LITERARY ELEMENTS NOTES

-Literary elements are elements that make up a work of literature (characters, characterization, conflict, setting, theme, symbolism, point of view, mood, tone, and plot)

CHARACTERS AND CHARACTERIZATION

CHARACTERS
-Characters are people or animals who take part in the action of a story.
  - Types of characters: major characters, minor characters, and extras
  - Major Characters
    - Protagonist: main/central character
      - Most important character in a story, poem, or play
      - Action of the story revolves around the protagonist
    - Antagonist: character or force that opposes the protagonist
    - Other Major Characters
      - Can provide a viewpoint of a story
      - Can have their own subplot within a story
  - Minor Characters
    - Characters who take place in the action but are not the focus of attention; they have a small role
  - Extras
    - Novels and movies need extra characters to create a realistic scene
      - Extra characters become part of the setting; therefore, we don't mention them when discussing characters in a novel
  - Static characters: characters that do not undergo any change from the story's inception to its conclusion
  - Dynamic characters: characters that undergo change over the course of a story as a result of their experience
    - Most protagonists are dynamic
Characterization: the ways in which an author reveals the traits of characters to his/her audience

- Direct characterization - tells the audience what the personality of the character is
  - EX: “The patient boy and quiet girls were both well-mannered and did not disobey their mother.”
  - Explanation: The author is directly telling the audience the personality of these two children. The boy is patient and the girl is kind.
    - The author is using adjectives to describe the character.
- Indirect characterization - a method of characterization that requires the reader to infer facts about a character's traits.
  - Indirect characterization includes:
    - Speech - what does the character say? How does the character speak?
    - Thoughts - What is revealed through the character's private thoughts/feelings?
    - Effect on others toward the character: What is revealed through the character's effect on other people? How do other characters feel or behave in reaction to the character?
    - Actions - What does the character do? How does the character behave?
    - Looks - What does the character look like? How does the character dress?
      - The author is using verbs to detail the character
- **Moral** - The lesson expressed in a simple story.
  - Fables and parables are specifically designed to teach a specific lesson, which often appears in a single statement at the end.

- **Theme** - The lesson that an author conveys in a piece of literature. Sometimes theme is obvious, while other times the reader must think carefully about a work in order to identify theme.
  - In most stories, theme is not directly stated. It is indirectly stated through a character’s actions or thoughts or through a sequence of events.
  - Theme is found in short stories, poems, novels, movies, television programs, and songs!
  - There can be more than one theme in a piece of literature.

- **Main Idea** - The overall idea about a passage or text.
  - The main idea is closely related to the topic of a passage and may sometimes be stated in a topic sentence, especially in shorter passages or paragraphs.
  - May be stated directly or implied
  - Find the main idea by thinking about the supporting details
    - They often answer the questions: who, what, when, where, why, how

- **THEME IS NOT…**
  - Main idea
  - The summary of a story’s plot
  - One word
  - The same as a moral
SYMBOLISM

-Symbol- something concrete that stands for something abstract.

- May be a person, place, thing, or action.
- It may stand for an idea, belief, feeling, or attitude.
- A symbol keeps its own meaning while also standing for something else.
- In literature, things aren’t always what they seem.

The symbolism of colors

- Yellow – joy, happiness, optimism, hope, sunshine, summer, cowardice, illness, hazard and friendship
- White – purity, cleanliness, peace, innocence, youth, winter, marriage (Western cultures), death (Eastern cultures), cold, clinical
- Red – excitement, energy, passion, love, desire, strength, power, heat, aggression, danger, fire, blood, war, violence, all things intense and passionate
- Purple – royalty and nobility
- Black – power, sophistication, elegance, mystery, fear, evil, unhappiness, depth, sadness, mourning, death (Western cultures)

- Symbolism in literature is used to enhance writing
- Symbolism can take many forms including:
  - Characters, words, actions, events that have deeper meaning in a story, metaphors, allegories

SYMBOLISM IN LITERATURE

-Metaphors as Symbolism

- Compares two unlike things; says one thing is another
  
  Example: Love is a jewel. This is symbolic because it suggests that love is rare and precious.
  
  Example: He is a rock. This is symbolic because it suggests that he is strong and dependable.

-Symbolism in literature can give a literary work more richness and color and can make the meaning of the work deeper.

Examples:

- Figures of speech (object, person, or situation has another meaning other than its literal meaning)
- Actions of characters, word, action, or event that have a deeper meaning in the context of the whole story.
Allegory as Symbolism

- Allegory - extended use of symbolism and **metaphors**
  - A story, a **poem**, or even a **whole book** can be an **allegory** and the symbolism will permeate throughout.

**CONFLICT**

- **Conflict**
  - The single most **important** element of a short story; without some sort of **meaningful conflict**, a story has little **plot** to interest the reader.
  - A **struggle** between opposing forces.
  - Every story has a **central** conflict; it shows up in the inciting incident of plot mountain (we will learn more about this later).
  - Stories can also have **side** conflicts.

Two categories of conflict:

- **Internal Conflict**
  - Character vs. **self** - a conflict in which the main character is at odds with an internal problem, such as fear, shyness, or guilt.

- **External Conflict** - one in which a character **struggles** against some **outside force**
  - Character vs. **character** - the main **character** has a problem with another character.
  - Character vs. **nature** - the main character must **struggle** against a harsh **environment** or natural disaster.
  - Character vs. **society** - the main character faces a problem with a part or the whole of society (e.g., government, tradition, laws).
  - Character vs. **fate** - the main character struggles with a **force** that seems beyond the character’s control.
  - Character vs. **supernatural** - the main character struggles with a **force** that is not of the **human world**.
FORESHADOWING, FLASHBACK, AND MOOD

- **Foreshadowing** - the use of clues early in a story to give hints about events that will happen later

- **Flashback** - the technique authors use to tell readers about an event that happened before the current action of the story
  - Must be relevant
  - Must be triggered by something

- **Mood** - the feeling the author creates for the reader
  - How the reader feels
  - Created by the author through writing (tone)
  - Can also be created in movies and when listening to music

**Point of View**

- **Author** - person who writes a story
- **Narrator** - the character or observer who is telling the story
- **Point of View** - the viewpoint of the story's narrator; stories can be told from several points of view
  - **First Person POV** - the narrator is a character in the story who can reveal only personal thoughts and feelings and what he or she sees and is told by other characters.
    - He/she cannot tell us thoughts of other characters
    - Pronouns: I, me, we, us, etc.
  - **Third Person POV** - the narrator is NOT a character in the story.
    - He/she tells the story from the outside
    - Pronouns: he, she, they, them, it, etc.
  - **Third Person Limited** - the narrator is an outsider who sees into the mind of one of the characters
    - One meaning limited to one person
  - **Third Person Omniscient** - the narrator is an all-knowing outsider who can enter the minds of more than one of the characters
    - Omniscient meaning all knowing