

MORE STYLE AND TONE WORDS

Style

accusatory	despairing	obsequious
acerbic	disdainful	patronizing
ambivalent	earnest	pessimistic
apathetic	gloomy	petulant
bitter	haughty	quizzical
conciliatory	indignant	reverent
condescending	judgmental	ridiculing
callous	jovial	reflective
contemplative	mocking	sarcastic
critical	morose, focusing	sardonic
choleric	on death	self-deprecating
churlish	malicious	sincere
contemptuous	objective	solemn
derisive	optimistic	

Tone

caustic	matter-of-fact	ribald
colloquial	informal	satiric
didactic	intimate	scholarly
effusive	lyrical	terse
erudite	objective	scholarly
fanciful	pedantic	terse
formal	poignant	whimsical
forthright		

Basic Elements of Fiction and Drama

On the AP Lit exam it won't be enough for you to simply identify literary elements. You will need to show how the elements contribute to the meaning of the work.

In This Chapter

Overview Basic Elements of Classical Tragedy
Key Terms Ten Common Novel Types

OVERVIEW

If doctors did not use precise medical terminology—"scalpel, stat" instead of "could you hand me that blade thing-y when you've got a moment?"—you would not want to be in surgery. It is important that doctors and nurses understand the language of their profession to do their jobs well. It is likewise important for you to understand the language we use to talk and write about literature.

The purpose of this chapter, and those that follow for poetry and language, is to define for you a **basic list** of literary terms, specifically, the literary terms that have appeared on AP Lit released exams. However, it is not enough for you just to know these terms and be able to define them. Your expert use of these terms in arguing your point about a passage is the next step. Chapter 11 will help you understand more about literary analysis. But let's start at the beginning.

KEY TERMS

It is critical to know these terms well. The starred terms (★) are those that have appeared more prominently on released AP Lit exams.

- ★ **allusion**: a reference to something in previous literature, history, or culture that adds to or emphasizes a theme of the work
- allegory**: a narrative or description with a secondary or symbolic meaning underlying the literal meaning. An example of an allegory is Orwell's *Animal Farm*. Old Major, the leader of the animals' revolution, is often seen to represent Karl Marx, who urged the proletariat to revolt.
- anecdote**: a clever little story; a short account of an interesting situation
- anti hero**: a protagonist whose attributes are opposite of what is expected of heroes. Antiheroes may be confused, powerless, victimized, or simply pathetic.
- archetype**: a symbol that recurs often enough in literature over time to be easily recognizable, such as water as a purifying element or the sun as knowledge; also character types that are common: prodigal son, wise grandfather, etc.
- ★ **atmosphere**: the emotional quality of the setting
- epiphany**: a moment of insight, spiritual or personal; a character's sudden revelation about life or his or her own circumstances
- eulogy**: a speech given at the memorial or funeral service in remembrance of one who has died
- extended metaphor**: a detailed or complex metaphor that is evident throughout a work
- foil**: a character who possesses traits that emphasize the characteristics and qualities of another character, either by being similar to or opposite from that character.
- ★ **imagery**: language that appeals to the senses. Images are emotionally evocative. There are seven types of imagery: visual (sight), auditory (sound), tactile (touch), olfactory (smell), gustatory (taste), kinesthetic (movement), and organic (internal sense of being)
- invocation**: a prayer or a statement that calls for help from a god or goddess. *The Odyssey* begins with Homer's invocation: "Sing in me, muse, and through me tell the story. . ."
- ★ **irony**: a discrepancy between appearance and reality. There are three types of irony: verbal (when what a character says is different from what he means); dramatic (when the reader knows something a character does not know); and situational (when something in the situation is incongruous with what may be expected).
- ★ **metaphor**: a metaphor compares two generally dissimilar things (objects, places, ideas, etc.) in order to show something new or to help readers see something in a new way.

15. ★ **mood**: the dominant tone in a piece of literature; typically the emotional quality of the scene or setting
16. **motif**: a recurring element, an image or idea, in a work of literature, whose repetition emphasizes some aspect of the work (theme, plot, etc.)
17. **parable**: a short tale that teaches through example. Parables usually teach a moral or even religious lesson; they teach people about how they ought to live.
18. **paradox**: a situation or statement containing contradictory elements which nonetheless seem plausible or true
19. **parody**: a work of satire where the author imitates the language and form of another work to ridicule the author or work.
20. **soliloquy**: primarily found in Shakespeare's plays, a soliloquy is a monologue, one character on stage, or in the spotlight, who relates his/her plight. Hamlet's famous "To be or not to be" soliloquy is an example. Soliloquies are not meant to be heard by other characters.
21. **symbol**: a person, place, thing or idea that represents something else.
22. **syntax**: in general, the order of words in a sentence that results in various sentence types used for a variety of rhetorical effects (see Chapter 5)
23. ★ **tone**: the speaker or narrator's attitude towards something or the emotional quality of a passage (see Chapter 5)



Test Tip
It's difficult to understand literary elements out of context. As you read, identify various elements and make margin notes about their significance in the passage. See Chapter 10 on "Engaged and Active Reading."

BASIC ELEMENTS OF CLASSICAL TRAGEDY

24. **verisimilitude**: the quality in literature of being true to life; details seem realistic and believable, even if the setting is supernatural
25. **vernacular**: the ordinary, everyday speech of a region
1. **catharsis**: a purging of emotion, experienced by audiences especially through the pity they feel when witnessing the tragic hero's fall from grace
2. **chorus**: a group of characters in a play who comment on, but do not participate in, the action
3. **hamartia**: a tragic flaw; an unwitting error in judgment
4. **hubris**: excessive pride
5. **tragedy**: typically a drama in which a tragic hero experiences a fall from noble stature. The audience feels pity for the hero, but also fear that they, but for chance, could have been or might be in the hero's place.
6. **tragic hero**: a person of greater than normal stature (more noble, more attractive, smarter, etc.) who falls from grace (station of power, respect, or goodness) due to a tragic flaw (hamartia), or, more typically, pride (hubris)



If you have never read a Greek tragedy, begin with Oedipus Rex or Antigone, both of which have been cited often on the AP Lit exam.

TEN COMMON NOVEL TYPES

Note: Many books can be classified in more than one way.

1. **Bildungsroman (novel of education) or coming-of-age novel:** the protagonist is a child whose experiences teach him or her about the realities of the adult world. This transformation is often complex, painful, and filled with disillusionment.
2. **Dystopian novel:** presents readers with an apparent perfect (Utopian) society where human life is somehow diminished. Dark, prophetic themes: oppression, abuse of power, loss of individuality.
3. **Epistolary novel:** consists of letters written by one or more characters
4. **Gothic novel:** characterized by dark, mysterious setting; has supernatural elements, especially ghosts. Gothic novels tend to be highly emotional, even melodramatic.
5. **Historical novel:** story is immersed in historical events; characters interact with history.
6. **Novella:** prose fiction longer than a short story, but shorter than a novel.
7. **Novel of Manners:** the author details the social customs of an era and/or the social behaviors of a particular social group
8. **Picaresque novel:** an episodic novel (string of episodes or adventures) starring a picaresque or rogue (a person of low social status) who wanders or has adventures.
9. **Social novel:** concerned with the effect of societal institutions and social conditions on humanity
10. **Utopian novel:** presents an ideal (perfect) society free from typical social problems