

## English 12

### Fiction Terms

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#### **Allegory**

An allegory is a story in which the characters, places, and events stand for general qualities and in which the interplay of actions is meant to reveal a general truth, resulting in a moral or philosophical statement via the story. Thus an allegory is a narrative with a second meaning beneath the surface, a story in which the writer's principal interest is in that underlying meaning. Allegorical characters, places, things and events, because they represent ideas or abstract qualities, often work as symbols of those concepts or ideas.

*Example.* George Orwell utilizes animal characters to illustrate his political views and opinions in *Animal Farm*.

#### **Autobiography**

An autobiography is a book about the life of a person, written by that person.

*Example.* *Angela's Ashes* by Frank McCourt is an autobiography.

#### **Biography**

A biography is a description or account of someone's life and the times, which is usually published in the form of a book or an essay, or in some other form, such as a film.

*Example.* *Get Happy: The Life of Judy Garland* is one of Garland's biographies.

#### **Caricature**

In literature, a caricature is a description of a person using exaggeration of some characteristics and oversimplification of others. It is similar to the technique of burlesque or parody.

*Example.* John Gay utilized elements of caricature and burlesque in his play *The Beggar's Opera*.

#### **Dialect**

Dialects are spoken by definable groups of people from a particular geographic region, economic group, or social class. Writers use dialect to contrast and express differences in educational, class, social, and regional backgrounds of their characters.

*Example.* John Steinbeck's utilizes a dialect specific to geographical region and time period in the speech of his characters in his novel *Of Mice and Men*.

#### **Diary**

A diary is a record with discrete entries arranged by date reporting on what has happened over time. Diaries undertaken for institutional purposes play a role in many aspects of human civilization, including government records, business ledgers and military records. Schools or parents may teach or require children to keep diaries in order to encourage the expression of feelings and to promote thought.

*Example.* *The Diary of Anne Frank* is a published personal account of Anne's life before and during the Second World War.

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#### **Dramatic Form**

Dramatic form or structure is the structure of a dramatic work such as a play or film. Many scholars have analyzed dramatic structure, beginning with Aristotle in his *Poetics* (c. 335 BCE). It is most popularly characterized by Gustav Freytag's pyramid structure including exposition, rising action, climax, falling action or denouement, and resolution.

*Example.* All of Shakespeare's works utilize the Freytag dramatic form.

#### **Epiphany**

In fiction, an epiphany is when a character suddenly experiences a deep realization about himself or herself; a truth, which is grasped in an ordinary rather than a melodramatic moment.

*Example.* In Tolstoy's *Anna Karenina*, Levin has an epiphany when he realizes that one must live for his soul rather than for external gratification.

#### **Fable**

A fable is a succinct story, in prose or verse, that features animals, mythical creatures, plants, inanimate objects, or forces of nature which are anthropomorphized (given human qualities), and that illustrates a moral lesson, which may at the end.

*Example.* *Aesop's Fables* are among the most famous, one of which being *The Tortoise and the Hare*.

#### **Fantasy**

Fantasy is a genre that uses magic and other supernatural forms as a primary element of plot, theme, and/or setting. Many works within the genre take place on fictional planes or planets where magic is common. Fantasy is generally distinguished from science fiction and horror by the expectation that it steers clear of scientific and macabre themes.

*Example.* J.R.R. Tolkien's works are among the most famous in the fantasy genre including *The Lord of the Rings*.

#### **Farce**

Farce is a form of humor based on exaggerated, improbable incongruities dating back as far as Commedia Dell'Arte. Farce involves rapid shifts in action and emotion, as well as slapstick comedy and extravagant dialogue.

*Example.* Malvolio, in Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night*, is a farcical character.

#### **Frame Story**

A frame story (also frame tale, frame narrative, etc.) employs a narrative technique whereby an introductory main story is composed, at least in part, for the purpose of setting the stage for a fictive narrative or organizing a set of shorter stories, each of which is a story within a story. The frame story leads readers from the first story into the smaller one within it.

*Example.* A famous use of a frame story is in Geoffrey Chaucer's *The Canterbury Tales*.

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#### Historical Reference

An historical reference is when a historical event or person is referred to in a literary work, as in an allusion.

*Example.* Shakespeare's *Henry VIII* is an example of historical reference.

#### Legend

A legend (Latin, *legenda*, "things to be read") is a narrative of human actions that are perceived both by teller and listeners to take place within human history and to possess certain qualities that give the tale verisimilitude. Legend, for its active and passive participants includes no happenings that are outside the realm of "possibility", defined by a highly flexible set of parameters, which may include miracles that are perceived as actually having happened, within the specific tradition of indoctrination where the legend arises.

*Example.* A simplistic legend can be seen as a folktale or fairytale.

#### Melodrama

Melodrama is a term applied to any literary work that relies on implausible events and sensational action for its effect. The conflicts in melodramas typically arise out of plot rather than characterization; often a virtuous individual must somehow confront and overcome a wicked oppressor. Usually, a melodramatic story ends happily, with the protagonist defeating the antagonist at the last possible moment. Thus, melodramas entertain the reader or audience with exciting action while still conforming to a traditional sense of justice.

*Example.* Melodramas are popularly staged in theatre. Jean-Jacques Rousseau's *Pygmalion* was a famous theatrical melodrama.

#### Mystery

Mystery is a fiction synonym for detective or crime fiction. In other words, it is a novel or short story in which a detective (either professional or amateur) investigates or solves a crime.

*Example.* A famous example of mystery writing is Edgar Allan Poe's *The Murders in Rue Morgue*.

#### Parody

A parody is a work created to mock, comment on, or poke fun at an original work, its subject, author, style, or some other target, by means of satiric or ironic imitation.

*Example.* A parody of *Hamlet* was created when Tom Stoppard wrote *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead*, placing two minor characters in Shakespeare's play in a similar and comedic framework.

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#### **Prologue**

The opening speech or dialogue of a play, especially a classic Greek play, that usually gives the exposition necessary to follow the subsequent action. Today the term also refers to the introduction to any literary work.

*Example.* *Romeo and Juliet* begins with a famous Prologue that sets the stage for the rest of the play.

#### **Epilogue**

An epilogue, or epilog, is a piece of writing at the end of a work of literature or drama, usually used to bring closure to the work. The writer or the person may deliver a speech, speaking directly to the reader, when bringing the piece to a close, or the narration may continue normally to a closing scene.

*Example.* Tolstoy's *War and Peace* features more than one epilogue- some of the longest ever written.

#### **Stream of Consciousness**

Stream-of-consciousness writing is characterized by associative leaps in syntax and punctuation that can make the prose difficult to follow. Stream of consciousness and interior monologue are distinguished from dramatic monologue, where the speaker is addressing an audience or a third person, and is used chiefly in poetry or drama. In stream of consciousness, the speaker's thought processes are more often depicted as overheard in the mind (or addressed to oneself); it is primarily a fictional device.

*Example.* James Joyce's *Ulysses* is an example of stream of consciousness narrative.

#### **Story within a Story**

A story within a story is a literary device or conceit in which one story is told during the action of another story.

*Example.* The inner drama created by Pyramus and Thisbe in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* is a story within a story.

#### **Monologue**

A monologue, or monolog, is an extended uninterrupted speech by a character in a drama. The character may be speaking his or her thoughts aloud, directly addressing another character, or speaking to the audience, especially the former. Monologues are common in the dramatic form.

*Example.* An example of a monologue is Puck's final delivery to the audience in Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* ("If we shadows have offended...")

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#### **Dramatic Monologue**

A type of lyric poem in which a character (the speaker) addresses a distinct but silent audience imagined to be present in the poem in such a way as to reveal a dramatic situation and, often unintentionally, some aspect of his or her temperament or personality.

*Example.* The poem “My Last Duchess” by Robert Browning is a dramatic monologue.

Also, any speech in a play is a dramatic monologue.

*Example.* The King’s speech in Act 1, Scene 1 of *Hamlet*, is also a dramatic monologue.

“Though yet of Hamlet our dear brother’s death  
The memory be green, and that it us befitted  
To bear our hearts in grief and our whole kingdom  
To be contracted in one brow of woe,  
Yet so far hath distraction fought with nature  
That we with wisest sorrow think on him,  
Together with remembrance of ourselves.”

#### **Interior Monologue**

An interior monologue is a narrative technique that seeks to portray an individual’s point of view by giving the written equivalent of the character’s thought processes, in connection to his or her actions.

*Example.* T. S. Eliot’s *The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock* is an example of an interior monologue.

#### **Soliloquy**

A soliloquy is a device often used in drama whereby a character relates his or her thoughts and feelings without addressing any of the other characters.

*Example.* A famous soliloquy is Hamlet’s “To be or not to be...” speech in Shakespeare’s *Hamlet*.

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The above definitions constitute the terms related to fiction that are examinable in English 12.

These definitions were gathered from public domain content at [wikipedia.org](http://wikipedia.org), [dictionary.com](http://dictionary.com), for students in the Saint Thomas Aquinas High School English Department.

Fiction is a literary work based on the imagination and not necessarily on fact. The terms on this list apply mostly to the study of short stories and novels, but could also be used in connection to non-fiction, biography, narrative poetry, and drama.

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<b>Chronological order</b>	<b>Foil</b>
<b>Climax</b>	<b>Indirect Presentation</b>
<b>Conflict (internal, external)</b>	<b>Protagonist</b>
<b>Exposition</b>	<b>Round Character</b>
<b>Falling Action</b>	<b>Static Character</b>
<b>Flashback</b>	<b>Stereotyped Character</b>
<b>Foreshadowing</b>	<b>Narration</b>
<b>Plot</b>	<b>Narrator</b>
<b>Resolution</b>	<b>Comedy</b>
<b>Rising action</b>	<b>Drama</b>
<b>Setting</b>	<b>Dialogue</b>
<b>Suspense</b>	<b>First Person POV</b>
<b>Antagonist</b>	<b>Limited Omniscient POV</b>
<b>Character</b>	<b>Objective POV</b>
<b>Direct Presentation</b>	<b>Omniscient POV</b>
<b>Dynamic Character</b>	<b>Point Of View (POV)</b>
<b>Flat Character</b>	<b>Tragedy</b>
<b>Analogy</b>	<b>Anti-Climax</b>
<b>Denouement</b>	<b>External Climax</b>
<b>Internal Climax</b>	<b>Third Person POV</b>
<b>Indeterminate Ending</b>	<b>Surprise Ending</b>
<b>Myth</b>	<b>Catastrophe</b>
<b>Comic Relief</b>	<b>Dilemma</b>
<b>Dramatic Irony</b>	<b>Characterization</b>
<b>Hero</b>	<b>Stereotype</b>
<b>Atmosphere</b>	

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The above terms related to fiction have been covered in high school English and are included in the list of examinable terms for the English 12 Provincial Exam.