling action-Resolution (Denouement).

EXPOSITION is the beginning section in which the author provides the necessary background information, sets the scene, establishes the situation, dates the action, introduces the characters. The exposition may be accomplished in a single sentence or paragraph, or, in the case of some novels, occupy an entire chapter or more.

COMPLICATION breaks the existing balance and introduces the underlying or inciting conflict. The conflict is then developed gradually and intensified.

CRISIS is that moment at which the plot reaches its point of greatest emotional intensity; it is the turning point of the plot, directly precipitating its resolution.

FALLING ACTION: Once the crisis, or turning point, has been reached, the tension subsides and the plot moves toward its appointed conclusion.

RESOLUTION: The final section of the plot which records the outcome of the conflict and establishes some new equilibrium or stability (however tentative and momentary).

Plot devices. A plot device is a means of advancing the plot in a story, often used to motivate characters, create urgency, or resolve a difficulty. This can be contrasted with moving a story forward with narrative (or dramatic) technique; that is, by making things happen because characters take action for well-motivated reasons. As an example, when the cavalry shows up at the last moment and saves the day in a battle, that can be argued to be a plot device; when an adversarial character who has been struggling with himself saves the day due to a change of heart, that is dramatic technique. Familiar types of plot devices include the Deus ex machina, the MacGuffin, the red herring, and Chekhov's gun.

Plot outline. A plot outline is a prose telling of a story which can be turned into a screenplay. Sometimes called a "one page" (one-page synopsis, about 1-3 pages in length). It is generally longer and more detailed than a standard synopsis (1-2 paragraphs), but shorter and less detailed than a treatment or a step outline. There are different ways to create these outlines and they vary in length, but are essentially the same thing. In comics, a pencil, often pluralized as "pencils", refers to a stage in the development where the story has been broken down very loosely in a style similar to storyboarding in film development. The pencils will be very loose (i.e., the rough sketch), the main goals being to lay out the flow of panels across a page, to ensure the story successfully builds suspense and to work out points of view, camera angles, and character positions within panels. This can also be referred to as a "plot outline" or a "layout". In fiction writing, a plot outline is a "laundry list of scenes" with each line being a separate plot point, and the outline helps give a story a "solid backbone and structure," according to Jenna Blum.

LECTURE 10. SETTING.

Basic notions: composition, structure, narrative, theme, thematic concept, subject, idea.

Setting is literary time and space. Setting denotes the location, historical period, and social surroundings in which the action of a text develops, the background, atmosphere or environment in which characters live and move. Thus it may be physical, social, spatial and temporal. Depending on the way of its presentation a setting may be simple or elaborate. According to the number and quality of details it gives a setting can be complex, minimal or inferred.

Setting is called on to perform a number of desired functions:

- (1) to provide background for the action;
- (2) as an antagonist (to establish conflict);
- (3) as a means of creating appropriate atmosphere;
- (4) as a means of revealing character (metaphor);
- (5) as a means of reinforcing theme to illustrate or clarify,
- (6) even as a way to distract the reader.

These functions must not, however, be thought of as mutually exclusive. In many works of fiction, setting can and does perform a number of different functions simultaneously.

Questions:

1. What is the plot of a literary work?
2. What is exposition?
3. What is complication?
4. What is rising action?
5. What is crisis?
6. What is falling action?
7. What is resolution?
8. What is the role of setting in a literary work?

LECTURE 11. CHARACTERS AND POINT OF VIEW.

Plan:

11.1. Characterization and Point of View.

Basic notions: characterization, direct characterization, indirect characterization, a character, point of view.

Characterization is a literary device that is used step by step in literature to highlight and explain the details about a character in a story. It is in the initial stage where the writer introduces the character with noticeable emergence and then following the introduction of the character, the writer often talks about his behavior; then as the story progresses, the thought-process of the character. The next stage involves the character expressing his opinions and ideas and getting into conversations with the rest of the characters. The final part shows how others in the story respond to the character's personality.

Characterization as a literary tool was coined in the mid 15th century. Aristotle in his Poetics argued that "tragedy is a representation, not of men, but of action and life". Thus the assertion of the dominance of plot over characters, termed as plot-driven narrative, is unmistakable. This point of view was later on abandoned by many because, in the 19th century, the dominance of character over plot became clear through petty bourgeois novels.

Types of Characterization

An author can use two approaches to deliver information about a character and build an image of it:

1. Direct or explicit characterization

This kind of characterization takes a direct approach towards building the character. It uses another character, narrator or the protagonist himself to tell the readers or audience about the subject.

2. Indirect or implicit characterization

This is a more subtle way of introducing the character to the audience. The audience has to deduce for themselves the characteristics of the character by observing his/her thought process, behavior, speech, way of talking, appearance, and way of communication with other characters and also by discerning the response of other characters.

A character (or fictional character) is a person in a narrative work of arts (such as a novel, play, television series or film). Derived from the ancient Greek word «χαρακτήρ», the English word dates

from the Restoration, although it became widely used after its appearance in *Tom Jones* in 1749. From this, the sense of "a part played by an actor" developed. Character, particularly when enacted by an actor in the theatre or cinema, involves "the illusion of being a human person." In literature, characters guide readers through their stories, helping them to understand plots and ponder themes. Since the end of the 18th century, the phrase "in character" has been used to describe an effective impersonation by an actor. Since the 19th century, the art of creating characters, as practised by actors or writers, has been called characterisation.

A character who stands as a representative of a particular class or group of people is known as **a type**. Types include both stock characters and those that are more fully individualised. The characters in Henrik Ibsen's *Hedda Gabler* (1891) and August Strindberg's *Miss Julie* (1888), for example, are representative of specific positions in the social relations of class and gender, such that the conflicts between the characters reveal ideological conflicts.

The term character applies to any individual in a literary work. For purposes of analysis, characters in fiction are customarily described by 1) their relationship to the plot, 2) by the degree of development they are given by the author, and 3) by whether or not they undergo significant character change.

1) The major, or central character of the plot is the *protagonist*; his opponent, the character against whom the protagonist struggles or contends, is the *antagonist*. The protagonist is the essential character without whom there would be no plot. It is the protagonist's fate (the conflict or problem) on which the attention of the reader is focused. The terms protagonist and antagonist do not imply a judgement about the moral worth. For this purpose they are more suitable terms as hero/heroine, or villain, which connote a degree of moral correctness. Most stories also have minor characters that provide support and illuminate the protagonist.

2) *Flat characters* represent a single characteristic, trait, or idea, or a very limited number of such qualities. They are also referred to as type characters, as one-dimensional characters, or,

when they are distorted to create humour, as caricatures. These characters and their deeds are always predictable and never vary for they are not changed by circumstance. *Round characters* embody a number of qualities and traits, and are complex multidimensional characters of considerable intellectual and emotional depth who have the capacity to grow and change. Major characters in fiction are usually round characters. As there exist two major types of characters, so there are two modes of their representation – typification in order to personify vices, virtues, or philosophical and religious positions and individualization of a character which has evolved into a main feature of the genre of the novel.

3) *Dynamic characters* exhibit a capacity to change; *static characters* do not. The degree of character change varies widely: in some works, the development is so subtle that it may go almost unnoticed; in others, it is sufficiently drastic and profound to cause a reorganization of the character's personality or system of values. Change in character may come slowly over many pages and chapters, or it may take place with a dramatic suddenness that surprises. Dynamic characters include the protagonists in most novels. Static characters leave the plot as they entered it, largely untouched by the events that have taken place. Although static characters tend to be minor ones, this is not always the case.

Methods of Characterization Basic techniques:

1) direct method of telling, which relies on exposition and direct commentary by the author (a method preferred by many older fiction writers).

- Characterization through the use of names.
- Characterization through appearance.
- Characterization by the author.

2) indirect, dramatic method of showing, which involves the author's stepping aside to allow the characters to reveal themselves directly through their dialogue and their actions.

- Characterization through dialogue.
- Characterization through action.

Telling and showing are not mutually exclusive, however. Most authors employ a combination of the two.

Creation of characters

In fiction writing, authors create dynamic characters by many methods, almost always by using their imagination. Jenna Blum in *The Author at Work* described three ways of creating vivid characters:

- a magic character comes into the author's head and "lives there", sometimes "dictates their story" to the author.
- a borrowed character is created by taking an emblematic quality or character trait from a real person, plugging that trait into a fictional situation, and then the author uses imagination to transform the character into a unique construct.
- a made-up character is created from the "ground up", often starting from expediency as a two-dimensional creation which the author then tries to get to know better, sometimes by adding trouble and conflict.

The term ***point of view***, or narrative perspective, characterizes the way in which a text presents persons, events, and settings. The major types of point of view are:

- third-person point of view — omniscient (unspecified narrator presents the action from an all-knowing, God-like perspective) or limited (the story from the third person with a knowledge of what the main character thinks);
- first-person point of view (observations of a character who narrates the story),
- second-person point of view.

LECTURE 12. CONFLICT.

In literature, a conflict is a literary device characterized by a struggle between two opposing forces. Conflict provides crucial tension in any story and is used to drive the narrative forward. It is often used to reveal a deeper meaning in a narrative while highlighting characters' motivations, values, and weaknesses. As

stated above in the definition of conflict, all literature requires conflict to have a storyline. Most stories show a character arc from the beginning of the end, displaying development or transformation of the main character(s) nature or opinions. The majority of this development and transformation occurs due to conflict. Conflict challenges a character's convictions and brings out their strengths and/or weaknesses, much as it does in real life. Note that conflict is not necessarily "bad" and often it is not obvious which side is right or wrong, just that it presents difficulties to the protagonist.

Most stories contain more than one conflict throughout the course of the plot, though often there is one overriding conflict that lasts the duration of the story. For example, in *The Lord of the Rings*, the main conflict is Frodo's struggle to deliver the One Ring to Mount Doom, but of course there are numerous conflicts throughout the trilogy between warring parties and obstacles that occur along the way.

There are six main types of literary conflict, each of which is detailed below.

Internal vs. External Conflict

All conflict falls into two categories: internal and external.

- Internal conflict is when a character struggles with their own opposing desires or beliefs. It happens within them, and it drives their development as a character.
- External conflict sets a character against something or someone beyond their control. External forces stand in the way of a character's motivations and create tension as the character tries to reach their goals.

Including both internal and external conflict is crucial for a good story, because life always includes both.

How to Create Conflict in Your Writing?

To create conflict for your protagonist, you'll need forces of antagonism that work against them. In genre writing, antagonists are usually arch-villains, but they don't have to be people—they can be any oppositional element that thwarts your character's main

desire. In crafting this conflict, it's helpful to remember some basic principles of antagonism.

- The stronger the forces of antagonism are, the more well-developed your character will become.
- The conflict should be tailored to your protagonist's main desire.
- Antagonism has to increase with time, or you'll lose the reader's interest.

The 6 Types of Literary Conflict

Just like it takes two to tango, it also takes two (or more) to create conflict. What you choose to pit your characters against will have a significant effect on what kind of story you tell. Many stories contain multiple types of conflict, but there is usually one that is the main focus.

1. Character vs. Self

This is an internal conflict, meaning that the opposition the character faces is coming from within. This may entail a struggle to discern what the moral or "right" choice is, or it may also encompass mental health struggles. All other types of conflict are external — meaning that a character comes up against an outside force that creates the conflict.

2. Character vs. Character

This is a common type of conflict in which one character's needs or wants are at odds with another's. A character conflict can be depicted as a straightforward fist fight, or as intricate and nuanced as the ongoing struggle for power in the HBO series *Game of Thrones*.

3. Character vs. Nature

In a nature conflict, a character is set in opposition to nature. This can mean the weather, the wilderness, or a natural disaster. For example, in Ernest Hemingway's *The Old Man and the Sea*, the main character, Santiago finally manages to reel in a fish after months and months of bad luck. He fends off sharks, who are trying to steal his prized catch, but eventually they eat the fish — leaving Santiago with only a carcass. This is the essence of the man versus

nature conflict: man struggles with human emotions, while nature charges forth undeterred.

4. Character vs. Supernatural

Pitting characters against phenomena like ghosts, gods, or monsters raises the stakes of a conflict by creating an unequal playing field. Supernatural conflict also covers characters, like Harry Potter or Odysseus, who have a fate or destiny and struggle to accept the sacrifices that come along with it.

5. Character vs. Technology

In this case, a character is in conflict with some kind of technology. Think of the tale of John Henry, the African American folk hero. In American folklore, Henry was a former slave who worked as a steel-driver on the rail line. To prove his superiority over new technology, he raced a steam-powered rock drilling machine and won. However, he suffered a heart attack after winning the race.

6. Character vs. Society

A character vs. society conflict is an external conflict that occurs in literature when the protagonist is placed in opposition with society, the government, or a cultural tradition or societal norm of some kind. Characters may be motivated to take action against their society by a need to survive, a moral sense of right and wrong, or a desire for happiness, freedom, justice, or love.

Creative Writing Prompts for Creating Conflict

Make a list of the forces of antagonism that are stacked against your protagonist. If you're having trouble identifying them, answer the following questions about your protagonist:

What is their main desire?

What is their unconscious desire? (This may be the inverse, or related to the main desire.)

What is the worst thing that can happen to this character?

What is something even worse that can happen to this character?

What people, institutions, or forces can bring this about? Include a description of how they do that.

Examples of Conflict in Literature

Example #1: Man versus man

William Shakespeare's play Othello represents a case of man versus man. There are other conflicts, such as the racism in the society, but the key struggles are between Othello and his confidant Iago. Iago is upset with Othello for two main reasons — Othello has promoted another man instead of Iago, and Iago believes that Othello has slept with his wife, Emilia. Iago therefore sets up scenarios in which Othello confronts insurmountable obstacles. Ultimately, since Iago wants to destroy Othello and his happiness, he and Othello are at odds in their desires. Othello, however, remains unaware that they are in conflict until it is too late, falsely believing that he is in conflict instead with his wife Desdemona and her supposed lover.

Example #2: Man versus nature

The Old English epic poem Beowulf is the tale of the eponymous hero who must defeat three monsters. These monsters include Grendel, Grendel's mother, and a dragon. The three monsters are not human and represent the fears that the Anglo-Saxons had about the natural world and its ability to destroy humanity. In turning the natural world into monsters that could be vanquished, the tale of Beowulf helped appease some of these fears.

Example #3: Man versus self

Arthur Miller's play Death of a Salesman is a tragedy in that all of the main characters are deluding themselves about reality. Willy is the eponymous salesman, and patriarch of the Loman family. He and his wife are under the delusion that he is a well-liked and successful salesman and that his company is glad to have him. Unfortunately, when Willy tries to get a job promotion he is instead fired. While there are external conflicts in how Willy is treated, the main conflict is between Willy and the delusions he has. This comes out even more starkly when he begins to hallucinate and talk to himself. As is foreshadowed in the title, Willy cannot overcome his conflict with himself and commits suicide, believing that this is the only way he can lessen the burden on his family.

Example #4: Man versus society

Margaret Atwood's novel *The Handmaid's Tale* is a futuristic dystopia in which the protagonist must confront the incredibly unjust world in which she is living. This society, which is set in the former United States of America, is a theocratic dictatorship in which women are subjugated. The protagonist, Offred, and other "handmaids" are actually concubines given to couples in the ruling class who are infertile. Offred finds out about a resistance network and does what she can to overthrow the ruling class.

Questions:

1. What are the main types of characters?
2. In what way are characters being created by the author?
3. What are basic techniques of characterization?
4. How do you understand the term "point of view"?
5. Consider the plot of George Orwell's *1984*: A man living in a dystopia begins to realize the extent of the ruling party's power and the hypocrisy with which they rule. He tries to fight against the Party by educating himself and teaming up with a few other people to change the system. Which type of conflict does this demonstrate?

LECTURE 13. LITERARY FORMS (KINDS) AND GENRES.

Plan:

13.1. Notion of "Genre".

13.2. Lyric.

13.3. Drama.

13.4. Epic.

13.5. Subgenres.

Basic notions: form, kind, genre, the lyric, poetry, art, verse, rhyme, rhythm, drama, tragedy, comedy, the epic, novel, novella, short story, subgenre, literary techniques.

13.1. Notion of "Genre".

"Genre" is a French term derived from the Latin "genus", "generis", meaning "type," "sort," or "kind." It designates the literary form or type into which works are classified according to what they have in common, either in their formal structures or in their treatment of subject matter, or both. The study of genres may be of value in 3 ways. On the simplest level, grouping works offers us an orderly way to talk about an otherwise bewildering number of literary texts. More importantly, if we recognize the genre of a text, we may also have a better idea of its intended overall structure and/or subject. Finally, a genre approach can deepen our sense of the value of any single text, by allowing us to view it comparatively, alongside many other texts of its type.

While the number of genres and their subdivisions has proliferated since classical times, the division of the literary domain into 3 major genres (by Plato, Aristotle, and, later, Horace), is still useful. These are lyric, drama, and epic, and they are distinguished by "manner of imitation," that is, by how the characters and the action are presented. The chart briefly summarizes the main differences in the way action and characters are presented in the lyric, drama, and the epic.

Lyric:	Drama:	Epic:
The poet writes the poem as his or her own experience; often the poet uses first person ("I"); however, this speaker is not necessarily the	The characters are obviously separate from the writer; in fact, they generally seem to have lives of their own and their speech reflects their individual	This long narrative is primarily written in third person. However, the epic poet makes his presence known, sometimes by speaking in first person, as when

poet but may be a fictional character or <i>persona</i> .	personalities. The writer is present, of course, in stage directions (which the audience isn't aware of during a performance), and occasionally a character acts as a mouthpiece for the writer.	the muses are appealed to for inspiration (the invocation) or by reporting the direct speech of the characters.
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13.2. Lyric.

The lyric includes all the shorter forms of poetry, e.g., *song*, *ode*, *ballad*, *elegy*, *sonnet*. Up to the nineteenth century, the short lyric poem was considered the least important of the genres, but with the Romantic movement the prestige of the lyric increased considerably. The relative brevity of the lyric leads to an emphasis upon tight formal construction and concentrated unity. Typically, the subject matter is expressive, whether of personal emotions, such as love or grief, or of public emotions, such as patriotism or reverence or celebration.

Poetry is a form of literary art which uses aesthetic and rhythmic qualities of language to evoke meanings in addition to, or in place of, prosaic ostensible meaning. Poetry has traditionally been distinguished from prose by its being set in verse; prose is cast in sentences, poetry in lines; the syntax of prose is dictated by meaning, whereas that of poetry is held across metre or the visual aspects of the poem. Prior to the nineteenth century, poetry was commonly understood to be something set in metrical lines; accordingly, in 1658 a definition of poetry is "any kind of subject consisting of Rythm or Verses". Possibly as a result of Aristotle's influence (his *Poetics*), "poetry" before the nineteenth century was usually less a technical designation for verse than a normative

category of fictive or rhetorical art. As a form it may pre-date literacy, with the earliest works being composed within and sustained by an oral tradition; hence it constitutes the earliest example of literature.

13.3. Drama.

Drama presents the actions and words of characters on a stage. The conventional formal arrangement into acts and scenes derives ultimately from the practice in Greek drama of alternating scenes of dialogue with choral sections. From classical example also comes the standard subdivision into ***tragedy*** and ***comedy***. Historically, many of the specific conventions of these two types have changed. We refer, for instance, to Greek tragedy, or to medieval tragedy, or to Shakespearean tragedy. This does not deny interrelationships between them; rather, it emphasizes the equal importance of their distinctive features. One thing that Greek tragedy and Shakespearean tragedy share is the "Tragic Vision."

It is helpful, in discussing plays, to have some familiarity with some basic conventions of drama. Every play typically involves the direct presentation of actions and words by characters on a stage. Although the structural principles are quite fluid, dramatic form often tends to move from exposition or presentation of the dramatic situation, through complication, setting of the direction of the dramatic conflict, to a climax or turning point (connected to Aristotle's *peripeteia* or "change of fortune"), and then through further action, resolving the various complications, to the denouement or conclusion of the play. This conventional movement in drama is not an absolute, but a tendency we observe, and variations are frequent. ("Exposition" of character motivation, for example, need not be limited to the first act.) It is useful to understand this conventional structure of drama so that we can better appreciate departures from it, as well as apply it more specifically to tragedies, as well as to comedies.

A play or drama is another classical literary form that has continued to evolve over the years. It generally comprises chiefly

dialogue between characters, and usually aims at dramatic/theatrical performance (see theatre) rather than at reading. During the 18th and 19th centuries, opera developed as a combination of poetry, drama, and music. Nearly all drama took verse form until comparatively recently. Shakespeare could be considered drama. *Romeo and Juliet*, for example, is a classic romantic drama generally accepted as literature.

Greek drama exemplifies the earliest form of drama of which we have substantial knowledge. Tragedy, as a dramatic genre, developed as a performance associated with religious and civic festivals, typically enacting or developing upon well-known historical or mythological themes. Tragedies generally presented very serious themes. With the advent of newer technologies, scripts written for non-stage media have been added to this form. *War of the Worlds* (radio) in 1938 saw the advent of literature written for radio broadcast, and many works of Drama have been adapted for film or television. Conversely, television, film, and radio literature have been adapted to printed or electronic media.

13.4. Epic.

The epic, in the classical formulation of the three genres, referred exclusively to the "poetic epic." It was of course in verse, rather lengthy (24 books in Homer, 12 books in Virgil), and tended to be episodic. It dealt in elevated language with heroic figures (human heroes and deities) whose exploits affected whole civilizations or even, by implication, the whole of mankind. Its lengthiness was properly a response to the magnitude of the subject material.

Today, we classify epics with other forms of the "mixed kind." That is, we see the classical epic as but one of the generic subdivisions of the epic or fiction. This broader classification can include many kinds of narratives, in prose as well as in verse. Thus the "mixed kind" now includes the novel, the folktale, the fable, the fairy tale, even the short story and novella, as well as the romance, which can be in either prose or verse. Of these, the novel and the

romance tend to continue the epic tradition of length (we speak of the "sweep" of a sizeable novel).

Prose is a form of language that possesses ordinary syntax and natural speech rather than rhythmic structure; in which regard, along with its measurement in sentences rather than lines, it differs from poetry. On the historical development of prose, Richard Graff notes that "[In the case of Ancient Greece] recent scholarship has emphasized the fact that formal prose was a comparatively late development, an "invention" properly associated with the classical period".

- Novel: a long fictional prose narrative. It was the form's close relation to real life that differentiated it from the chivalric romance; in most European languages the equivalent term is roman, indicating the proximity of the forms. In English, the term emerged from the Romance languages in the late fifteenth century, with the meaning of "news"; it came to indicate something new, without a distinction between fact or fiction. Although there are many historical prototypes, so-called "novels before the novel", the modern novel form emerges late in cultural history - roughly during the eighteenth century. Initially subject to much criticism, the novel has acquired a dominant position amongst literary forms, both popularly and critically.

- Novella: in purely quantitative terms, the novella exists between the novel and short story; the publisher Melville House classifies it as "Too short to be a novel, too long to be a short story". There is no precise definition in terms of word or page count. Literary prizes and publishing houses often have their own arbitrary limits, which vary according to their particular intentions. Summarizing the variable definitions of the novella, William Giraldis concludes "[it is a form] whose identity seems destined to be disputed into perpetuity". It has been suggested that the size restriction of the form produces various stylistic results, both some that are shared with the novel or short story, and others unique to the form.

- Short story: a dilemma in defining the "short story" as a literary form is how to, or whether one should, distinguish it from any short narrative; hence it also has a contested origin, variably suggested as the earliest short narratives (e.g. the Bible), early short story writers (e.g. Edgar Allan Poe), or the clearly modern short story writers (e.g. Anton Chekhov). Apart from its distinct size, various theorists have suggested that the short story has a characteristic subject matter or structure; these discussions often position the form in some relation to the novel.

13.5. Subgenres.

It should be noted that the three-part division of lyric, drama, and epic or fiction, while useful and relatively comprehensive, does not provide a place for all of the known literary genres. Some obvious omissions are the essay, the pastoral, biography and autobiography, and satire.

Genres are often divided into subgenres. Literature, is divided into the classic three forms of Ancient Greece, poetry, drama, and prose. Poetry may then be subdivided into the genres of lyric, epic, and dramatic. The lyric includes all the shorter forms of poetry, e.g., song, ode, ballad, elegy, sonnet. Dramatic poetry might include comedy, tragedy, melodrama, and mixtures like tragicomedy.

The standard division of drama into tragedy and comedy derives from Greek drama. Comedy itself has subgenres, including farce, comedy of manners, burlesque, and satire. This parsing into subgenres can continue: comedy has its own subgenres, including, for example, comedy of manners, sentimental comedy, burlesque comedy, and satirical comedy. Nonfiction can cross many genres but is typically expressed in essays, memoir, and other forms that may or may not be narrative but share the characteristics of being fact-based, artistically-rendered prose.

Often, the criteria used to divide up works into genres are not consistent, and may change constantly, and be subject of argument, change and challenge by both authors and critics. However, even a very loose term like fiction ("literature created from the imagination,

not presented as fact, though it may be based on a true story or situation") is not universally applied to all fictitious literature, but instead is typically restricted to the use for novel, short story, and novella, but not fables, and is also usually a prose text. Types of fiction genres are science fiction, fantasy, historical fiction, realistic fiction and mysteries.

Semi-fiction spans stories that include a substantial amount of non-fiction. It may be the retelling of a true story with only the names changed. The other way around, semi-fiction may also involve fictional events with a semi-fictional character, such as Jerry Seinfeld.

Genres may easily be confused with ***literary techniques***, but, though only loosely defined, they are not the same; examples are *parody, frame story, constrained writing, stream of consciousness*.

Questions:

1. How do you understand the term "genre"? What is the difference between classification of literature in Western countries and countries of our region?
2. What are the main characteristics of lyric?
3. What are the main characteristics of drama?
4. What are the main characteristics of epic?
5. What literary subgenres do you know?

LECTURE 14. LITERARY DEVICES.

Plan:

14.1. Microcomponents of the Literary Text Structure. Style.

Basic notions: stylistics, figure of speech, stylistic device, rhetoric device, tone, simile, metaphor, hyperbole, personification, apostrophe, metonymy, synecdoche, oxymoron, antithesis, onomatopoeia, epigram, irony, pun, alliteration, transferred epithet, image, imagery, visual, auditory, olfactory, gustatory, tactile, kinesthetic, organic.

Novelists also use a number of minor devices to make their novels rich in meaning and rewarding to the reader, including diction, tropes and figures of speech.

Diction is stipulated by the word choice and usage (for example, formal vs. informal), as determined by considerations of audience and purpose.

Tropes and figures of speech are specifically patterned - semantically, lexically, syntactically, phonologically - word sequences that constitute a literary text. Trope is an expressions with a transferable meaning (e.g. metaphor), which can be understood as a substitute for a denotatively suitable word. That is to say, trope is a semantic substitution. Tropes produce imagery, the collection of descriptive details that appeal to the senses and emotions of the reader by creating a sense of real experience. Through imagery the writer attempts to embody in images all abstractions and generalizations about character and meaning. There can be tactile imagery (sense of touch); aural imagery (sense of hearing); olfactory imagery (sense of smell); visual imagery (sense of sight), gustatory imagery (sense of taste).

The most important figures of speech are Simile; epic or Homeric Simile; Metaphor; Personification; Pathetic Fallacy; Apostrophe; Hyperbole; Metonymy; Synecdoche; Oxymoron; Antithesis; Onomatopaeia; Alliteration; and Transferred Epithet.

1. Simile. The word "*Simile*" comes from the Latin '*similis*' – '*like*' and means '*likeness*'. A simile is an expression of likeness between different objects or events. It consists in placing two different things side by side and comparing them with regard to some quality common to them. In other words there are two essential elements in a simile. First, the two objects or events compared must be different in kind. Secondly, the point of resemblance between the two different objects or events compared must be clearly brought out. Such words of comparison *as, like, as, so*, etc., are always used. For example: (a) *Errors like straws upon the surface flow.* (b) *The younger brother is as good as gold.*

2. Epic or Homeric Simile. It is so called because it was first used by Homer, the great epic poet of ancient Greece, and ever since it has been made use of by epic poets all over the world. It is also called *the long-tailed simile* because in it the comparison is not confined to some one quality but a number of qualities are compared and the comparison is elaborated and spread over a number of lines. Homeric simile imparts variety to the narrative and helps the poets to lengthen it out. Milton in his *Paradise Lost* and Pope in his mock-epic *The Rape of the Lock* have made abundant use of such Homeric similes. For example:

The broad circumference (of the shield of Satan)
Hung on his shoulders like the Moon, whose orb
Through optic glass the Tuscan artist views, etc.

3. Metaphor. A metaphor is implied simile. The word "metaphor" comes from the Greek, 'meta – over; 'phero' – carry. It means, literally, "a carrying over"; and by this figure of speech a word is transferred, or carried over, from the object to which it belongs to another in such a manner that a comparison is implied, though not clearly stated. Thus a metaphor is a compressed, or implied simile – simile with the word 'like', 'as' etc., omitted. For example: (a) *The camel is the ship of the desert.* (b) *He is the pillar of the state.*

4. Personification. Personification is really a special kind of metaphor. It is a figure of speech in which inanimate objects and abstract ideas or qualities are spoken of, as if they were persons or human beings. Examples of personification are: (a) *Opportunity knocks at the door but once.* (b) *Death lays his Icy hands on kings.* (c) *"Peace hath her victories. No less renowned than war".*

In all these instances, life and intelligence have been imparted to lifeless objects or abstract ideas.

5. Pathetic Fallacy. Pathetic Fallacy is a figure of speech in which human emotions are given to lifeless objects and abstract ideas. It is a special kind of personification in which the inanimate, the lifeless, and the abstract, are made to partake of human

emotions. For example: *All Nature wept at his death, and the Flowers were filled with tears.*

It is usual to begin the name of the personified object with a capital letter.

6. Apostrophe. It is a figure of speech in which abstract ideas or inanimate objects are addressed as if they were alive. The word literally means a 'turning aside', for in this figure a writer 'turns aside' to address a person absent or dead, or an inanimate object, or an abstract idea, For example:

(a) *"O wild west wind, thou breath of Autumn's being."*

(b) *"O Solitude, where are the charms
That sages have seen in they face?"*

7. Hyperbole. The word "hyperbole" ("*Hyper*" – beyond; "*ballo*" – throw) literally, "a throwing beyond", means exaggeration. This figure of speech consists in representing things as much greater or smaller than they really are, with the intention of producing a more striking effect than a plain statement can. For example:

(a) *"Here is the smell of blood still; all perfumes of Arabia will not sweeten this little hand?"*

8. Metonymy. The word "metonymy", Greek, '*meta*' – after; '*onoma*' – a name, means literally, "substitution of name", and the figure consists in "substituting the thing named for the thing meant"; for example, grey hair may be used for old age, throne for monarchy. Some other examples are:

(a) *The pen (author) is mightier than the sword (the soldier).*

(b) *"Sceptre and crown.*

*Must tumble down,
And in the dust be equal made
With the poor crooked scythe and spade."*

9. Synecdoche. This figures of speech is really a special form of metonymy. Its name '*syn*' – with, '*ekdoche*' – succession, means literally, "the understanding of one thing by another". In the figure there is the substitution of a part for the whole or *vice versa*, or of an abstract noun for a concrete one or *vice versa*, of an individual for a class, or *vice versa*, or of the name of the material of which a

thing is made for the name of the thing itself. For example: (a) *The rank and file streamed out of the city to see the sight.* (b) *There is a mixture of the tiger and the ape in his character.* (c) *Kalidasa is the Shakespeare of India.*

(d) *He gave the beggar a few coppers.*

10. Oxymoron. An oxymoron is the association or bringing together of two words or phrases having opposite meanings. For example:

(a) *"James I was the wisest fool in Christendom."*

(b) *"That time is past*

And all its aching joys are now no more,

And all its dizzy raptures."

11. Antithesis. An antithesis, '*anti*' – against; '*thesis*' – placing, is a figure of speech in which one word or idea is set against another with the object of heightening the effect of what is said by contrast. For example:

(a) *"God made the country but man made the town."*

(b) *"United we stand divided we fall."*

(c) *"Speech is silvery, silence is golden."*

12. Onomatopaeia. Onomatopaeia, '*onoma*' – name; '*poiea*' – make, is the use of a word or words whose sound itself conveys the sense of the author. Examples of onomatopaeia are: (a) *"It cracked and growled and roared and howled like noises in a swound."* (b) *"The murmurous haunt of flies on summer eves."*

13. Epigram. A brief pointed saying expressing antithetical ideas, or exciting surprise, is called Epigram. For example: (a) *The child is father of the man,* (b) *Art lies on concealing art.*

14. Irony. It is the figure of speech in which the real meaning is just the opposite of that which is literally conveyed by the language used. For example: *Here, under leave of Brutus, and the rest, (For Brutus is an honourable man) I come to speak in Caesar's funeral.* Here the use of the word, "honourable" is ironical.

15. Pun. When we use the same word in two or more senses in order to make the people laugh, we employ the Figure of Speech

called Pun. *An ambassador is a gentleman who lies abroad for the good of his country.* Here there is a pun on the word 'lies'.

16. Alliteration. Alliteration consists in the repetition of the letters or syllable, or the same sound at the beginning of two or more words in a line. In this way language becomes musical. For example:

(a) *How high His Honour holds his haughty head.*

(b) *"The fair breeze blew, the white foam flew, the furrow followed free."*

17. Transferred Epithet. In this figure of speech an epithet or qualifying adjective is sometimes transferred from a person to an object or from one word to another. For example:

(a) *"The ploughman homeward plods his weary way."*

(b) *"He tossed from side to side on his sleepless bed."*

In the first case 'weary' has been transferred from 'the ploughman' to the 'way'; in the second case 'sleepless' has been transferred from 'He' to 'bed'.

LECTURE 15. IMAGERY.

Basic notions: stylistics, figure of speech, stylistic device, rhetoric device, tone, simile, metaphor, hyperbole, personification, apostrophe, metonymy, synecdoche, oxymoron, antithesis, onomatopoeia, epigram, irony, pun, alliteration, transferred epithet, image, imagery, visual, auditory, olfactory, gustatory, tactile, kinesthetic, organic.

Imagine the last book you read that you just couldn't put down. Were you lost in another world? Did the author describe the characters and the scene so vividly that you felt as though you were a part of the story? This is all due to imagery, words, and phrases used to help the reader develop a mental image of the story throughout the novel. **Imagery** in literature is what helps draw readers in. Without descriptive phrases that allow you to picture a scene, how could you ever be engrossed in a story? There are seven

distinct ***types of imagery***: visual, auditory, olfactory, gustatory, tactile, kinesthetic and organic. Many of these deal with the five senses, which all work together to help us create mental images of whatever we are reading.

Visual. Visual imagery appeals to the sense of sight, and plays the largest role in imagery in literature. It describes what a scene or character looks like. If an author writes something such as, “The deep blue hues of twilight were reflected in the still water; the slight glint of moonlight peeked through the clouds just enough to make out the silhouette of a passing ship”, the reader can imagine a still, ocean scene at twilight as if they were standing on the edge of the water themselves.

Auditory. Auditory imagery describes specific sounds that are happening within the story. This can be something like, “The rooster crowed at early dawn, a sign that it was time to start the day. John woke up, listening to the quiet murmurs of his children in the kitchen below; the clang of pots and pans signaled that breakfast was almost ready”. Can you hear the rooster? Are you imagining the clanging of pots and pans? How does this auditory imagery assist in your overall mental image of the scene? Even though the imagery here describes particular sounds, I’m imagining a man waking up in a quaint room in a log house and a rooster crowing at sunrise over a bright green field. Auditory imagery could also appear in the form of onomatopoeia. Words such as “bang!” “achoo!” “cacaw!” all work to describe sounds that most people are familiar with.

Olfactory. Olfactory imagery describes a particular scent. Let’s say you’re about to bite into a warm, steaming plate of maple smoked bacon. How would that smell? An author may describe it as, “The sweet scent of maple wafted through the room, causing Stephanie to stop what she was doing and sniff the air. A second waft of scent carried the underlying smoky scent of bacon; a scent only bacon straight off the grill could have”. Is your mouth watering yet? Are you itching to get off of the computer and go cook up some bacon? Authors want you to be able to almost smell the scent coming off the pages. Describing the scent of a particular food can

also help readers imagine how that food tastes, which brings us to the next type of imagery.

Gustatory. Gustatory imagery pertains to the sense of taste. Let's say a fictional Jason is about to bite into a delicious cupcake, smothered in chocolate frosting. This experience may be described as, "Jason took one look at the cupcake in front of him and couldn't wait another second – he stuffed it right into his mouth. The rich, sweet, sugary taste of chocolate ran over his taste buds as he chewed and swallowed the whole dessert in less than ten seconds". I don't know about you, but I'm really craving some chocolate now.

Tactile. Tactile imagery appeals to the sense of touch. The feeling of a nice fuzzy blanket on a cold night, the smooth underside of a snake, the rough texture of tree bark. Anything you can touch can be described through imagery. The description of a bare hand on a mound of snow could be described as, "Sarah placed her bare hand on the cold snow. It was wet at first, then the frigid cold set in like a thousand needles, all pricking her palm at once".

Kinesthetic. These last two types of imagery extend beyond the five senses. Kinesthetic imagery deals with the movement or action of objects or people. An example of kinesthetic imagery could be, "The birds flapped their wings in excitement, the promise of food so close. They sprung out of the tree, one by one, soaring through the branches and swooping down low to the pile of berries beneath the tree". The flapping of the wings and the description of the way the birds fly down towards the ground helps the reader create an accurate visual image of the scene.

Organic. Organic imagery is the most difficult form of imagery to write, because it deals with creating a specific feeling or emotion within the reader. Phrases that make the reader feel sad, fearful, nostalgic, elated, even lost are all extremely effective organic imagery. Have you ever read a book that made you question your entire existence? Some authors have such a way with words that one simple sentence can resonate with you for years. A quote from Haruki Murakami has stuck with me for quite a while: "You might think you made a new world or a new self, but your old self is

always gonna be there, just below the surface, and if something happens, it'll stick its head out and say 'Hi.' (Haruki Murakami, "The Wind-Up Bird Chronicle"). The organic imagery in this quote is almost an indescribable feeling of your own sense of self. While organic imagery can certainly be simpler than this, it can be even more complex as well.

Questions:

1. What is diction?
2. What are tropes and figures of speech?
3. Give examples of rhetoric devices.
4. What are types of imagery used in literature?

GLOSSARY

Action

Also called "[action-adventure](#)," action is a [genre](#) of film, TV, literature, etc., in which the primary feature is the constant slam-bang of fights, chases, explosions, and clever one-liners. Action stories typically do not explore complex relationships between human beings or the subtleties of psychology and philosophy.

Ad Hominem

[Ad hominem](#) is Latin for "against the man," and refers to the *logical fallacy* (error) of arguing that someone is incorrect because they are unattractive, immoral, weird, or any other bad thing you could say about them as a person.

Adage

An [adage](#) is a brief piece of wisdom in the form of short, philosophical, and memorable sayings. The adage expresses a well-known and simple truth in a few words.

Allegory

An [allegory](#) is a story within a story. It has a "surface story" and another story hidden underneath. For example, the surface story might be about two neighbors throwing rocks at each other's homes, but the hidden story would be about war between countries.

Alliteration

In [alliteration](#), words that begin with the same sound are placed close together. Although alliteration often involves [repetition](#) of letters, most importantly, it is a repetition of sounds.

Allusion

[Allusion](#) is basically a reference to something else. It's when a writer mentions some other work, or refers to an earlier part of the current work. In literature, it's frequently used to reference cultural works (e.g. by alluding to a Bible story or Greek myth).

Ambiguity

[Ambiguity](#) is an idea or situation that can be understood in more than one way. This extends from ambiguous sentences (which could mean one thing or another) up to ambiguous storylines and ambiguous arguments.

Amplification

[Amplification](#) involves extending a sentence or phrase in order to further explain, emphasize, or exaggerate certain points of a definition, description, or [argument](#).

Anagram

An [anagram](#) is a type of word play in which the letters of a word or phrase are rearranged to create new words and phrases.

Analogy

An [analogy](#) is a literary technique in which two unrelated objects are compared for their shared qualities. Unlike a [simile](#) or a [metaphor](#), an analogy is not a [figure of speech](#), though the three are often quite similar. Instead, analogies are strong [rhetorical](#) devices used to make rational arguments and support ideas by showing connections and comparisons between dissimilar things.

Anaphora

[Anaphora](#) is when a certain word or phrase is repeated at the beginning of clauses or sentences that follow each other. This repetition emphasizes the phrase while adding rhythm to the passage, making it more memorable and enjoyable to read.

Anecdote

An [anecdote](#) is a very short story that is significant to the topic at hand; usually adding personal knowledge or experience to the topic.

Antagonist

In a story, the [antagonist](#) is the opposite of the [protagonist](#), or main character. Typically, this is a [villain](#) of some kind, but not always! It's just the opponent of the main character, or someone who gets in their way.

Anthimeria

[Anthimeria](#) (also known as antimetonymy) is the usage of a word in a new grammatical form, most often the usage of a noun as a verb.

Anthropomorphism

[Anthropomorphism](#) is giving human traits or attributes to animals, inanimate objects, or other non-human things. It comes from the Greek words *anthropo* (human) and *morph* (form).

Antithesis

[Antithesis](#) literally means "opposite" – it is usually the opposite of a statement, concept, or idea. In literary analysis, an antithesis is a pair of statements or images in which the one reverses the other. The pair is written with similar grammatical structures to show more [contrast](#).

Antonomasia

[Antonomasia](#) is a literary term in which a descriptive phrase replaces a person's name. Antonomasia can range from lighthearted nicknames to epic names.

Aphorism

An [aphorism](#) is a short, concise statement of a general truth, insight, or good advice. It's roughly synonymous with "a saying." Aphorisms often use *metaphors* or creative [imagery](#) to get their point across.

Aphorismus

[Aphorismus](#) is a term in which the speaker questions whether a word is being used correctly to show disagreement. Aphorismus is often written as a [rhetorical question](#) such as "How can you call this *music*?" to show the difference between the usual meaning of a word and how it is being used. So, the point is to call attention to the qualities of the word, suggesting that how it is being used is not a good example of the word.

Apologia

An [apologia](#) is a defense of one's conduct or opinions. It's related to our concept of "apology," but in many cases it's the precise *opposite* of an apology! When you apologize, you're saying "I did the wrong thing, and I regret it." But in an apologia, you're *defending yourself*, either by saying that what you did wasn't wrong or denying that you were responsible for what happened.

Apologue

An [apologue](#) is a short story or [fable](#) which provides a simple moral lesson. Apologues are often told through the use of animal [characters](#) with [symbolical](#) elements.

Aporia

In literature, [aporia](#) is an expression of insincere doubt. It's when the writer or speaker pretends, briefly, not to know a key piece of information or not to understand a key connection. After raising this doubt, the author will either respond to the doubt, or leave it open in a suggestive or "hinting" manner.

Aposiopesis

[Aposiopesis](#) is when a sentence is purposefully left incomplete or cut off. It's caused by an inability or unwillingness to continue speaking. This allows the ending to be filled in by the listener's imagination.

Appositive

Appositives are noun phrases that follow or precede another noun, and give more information about it.

Archaism

An [archaism](#) is an old word or expression that is no longer used with its original meaning or is only used in specific studies or areas.

Archetype

An [archetype](#) is an idea, symbol, pattern, or character-type, in a story. It's any story element that appears again and again in stories from cultures

around the world and symbolizes something universal in the human experience.

Argument

An argument is a work of persuasion. You use it to convince others to agree with your claim or viewpoint when they have doubts or disagree.

Assonance

[Assonance](#) is the repetition of the same or similar vowel sounds within words, phrases, or sentences.

Asyndeton

[Asyndeton](#) is skipping one or more conjunctions (and, or, but, for, nor, so, yet) which are usually used in a series of phrases. Asyndeton is also known as asyndetism.

Autobiography

An [autobiography](#) is a self-written life story. It is different from a *biography*, which is the life story of a person written by someone else. Some people may have their life story written by another person because they don't believe they can write well, but they are still considered an author because they are providing the information.

Bathos

[Bathos](#) is text that abruptly turns from serious and poetic, to regular and silly.

Buzzword

A [buzzword](#) is a word or phrase that has little meaning but becomes popular during a specific time.

Cacophony

[Cacophony](#) is the use of a combination of words with loud, harsh sounds—in reality as well as literature. In literary studies, this combination of words with rough or unharmonious sounds are used for a noisy or jarring poetic effect. Cacophony is considered the opposite of euphony which is the use of beautiful, melodious-sounding words.

Caesura

[Caesura](#) refers to a break or pause in the middle of a line of verse. It can be marked as || in the middle of the line, although generally it is not marked at all – it's simply part of the way the reader or singer pronounces the line.

Catharsis

[Catharsis](#), meaning "cleansing" in Greek, refers to a literary theory first developed by the philosopher Aristotle, who believed that cleansing our emotions was the purpose of a good story, especially a tragedy. Catharsis applies to any form of art or media that makes us feel strong negative

emotions, but that we are nonetheless drawn to – we may seek out art that creates these emotions because the experience purges the emotions from our system.

Character

A character is a person, animal, being, creature, or thing in a story. Writers use characters to perform the actions and speak [dialogue](#), moving the story along a [plot](#) line. A story can have only one character (protagonist) and still be a complete story.

Chiasmus

[Chiasmus](#) comes from a Greek word meaning “crossed,” and it refers to a grammatical structure that inverts a previous phrase. That is, you say one thing, and then you say something very similar, but flipped around.

Circumlocution

[Circumlocution](#) means “talking around” or “talking in circles.” It’s when you want to discuss something, but don’t want to make any direct reference to it, so you create a way to get around the subject. The key to circumlocution is that the statement has to be unnecessarily long and complicated.

Cliché

A cliché is a saying, image, or idea which has been used so much that it sounds terribly uncreative. The word “cliche” was originally French for the sound of a printing plate, which prints the same thing over and over.

Climax

[Climax](#) is the highest point of tension or [drama](#) in a [narrative](#)’s plot. Often, climax is also when the main problem of the story is faced and solved by the main character or protagonist.

Coherence

[Coherence](#) describes the way anything, such as an argument (or part of an argument) “hangs together.” If something has coherence, its parts are well-connected and all heading in the same direction. Without coherence, a discussion may not make sense or may be difficult for the audience to follow. It’s an extremely important quality of formal writing.

Connotation

A [connotation](#) is a common feeling or association that a word has, in addition to its literal meaning (the [denotation](#)). Often, a series of words can have the same basic definitions, but completely different connotations—these are the emotions or meanings implied by a word, phrase, or thing.

Consonance

[Consonance](#) is when the same consonant sound appears repeatedly in a line or sentence, creating a rhythmic effect.

Conundrum

A [conundrum](#) is a difficult problem, one that is impossible or almost impossible to solve. It's an extremely broad term that covers any number of different types of situations, from moral dilemmas to riddles.

Denotation

Denotation is a word' or thing's "dictionary definition", i.e. its literal meaning.

Denouement

The [denouement](#) is the very end of a story, the part where all the different plotlines are finally tied up and all remaining questions answered.

Deus ex machina

[Deus ex machina](#) is Latin for "a god from the machine." It's when some new character, force, or event suddenly shows up to solve a seemingly hopeless situation. The effect is usually much too abrupt, and it's often disappointing for audiences.

Diacope

[Diacope](#) is when a writer repeats a word or phrase with one or more words in between. A common and persistent example of diacope is Hamlet's "To be, *or not* to be!"

Dialogue

Dialogue means "conversation." In the broadest sense, this includes any case of two or more characters speaking to each other directly. But it also has a narrower definition, called the **dialogue form**. The dialogue form is the *use* of a sustained dialogue to express an argument or idea.

Diction

[Diction](#) refers to word choice and phrasing in any written or spoken text. Many authors can be said to have their own "diction," because they tend to use certain words more than others or phrase things in a unique way.

Doppelganger

[Doppelganger](#) is a twin or double of some character, usually in the form of an **evil twin**. They sometimes impersonate a main character or cause confusion among the love interests.

Dystopia

A [dystopia](#) is a horrible place where everything has gone wrong. Whereas [utopia](#) means a perfect paradise, *dystopia* means exactly the opposite.

Enjambment

[Enjambment](#) is continuing a line after the line breaks. Whereas many poems end lines with the natural pause at the end of a phrase or with

punctuation as end-stopped lines, enjambment ends a line in the middle of a phrase, allowing it to continue onto the next line as an enjambed line.

Enthymeme

An [enthymeme](#) is a kind of *syllogism*, or logical deduction, in which one of the *premises* is unstated.

Epigram

An [epigram](#) is a short but insightful statement, often in verse form, which communicates a thought in a witty, [paradoxical](#), or funny way.

Epiphany

An [epiphany](#) is an "Aha!" moment. As a [literary device](#), epiphany is the moment when a character is suddenly struck with a life-changing, enlightening revelation or realization which changes his or her perspective for the rest of the story.

Epistrophe

[Epistrophe](#) is when a certain phrase or word is repeated at the end of sentences or clauses that follow each other. This repetition creates a rhythm while emphasizing the repeated phrase. Epistrophe is also known as epiphora and antistrophe.

Epitaph

An [epitaph](#) is a short statement about a deceased person, often carved on his/her tombstone. Epitaphs can be poetic, sometimes written by poets or authors themselves before dying.

Epithet

An [Epithet](#) is a glorified nickname. Traditionally, it replaces the name of a person and often describes them in some way.

Eponym

An [eponym](#) refers to a person or thing after which something else is named. A person or thing's name can come to be associated with the name of another character, person, product, object, activity, or even a discovery.

Equivocation

Commonly known as "doublespeak," [equivocation](#) is the use of vague language to hide one's meaning or to avoid committing to a point of view.

Essay

An [essay](#) is a form of writing in paragraph form that uses informal language, although it can be written formally. Essays may be written in first-person point of view (I, ours, mine), but third-person (people, he, she) is preferable in most academic essays.

Etymology

[Etymology](#) is the investigation of word histories. Every word in every language has a unique origin and history; words can be born in many ways, and often their histories are quite adventurous and informative. Etymology investigates and documents the lives (mainly the origins) of words.

Euphemism

A [euphemism](#) is a polite, mild phrase that we substitute for a harsher, blunter way of saying something uncomfortable.

Excursus

An [excursus](#) is a moment where a text moves away from its main topic – it's roughly similar to "digression."

Exemplum

[Exemplum](#) is just Latin for "example." And that's all it is. It's an example, story, or anecdote used to demonstrate a point.

Exposition

The [exposition](#) of a story is the first paragraph or paragraphs in which the characters, [setting](#) (time and place), and basic information is introduced.

Extended Metaphor

An [extended metaphor](#) is a metaphor that is developed in some detail by being used in more than one phrase, from a sentence or a paragraph, to encompassing an entire work.

Fairy Tale

A [fairy tale](#) is a story, often intended for children, that features fanciful and wondrous characters such as elves, goblins, wizards, and even, but not necessarily, fairies. The term "fairy" tale seems to refer more to the fantastic and magical setting or magical influences within a story, rather than the presence of the character of a fairy within that story.

Fantasy

[Fantasy](#), from the Greek *φαντασία* meaning 'making visible,' is a genre of fiction that concentrates on imaginary elements (the fantastic). This can mean magic, the supernatural, alternate worlds, superheroes, monsters, fairies, magical creatures, mythological heroes—essentially, anything that an author can imagine outside of reality.

Farce

A [farce](#) is a [comedy](#) in which everything is absolutely absurd. This usually involves some kind of deception or miscommunication.

Figures of Speech

A figure of speech is a word or phrase using figurative language—language that has other meaning than its normal definition. In other

words, figures of speeches rely on implied or suggested meaning, rather than a dictionary definition.

Flashback

[Flashback](#) is a device that moves an audience from the present moment in a chronological narrative to a scene in the past.

Folklore

[Folklore](#) refers to the tales people tell – folk stories, fairy tales, “tall tales,” and even urban legends. Folklore is typically passed down by word of mouth, rather than being written in books. The key here is that folklore has no author – it just emerges from the culture and is carried forward by constant retelling.

Foreshadowing

[Foreshadowing](#) gives the audience hints or signs about the future. It suggests what is to come through imagery, language, and/or symbolism.

Genre

A genre is a category of literature identified by form, content, and [style](#). Genres allow literary critics and students to classify compositions within the larger canon of literature.

Haiku

A [haiku](#) is a specific type of Japanese poem which has 17 syllables divided into three lines of 5, 7, and 5 syllables. Haikus or haiku are typically written on the subject of nature.

Hamartia

[Hamartia](#) is the tragic flaw or error that reverses a protagonist’s fortune from good to bad.

Homophone

[Homophone](#) is when two or more words have the same sound, but different meanings. They may be spelled the same or differently.

Horror

In literature, [horror](#) is a genre of fiction whose purpose is to create feelings of fear, dread, repulsion, and terror in the audience—in other words, it develops an atmosphere of horror.

Hyperbaton

[Hyperbaton](#) is a figure of speech in which the typical, natural order of words is changed as certain words are moved out of order.

Hyperbole

[Hyperbole](#) is a figure of speech in which an author or speaker purposely and obviously exaggerates to an extreme. It is used for emphasis or as a way of making a description more creative and humorous.

Idiom

An [idiom](#) is a phrase that conveys a figurative meaning different from the words used. In this sense, idiom is pretty much synonymous with “figure of speech,” though with a slightly narrower definition: an idiom is part of the language.

Imagery

Imagery is language used to create images in the mind of the reader. Imagery includes figurative and metaphorical language to improve the reader’s experience through their senses.

Innuendo

An [innuendo](#) is when you say something which is polite and innocent on the surface, but indirectly hints at an insult or rude comment, a dirty joke, or even social or political criticism.

Intertextuality

[Intertextuality](#) is a fact about literary texts – the fact that they are all intimately interconnected. Every text is affected by all the texts that came before it, since those texts influenced the author’s thinking and aesthetic choices.

Invective

[Invective](#) is the literary device in which one attacks or insults a person or thing through the use of abusive language and [tone](#).

Irony

[Irony](#) is when there are two contradicting meanings of the same situation, event, image, sentence, phrase, or story. In many cases, this refers to the difference between expectations and reality.

Jargon

[Jargon](#) is the specific type of language used by a particular group or profession.

Juxtaposition

[Juxtaposition](#) is the placement of two or more things side by side, often in order to bring out their differences.

Kairos

[Kairos](#) in Ancient Greek meant “time” – but it wasn’t just any time. It was exactly the *right* time to say or do a particular thing. In modern rhetoric, it refers to making exactly the right statement at exactly the right moment.

Limerick

A [limerick](#) is a five-line poem with a strict rhyme scheme (AABBA, lines 1,2, and 5 rhyme together, while lines 3 and 4 rhymes together) and a

reasonably strict meter (anapestic triameter for lines 1, 2, and 5; anapestic dimeter for lines 3 and 4). Limericks are almost always used for comedy, and it's usually pretty rude comedy at that – they deal with bodily functions, etc., and could be considered “toilet humor.”

Lingo

[Lingo](#) is language or vocabulary that is specific to a certain subject, group of people, or region; including slang and jargon. The term lingo is relatively vague—it can mean any type of nonstandard language, and varies between professions, age groups, sexes, nationalities, ethnicities, location, and so on.

Literary Device

In literature, any technique used to help the author achieve his or her purpose is called a *literary device*.

Litotes

[Litotes](#) is an [understatement](#) in which a positive statement is expressed by negating its opposite. The classic example of litotes is the phrase “not bad.” By negating the word “bad,” you’re saying that something is good, or at least OK.

Malapropism

Malapropisms are incorrect words used in place of correct words; these can be unintentional or intentional, but both cases have a comedic effect.

Maxim

A [maxim](#) is a brief statement that contains a little piece of wisdom or a general rule of behavior.

Metanoia

[Metanoia](#) is a self-correction. It's when a writer or speaker deliberately goes back and modifies a statement that they just made, usually either to strengthen it or soften it in some way.

Metaphor

A metaphor is a common figure of speech that makes a comparison by directly relating one thing to another unrelated thing (though these things may share some similarities).

Unlike similes, metaphors do not use words such as “like” or “as” to make comparisons.

Metonymy

[Metonymy](#) is a figure of speech that replaces words with related or associated words. A metonym is typically a part of a larger whole, for example, when we say “wheels,” we are figuratively referring to a “car” and not literally only the wheels.

Mnemonic

A [mnemonic](#), also known as a memory aid, is a tool that helps you remember an idea or phrase with a pattern of letters, numbers, or relatable associations. Mnemonic devices include special rhymes and poems, acronyms, images, songs, outlines, and other tools.

Monologue

A [monologue](#) is a speech given by a single character in a story.

Motif

A [motif](#) is a symbolic image or idea that appears frequently in a story. Motifs can be symbols, sounds, actions, ideas, or words.

Mystery

[Mystery](#) is a genre of literature whose stories focus on a mysterious crime, situation or circumstance that needs to be solved.

Narrative

A narrative is a story. The term can be used as a noun or an adjective. As a noun, narrative refers to the story being told. As an adjective, it describes the form or style of the story being told.

Nemesis

A [nemesis](#) is an enemy, often a villain. A character's nemesis isn't just any ordinary enemy, though – the nemesis is the *ultimate* enemy, the arch-foe that overshadows all the others in power or importance.

Neologism

[Neologism](#) is new word or phrase that is not yet used regularly by most speakers and writers.

Ode

In the strict definition, an ode is a classical poem that has a specific structure and is aimed at an object or person. In the loose definition, an ode is any work of art or literature that expresses high praise.

Onomatopoeia

[Onomatopoeia](#) refers to words whose pronunciations imitate the sounds they describe. A dog's bark sounds like "woof," so "woof" is an example of onomatopoeia.

Oxymoron

An [oxymoron](#) is a figure of speech that puts together opposite elements. The combination of these contradicting elements serves to reveal a paradox, confuse, or give the reader a laugh.

Palindrome

A [palindrome](#) is a type of word play in which a word or phrase spelled forward is the same word or phrase spelled backward.

Parable

A [parable](#) is a short story used to illustrate a moral or spiritual lesson.

Paradox

A paradox is a statement that contradicts itself, or that must be both true and untrue at the same time.

Parallelism

[Parallelism](#), also known as parallel structure, is when phrases in a sentence have similar or the same grammatical structure.

Paraphrase

A [paraphrase](#) is a restatement or rewording of text in order to borrow, clarify, or expand on information without plagiarizing.

Parody

A [parody](#) is a work that's created by imitating an existing original work in order to make fun of or comment on an aspect of the original.

Pastiche

[Pastiche](#) is a creative work that imitates another author or genre. It's a way of paying [homage](#), or honor, to great works of the past.

Pathetic Fallacy

The [pathetic fallacy](#) is a figure of speech in which the natural world (or some part of it) is treated as though it had human emotions.

Peripeteia

[Peripeteia](#) is a sudden change in a story which results in a negative reversal of circumstances. Peripeteia is also known as the [turning point](#), the place in which the tragic protagonist's fortune changes from good to bad.

Persona

[Persona](#) can refer to the characters in any dramatic or literary work. But it has another special meaning in literary studies, where it refers to the voice of a particular kind of character—the character who is also the narrator within a literary work written from the first-person point of view.

Personification

[Personification](#) is a kind of metaphor in which you describe an inanimate object, abstract thing, or non-human animal in human terms.

Plagiarism

[Plagiarism](#) is the act of using someone else's ideas, words, or thoughts as your own, without giving credit to the other person. When you give credit to the original author (by giving the person's name, name of the article, and where it was posted or printed), you are citing the source.

Platitude

A [platitude](#) repeats obvious, simple, and easily understood statements that have little meaning or emotional weight.

Pleonasm

A [pleonasm](#) is when one uses too many words to express a message. A pleonasm can either be a mistake or a tool for emphasis.

Plot

In a narrative or creative writing, a plot is the sequence of events that make up a story, whether it's told, written, filmed, or sung. The plot is the story, and more specifically, how the story develops, unfolds, and moves in time.

Poetry

[Poetry](#) is a type of literature based on the interplay of words and rhythm. It often employs rhyme and meter (a set of rules governing the number and arrangement of syllables in each line). In poetry, words are strung together to form sounds, images, and ideas that might be too complex or abstract to describe directly.

Polyptoton

[Polyptoton](#) is the repetition of a root word in a variety of ways, such as the words "enjoy" and "enjoyable." Polyptoton is a unique form of wordplay that provides the sentence with repetition in sound and rhythm.

Prologue

A [prologue](#) is a short introductory section that gives background information or sets the stage for the story to come.

Prose

[Prose](#) is just non-verse writing. Pretty much anything other than poetry counts as prose.

Protagonist

Protagonist is just another word for "main character." The story circles around this character's experiences, and the audience is invited to see the world from his or her perspective.

Proverb

A [proverb](#) is a short saying or piece of folk wisdom that emerges from the general culture rather than being written by a single, individual author.

Pun

A pun is a joke based on the interplay of *homophones* — words with the same pronunciation but different meanings.

Quest

A [quest](#) is a journey that someone takes in order to achieve a goal or complete an important task. Accordingly, the term comes from the Medieval Latin *questa*, meaning “search” or “inquiry.”

Rebus

A [rebus](#) is a code or reference where pictures, letters, or symbols represent certain words or phrases. Perhaps the simplest and most common rebus in use today is “IOU” for “I owe you.”

Red Herring

A [red herring](#) is a misleading clue. It’s a trick used by storytellers to keep the reader guessing about what’s really going on.

Repetition

Quite simply, repetition is the repeating of a word or phrase. It is a common [rhetorical device](#) used to add emphasis and stress in writing and speech.

Resolution

The [resolution](#), also known as the denouement, is the conclusion of the story’s plot structure where any unanswered questions are answered, or “loose ends are tied.”

Rhetoric

Rhetoric is the ancient art of persuasion, in the broadest sense. It is the way you present and make your views convincing or attractive to your audience.

Rhetorical Device

A rhetorical device is any way of using language that helps an author or speaker achieve a particular purpose. Usually, the purpose is *persuasion*, since rhetoric is typically defined as the art of persuasion.

Rhetorical Question

A rhetorical question is a question that is not asked in order to receive an answer, but rather just to make a point.

Sarcasm

[Sarcasm](#) is a form of verbal irony that mocks, ridicules, or expresses contempt. You’re saying the opposite of what you mean (verbal irony) and doing it in a particularly hostile tone.

Satire

The formal definition of [satire](#) is “the use of humor, irony, exaggeration, or ridicule to expose and criticize people’s stupidity or vices.” It’s an extremely broad category.

Self-Fulfilling Prophecy

A [self-fulfilling prophecy](#) is a prediction that somehow causes itself to come true. The characters may try to prevent their fate, but in the end their actions simply cause that fate to come about.

Setting

Setting is the time and place (or when and where) of the story. It may also include the environment of the story, which can be made up of the physical location, climate, weather, or social and cultural surroundings.

Simile

A simile is a literary term where you use “like” or “as” to compare two different things, implying that they have some quality in common.

Soliloquy

A [soliloquy](#) is a kind of *monologue*, or an extended speech by one character. In a soliloquy, though, the speech is not given to another character, and there is no one around to hear it.

Sonnet

A [sonnet](#) is a fourteen line poem with a fixed rhyme scheme. Often, sonnets use iambic pentameter: five sets of unstressed syllables followed by stressed syllables for a ten-syllable line.

Stanza

In poetry, a [stanza](#) is a dividing and organizing technique which places a group of lines in a poem together, separated from other groups of lines by line spacing or indentation. There are many important pieces that together make up a writer’s style; like tone, word choice, grammar, language, descriptive technique, and so on.

Style

Style is the way in which an author writes and/or tells a story. It’s what sets one author apart from another and creates the “voice” that audiences hear when they read.

Subtext

The [subtext](#) is the unspoken or less obvious meaning or message in a literary composition, drama, speech, or conversation.

Surrealism

[Surrealism](#) is a literary and artistic movement in which the goal is to create something bizarre and disjointed, but still somehow understandable.

Symbol

A symbol is any image or thing that stands for something else. It could be as simple as a letter, which is a symbol for a given sound (or set of sounds).

Synecdoche

A [synecdoche](#) is figure of speech which allows a part of something to stand for a whole, or the whole to stand for a part.

Synonym

A [synonym](#) is a word that has the same or nearly the same meaning as another word. When words or phrases have the same meaning, we say that they are synonymous of each other.

Synopsis

A [synopsis](#) is a brief summary that gives audiences an idea of what a composition is about. It provides an overview of the storyline or main points and other defining factors of the work, which may include style, genre, persons or characters of note, setting, and so on.

Tautology

[Tautology](#) is defining or explaining something by saying exactly the same thing again in different words.

Theme

[Theme](#) is the central idea, topic, or point of a story, essay, or narrative.

Thesis

A [thesis](#) is the main argument or point of view of an essay, nonfiction piece or narrative—not just the topic of the writing, but the main *claim* that the author is making about that topic.

Tone

Tone refers to the “feel” of a piece of writing. It’s any or all of the stylistic qualities of the writing, such as formality, dialect, and atmosphere.

Trope

The word [trope](#) can refer to any type of figure of speech, theme, image, character, or plot element that is used many times. Any kind of literary device or any specific example can be a trope.

Understatement

Understatement is when a writer presents a situation or thing as if it is less important or serious than it is in reality.

Utopia

Utopia is a paradise. A perfect society in which everything works and everyone is happy – or at least *is supposed* to be.

Verisimilitude

[Verisimilitude](#) simply means ‘the quality of resembling reality’ and a work of art, or any part of a work of art, has verisimilitude if it seems believably realistic. A verisimilitudinous story has details, subjects, and characters that seem similar or true to real life.

Villain

A villain is the bad guy, the one who comes up with diabolical plots to somehow cause harm or ruin. It is one of the archetype characters in many stories.

Wit

Wit is a biting or insightful kind of humor. It includes sharp comebacks, clever banter, and dry, one-line jokes. It is often cynical or insulting, which is what provides it with its characteristic sharpness.

Zeugma

[Zeugma](#) is when you use a word in a sentence once, while conveying two different meanings at the same time.

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