



Tips for Studying Literature

In your English classes, you will study a variety of literature, such as novels, short stories, and poems. Use the study strategies below to help you become a better reader and to better understand the literature you read.

As you read, take notes on the literary elements below. Literary elements include story structure, such as characters, plot, and setting. They also include other elements, such as theme, tone, and mood.

- Character—form an opinion of each character based on the following:
 - The character’s actions, thoughts, and feelings
 - The description of the character
 - The character’s dialogue
 - Others’ thoughts and feelings about and actions toward the character
- Plot—note the parts of the plot:
 - Exposition—introduction to the main characters and setting
 - Rising action—when the conflict is revealed; how the story works its way toward the climax
 - Conflict—the problem or issue
 - Climax—the turning point
 - Falling Action—how the story works its way toward the resolution
 - Resolution—how the conflict is solved
- Setting—note where and when the story took place, including the following:
 - Historical period
 - Cultural influences
 - Political backdrop
- Theme—look for the main message of the story. Look for the big idea or topic around which the story circulates.
- Tone—note the attitude of the author toward the subject.
- Mood—note the overall atmosphere of the writing.

Here are some added tips to help you study literary elements:

- Visualize the information.
- Read the information aloud.
- Create possible test questions and write sample answers.
- Study with a partner.



- Use a Story Map graphic organizer available on mySylvan to take notes on this information.

By examining the literary elements in the literature you read and using the study tips to help you remember what you've learned, you will better understand the literature you read and have greater success on literature homework and tests.