**Definitions**

Setting – The time, place, and social circumstances in which a story takes place. Helps establish the “atmosphere” of a work, indicating the tone or manner in which the story is to be read. Often associated with genre: a foggy, gas-lamp lit street brings to mind the detective genre. Beyond establishing atmosphere and genre, the setting of a story can often play an active role in the story that follows.

Diction – The choice and use of words and phrases in speech or writing.

* **Monosyllabic** or **polysyllabic**
* **Simple** or **sophisticated**
* **Familiar (colloquial) language** or **less quotidian sources (poetical, scientific, legal, other specialist discourses)**
* **Modern and up to date** or **antiquated and archaic**
* **Connotative (range of possible meanings) or denotative (pointing to very specific references)**

Syntax – The arrangements of words and phrases to create grammatically complete sentences.

* **Simple and plain (subject – verb – object)** or **complex (with numerous dependent clauses, qualifying phrases, and parentheses)** or **varying between both to produce multiple, shifting effects of rhythm and tone**

Atmosphere – The mood or general feeling of a literary work, especially as it relates to the physical setting. Produced from diction and syntax and establishes the genre of a work (paranoia + uncertainty = horror fiction).

Character – The agents of a narrative, someone who acts, appears, or otherwise is seen to advance the plot. The most common distinction to be made is between the protagonist and the antagonist. Characters are often divided between two types: flat and round. Flat characters represent a stock set of attitudes in a convention, while round characters are more psychologically complex.

Narrative style - The author’s personal matter of expression. It is the result of the choices an author makes, with respect not only to subject matter, but to its presentation: elements of diction (word choice), syntax (the grammatical arrangement of words), figurative language (use of similes, metaphors, personification, alliteration, etc.), literary allusion, paragraph construction, and organization all contribute to the development of an author’s manner of expression. In some cases, an author’s narrative style is highly individualistic, so much so that a reader can almost immediately recognize a passage as having been written by a particular writer, or in imitation of his or her style. In other cases, a style may have no telltale marks of a strong personality, as in the “plain style” encouraged in the expository essay. In assessing an author’s narrative style it is useful to consider such adjectives as:

* **Formal** or **unformal**
* **Denotative** or **connotative**
* **Abstract** or **concrete**
* **Simple** or **complex**
* **Elaborate** or **spare**
* **Literary** or s**cientific**
* **Passionate** or **dispassionate**
* **Ironic** or **sincere**

Story – The chronological order of events from beginning to end. The story exists before the narrative. The story is “what” happened.

Plot – The ways in which a narrator chooses to rearrange the events that make up a “story” to produce specific artistic and emotional effects. The plot is concerned with the underlying logic or patterns that connect one event to another. Similar to the story, but can reject the chronological order of events to draw out different aspects (flashbacks, multiple viewpoints) to even change the genre. The plot indicates “why” things happen.

Narrative perspective – The standpoint from which a story is told. Can be a direct view through a lens or through a fully developed consciousness that alters our access to the events described.

* Distance – judged by space or time, where the perspective is close to the events or far (or between the two), or events are described as they are happening or in the past.
* Focus – The way is which the author arranges our point of view so we see the events being described in a certain way (close or far)
* Omniscient perspective – Narrator is placed outside the events being described
* First-person narrator – Speaks as an “I” and may have a role, either as a protagonist or an observer, within the story.

**Stories**

The Zebra Storyteller – Spencer Holst

The Fall of the House of Usher – Edgar Allan Poe

Hills Like White Elephants – Ernest Hemingway

An Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge – Ambrose Bierce

The Metamorphosis – Franz Kafka

Gilgamesh – Stephen Mitchell

Oedipus the King – Sophocles

Pride and Prejudice – Jane Austen

Ghost World – Daniel Clowes