**Literary Elements Notes**

***Mood***

**Mood** is the general atmosphere created by the author’s words. It is the feeling **the reader gets** from reading those words. It may be the same, or it may change from situation to situation. Mood is all about you!!!!

Mood is the emotions that you (the reader) feel while you are reading. Some literature makes you feel sad, others joyful, still others, angry. The main purpose for some poems is to set a mood. Writers use many devices to create mood, including images, dialogue, setting, and plot. Often a writer creates a mood at the beginning of the story and continues it to the end. However, sometimes the mood changes because of the plot or changes in characters.

**Words That Describe Mood:**

Fanciful

Melancholy

Frightening

Mysterious

Frustrating

Romantic

Gloomy

Sentimental

Happy

Sorrowful

Joyful

Suspenseful

Depressing

Excited

Anxious

Angry

Sad

Tense

Lonely

Suspicious

Disgusted

Evil

Playful

***Theme***

**The theme of a book is a universal idea or message that stretches through an entire story.** A theme may show up in a pattern (such as reoccurring examples of beauty in simplicity) or a theme may come through as the result of a buildup (tragedy of war). **It is often a lesson that we learn about life or people – something that the author is trying to teach us about life.** A theme cannot usually be expressed in one word. The examples below are universal ideas that can be used to determine theme.

**Examples**

 Beauty of simplicity

 Change versus tradition

 Chaos and order

 Circle of life

 Coming of age

 Companionship as salvation

 Dangers of ignorance

 Darkness and light

 Death – inevitable or tragedy

 Desire to escape

 Destruction of beauty

 Everlasting love

 Facing reality

 Family – blessing or curse

 Fate and free will

 Greed as downfall

 Growing up – pain or pleasure

 Heartbreak of betrayal

 Inner versus outer strength

 Injustice

 Isolation

 Love and sacrifice

 Power and corruption

 Power of words

 Pride and downfall

 Self-preservation

 Will to survive

 Wisdom of experience

 Youth and beauty

***Foreshadowing***

This literary device is used to build suspense and prepare the reader's subconscious for the conflict. It also helps the reader believe extraordinary events when they happen. It can be subtle, such as rain in the beginning of a story to suggest something bad is going to happen, or more obvious.

Foreshadowing drops hints of what may happen in the future.

**Types of Foreshadowing**

Sounds (music, nature, et.)

Statements (Dialogue)

Behaviors (facial expressions, actions, movements, etc.)

Visuals (use of figurative language and symbols)

**Example**

*Sam wished he could rid himself of the sick feeling in his gut that told him something terrible was going to happen, and happen soon.*

***Flashback***

Flashback is an interjected scene that takes the narrative back in time from the current point the story has reached. Flashbacks are often used to recount events that happened before the story’s primary sequence of events or to fill in crucial backstory.

**Information**

Each story has a time frame—the amount of time the author has decided to cover in a particular narrative—and anything that happens before this time frame begins is called *backstory*. Writers use *flashback* to tell the backstory and show character motivation.

Example: If the main character won't enter a hospital, a quick trip back in time to when he sat at the bedside of his dying mother will increase reader understanding and empathy.

Backstory must be shown, however, not told. The terms *backstory* and *flashback* come from film terminology, and knowing this should be a reminder that their purpose is to dramatize the past, not summarize it. The sentence *he thought back to that horrible summer when he sat beside his mother's bed as she withered away from cancer* is not yet a proper flashback.

**Example**

*Danny remembered more about his mother's death than he'd ever told anyone. The day she* ***had*** *died, she* ***had*** *called each of her sons to her bedside individually.*

*"Pour me a cup of fresh water, please," she said, her voice thick with the Polish accent that decorated her words when she was tired or sick.*

*Danny filled the cup, careful not to splash it on the bedside table.*

*"Now, hand me my lipstick."*

**Techniques**

1. *Recollection*: The most common technique for using backstory in fiction is to weave bits and pieces of what a character remembers throughout the narrative as they become relevant to the character's motivation. This adds texture to the story, provided you keep these pieces as short as possible; often only a sentence or two is enough.
2. *Full scenes*: These are extended memories that use both action and dialogue. If there is a significant amount of material that takes place in the past, authors might write long scenes and alternate chapters in the past or present, or create a separate section for the past.
3. *Italicized Inserts*: Stories might also include short italicized passages that dramatize the past. For example, a son contemplating his father's death might address his father in short passages that separate scenes: *You met mother on a ridge high on Mt. Temple in Banff National Park...*
4. *Letters or Journals*: A character might either write or read a letter or journal to impart historical information to the reader. Sometimes these are also placed in italics.
5. *Frames*: this is the "story within a story," and it often makes use of a prologue and an epilogue, with the entire story told in flashback between the two "bookends."