

Essential Elements for Language Arts
10th Grade Literary Elements

1. Allegory a story in which people, things, and actions represent an idea or generalization about life; they often have a strong moral or lesson
2. Allusion a literary reference to a familiar person, place, thing, or event
3. Analogy a comparison of two or more similar objects, suggesting that if they are alike in certain respects, they will probably be alike in other ways as well
4. Anecdote a short summary of a humorous event used to make a point
5. Antagonist The person or thing working against the protagonist, or hero, of the work
6. Autobiography An author's account or story of her or his own life
7. Biography The story of a person's life written by another person
8. Characterization The method an author uses to reveal characters and their personalities
9. Climax Usually the most intense point in a story -- A series of struggles or conflicts build a story or play toward this

10. Comedy Literature in which human errors or problems appear funny – these stories end on a happy note
11. Conflict The problem or struggle in a story that triggers the action – there are five basic types
12. Conflict:
Person vs. Person One character in a story has a problem with one or more of the other characters
13. Conflict:
Person vs. Society A character has a problem with some element of society: the school, the law, the accepted way of doing things
14. Conflict:
Person vs. Self A character has a problem deciding what to do in a certain situation
15. Conflict:
Person vs. Nature A character has a problem with nature: heat, cold, a tornado, an avalanche, or any other element of nature
16. Conflict:
Person vs. Fate (God) A character must battle what seems to be an uncontrollable problem. Whenever the conflict is an unbelievable or strange coincidence, it can be attributed to this
17. Content The set of acts or circumstances surrounding an event or a situation in a piece of literature

18. Denouement The final resolution or outcome of a play or story
19. Diction An author's choice of words based on their correctness, clearness, or effectiveness
20. Diction:
Colloquialism An expression that is usually accepted in informal situations and certain locations, as in "He really grinds my beans."
21. Diction:
Jargon (technical diction) the specialized language used by a specific group , such as those who use computers: *override, interface, download*
22. Didactic Literature that instructs or presents a moral or religious statement
23. Drama The form of literature known as play; but drama also refers to the type of serious play that is often concerned with the leading character's relationship to society
24. Epic A long narrative poem that tells of the deeds and adventures of a hero
25. Epigram
aka. Aphorism A brief, witty saying or poem often dealing with its subject in a satirical manner: "*There never was a good war or a bad peace.*" - *Ben Franklin*

26. Epiphany A sudden perception (moment of understanding) that causes a character to change or act in a certain way
27. Epitaph A short poem or verse written in memory of someone
28. Epithet A word or phrase used in place of a person's name; it is characteristic of that person:
Alexander the Great, Material Girl, Ms. Know-It-All
29. Exposition Writing that is intended to explain something that might otherwise be difficult to understand; in a play or novel, it would be the portion that gives the background or situation surrounding the story
30. Fable A short fictional narrative that teaches a lesson; it usually includes animals that talk and act like people
31. Falling action The part of a play or story that works out the decision arrived at during the climax
32. Figure of Speech: Antithesis An opposition, or contrast, of ideas: "*it was the best of times, it was the worst of times . . .*" -- Charles Dickens, *A Tale of Two Cities*
33. Figure of Speech: Hyperbole An exaggeration or overstatement: "*I have seen this river so wide it had only one bank.*" – Mark Twain, *Life on the Mississippi*

34. Figure of Speech: Metaphor A comparison of two unlike things in which no word of comparison (as or like) is used: *A green plant is a machine that runs on solar energy.* -- Scientific American
35. Figure of Speech: Metonymy The substituting or one word for another related word: *"The White House has decided to create more public service jobs."* (White House is substituted for president)
36. Figure of Speech: Personification A literary device in which the author speaks of or describes an animal, object, or idea as if it were a person: *"The rock stubbornly refused to move."*
37. Figure of Speech: Simile A comparison of two unlike things using the words *like* or *as*: *"She stood in front of the altar, shaking like a freshly caught trout."* Maya Angelou, I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings
38. Figure of Speech: Understatement A way of emphasizing an idea by talking about it in a restrained manner: *"Aunt Polly is prejudiced against snakes."* (She was terrified of them.) – Mark Twain, Adventures of Tom Sawyer
39. Flashback Returning to an earlier time (in a story) for the purpose of making something in the present more clear
40. Foil Someone who serves as a contrast or challenge to another character
41. Foreshadowing Giving hints or clues of what is to come later in a story

42. Genre Refers to a category or type of literature based on its style, form and content; the mystery novel is a literary one of these
43. Gothic novel A type of fiction that is characterized by gloomy castles, ghosts, and supernatural happenings – creating a mysterious and sometimes frightening story -- Bram Stoker's Dracula is probably the best known gothic novel still popular today
44. Hubris Derived from the Greek work *hybris*, means “excessive pride” – in Greek tragedy, hubris is often viewed as the flaw that leads to the downfall of the tragic hero
45. Imagery The use of words to create a certain picture in the readers mind; imagery is usually based on sensory details: “*The sky was dark and gloomy, the air was damp and raw, the streets were wet and sloppy.*” – Charles Dickens, The Pickwick Papers
46. Irony Using a word or phrase to mean the exact opposite of its literal or normal meaning; there are three kinds
47. Irony: dramatic When the audience sees a character's mistakes, but the character does not
48. Irony: verbal When the writer says one thing and means another: “*the best substitute for experience is being thirteen*”

49. Irony: of situation When there is a great difference between the purpose of a particular action and the result
50. Local color The use of language and details that are common in a certain region of the country:
“Mama came out and lit into me for sitting there doing nothing. Said I was no-count and shiftless . . . “ --Olive Ann Burns, Cold Sassy Tree
51. Malapropism The type of pun, or play on words that results when two words become jumbled in the speaker’s mind; this term comes from a character in Sheridan’s comedy The Rivals – the character “Mrs. Malaprop, is constantly mixing up her words, as when she says *“as headstrong as an allegory [she means alligator] on the banks of the Nile.*
52. Melodrama An exaggerated form of drama (as in television soap operas) characterized by heavy use of romance, suspense, and emotion
53. Memoir Writing based on the writer’s memory of a particular time, place, or incident; reminiscence is another term for memoir
54. Mood The feeling a text arouses in the reader: happiness, peacefulness, sadness, and so on
55. Moral The particular value or lesson the author is trying to get across to the reader
56. Myth A traditional story that attempts to justify a certain practice or belief or to explain a natural phenomenon

57. Narration Writing that relates an event or series of events: a story
58. Narrator The person who is telling the story
59. Naturalism An extreme form of realism in which the author tries to show the relation of a person to the environment or surroundings; often, the author finds it necessary to show the ugly or raw side of that relationship
60. Novel A lengthy fictional story with a plot that is revealed by the speech, action and thought of the characters
61. Novella A prose work longer than the standard short story, but shorter and less complex than a full-length novel
62. Oxymoron A combination of contradictory terms as *in jumbo shrimp, tough love, or cruel kindness*
63. Parable A short descriptive story that illustrates a particular belief or moral
64. Paradox A statement that seems contrary to common sense, yet may, in fact, be true: "*The coach considered this a good loss.*"
65. Parody A form of literature that intentionally uses comic effect to mock a literary work or style

66. Pathetic fallacy A form of personification giving human traits to nature: *cruel sea, howling wind, dancing water*
67. Pathos A Greek root meaning *suffering* or *passion*; it usually describes the part in a play or story that is intended to elicit pity or sorrow from the audience or reader
68. Picaresque novel A work of fiction consisting of a lengthy string of loosely connected events; it usually features the adventures of a rogue living by his or her wits – Mark Twain's Huckleberry Finn is a picaresque novel
69. Plot The action or sequence of event in a story; it usually is a series: *exposition, rising action, climax, falling action, and resolution*, as the story develops
70. Point of view The vantage point from which the story is told – there are three types of these
71. Point of View: Omniscient The point of view that allows the narrator to share the thoughts and feelings of all the characters
72. Point of View: Limited omniscient The point of view that allows the narrator to share the thoughts and feelings of only one character
73. First Person Narrative
aka. Point of view: Camera view The most objective point of view, allowing the story teller to record the action from his or her own point of view, being unaware of any of the characters' thoughts or feelings

74. **Protagonist** The main character or hero of the story
75. **Pseudonym** This term is also referred to as “pen name” – it means “*false name*” and applies to the name a writer uses in place of his or her given name
76. **Quest** Features a main character who is seeking to find something or achieve a goal; in the process, this character encounters and overcomes a series of obstacles, returning wiser and more experienced
77. **Realism** Literature that attempts to represent life as it really is
78. **Renaissance** Means “rebirth”; is the period of history following the Middle Ages, beginning in the late fourteenth century and continuing through the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries; this term now refers to any period of time in which intellectual and artistic interest is revived or reborn
79. **Resolution** Also known as denouement, the portion of the play or story in which the problem is solved; it comes after the climax and falling action and is intended to bring the story to a satisfactory end
80. **Rising action** The series of struggles that builds a story or play toward a climax
81. **Romanticism** A literary movement with an emphasis on the imagination and emotions

82. **Sarcasm** The use of praise to mock someone or something, as in “She’s a real winner.”
83. **Satire** A literary tone used to make fun of human vice or weakness, often with the intent of correcting or changing the subject of the attack
84. **Setting** The time and place in which the action of a literary work occurs
85. **Short story** A brief fictional work; it usually contains one major conflict and at least one main character
86. **Slice of life** A term that describes the type of realistic or naturalistic writing that accurately reflects what life is really like
87. **Soliloquy** A speech delivered by a character when he or she is alone on stage; it is as though the character is thinking out loud
88. **Stereotype** A form that does not change; this type of character has no individuality and fits the mold of that particular kind of person
89. **Stream of consciousness** A style of writing in which the thoughts and feelings of the writer are recorded as they occur
90. **Style** How the author uses words, phrases, and sentences to form his or her ideas; this term is also thought of as the qualities and characteristics that distinguish one writer’s work from the work of others

91. Symbol A person, a place, a thing, or an event used to represent something else: *dove/peace; white/good, black/evil*
92. Theme The statement about life that a writer is trying to get across in a piece of writing; in most cases this will be implied rather than directly spelled out
93. Tone The overall feeling, or effect, created by a writer's use of words; this feeling may be serious, humorous, or satiric
94. Tragedy A literary work in which the hero is destroyed by some character flaw or by forces beyond his or her control
95. Tragic hero A character who experiences an inner struggle because of a character flaw; that struggle ends in the defeat of the hero
96. Transcendentalism A philosophy that requires human beings to go beyond reason in their search for truth; it assumes that an individual can arrive at the basic truths of life through spiritual insight if he or she takes the time to think seriously about them
97. Alliteration The repetition of initial consonant sounds in words: "*blind eyes could blaze like meteors.*" -- *W.B. Yates, When You Are Old*
98. Blank verse An unrhymed form of poetry -- each line normally consists of 10 syllables in which every other syllable is stressed

99. Consonance The repetition of consonant sounds – although it is similar to alliteration, it is not limited to the first letters of words: “*above his blond determined head the sacred flag of truth unfurled*” -- e.e. cummings, Two VIII
100. Couplet A pair of lines of verse of the same length that usually rhyme
101. End rhyme The rhyming of words that appear at the ends of two or more lines of poetry
102. Foot The smallest repeated pattern of stressed and unstressed syllables in a poetic line
103. Foot: Iambic An unstressed followed by a stressed syllable (repeat)
104. Foot: Anapestic Two unstressed followed by a stressed syllable (interrupt)
105. Foot: Trochaic A stressed followed by an unstressed syllable (older)
106. Free verse Poetry that does not have a regular meter or rhyme scheme
107. Haiku A form of Japanese poetry that has three lines: the first line has five syllables, the second has seven syllables, and the third has five syllables – the subject of the haiku has traditionally been nature

108. Lyric A short verse that is intended to express the emotions of the author
109. Onomatopoeia The use of a word whose sound suggests its meaning, as in *clang, buzz, and twang*
110. Repetition The repeating of a word, a phrase, or an idea for emphasis or for rhythmic effect: “*someone gently rapping, rapping at my chamber door . . .*”
111. Rhyme The similarity or likeness of sound existing between two words: *sat* and *cat* are perfect rhymes because the vowel and final consonant sounds are exactly the same
112. Rhythm The regular or random occurrence of sound in poetry; regular rhythm is called *meter*; random occurrence of sound is called *free verse*
113. Sonnet A poem consisting of fourteen lines of iambic pentameter
114. Sonnet:
Italian (Petrarchan) Has two parts; an octave (eight lines) and a sestet (six lines), usually rhyming *abbaabba, cdecde* – often, a question is raised in the octave and answered in the sestet
115. Sonnet:
Shakespearean
(English or Elizabethan) Consists of three quatrains and a final rhyming couplet – the rhyme scheme is *abab, cdcd, efef, gg*; usually, the question or theme is set forth in the quatrains while the answer or resolution appears in the final couplet