LITERARY DEVICES

I-   Literary Elements

1-Introduction

In order to understand and/or analyze a literary text, the reader needs certain instruments to decipher the ambiguities and codes used by the author for poetic and eloquent requirements of literariness. Literary devices refer to the elements and techniques the writer uses for rhetorical or figurative purposes. Both literary elements and techniques are the keys to answer the who, what, why and how of the text.

2-A literary device is any specific aspect of literature, or a particular work, which we can recognize, identify, interpret and/or analyze. Both literary elements and literary techniques can rightly be called literary devices. The current lesson focuses on the elements and the following lesson will be devoted to literary techniques.

3- Literary Elements are aspects or characteristics of a whole text. They are not "used," per se, by authors; we derive what they are from reading the text. Most literary elements can be derived from any and all texts; for example, every story has a **theme**, every story has a **setting**, every story has a **conflict,** every story is written from a particular **point-of-view**, etc. In order to be discussed legitimately, literary elements must be specifically identified for that text.

a- Character

This is a character, animal, or object found in a literary text .Characters' personalities, actions, appearance, and thoughts are used to describe them. There is a protagonist—the main character in a story—who is the most significant character and initiates the plot, and there are minor characters who are not as significant to the plot as the protagonist. The antagonist is the character who stands in the way of the protagonist or main character. An antagonist can either be a force that opposes the main character or a villain who is a person. The following terms are used to describe character traits: Dynamic or round characters are those that undergo change, whereas static or flat characters do not. Characterization is how writers show who their characters are. A character trait is a quality that a character possesses. The character's words, deeds, or thoughts may reveal this quality.

b- Setting

The setting refers to the time and place in which a story takes place. Details of a setting include:

*Time/Historical Period – the general period of the plot and the main location of the story (The story took place during the 1960's at Woodstock)

*Geographic Location – the actual location of the place (The story took place in China Town of New York City)

c- Conflict

It is a central problem around which a story revolves. There are 2 types of conflict that can occur:

(1) **Internal conflict** occurs within a person or character

(2) **External conflict** occurs between a person & another person, a machine, nature, or society.

Every story needs to have conflict. There is typically only one major conflict in short stories. There may be multiple conflicts in longer stories. A story gains excitement and suspense from conflict. Typically, the conflict is made clear at the beginning of the story. The reader begins to wonder what will happen next and how the characters will deal with the situation as the plot develops.

d-Plot

The plot is the series of events that make up the story or drama/play. The parts of plot are: Exposition, Rising Action, Climax, Falling Action and Resolution/Denouement.

*Exposition – The part of a work of fiction where readers learn about the characters and the conflicts they experience. It is sometimes referred to as the basic situation; provides needed background information.

*Rising Action -the suspense builds because complications arise that make the conflict more difficult for the main characters to resolve

*Climax – or the turning point of the action, this is when the reader's interest reaches its highest point

*Falling Action - This is the part of the plot that occurs after the climax has been reached and the resolution of the conflict has occurred

*Resolution – Solution to the conflict. This is often called denouement; loose ends are tied up; end of the story/conflict

Plot Diagram:
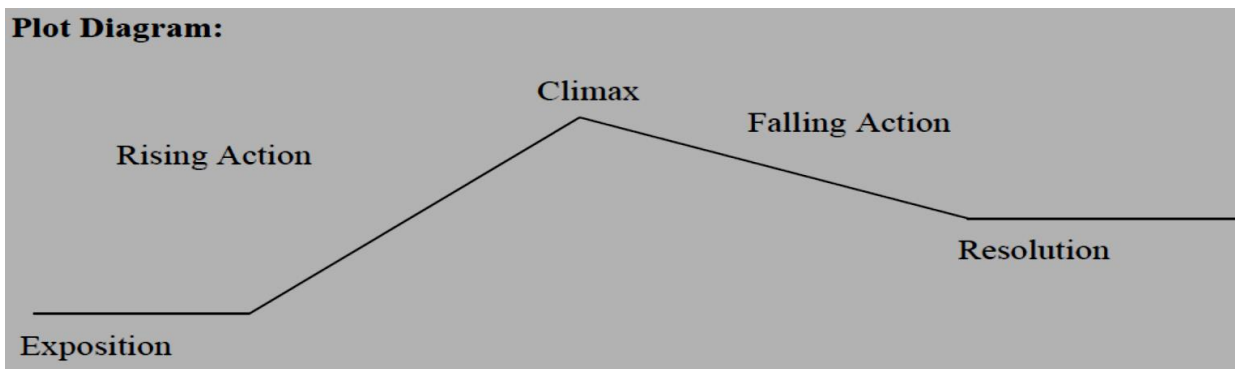
e-Theme : The theme is the underlying thematic focus of the story. The manipulated subjects or main ideas of works can often be expressed in one word, eg: Love. But a theme is underlying, something the writer wants the reader to discover. There may be more than one theme in a literary work.

Some interesting themes might be like: Love, chaos, arrogance, pride, anarchy, triumph, failure, loss, depression, poverty, prejudice, etc

f- Point of View

The voice telling the story is the narrator. Point of view refers to the voice in which the story is told. It is the set of eyes the author uses to let the reader see the action unfold. The three points of view or voices follow; however, of the three, first and third persons are the most commonly used in writing stories:

*First-Person – One can spot first person point of view by the pronouns "I, we, & us" used by the narrator. With the use of first person, the narrator is an actual character in the story. His or her knowledge is, therefore, limited to that one person's perspective.

*Second-Person – A narrator using second person is rather rare. The pronoun "you" is used in this type of writing. An example follows: "You feel the salt air on your skin. You feel alone and isolated on the beach; yet, you feel deep inside of yourself that you are not alone."

*Third-Person – When writing in third person, the narrator uses names of characters & pronouns like "he, him, she, her, they, & them." If the narrator relates thoughts of only one character in the story, it is **third person limited**, as in limited to the knowledge of the thought process for that one character. In **third person omniscient** point of view, the narrator knows and relates not only action of all characters in the story, but of each character's thoughts as well, thus the term omniscient or all-knowing.

g- Tone

The tone is the attitude that the author conveys about his/her subject through his/her choice of words. Examples of tone follow: serious / light-hearted / bitter / angry / ironic / sarcastic.

h- Mood

The mood happens when authors use descriptive words/adjectives to create a certain feeling or mood in the reader of the story. Examples of mood might be: ominous, happy, sad, etc. Setting often helps create mood in the reader.

i- Imagery

A collection of mental pictures or images is what the term means. It is about the representation of things, actions, or ideas through the use of vivid or figurative language. An author frequently makes use of words and phrases that appeal to the senses in order to make an imaginary world appear real. A reader can mentally experience what the characters in the literary selection are going through by using these words and phrases, which are referred to as images. A good description should make the reader think of a specific reaction or emotion. The five senses are utilized to develop sensory imagery: taste, smell, sight, and sound.

j- Symbolism

Symbolism is crucially important in literary texts because it sometimes plays the role of literariness. This occurs when something specific is used to represent something abstract.