ENGLISH 271 INTRODUCTION TO LITERATURE:
Genre
(Monster Fiction)
M-W 1:30-2:45
(3 Credits)

INSTRUCTOR: Robert Barclay
OFFICE: ʻĀkoakoa 236
OFFICE HOURS: M-W-F: 10:00 to 1:30; T-Th: 8:45 to 9:45, 12:30-1:30
CONTACT: rbarclay@hawaii.edu Phone: 224-3019
EFFECTIVE DATE: Fall 2010

WINDWARD COMMUNITY COLLEGE MISSION STATEMENT

Windward Community College is committed to excellence in the liberal arts and career
development; we support and challenge individuals to develop skills, fulfill their potential, enrich
their lives, and become contributing, culturally aware members of our community.

CATALOG DESCRIPTION

This course introduces students to the study of significant works of literature in selected genres.
Emphasis is on discussion of and writing about characteristics and themes of the works. A student
may enroll in this course more than one time (for different genres); however, only three credits
will be applied toward degree. Prerequisite: a grade of C or better in English 100 or consent of
instructor.

REQUIREMENTS COURSE SATISFIES

This course satisfies one of the Arts and Humanities requirements (DL) and fulfills three of the
six writing intensive credits needed for the Associate in Arts degree.

RECOMMENDED BASIC SKILL LEVELS

Ability to carefully read and take notes on short stories and novels (allow two hours of reading
and prep per class—slower readers will take longer). Ability to write papers that contain and
follow a clear thesis statement. Ability to arrive in class on-time and prepared for discussions.

STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES

The student learning outcomes for the course are:
1. Use concepts and terminology particular to literary study to analyze and interpret
imaginative literary works orally and in writing.
2. Respond to a work of literature as an expression of a culture’s values and compare those
values with the student’s own.
3. Enjoy a more creative, enlightened, and fulfilled life through an appreciation of
literature’s social, cultural, political, and philosophical significance.
4. Exhibit knowledge about selected writers and their characteristic themes and techniques.
COURSE CONTENT

Most of the semester will be devoted to discussing the assigned readings, and you will be called upon to actively participate. Other than the assigned readings, your homework will include focused and typed preparation for the discussions, preparation for quizzes, and the writing of several papers. Along the way we will address various schools of critical and creative thought, so that as the semester progresses you will become a greater critical, ethical, and analytical reader and thinker—and, as this is also a writing intensive course, you will become a greater writer as well. You will also maintain a portfolio of all writing assignments, which you will turn in at the end of the semester. Attendance will be taken daily via a short, easy quiz on the assigned reading, and your quiz scores will determine the Attendance and Participation portion of your final grade (I assume that if you do well on the quizzes, you are not only present but also prepared to contribute to the discussion). Also, be sure to activate and check your Hawaii.edu email account, as that is how I will communicate with the class at times.

BOOKS

Grendel by John Gardner
Unwind by Neal Shusterman
Melal by Robert Barclay
Survivor by Chuck Palahniuk
Geek Love by Katherine Dunn
Several handouts will also be provided

ASSESSMENT TASKS AND GRADING

You must complete ALL assignments to pass this class. No exceptions. Assignments that do not meet minimal proficiency (receiving an F grade) must be redone to receive passing credit.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Task</th>
<th>Weight</th>
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<tr>
<td>Article Summary</td>
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<tr>
<td>Story Assignment</td>
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<td>3 pages, plus drafts</td>
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<tr>
<td>3 Reader Response Assignments:</td>
<td>5% each</td>
<td>2 pages each, plus drafts</td>
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<tr>
<td>Comparative Assignment</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>4 pages, plus drafts</td>
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<tr>
<td>Common Book Report</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>1 page</td>
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<tr>
<td>Discussion notes</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>Approx 10 pages</td>
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<td>Conferences (three required):</td>
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<tr>
<td>Portfolio (including self-analysis and revised final drafts):</td>
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A = 90+; B = 80+; C = 70+; D = 60+; F = 59 and below

ATTENDANCE POLICY

This is not a correspondence course. There are no excused absences. Schedule medical appointments outside of class times. You are required to show up and participate. A failure to show up on time will be reflected in your daily quiz score and result in a lowering of your grade. If, for whatever reason, you think you will miss more than five classes this semester, then this is not the class for you. There will be no make-up quizzes and no extra credit. Six absences (amounting to missing three full weeks of the semester) lowers your final grade by 20%. Seven absences lowers it another 20%. Eight absences results in an F final grade. As such, you will be wise to not miss class except for real illnesses or emergencies. If you do miss class, it is your responsibility to contact your classmates to find out what you missed, what changes have
been made to assignments, and what you need to be prepared for the next class. If it is a day that we are conducting peer reviews of your drafts, you are still responsible to get that done. If life prevents you from regularly attending, then drop the course. If life prevents you from attending after the drop deadline, contact the Dean with proof of a valid excuse (medical emergency, death in the family) and you will receive a late withdrawal without penalty. Valid excuses for late withdrawal do not include employer or child care demands. **Bottom line: you must attend class, arrive on time, and be prepared to contribute.** This is not a hard class, but don’t think you can blow off a week and easily catch up. We will have moved on without you and you will have twice as much work.

**PAPER AND ASSIGNMENT POLICY**

The writing assignments require you to turn in up to three drafts: a rough draft, a final draft, and a revised final draft. The rough drafts must be complete drafts, and final drafts must be typed in MLA format. The revised final draft will address and correct all punctuation, grammar, and content issues that I mark on the final draft. Drafts are due on the dates specified. Late drafts lose one letter grade. Drafts more than a week late will lose two letter grades. Keep in mind that paper lengths are minimums. **Not completing all assignments will result in a failing grade for the entire course.** Do not submit papers as email attachments, or send email drafts to me for editing. If you want help with any of your papers (for this class or any other) come see me during my office hours or make an appointment. I am always happy to help.

**PLAGIARISM POLICY**

Plagiarism will not be tolerated. If you do plagiarize, you will be dis-enrolled from the course, receive a failing grade, and the incident will be filed within your permanent academic record. All sources used in your papers must be properly cited according to MLA format. If in doubt, come see me **before** turning in your paper.

**CONTENT WARNING**

Literature, as does the world it comes from, sometimes contains violence, sexuality, profanity, depravity, and other graphic content that might offend you. Additionally, the purpose of a college education is not to reinforce our own existing beliefs, but to examine the world outside of them in its entirety, including—and sometimes especially—that which we find offensive, distasteful, or otherwise disagreeable. If you would prefer not to expose yourself to these things in reading, then this is not the class for you.

**DISABILITIES ACCOMMODATION STATEMENT**

If you have a physical, sensory, health, cognitive, or mental health disability that could limit your ability to fully participate in this class, you are encouraged to contact the Disability Specialist Counselor to discuss reasonable accommodations that will help you succeed in this class. Ann Lemke can be reached at 235-7448, lemke@hawaii.edu, or you may stop by Hale ‘Akoakoa 213 for more information.
CONFERENCES WITH INSTRUCTOR

You are required, three times this semester, to sit down with me to discuss a draft of one of your writing assignments. You may either stop by during office hours, or make an appointment, or use the class days reserved for this purpose. An appointment may help you to avoid waiting while I meet with other students. Do not neglect these conferences, as you cannot pass the course without doing them. I will sign the papers so you and I can keep track.

DISCUSSION NOTES

For each class in which we are discussing assigned readings, you are required to bring to class a typed, one-half page note containing the following information.

1) A short summary of two passages that you found interesting, provocative, or problematic.

2) Brief commentary on the two passages, using at least one of the terms from the vocabulary list in each commentary.

3) Two or three questions you think will promote a good discussion of the reading in class.

SAMPLE NOTES. (based on The Three Little Pigs). You can do it this way, or combine it in some other way.

1) Short Summaries: (should be a little more involved than this)

   A) The first little pig builds his house out of straw, and then the wolf blows it down and eats the pig.

   B) The second little pig builds his house out of sticks, and then the wolf blows it down and eats him.

2) Commentaries:

   A) This passage is interesting because the pig is obviously a metaphor for a lazy person, and it teaches a simple lesson about the consequences of doing shoddy work. It’s also interesting because for a children’s story it’s actually very violent, in that it causes you to imagine what it might be like to be eaten alive.

   B) This passage is interesting because a wood house is actually pretty common. I had to wonder what the message is here, because it seems life becomes not worth living if you have to fortress yourself away from the rest of the world.

3) Questions:

   A) Why is the wolf portrayed as a villain; shouldn’t he have just as much a right to a good life as the pigs? And what is the pigs’ gender?

   B) Why do stories like this works so well to teach moral lessons, as opposed to simply telling somebody the moral straight up?
PORTFOLIO: Due Dec. 8

In a three ring binder, keep all of your writing assignments for this course. This includes your rough drafts, peer reviews, final drafts, revised final drafts, and discussion notes. Separate each assignment with tabbed inserts. Do not wait until the end of the semester to revise your final drafts. Revise them shortly after I return them to you and place them in your binder.

You must also write a two-page self-analysis of your writing and class experience this semester. To do so, look at the Student Learning Outcomes for this course. Do you feel that you achieved these outcomes? Do you feel that the course left you deficient in any of these outcomes? Address all four outcomes, one at a time, and also give yourself a score for each outcome, on a scale of one to ten. Then look at your writing assignments. What did you do well? Where did you make the most improvement? What do you still need to improve on?

This portfolio is worth 30% of your final grade, so as the semester progresses make sure you complete all drafts and peer reviews and keep up with your discussion notes. Your portfolio must be complete to pass this course, and it will be graded primarily on the quality of your revised final drafts.

Portfolio Checklist (copy this page and include it in your portfolio, with items checked off.)

Paper 1 (article summary)
   Final Draft

   Paper 2 (Story)
      Revised Final Draft
      Final Draft
      Rough Draft
      Peer Review
      Grade Sheet

   Paper 3 (Reader-Response)
      Revised Final Draft
      Final Draft
      Rough Draft
      Peer Review
      Grade Sheet

   Paper 4 (Reader-Response)
      Revised Final Draft
      Final Draft
      Rough Draft
      Peer Review
      Grade Sheet

   Paper 5 (Reader-Response)
      Revised Final Draft
      Final Draft
      Rough Draft
      Peer Review
      Grade Sheet

   Paper 6 (Comparative Analysis)
      Final Draft
      Rough Draft
      Peer Review

   Paper 7 (Common Book)
      Final draft

   Paper 8 (Self Analysis)
      Final Draft
      Rough Draft
      Peer Review

Typed Discussion Notes
Paper 1 (Article Summary): Due Wed., Aug. 25

Go to the library or go online and look for articles that discuss concepts such as otherness, alterity, and alienation. Bonus points for finding an article that uses one of these in relation to freaks or monsters etc. Maybe you’ll focus on a term other than the three above, which is fine as long as you can relate it to the topic of this course. Bring to class on the due date a ½ page summary of the article, and a ½ page summary of your thoughts on the article. Type this in MLA format and turn it in on a single sheet of paper.

Do not bring summaries of Wikipedia, dictionary, or other encyclopedia or glossary entries, although these might be good places to begin your research. Find and read entire articles written by intelligent people. You might try Google Scholar, or one of the many databases provided on the library webpage. Avoid generalized Google or Yahoo searches, as you will waste precious time.

The purpose of this assignment is to provide us with a foundation for our discussions of the readings. Resist definitions and strive instead for understanding.

Paper 2 (Story): Rough Due Sept. 8. Final Due Sept. 13

Write, and submit for publication, a three-page (minimum) short story that involves something freakish or monstrous. Your story will receive an A if 1) it includes an interesting plot, 2) interesting and developed characters, 3) it strives to impart some theme, and 4) it is written with clear sentences and understandable punctuation. Remember this is fiction, not essay. Use your imagination to create this story, and feel free to go hyperbolic!

Look at the stories we have read this semester as models. How are they structured? What makes for an interesting plot, characters, theme?

Think about the story having a beginning, middle, and especially a good ending. Think about point of view, good dialogue, strong descriptions that appeal to the senses and give the reader a precise and vivid evocation of experience. Write scenes that are in the moment, transitioning from scene to scene. Most of all, think about your audience. What must you do to make them like it? Write through the senses of your character and to the senses of your audience.

Your story should be at least three full pages in MLA format. Two pages or shorter will be returned ungraded. Stories or Essays less than three full pages, but more than two full pages, will lose 10% from the final grade. See me if you are having trouble. On the due date you are required to turn in two copies of your story or essay as follows:

Copy 1) Final Draft  
        Rough Draft  
        Peer Review

Copy 2) Final Draft (without your name on it)  
        Rain Bird Entry Form

If your assignment is not turned like this, in its entirety, it will be handed back to you.
Story Peer Review

Final draft should be turned in stapled to the rough draft and the peer review, in that order

1) Describe the protagonist, and how you feel about him/her.

2) Is the setting detailed and specific enough to draw you into the story? If not, how might the setting become better established?

3) After reading the story, what images or lines remain in your mind?

4) Insure that dialogue is separated by paragraphs, not jammed together in the same paragraph. (Ask if you do not understand this).

5) Is the voice appropriate for this character, and what would you suggest to improve it?

6) What theme or main idea is the story communicating to you, or what theme might be developed?

6) What did you like best about this story?

7) What needs the most improvement?

8) Author’s comments: State three things in three full sentences on how you plan to improve this story.
Story Evaluation Sheet
Subtract 10% for a late paper, and 10% if it’s short of four full pages.
(Papers less than three full pages will not be graded)

Proper MLA Format 25%

- 12 pt. Times New Roman Font
- Double Spacing Throughout
- One Inch Margins
- Headings (name, page #)
- Stapled

Assignment Criteria 50%

- Contains Interesting Plot (or situation)
- Contains Interesting and Developed Characters
- Theme
- Peer Review
- Good Title

Quality of Writing 25%

- Grammar
- Punctuation
- Spelling
- Voice
- Final Draft Improves Greatly from Rough Draft
Write two-page Reader Response papers on *Grendel*, *Unwind*, and *Melal*. Avoid summarizing the novels, and assume your audience has already read them. In other words, they don’t need to be told what the novels are about or what happens in them. They want to know what you think about them. As part of each paper, cite two authoritative outside sources and include them in a works cited page. Authoritative sources are not simple facts, statistics, dictionary definitions, or encyclopedia entries. Authoritative sources are identifiable human beings who have expertise in something, and have something intelligent for you to incorporate and comment on in your paper. Below is an explanation of Reader Response theory and a sample paper.

Your paper should be at least two full pages in MLA format. Papers shorter than two full pages will be returned ungraded. See me if you are having trouble.

**Reader Response Theory**

Reader response theory has been recognized as a distinct critical movement since the early 1970s. Its many advocates include Kenneth Burke, Wayne Booth, Stanley Fish, Louise Rosenblatt, and Walker Gibson. Although these thinkers disagree on many of the features of reader response criticism, they agree that reader response criticism should pay attention to the areas of psychology, history, and sociology. In so doing, these critics make reading an interdisciplinary activity. They also weaken notions of "expert readers," for reader response criticism adheres to the principle that everyday readers can produce, if not "right" interpretations, then at least interpretations that make sense for them. Reader response criticism develops open-ended problem solving strategies, or *heuristics*, intended to assist readers with the work of interpretation. Reader response criticism operates on the following premises:

Texts affect readers in unique and subjective ways.

Readers participate in determining the meaning of literary works.

Anything that contributes to the development of a reader influences his/her interpretation of a reading selection.

An individual's social class, racial background, ethnicity, gender, nationality, age, physical condition, employment, vocational interests, and so on, make a profound impact on how that person sees and understands the world.

Just because reader response theory validates the interpretive powers of the reader does not mean that "anything goes" in interpretation. Readers are expected to support their interpretations with sound references and inferences, combining their understanding of the text with their knowledge of the world.
As I began the story, I was jolted by Dave's use of the word "nigger," even before I understood that the character was an African American. I have always been conditioned not to use that word, and to think that people who do so are morally confused. Later, after I gathered that he was black, I reconsidered. However, I'm still doubtful of that whole cultural thing that says people who belong to a certain group can use whatever language they like to describe themselves. Just because I'm female, I wouldn't call other women "bitches" or "hos."

As I continued to read, I got over my language hang-up, because I saw that the whole piece is written in a rough country dialect. None of the characters in the story have much of a vocabulary. Actually, I enjoyed the dialect. My grandparents were tenant land farmers, and they spoke a country dialect. Once I realized that the people in the story are much like the people in my own hardworking, close-knit family, I began to sympathize with the characters. I wanted good things to happen for Dave.

I also wanted some opportunity to present itself that would enable Dave to feel good about himself. I felt sorry for Dave because of the way other men on the farm treated him, and I wondered if his problems are peculiar to African American males, or applicable to all. I tend to think that most men endure this treatment. I've listened to the conversations of some young men, and I know how cruel they can be to each other, and how much pressure they put on themselves to feel like men—the whole male angst thing. Not that females aren’t guilty of similar stuff, but… this story is about a guy.

At the same time, I understand that, sometimes, people treat others poorly because they themselves suffer from low self-esteem. I've been mistreated in similar ways. For instance, I once happened to win a special college award. At a party shortly afterward, I overheard two girls saying to each other, "What did she do to win that award? She's not so hot." I was a little stung
by their remarks. I had worked very hard to qualify for that award, and I had not pulled any strings in order to get it. After thinking about it, I thought that they might suffer from low self-esteem. Tearing me down, and suggesting that I won the award through secret channels, made them feel better about themselves. So, I tossed the whole thing off, and wished them both much happiness. Perhaps the older men in the story also felt bad about themselves, and talking down to Dave made them feel bigger and stronger.

After the shooting accident and the death of the mule, I knew Dave was in serious trouble. He couldn't possibly stay on the farm and endure an endless round of ribbing from the other men. As much as he loved his mom, he couldn't put up with more insults to his self-esteem. It was bad enough to be poor and to have nothing to look forward to but another day of backbreaking work. So, although I did not agree with his running away in the end, I understood why he did it. If it were my decision to make, I probably would have stayed, even though it would mean more or less constant humiliation for awhile. Eventually, though, people would forget about the mule and chalk up the whole incident to youthful high jinks. Perhaps the story would have become something to laugh about. Growing up is hard. Sometimes I've been so embarrassed that I've felt tempted to run away, but I never have, because I know that running away doesn't make problems disappear; it only creates a set of new problems. Dave's decision must have created more problems for him. Who would have supper waiting for him at the end of the train ride? No-one.

Dave's story makes me think about young people in the world who are desperate for some shred of human dignity. I believe that lots of teens think that drugs, sex, and violence will provide them a way out of a life of loneliness and deprivation. I'll have to think about this problem, because I don't have any good answers for it yet. As this story shows, family love is not enough, for, even though Dave's mother loved him, she couldn't help him. A more broadly cultural solution must be needed.
What main point or thesis is made in the paper? Write it down, and state what evidence is used to support it.

Does the paper tend to simply summarize the novel in places (this happened, then that happened, etc)? Show the author so that these areas can be deleted.

Does the focus get away from the novel in places? Where? How can the material be related to the story?

Does the paper include intelligence from at least two authoritative outside sources? What are the sources?

How would you rate the level of insight in the paper? How might the paper be made more insightful?

Author’s comments: on the back, in five complete sentences, state five ways you will improve this paper.
Reader-Response Evaluation Sheet
Subtract 10% for late papers, and papers less than two pages will be returned ungraded.

Proper MLA Format 25%
- 12 pt. Times New Roman Font
- Double Spacing Throughout
- One Inch Margins
- Headings (name, page #, Works Cited page)
- Stapled

Assignment Criteria 50%
- Contains a strong thesis that is supported with sound logic, evidence, and argument
- Avoids Summarizing the Play
- Contains Intelligent Thought
- Peer Review
- Good Title

Quality of Writing 25%
- Grammar
- Punctuation
- Spelling
- Voice
- Final Draft Improves Greatly from Rough Draft
Write a four-page (minimum) comparative analysis, in MLA format, of *Survivor* and *Geek Love*. You might focus on how you believe the works compliment or oppose each other in their representation of otherness or alienation. Are there different kinds of otherness at play between the two novels? Or you might choose a particular motif, such as spirituality, and compare are how each work incorporates this motif. You might also consider the role of the outsider in American culture, and how these novels demonstrate its consequences. Cite at least three outside sources for this paper, and feel free to use any of the other works we have read in the class as your sources. You may compare these works in any way you wish, but keep your focus narrow to have a strong paper. Also, keep this paper in mind as you read both books, and use your notes and class discussions to help you arrive at what to write about.

**You must have a thesis statement in the first paragraph,** then a coherent organization that delivers a body of information supporting your thesis. Assume your audience to be this class and do not retell or summarize the works. See the peer review and evaluation sheets to insure you follow all criteria.

Your paper should be at least four full pages in MLA format, plus a Works Cited page. Papers three pages or shorter will be returned ungraded. Papers less than four full pages, but more than three full pages, will lose 10% from the final grade. See me if you are having trouble.
Comparative Analysis Peer Review

Final draft should be turned in stapled to the rough draft and the peer review, in that order

Does the paper have a clear thesis statement in the first paragraph? What is it? Write it down. Comment on it.

What are the main points made in the paper that support the thesis statement? Write them down, and state what evidence is used to support each one.

Are there any points defended in the paper that are not related to the thesis statement? If so, how might the thesis statement be adjusted to accommodate these points?

Does the paper tend to simply summarize the works in places (this happened, then that happened, etc)? Show the author so that these areas can be deleted.

Does the paper include intelligence from at least three authoritative outside sources? What are the sources? How do they contribute to supporting the author’s thesis statement?

How would you rate the level of insight in the paper? How might the paper be made more insightful?

Author’s comments: on the back, in five complete sentences, state five ways you will improve this paper.
Comparative Analysis Evaluation Sheet
Subtract 10% for a late paper, and 10% if it’s short of four full pages.
(Papers less than three full pages will not be graded—resubmit)

Paper that summarize the works will not be graded

Proper MLA Format 25%
12 pt. Times New Roman Font
Double Spacing Throughout
One Inch Margins
Headings (name, page #, Works Cited page)
Stapled

Assignment Criteria 50%
Contains a Clear Thesis Statement
Contains Authoritative Outside Sources (not encyclopedias or dictionaries)
Outside Sources Cited Properly, in Text and Works Cited Page (according to MLA)
Peer Review
Good Title

Quality of Writing 25%
Grammar
Punctuation
Spelling
Voice
Final Draft Improves Greatly from Rough Draft
Self-Analysis Peer Review

Staple together final draft in the following order: Final Draft, Rough Draft, Peer Review

Does the paper have a title–not self evaluation or self analysis?

Is the paper in proper MLA format? If not, suggest how to get it there.

Does the paper address each SLO for the course? If not, help the author do so.

What did the author do well in his or her writing this semester?

Where did the author make the most improvement?

What does the author still need to improve on?

Remind the author that his or her portfolio needs to be hole-punched into a three ring binder, with no staples and no plastic sleeves.

Author’s comments: State five things in five full sentences that you will do to improve this paper.
Attend one Common Book presentation on campus this semester and write a one-page summary of your thoughts on the experience.

A FEW VOCABULARY TERMS

Just as it helps to have a specific vocabulary to discuss the game of basketball (Lay-up, foul, dunk, etc.) it also helps to have a specific vocabulary to discuss literature. The list below provides a basic vocabulary, and any glossary of literary terms will show hundreds more.

1) Metaphor and Simile

Metaphor: the representation of one thing by another. The tenor of a metaphor is what is being represented. The vehicle is what does the representing. Example: That test was a monster. Test is the tenor, and monster is the vehicle. A direct metaphor specifies both tenor and vehicle: My life is a train wreck. An indirect or implied metaphor mentions only the vehicle. This test bites. The implied tenor here is the act of taking the test. Another example: I bombed the test. Bombed is the implied tenor that refers to my performance on the test. Or “I plowed through the book.” An extended metaphor simply runs with the established tenor and vehicle relationship. Example: This test is a monster. I felt it sink its teeth into me with the first question, and then it kept chomping on me until it spit me out at the end or class. Keep in mind that metaphors are not just sentences. A character’s actions might be a metaphor; for example, crossing a raging river might represent some sort of rite of passage such as coming of age, becoming a man etc. Or a fire might represent anger or passion. A simile compares two different things by using connective words such as like or as to connect the tenor and vehicle. Example: Every class feels just like spending three hours in the DMV.

2) Foil, Protagonist, and Antagonist

A foil is a type of character who by contrast to another character, often the protagonist, highlights that other character’s or protagonist’s qualities. For example, a foil to a character who is especially honest would be a character who is especially dishonest. The foil’s dishonesty highlights the other character’s honesty. To put this in modern jargon, the foil is what makes the protagonist “pop.” A protagonist is the most important or main character in a short story or novel. The protagonist is often the point of view character as well. An antagonist is a type of character that often blocks, frustrates, or comes in direct conflict with the protagonist. A particularly nasty antagonist is called a villain. An example of a non-villainous antagonist might be a sibling that the protagonist is always competing with for the attention of a parent or love interest.

3) Plot, Story, and In Media Res

Plot is the order with which a story is presented, and the interrelationship of those plot points, which creates meaning or emotion. A plot may begin on page one with an event near the end of the story, then relate it to another event earlier in the story to give it meaning or to create suspense. For example, you may begin with your protagonist on the edge of a cliff, then from that plot point you go back in time to another series of plot points that show how your protagonist got there. This delay creates suspense, and if the flashback reveals the characters acrophobia, recent failures, the consequences of jumping or going
back etc, this would give the initial scene meaning. Another function of plot is to impose a beginning, middle, and end on a story (life, as it travels in its straight-line chronology, does not always provide this). For example, a story might start with our character on the cliff, back up to reveal how he got there on various levels (physical, emotional), then come back to the cliff and resolve the crisis—does he jump to possible safety in the river below, or does he find the courage to turn and face his antagonist? A story is a narrative of events delivered in the same order in which they happen, a straight-line chronology. Plot allows a writer to condense this story and to make it meaningful and entertaining. In media res means in the middle of things. It is a plot strategy wherein a short story or novel begins on page one in the middle (or sometimes near the end) of the main action.

4) Irony, Verbal Irony, Situational Irony, and Sarcasm

Irony is a contradiction between expectation and reality. For example, you would expect an anger management instructor to be a calm person, and so if in reality he starts a fight at his anger management seminar, that would be ironic. Verbal irony is a contradiction between what a character says and what that character really thinks or means. For example, upon seeing a man in a neon green aloha shirt with penguins on it, a character might say “Nice shirt.” Sometimes it can take a little effort to tell if a character is being verbally ironic—you might think the character really likes the shirt. Another example of verbal irony might be a character looking up at a stormy sky and saying, “What a great day for the beach.” An example of situational irony would be the one above concerning the anger management instructor, or seeing a man in a McDonalds uniform eating at Burger King. The situation itself is ironic. Another example would be Dwayne Hoobler’s hobby of making birdhouses in a world where there are no longer any birds. If in giving a presentation of the vocabulary term irony, I were unable to explain it, then that would be situationally ironic too. Sarcasm is mean, nasty, and insulting irony intended to hurt or embarrass someone. “Nice shirt,” is a form of sarcasm. “What a great day for the beach,” is not sarcasm.

5) Epiphany

An epiphany is when a character has a sudden, almost blinding insight into something deep and meaningful. A character might suddenly realize that his whole life has been spent chasing an impossible dream. The little girl in the short story “Distance” has an epiphany at the end when she looks into her father’s eyes. The substance of that epiphany is left up to the reader to interpret.

6) Theme

In literature, theme is an interpretive statement. To state a theme is to state your interpretation of a story’s or novel’s meaning. As such, the theme of a story would not be “love,” but what you believe the story is saying about love. For example, rather than saying the theme of a story is the general vulgarity of human beings, I would instead say, This story demonstrates that human beings are inherently vulgar in their treatment of others and the planet, and as our technological ability advances, so does the scale of our vulgarity. This, ultimately, is self-destructive and will be our demise. If I were writing a thematic critical analysis of this story, I would state this theme in the first paragraph and then use the rest of the paper defending its existence with evidence and argument.

7) Subtext

In literature, subtext is sometimes mistakenly believed to be the “hidden meaning.” It’s not really hidden though, just unstated. Why? Because we dislike being hit over the head with
messages, and sometimes it’s the only way to get an audience to confront a controversial or difficult issue without alienating them. For example, Dr. Seuss’s story “The Sneetches,” which on the surface is just a silly little children’s story, has deep subtext that pushes us to confront our own biases against people who we perceive as different. If a story were to straight-out call us racist or classist or sexist, we might never read it and never internalize the message. Bottom line: subtext is a way to be subtle, and in literature being subtle is often the best way to deliver a message.

8) Narrator, Unreliable Narrator, Stream of Consciousness, and Interior Monologue.
A narrator is who is telling a story, often but not always one of the characters.
An unreliable narrator is usually a first person narrator who the reader simply cannot trust to tell the story truthfully or reliably. It is their perception that is in question. For example, a character might be drunk, insane, mentally ill, possessed, or simply biased. Usually but not always an author will provide clues as to what is actually happening.
Stream of consciousness is a narrative technique that tries to capture the way thoughts actually process through the human mind. There are various levels of this, and the closer they are to how the mind actually works, the harder they are to understand. This is because the mind does not process information using clear grammatical sentences, and is often chaotic. For example, a stream of consciousness narration of what is going through my mind as I’m sitting here might be: Type type type. It’s raining. Warm soda. Sometimes I wish I could fly. Once, when I was twelve, I almost drowned. Focus focus focus. Get these terms done. “Do you know what time it is,” a guy asks me. He stands there at my door, frowning at me. I don’t know what time it is. I don’t even know what day it is. Why the hell is he frowning at me? An Interior Monologue is a type of stream of consciousness that renders a characters thoughts, feelings, and emotions, and can occur at times in any kind of narrative. Sometimes an interior monologue might be broken up by thoughts coming from an outside narrator.

9) Point of View, Person, and Levels of Omniscience
Point of View is the predominant perspective and voice of the narrator, and can be broken into first person (I), second person (you) and third person (he, she, it, etc.). Each of these can be paired with present, past, and future tense. For example, a story may be told in first person, present-tense point of view. Third person narrators can have total omniscience, in which they are privileged to know the thoughts and perceptions of all characters (most of the time this kind of narrator is not one of the characters), limited omniscience, in which the narrator can know the thoughts and perceptions of a limited number of characters, and central omniscience, in which the narrator writes through the thoughts and perceptions of just one character. In central omniscience, for example, an character would not be able to narrate what is going on behind his or her back. To do so would be to lapse into total or limited omniscience. Lapsing from one to the other usually indicates bad writing.

10) Character: Characters can run the spectrum from flat, (one-dimensional) to fully rounded (complex). Flat characters are often stereotypical, more caricature than character. For example, as you have probably seen in countless movies: the wise-cracking buddy cops, the thoroughly evil bad guy, the wimpy scientist, etc. Round characters are more complex, and often display the inconsistencies and internal conflicts found in most people. A good round character, as William Faulkner says, demonstrates “the human heart in conflict with itself.” This is not to say that flat characters are poor choices to use in fiction; some great novels are full of them.
11) **Conflict:** Conflict is the struggle between opposing forces. A protagonist might be struggling against some combination of obstacles or other characters. Or the conflict might be internal, involving competing motives, desires, loyalties: the human heart in conflict with itself.

12) **Setting:** Think of this as not just time and place, but social setting as well. In a paper, you might analyze how various setting evoke mood or atmosphere, how settings mirror or contradict (creating irony) what’s happening in the novel or in a character’s mind. Do changes in setting compliment changes (motives, desires, conflicts) within the characters?

13) **Scapegoat:** A person, group, or thing upon whom the blame for the mistakes or crimes of other is thrust.

14) **Genre:** A more or less arbitrary mode of classification, whose justification is the convenience of talking about literature. Novel, poem, essay, play, short story.

15) **Tone**
   The quality of writing which results from the attitude of the narrator or character toward his or her subject matter. This attitude, which the audience must interpret, can be sarcastic, sentimental, angry, silly, high makamaka, etc.

16) **Figurative Language**
   A departure from the standard meaning of words in order to achieve some meaning or effect. *His eyes drank heavily of her beauty. Kobe Bryant is on fire!*

17) **Imagery**
   Mental pictures produced verbally though literal or figurative language. Often defined more broadly to include all sensory experience.

**A Stab at Goodness**
   A work of literature is good if it is beautiful and meaningful. Sometimes it only needs to be one of those. And sometimes just being meaningful is beautiful. E=MC². Truth is beauty is truth is beauty is truth. Something is beautiful when it creates positive emotion, when it moves us, when it evokes our senses or makes us feel something. How do you know when a man or a woman is beautiful? You know because of what that person makes you feel. The same is true of literature. If it makes you feel something, then it has succeeded and it is good. If it makes you think something, then it has succeeded and it is good. In this way, even something ugly can be beautiful. This presupposes that there is a value to beauty in this world.