***This comprehensive list of literary devices is a compilation of resources gathered from Shmoop.com, the PowerFolder, and Ms. Youssef.***

**Literary Devices – General** [33 total]

1. **Allegory**
	1. [Literary device] An allegory is an elaborate set of symbols in which *everything* in the poem or book is symbolic of some other level of interpretation. Allegories are usually long and are not often used on this exam, but it's beneficial to be able to identify them.
	2. **Example:** C.S. Lewis' *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* is an example of a literary allegory. On the surface, it's a children's adventure novel, but on a deeper level, is also an allegory of Christian theological principles. Ursula Le Guin’s *The Ones Who Walk Away from Omelas* is can also be an allegory for society.
2. **Alliteration**
	1. [Figurative language] Alliteration is a musical device in which words are linked together by having the same initial or beginning consonant.
	2. **Example:** "A field full of fair folk" or "Please persist in pleasing the peas and their overlords, the petunias."
3. **Allusion**
	1. [Figurative language] An allusion is a reference to another text, story, or symbol. It is usually something from mythology, ancient history, current events, art, or religion.
	2. **Example:** "Jeff and his brother get along about as well as Cain did with Abel."
4. **Anachronism**
	1. [Literary device] Anachronisms are things that are out of place in time. In movies or theatrical productions, these mistakes are usually inadvertent set mistakes that are then hilarious to anyone who catches it. In literature, anachronisms can be used for humorous effect or as satire. Shakespeare wrote many anachronisms throughout his works, including giving Julius Caesar a wrist-watch. He really should have seen Brutus coming.
	2. **Example:** A stop-light in medieval Spain or a clock radio in ancient China
5. **Anaphora**
	1. [Figurative language] Repetition of a word or words in a systematic way for effect.
	2. **Example:** Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., repeated the phrase "I have a dream" eight different times in his famous speech.
6. **Apostrophe**
	1. [Figurative language] An apostrophe involves addressing something or someone dead or inanimate as if he/she/it were really able to answer. It is not the same thing as the punctuation mark.
	2. **Example:** "[Where have you gone, Joe DiMaggio?](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m_jmDscGi7E&feature=related)" or "Twinkle, twinkle little star, how I wonder what you are."
	3. **A More Literary Example:**"Oh! Stars and clouds and winds, ye are all about to mock me; if ye really pity me, crush sensation and memory; let me become as nought; but if not, depart, depart, and leave me in darkness." (Mary Shelley, [*Frankenstein*](http://www.shmoop.com/frankenstein/))
7. **Assonance**
	1. [Figurative language] Assonance is a musical device in which words are linked together by having similar vowel sounds.
	2. **Example:** "Sea-blOOms swayed in the OOzy wOOds beneath the sea."
8. **Cacophony**
	1. [Figurative language] The use of harsh, discordant sounds or words for effect.
	2. **Example:** "[The Jabberwocky](http://www.poets.org/viewmedia.php/prmMID/15597)" by Lewis Carroll is a great example.
9. **Catharsis**
	1. [Literary device] Catharsis is the release of emotional tension during the resolution of a work of tragedy. There is always an element of grief in catharsis—if it's a happy ending and all the main characters are still alive, the term catharsis should not come up in your analysis.
	2. **Example:** Juliet finally deciding to end it all or Old Yeller going to the great, rabies-free dog park in the sky are both examples of catharsis.
10. **Consonance**
	1. [Figurative language] Consonance is a musical device in which words are linked together by having similar ending consonants or sounds. This technique is often used in near/slant rhyme.
	2. **Example:** The words "bed, stoned, defined" share consonance with the ending "d" sound.
11. **Dialogue**
	1. [Literary device] Dialogue occurs when characters speak to one another. It is a great revealer of character.
	2. **Example:** Any time characters speak to one another in any genre of literature.
12. **Diction**
	1. [Literary device] Diction does not have anything to do with Charles Dickens or British accents. It simply means word choice. A word's **denotation** is its dictionary definition, but authors know that different words have different effects based on their **connotations**. Connotation is the word's suggested, more emotional, and implicit meaning. Diction can also refer to things like appropriateness to the intended audience.
	2. **Example 1:** The word "overweight" is neutral, but the word "fat" has undeniably negative connotations.
	3. **Example 2:** You would never excuse yourself from an important board meeting by saying "I have to go tinkle," but conversely, you wouldn't expect a kindergartener to say "Pardon me a moment, I have to use the facilities," unless that kindergartener were Stewie Griffin.
13. **Dissonance**
	1. [Figurative language] Dissonance is yet another musical device, but one which utilizes harsh, conflicting sounds in a way that feels discordant or jumbled. It is similar to cacophony but less severe.
	2. **Example:** "The phone crashed and clanged and kerplunked to the floor."
14. **Euphemism**
	1. [Figurative language] A milder term for something explicit and/or inappropriate.
	2. **Example:** "I need to see a man about a horse" means that you are going to the restroom, not becoming [this guy](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MHVSCribt3U).
15. **Euphony**
	1. [Figurative language] Euphony is the opposite of cacophony. It employs the use of soothing, pleasant words for effect. "Melodious" is an old-school term for euphony, implying that euphonic works were melodic and rhythmic like a song. It frequently utilizes alliteration.
	2. **Example:** "The winter slipped softly by, with drops of snow on silver branches."
16. **Foreshadowing**
	1. [Literary device] Technique in which the author suggests or hints at future events.
	2. **Example:** In Steinbeck's [*Of Mice and Men*](http://www.shmoop.com/of-mice-and-men/), the not-so-gentle giant Lenny accidentally kills a puppy, foreshadowing his impending accidental killing of a woman.
17. **Hyperbole**
	1. [Figurative language] An exaggeration for the sake of an effect.
	2. **Example:** "I'm so hungry I could eat a horse."
18. **Imagery**
	1. [Literary device] Imagery is the way in which words are used to create an image, but not like magnetic refrigerator poetry. Imagery is all verbal, and usually related to one of the five senses.
	2. **Visual imagery**, or wording that creates a picture in the mind's eye, is the most common. There are words for imagery involving the other senses as well:
	3. **Auditory imagery:** Words that create the sensation of hearing. Frequently uses onomatopoeia.
		1. **Example:** "The pitter patter of little feet"
	4. **Olfactory imagery**: Words that appeal to the reader's [sense of smell](http://www.scientificamerican.com/article.cfm?id=the-hidden-power-of-scent), which is a lot stronger than scientists previously thought.
		1. **Example:** "The fresh-baked bread filled the house with warm, yeasty smells."
	5. **Tactile imagery**: Words that appeal to the reader's sense of touch.
		1. **Example:** "The splintered ladder was rough with peeling paint and chipping wood."
	6. **Gustatory imagery**: Words that appeal to the reader's sense of taste, and also the term that's the most fun to say aloud.
		1. **Example:** "The pie was lush and buttery with the crisp bite of apples and the delicate squish of plump, juicy raisins."
	7. **Synesthesia:**The use of one sense to convey the experience of another.
		1. **Example:**If Jake is wearing a "loud shirt," he's *probably*wearing a brightly colored monstrosity of a button-up and not a shirt that is talking. Probably.
19. **Irony**
	1. [Literary device] Generally, irony is appearing to mean one thing when you actually mean something else. It's probably *the* most difficult literary device to identify, define, or explain. People have long, drawn-out debates about whether or not [Alanis even knew what she was talking about](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8v9yUVgrmPY), but in a nutshell, there are three kinds of irony:
	2. **Verbal Irony:** Saying the opposite of what you mean, simplified as sarcasm.
		1. **Example:** Nothing more perfect here than a [Mean Girl](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lmSBrmgdKts).
	3. **Dramatic Irony:** When the audience knows something the other characters do not.
		1. **Example:** [Shakespeare](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8GDd83IQDxw) is almost always your guy on this one.
	4. **Situational Irony:** When the situation ends up surprisingly or inappropriately.
		1. **Example:** [Steve Buscemi sums it up nicely.](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f72Svxhqy-k)
	5. **Cosmic Irony:**God or fate is manipulating events so as to inspire false hopes, which are usually ruined.
		1. **Example:***Oedipus, the King*
20. **Juxtaposition**
	1. [Literary device] Juxtaposition simply means when two normally unlike things, ideas, or characters are jammed up against one another in a way that is unusual or noticeable.
	2. **Example:** John Donne oddly juxtaposes a blood-sucking flea with a love poem to a desired lover—fleas and love poems don't seem to go together naturally. At least, not in our book.
21. **Metaphor**
	1. [Figurative language] An implicit comparison of two different objects *not*using *like*or *as*.
	2. **Example:** "Our Great Dane puppy, [Marmaduke](http://www.gocomics.com/marmaduke), is a steamroller, knocking over and destroying everything in his path."
22. **Metonymy**
	1. [Figurative language] Metonymy is a device in which something is referred to not by its name, but by something closely associated with it.
	2. **Example:** Saying "The White House," but meaning the entire U.S. government
23. **Onomatopoeia**
	1. [Figurative language] Using words that, when spoken, make the sound that they are describing. Bonus points if you can spell it correctly.
	2. **Example:** Bang! Zoom! Sizzle. Ka-pow! Yes, [there's a song](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=144hlLW7opQ&feature=related%3Cbr%20%3E%3C/a%3E).
24. **Oxymoron**
	1. [Figurative language] An oxymoron is a compressed paradox containing two contradictory ideas.
	2. **Example:** "Jumbo shrimp," "accidentally on purpose," or "scheduled pop-quiz." The *au current* term "frenemy" embodies people's new ability to sometimes accept two conflicting ideas at the same time. It probably also involves gossiping and secret plots for destruction or brunch.
25. **Paradox**
	1. [Figurative language] A paradox is a self-contradictory statement that is somehow still true.
	2. **Example:** "You will never truly possess someone until you free them entirely." Paradoxes don't have to be classy, though. [Sometimes they're just funny.](http://www.collegehumor.com/pictures/gallery/5705391/paradox)
26. **Parallelism**
	1. [Literary device] This is the literary version of symmetry. It entails using balanced construction to give your sentences rhythm.
	2. **Example:** "If you are young and not liberal, then you have no heart; but if you are old and not conservative, then you have no brain." – Churchill or Disraeli, depending on who you ask.
27. **Personification**
	1. [Literary device] A type of metaphor in which a non-human, inanimate object or thing is described as if it *were*alive and animate (and possibly human).
	2. **Example:** You can personify anything, [even snot](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vLCq_tOlEAA&feature=related).
28. **Repetition**
	1. [Literary device] While mostly used in poetry, repetition can be used in any genre for a variety of effects. It can be haunting, irritating, outraged, obnoxiously joyous—it all depends on the context. It is frequently found in poetry but shows up across all genres. Repetition is generally a way to reinforce or emphasize something. Anaphora, previously mentioned, is a type of repetition.
	2. **Example:** "For the woods are lovely, dark and deep. / But I have promises to keep / and miles to go before I sleep, / and miles to go before I sleep." – Robert Frost, "Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening."
	3. Here, Frost repeats the last line for emphasis, but he also repeats the "eep" sound in the last word of each line: "deep," "keep," "sleep," and "sleep." This creates a plodding, rhythmic feel that mimics the image of walking in a snowy wood. Notice that the "ee" is also assonance.
29. **Simile**
	1. [Figurative language] An explicit comparison of two different objects using *like* or *as*.
	2. **Example:** "These cookies are like an explosion of sugary happiness on my taste buds."
30. **Symbolism**
	1. [Figurative language] When an image, object, or idea is used to represent something else. This can blend very closely with metaphor. Whatever happens to the symbol, happens to the abstract idea it represents.
	2. **Example:** Simply put, American flags are often spoken of as symbolizing patriotism or wedding rings symbolize romantic commitment. When interpreted in a literary sense, the conch in Lord of the Flies, for example, can symbolize civilization. When Jack and his “savage” crew ambush the camp set up by Piggy and Ralph, they steal Piggy’s glasses but leave the conch untouched. They don’t want it! Piggy and Ralph, however, were surprised when they realized that Jack didn’t want to steal the conch. Thinking about it symbolically, it makes sense. Why on earth would savages want to covet civilization and order?! When the conch is shattered, all order and civilization is also shattered. Ralph is then left to fend for himself in the jungle while Jack and the savages reign over the island leading a society of chaos, immorality, and savagery – all the while, order could have been maintained with a mere conch.
31. **Synecdoche**
	1. [Figurative language] Very closely related to metonymy, but more specifically refers to something (the whole) by a small piece of itself (the part). Can also be reversed.
	2. **Example 1:** "I got new wheels for my birthday". You did, but you also got the car that goes on top of the wheels…hopefully.
	3. **Example 2:** "France will win the World Cup this year" implies that the members of Frances's soccer team—not the entire country of France—will win.
32. **Syntax**
	1. [Literary device] While diction means "word choice," syntax refers to the order in which you use the words you have chosen. It's a difficult device to identify and talk about, but—particularly in poems—word order can be important. For example, the writer can choose to place a certain word last to give it more emphasis or power. This is specifically called **inverted syntax**.
	2. **Example:** In Yeats's poem about the Lake Isle of Innisfree, he talks about "the roadway and the pavements gray"—putting extra emphasis, including rhyme, on the word "gray" to make what is not natural (an urban environment) seem more gloomy and depressing. [Yoda did it](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fE8PieLJttY&feature=related), too.
33. **Understatement**
	1. [Figurative language] The opposite of a hyperbole. This is deliberately saying less than what is appropriate to the circumstance, usually for sarcastic or ironic purposes.
	2. **Example:** "Smashing my finger in the car door was slightly uncomfortable."

**Poetic Devices** [21 total]

1. **Ballad**
	1. A type of poem; usually a 4-line stanza poem with a tight rhyme scheme that tells a story. It is generally folkloric and/or romantic. [Rock songs can be ballads too](http://www.nutsie.com/top100sradio/Top%20100%20Rock%20Ballads/1614267%29), though.
	2. **Example:** John Keats' [La Belle Dame Sans Merci](http://www.bartleby.com/126/55.html).
2. **Blank Verse**
	1. A type of poem; unrhymed iambic pentameter.
	2. **Example:** Basically anything written by [Shakespeare](http://www.types-of-poetry.org.uk/07-blank-verse.htm) that wasn't a sonnet. This guy is famous for a reason.
3. **Caesura**
	1. A pause in the line, usually with punctuation.
	2. **Example:** Old English used lots of caesura. In this excerpt from [*Beowulf*](http://www.poetryfoundation.org/poem/180445), we see caesura in lines 2 and 3, after "tribe" and "earls" respectively.
	3. Oft Scyld the Scefing from squadroned foes,
	from many a tribe, the mead-bench tore,
	awing the earls. Since erst he lay
	friendless, a foundling, fate repaid him…
4. **Couplets**
	1. A type of stanza; two lines of poetry, usually linked together by rhyme scheme.
	2. **Example:**
	3. Good nature and good sense must ever join;
	To err is human, to forgive, divine.
	4. – Alexander Pope
5. **Elegy**
	1. A type of poem; usually morbid and focusing on death or dying; never very cheery.
	2. **Example:** [This poem](http://www.bartleby.com/142/193.html) by Walt Whitman is an elegy. It is also the poem quoted all the time in the movie [*Dead Poets Society*](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UJsjNNp0foE&feature=related).
6. **Enjambment**
	1. A sentence broken over more than one line of poetry. Without the use of enjambment, all ideas and phrases would be of the same length, creating a rhythmically boring poem that would put the reader to sleep. Also, it would deprive us of the opportunity to say "enjambment." Enjambment. Enjambment.
	2. **Example:** Basically all of "[in Just-](http://www.shmoop.com/in-just/)" by E.E. Cummings
7. **Epic**
	1. A type of poem; a long narrative about the adventures of a hero.
	2. **Example:** Check out this list of the [Top 10 Greatest Epic Poems](http://listverse.com/2008/07/06/top-10-greatest-epic-poems/)—with summaries!
8. **Epigram**
	1. A type of poem; a witty, usually rhyming saying or quip meant for satire or amusement. 16th and 17th century poets were particularly fond of epigrams and used them quite a bit.
	2. **Example:**
	3. You wrote a line too much, my sage,
	Of seers the first, and first of sayers;
	For only half the world's a stage,
	And only all the women players

	– James Kenneth Stephen to William Shakespeare
9. **Free verse**
	1. A type of poem; when the poem does not have a regular meter or line length
	2. **Example:** E.E. Cummings is famous for his free verse poetry, as well as for his hippie-style "free punctuation" philosophy. The spacing and punctuation in his poems are the most noticeable aspects of his work. His most famous work is "[i carry your heart with me (I carry it in my heart)](http://writersalmanac.publicradio.org/index.php?date=2010/10/14)."
10. **Lyric**
	1. A type of poem; subjective, personal poetry expressing the author's thoughts or feelings. Originally these poems were sung accompanied by a lyre, hence the term lyric. There is no set rhyme scheme but it does have set meter. Song lyrics *do* count.
	2. **Example:** Emily Dickinson's "[I felt a Funeral, in my Brain](http://www.poets.org/viewmedia.php/prmMID/15391)."
11. **Meter or Rhythm**
	1. Meter is an elaborate trick that poets use to write in rhythmic language. Generally, you can identify meter when poets follow a strict rule for their lines of poetry. The most famous meter is called *iambic pentameter,* which is basically a line made up of ten syllables. Five of these are stressed, five of which are unstressed and regularly alternate.
	2. It sounds a little like this: dum DUM dum DUM dum DUM dum DUM dum DUM
	3. And will be marked like this: U / U / U / U / U /
	4. Finally, an example: "I WISH that I might BW a THINKing STONE." – Wallace Stevens
	5. It is often not meaningful—that is, the meter is not part of the meaning of the poem—but it is part of the art of the text. There are many different types of meters poets use with different patterns, for example: **trochaic**, **dactylic**,**anapestic**. Most of these will not show up on the exam, but it is important to know that the rhythmic structure of a poem is its *meter*.
12. **Ode**
	1. A type of poem; a long lyric poem, usually very formal and using elevated language. These usually sound snobby, but they also exist in music. Odes sound better when [sung by the Muppets](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VnT7pT6zCcA).
	2. **Example:** John Keats wrote lots of odes, frequently to inanimate objects, like ceramics. [This](http://englishhistory.net/keats/poetry/odeonagrecianurn.html) is one.
13. **Pastoral**
	1. A type of poem; poems idealizing rural life of some kind.
	2. **Example:** Christopher Marlowe's "[The Passionate Shepherd to his Love](http://www.poetryfoundation.org/poem/173941)."
14. **Quatrains**
	1. A type of stanza; four lines of poetry, usually linked together by rhyme scheme.
	2. **Example:**
	3. Tyger! Tyger! burning bright
	In the forests of the night,
	What immortal hand or eye
	Could frame thy fearful symmetry?
	4. – From William Blake's "The Tyger"
15. **Refrain**
	1. A type of stanza; a line or phrase repeated throughout a poem for effect.
	2. **Example:** "[The Raven](http://www.houseofusher.net/raven.html)," by Edgar Allen Poe, famously uses the refrain "Quoth the raven, 'Nevermore.'" Yes, [like the *Simpsons* Halloween episode](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BfzBH6KVC5o&feature=related).
16. **Rhyme**
	1. Technically, rhyme is "assonance plus consonance," but an easier way to describe it is to say that it's when words end with the same sounds. "Rhyme scheme" refers to the regular pattern of rhyming a poet uses, usually described by assigning random letters to different rhyming sounds for the length of the poem: "This limerick has a rhyme scheme of *AABBA*," meaning that the first, second, and fifth lines share one rhyme, while the third and fourth lines share a different rhyme.
	2. **Full rhymes** have perfectly alike ending sounds.
		1. **Example:** "Above" and "love"
	3. **Sight rhymes** look like they should rhyme according to spelling, but actually don't when spoken.
		1. **Example:** "Above" and "move"
	4. **Internal rhymes** occur when poets put several rhyming words inside a line.
		1. **Example:** "Once upon a midnight *dreary*while I pondered weak and *weary*."
	5. **Slant/near rhymes** are when words *almost*rhyme, but not quite. Usually these words have consonance in common. They are used more commonly in modern poetry, and they often are described as being a "minor chord"—rhymes that are a little darker in mood. Emily Dickinson was quite fond of near/slant rhymes.
		1. **Example:** "Blood" and "shod"
17. **Sestina**
	1. A type of poem; a 39-line poem with 6-line stanzas and 6 repeating end words. This is fairly rare in the poetry world due to its rigid rules, but sestinas do still get written.
	2. **Example:** Ezra Pound's "[Sestina: Altaforte](http://www.poets.org/viewmedia.php/prmMID/15423)."
18. **Sonnet**
	1. A type of poem; a 14-line poem with a complicated rhyme scheme written in iambic pentameter; typically split into two groups of eight (an octave) and six (a sestet). Made exceptionally, ridiculously famous by Shakespeare.
	2. To make things even more interesting, there are technically three different types of sonnets:
	3. Petrarchan: Named after a dude who was really, really into a lady named Laura. The rhyme scheme for the octave is typically ABBAABBA (or, if you prefer, [ABBA](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-crgQGdpZR0) [ABBA](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Sj_9CiNkkn4)) while the sestet can be CDECDE, CDCDCD, or any variation thereof.
	4. Shakespearian: Named after...you know what, never mind. Shakespeare's sonnets usually come in three quatrains and a couplet, and the rhyme scheme usually looks something like this: ABAB CDCD EFEF GG.
	5. Spenserian: Named after an Elizabethan poet who liked a good [ruffle](http://www.luminarium.org/renlit/spenser.htm), the Spenserian sonnet usually has three quatrains and a final couplet. The rhyme scene for this one, however, interlocks like a good tupperware lid: ABAB BCBC CDCD EE.
	6. **Example:** Read a breakdown of Shakespeare's [top five sonnets](http://shakespeare.about.com/od/thesonnets/tp/Shakespeare-Sonnets.htm).
19. **Stanza**
	1. The "paragraphs" of the poem, usually marked by empty lines between sections. The structure of each stanza also has a name: 2 lines in a stanza = couplet, 3 lines = tercet, 4 lines = quatrain.
	2. **Example:** There are five stanzas in [this](http://famouspoetsandpoems.com/poets/maya_angelou/poems/492) poem by Maya Angelou.
20. **Tercets**
	1. A type of stanza: three lines of poetry, usually linked together by rhyme scheme.
	2. **Example:**
	3. A still small voice spake unto me:
	"Thou art so full of misery,
	Were it not better not to be?"
	– From *Two Voices* by Alfred, Lord Tennyson
21. **Villanelle**
	1. A type of poem; a 19-line poem with two lines repeating at regular intervals. This has a very rigid structure and is not all that common. If a villanelle shows up on your test and you can identify it, you've won the lottery.

**Example:** Read 4 different villanelles by 4 different poets [here](http://www.webexhibits.org/poetry/explore_classic_villanelle_examples.html).

**Plot Devices – Used in prose** [13 total]

1. **Anecdote**
	1. Short stories typically used to illustrate a point.
	2. **Example:** Telling the story of how you broke your ankle skiing backwards down the slopes would be an excellent warning to your cousin contemplating doing the same thing on the next family vacation.
2. **Antagonist**
	1. The primary character in a work of literature who is opposed to the protagonist in one way or another. In layman's terms: the bad guy.
	2. **Example:** Mr. Hyde (*Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*), any Disney evil stepmother, Claudius (Hamlet's uncle), Darth Vader (*Star Wars*)
3. **Aphorism**
	1. Sometimes known as a **proverb**; a short, wise saying. In literature, these are often given by the wise old man character as advice to the protagonist. Sometimes they bear metaphorical implications, and sometimes not.
	2. **Example:** "Happy families are all alike; every unhappy family is unhappy in its own way."
	–The first line of Leo Tolstoy's [*Anna Karenina*](http://www.shmoop.com/anna-karenina/).
4. **Archetype**
	1. Similar to a stock character, except that archetypes are universal figures found throughout world literature. Stock characters tend to be regional.
	2. **Examples:**
	3. The hero: Hercules
	4. The damsel in distress: Pretty much any Disney princess ever, until Mulan
	5. The trickster: The fox in Aesop's Fables
	6. The wise old man: Merlin from the King Arthur stories
5. **Character**
	1. The people in the text. The AP Lit exam loves to ask you how a character is "developed," by which the exam means, "How do we know what this person is like or what qualities he or she exhibits?" To tackle this question, we'll review the ways that we might learn what a character is like:
		1. By how the narrator describes the person (diction, imagery, figures of speech)
		2. By how the other characters describe the person
		3. By how the person describes himself
		4. By how the person dresses
		5. By the manner in which the person talks (dialogue, diction)
		6. By the choices the person makes in the narrative
	2. Characters can be either **flat** (meaning they do not change during the course of the story) or **dynamic** (meaning the character *does* change during the story). Flat characters can often verge into stereotyped or **stock characters**. Dynamic characters who reveal many, often contradictory personality traits are sometimes described as well-rounded. These characters are usually the ones playing more significant roles in the storytelling process, whereas flat and stock characters are often the secondary players.
	3. **Example of character:** Anyone you read about or meet in any story
	4. **Example of stock character:** [Mr. Miyagi in *The Karate Kid*](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=J1gAHil89Z4) is a stock character, but so is Aunt Jemima on your pancake syrup bottle. She represents the stereotype from the antebellum South when black slave women were the cooks for large households and were generally stereotyped as "sassy" and great at frying chicken—and making pancakes.
6. **Colloquialism**
	1. The fancy term for local, informal slang that you would never dream of using in a formal essay. Sometimes the types of colloquialisms characters use will reveal aspects of their backgrounds or education.
	2. **Example:** "Totally rad," "she ain't here." Mark Twain is famous for his colloquial writing style in[*Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*](http://www.shmoop.com/huckleberry-finn/) and *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*.
7. **Conflict**
	1. What occurs when the author sets up events that make the reader nervous or anxious until the climax and resolution. Conflict is crucial to the success of any story. It is essentially a question that is answered by the resolution.
	2. **Example:** The major conflict in Harper Lee's [*To Kill a Mockingbird*](http://www.shmoop.com/to-kill-a-mockingbird/)is whether or not Scout and Jem will retain their childhood innocence or be overcome by the actions of a sometimes evil world.
8. **Foreshadowing**
	1. What occurs when the narrator places deliberate hints or omens of things to come early in the narrative. These hints often only become clear later, after the entire text has been read.
	2. **Example:** John Steinbeck's [*Of Mice and Men*](http://www.shmoop.com/of-mice-and-men/%3Cem%3E)uses tremendous amounts of foreshadowing. As one example, Lennie's accidental killing of the puppy foreshadows his role in the accidental death of the ranch foreman's wife.
9. **Protagonist**
	1. The main character of the story. This is often the hero or heroine, though sometimes if the main character is nasty, we refer to him or her as an anti-hero. A frequent dead giveaway is in the title.
	2. **Example:** Hamlet (in *Hamlet*), Ariel (*The Little Mermaid*) Rocky (in *Rocky*), Snow White (in *Snow White*), Anna Karenina (in *Anna Karenina*) and so on…
10. **Point of View**
	1. The perspective from which the text is written. The different types are as follows:
	2. **First Person**: When a character in the story is actually telling the story, marked by the use of "I."
		1. **Example:** Charles Dickens' [*David Copperfield*](http://www.readbookonline.net/read/43/2017/)
	3. **Second Person**: Extremely rare and almost never used, this point of view is marked by the use of "you," as in "You go to the store, where you pick up a book." Its rarity is mostly due to how weird it is to read. Many of the works in this tradition are absurdist or modernistic, meaning they're deliberately playing with your head.
		1. **Example:** See this [list](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Second-person_narrative) of authors who have written in the second person.
	4. **Third Person Omniscient**: This is when the narrator is outside of the story's action and can enter into any character's thoughts or swoop around to describe any sort of action occurring in the novel. The most important facet is that the narrator knows things that the characters don't…as if the narrator were an all-knowing, omniscient god. Common clue words for an omniscient narrator are "meanwhile" and "little did he know."
		1. **Example:** This narrator is [omniscient](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oVLFeEY03Tw).
	5. **Third Person Limited**: When the narrator is outside the story but chooses to limit what is revealed to the reader by focusing entirely on one character's actions and thoughts without revealing other parts of the story in which this character is not present.
		1. **Example:** The *Harry Potter* books are written in this narrative mode; the reader only knows as much as the characters know and only as they know it. A more literary example would be Ernest Hemingway's *The Old Man and the Sea.*
11. **Plot**
	1. Plot is the action of the narrative, often broken into four different terms. Plot is only of minimal use on the AP English Literature Exam since you are usually only reading a piece of a text, rather than the whole story.
	2. **Exposition:** The beginning of the story when the setting is revealed
	3. **Rising Action:**The major conflict is revealed and things start to go wrong
	4. **Climax:**The highest point of tension or suspense in the story, the tipping point where everything changes
	5. **Falling Action:**When the loose ends after the climax are being tied up
	6. **Resolution*/*denouement:**The ending of the story, when all the plot points are resolved
	7. **Example:** These days, TV contains only cop shows, lawyer shows, doctor shows and reality contests. It is often said, though, that there are truly only [seven basic plot lines](http://tvtropes.org/pmwiki/pmwiki.php/Main/TheSevenBasicPlots) in literature. Agree or disagree?
12. **Tragic Flaw**
	1. This is also known as an Achilles' heel. It is the one weakness that can—and usually does—bring down the hero. Excessive pride, known as hubris in the classical Greek canon, is a frequent tragic flaw.
	2. **Example:** Achilles was a near-invincible Greek warrior whose only character weakness was hubris. This weakness corresponded to his one physical weakness: a tiny spot on his heel where he was not invincible. Of course that's where he eventually takes an arrow and somehow dies. Seriously, who dies from an ankle injury? Achilles does. Also: situational irony!
13. **Setting**
	1. Setting is simply the time and place where the narrative takes place. Time can refer to season, time of day, or year, but it can also refer to the more figurative cultural settings and the things that are going on in the world that could be affecting people's ideas, thoughts and feelings. This is usually put forth in the exposition. Hint: If there is a war happening, it is affecting people. That's a big one.
	2. **Example:**Read our guide to the setting in F. Scott Fitzgerald's [*The Great Gatsby*](http://www.shmoop.com/great-gatsby/setting.html).