Literary Terms - Fiction

Plot -
The sequence of events in a literary work. Usually involves a conflict.

Character -
The persons, animals or creatures who take part in the action of a literary work.

Setting -
The time(s) and place(s) in which a story takes place.

Narrator -
The person telling the story.
The narrator may or may not be a character within the story.

First Person Narrator -
Uses "I", story is told from his/her point of view only.

Third Person Limited Narrator -
A voice outside the story narrates - sees only one perspective (view) of the story.

Third Person Omniscient -
An all knowing narrator.
Knows what all characters think and feel.

Theme -
A central message or insight into life revealed through the literary work.
May be directly stated or only implied.
There is often no single correct statement of a work's theme.

Exposition -
The beginning of a work of fiction. Introduces setting, characters and plot.
May provide background information.

Genre -
A category or type of literature.
Literature is commonly divided into three major genres: poetry, prose and drama.
Each major genre can be divided into smaller categories.

Foreshadow -
The use of clues that suggest events that have yet to occur.
This technique helps to create suspense.

Flashback -
A section of a literary work that interrupts the sequence of events (plot) to tell about an event from an earlier time.

Conflict -
A struggle between two opposing forces.

Kinds of Conflict -

Internal Conflict
A character struggles with a decision or choice.
External Conflict
A character struggles with a force outside him/herself.

Five categories of conflict -

1. person against nature
2. person against self
3. person against supernatural (technology, God, UFO...)
4. person against society
5. person against person

Dialogue -
A conversation between characters. Reveals character and advances action. Appears between quotation marks except in scripts.

Symbol -
Something which stands for or represents something else.

\[(\text{Heart} = \text{love})\]

Climax -
The main conflict is resolved.
Often the major event or turning point in the plot.

Resolution -
The ending of the story. Loose ends may be tied up.
Some stories especially science fiction may not have a resolution.

Rising Action -
The series of events which lead to the climax of the plot of a story.

Initiating Event -
The incident which introduces the central conflict in a story; it may have occurred before the story opens.

Mood /atmosphere-
The feeling evoked in the reader by a literary work or passage.
Often developed through descriptive details and wording.
(lighthearted, frightening, spooky, despairing).

Tone -
The writer's attitude toward his or her audience and subject.

Villain -
A dramatic or fictional character who is typically at odds with the hero or heroine.

Stereotype -
An oversimplified conception, opinion, or image of a larger group.
Frequently negative.

**Hyperbole** -  
Intentional exaggeration to create an effect.  
(I'm starving.)

**Irony** -  
Literary technique which involves surprising, interesting or amusing contradictions.

**Dramatic Irony** -  
A contradiction exists between what a character thinks or knows and what the reader knows.

**Direct Characterization** -  
The author directly states the character’s traits.

**Indirect Characterization** -  
The reader must figure out what the character is like from his/her actions, dialogue and the comments of others.

**Dynamic Character** -  
A character who grows or changes as a result of the experiences in the work of fiction.

**Static Character** -  
A character who remains the same throughout the work of literature. (does not change)

**Characterization**  
The art of creating and developing a character in a story.

**Round Character** -  
A character who is fully developed and exhibits multiple traits, often both faults and virtues.

**Flat Character** -  
A character who comes across as one-sided or stereotypical (not well developed).

**Hero** -  
A character whose actions are inspiring or noble.  
Often struggles mightily to overcome obstacles or problems, frequently created by a villain which stand in his/her way.

**Protagonist**  
The main character of a work of fiction.  
Often grows or changes as a result of the experiences described in the literary work.  
(The "good guy")

**Antagonist** -  
The character or force which opposes the main character in a work of fiction.  
(the "bad guy")

**Connotation**  
The suggested meaning of a word beyond the explicit meaning.  
Example - The connotations of comfort that surround the old, worn chair.
**Denotation**
The most specific or direct meaning of a word, in contrast to its figurative or associated meanings.

**Allusion** -
A reference to a well-known person, place, event, literary work or work of art. Understanding a writer’s meaning often depends upon recognizing allusions.

**Idiom** -
An expression whose meanings cannot be taken literally. Example - You're pulling my leg.

**Voice** -
Shows an author's personality, awareness of audience, and passion for his or her subject.

**Dialogue** –
Words that are said by characters in literature. Indicated by quotation marks.