Glossary of Academic and Literary Terms

Academic or Literary Term	Definition
1st-person point of view	when a story is told by someone who is in it, using “I” or “we”
3rd-person point of view	When the narrator tells the story about other people using “he,” “she,” or “they”; when the narrator is outside the story
3rd-person limited	Only having information about the thoughts and feelings of one or just a few characters
3rd-person omniscient	Knowing the thoughts and feelings of all characters.
Allegory	a story, poem, or picture that can be interpreted to reveal a hidden meaning, typically a moral or political one
Alternate claim	challenges an argument by presenting a different solution, interpretation of the problem, or another viewpoint
Analogy	a writing technique that aims to explain a complex concept by comparing it to something else
Argument (6th-7th grade)	The author’s position on a topic; it includes a claim supported with reasons and evidence
Argument (8th grade)	The author’s position on a topic; it includes claims supported with evidence and reasoning
Author's perspective	The author’s thoughts, feelings, and opinions about a topic, shown through their writing
Author’s purpose	The reason why an author writes something; to inform, entertain, or persuade
Background information	Sets up the topic and gives the reader enough information to understand what the text is about
Central idea	A main point or message the author conveys over the course of a text
Character perspective	What a character thinks, feels, or believes based on their experiences and background
Characterization	The way an author shows what a character is like through their words, actions, thoughts, appearance or what others say about them
Claim (6th-7th grade)	A statement or belief that can be supported with evidence
Claim (8th grade)	A statement or belief that can be supported with evidence; claims can be an explicitly stated idea or an idea built up throughout the argument
Conflict	A problem or struggle that drives the plot
Connotation	The feelings or ideas a word suggests beyond its literal meaning
Counterclaim	A direct challenge to an argument
Credible	Trustworthy or factual
Descriptive language	The use of vivid and detailed words to create a clear image or impression in a reader’s mind.
Dialogue	The words characters say to each other in a story or play
Diction	The specific, deliberate choice and arrangement of words a writer uses to convey meaning

Dramatic irony	When the audience knows something important that the characters in a story or play do not
Elaboration	The explanation or elaboration of the evidence; the writer's own thinking that shows how the evidence supports the main and central ideas
Epigraph	A short quote or phrase at the beginning of a book, chapter, or text
Evidence (argument)	Quotes, facts, examples, or details used to support a claim
Evidence (informative)	Details, quotations, or paraphrased information from the text(s) that develops the main and central ideas
Exposition	The beginning of a story where the context—characters, setting, and background—is established
Extended metaphor	A metaphor that continues over several lines throughout a poem
External conflict	A struggle between two characters or between a character and some other force
Figurative language	Words used creatively to express something beyond their literal meaning
Formal verse	Poetry that has a defined structure
Free verse	Poetry that avoids rigid structures
Idiom	A phrase that means something different from what the words actually say.
Imagery	Descriptions that appeal to the senses and create a picture in the reader's mind
Informative writing	A type of nonfiction writing that explains, describes, or informs readers about a topic
Internal conflict	A struggle that happens inside one character
Line	A row of words in a poem
Memoir	Nonfiction narrative writing based on the author's personal memories
Metaphor	A figure of speech that directly states one thing is another to suggest a similarity between them
Mood	The feeling a piece of writing creates for the reader
Motif	A repeated image, idea, or symbol that helps develop a theme
Narration	The written or spoken act of telling a story
Narrative	A story, real or imagined, that uses characters, setting, and events to show what happens from a specific point of view
Narrator	The person telling the story
Opposing claim	Challenges an argument by presenting the opposite position
Pacing	The use of elements like sentence structure, paragraph length, and writing voice to control how quickly or slowly events unfold in a story
Perspective (literary)	The way a character or narrator views things; shaped by their experiences and beliefs
Poetic form	The type or style of a poem
Poetic structure	The way a writer organizes language and ideas in a poem using techniques such as stanza breaks, line breaks, repetition, rhythm, rhyme, capitalization, punctuation, and the visual shape of the poem on the page
Point of view	The type of narrator the author chooses to tell a story
Preview of key points	Brief description of the subtopics, usually in the same order they appear in the text

Reasoning	The writer’s logical justification for how the evidence supports the claim
Reasons	The supporting points that explain why the claim is true
Register	The style of speaking or writing that a writer uses, depending on audience and context
Relevance	How closely something is connected to the topic or question
Resolution	The part of the story where the conflict is resolved and the story comes to a satisfying ending
Setting	All of the elements that make up a character’s environment, including where and when a story takes place
Shift	A noticeable change that happens in a poem’s tone, mood, subject, or speaker’s perspective
Situational irony	When the opposite of what is expected happens
Stanza	A group of lines in a poem, like a paragraph in poetry
Statistic	A piece of numerical information
Style	How a writer expresses ideas through word choice and sentence structure
Suspense	A feeling of excitement or nervousness about what will happen next in a story
Symbol	Something that stands for something else, often an idea
Symbolism	Objects, colors, or other elements used to represent deeper meanings beyond their literal sense
Text structure	The way a writer organizes language and ideas in a text, using sentences, paragraphs, scenes, chapters, or sections
Theme	A central, unifying idea about life, society, or humanity conveyed across a text
Tone	The writer's, author’s, or speaker’s attitude toward the topic or audience
Topic sentence	A statement that presents the main idea of a paragraph