

Glossary of Important Terms

Antagonist: Main character (usually a person, but may be society, nature, heredity, or an aspect of the protagonist's self) who opposes the hero and represents the negative values. See "protagonist."

Allegory: A story or visual image with a second distinct meaning partially hidden behind its literal or visible meaning.

Apocalyptic: Dealing with the end of the world and with revelation (especially of the next world).

Author: The original writer of a literary work. For example, Hjalmar Söderberg is the author of Dr. Glas. Dr. Glas is the narrator.

Brandes, Georg (1842-1927): Danish scholar and critic. Brandes called into being the Modern Breakthrough in Scandinavia as a reaction against Romanticism. Literature should not deal with our dreams, but should bring up current social issues for debate.

Bohemian: A person, generally not well-to-do, who follows art and literature and adopts an easygoing lifestyle in defiance of or indifference to social conventions.

Comedy: A drama in which society is temporarily disrupted by an individual or circumstance, which gives occasion for amusing and satirical situations. As part of the happy ending, order is restored and the disturbing influence is expelled from society.

Communism: A form of government, an economic system, a revolutionary movement, a way of life, or a goal or ideal of an equal, classless society. Government owns the means of production and is willing to use force to reach its goals.

Dadaism: An artistic movement which began in Germany during World War I and which sought to suppress the logical relationship between idea and statement. The incongruity, nonsense, and conscious madness of their production was a response to the insanity of war.

Dandy: A person who is impeccably dressed and pays extreme attention to self-appearance, usually adhering to the height of fashion.

Decadence: A period in which a decline in morals and values is contrasted with a former age of excellence. The 1890s were considered decadent.

Drama: A literary work that tells a story by means of dialogue and action to be performed by actors. A play.

Enlightenment: A philosophical movement which developed in Europe in the 1600s and peaked in the 1880s, celebrating reason, the scientific method, and human beings' ability to perfect themselves and their society.

Existentialism: The foremost exponent of existentialism in this century has been the French philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre. Existentialism became a concern in Scandinavia primarily during World War II and afterwards. The following five points may be useful in understanding existentialism:

1. A problem of identity: Who am I? Existentialism attempts to answer the question.
2. The experience of one's own life or existence lacking a purpose or meaning.
3. A feeling of alienation. One feels fear and loneliness in the face of our well known world. The world is seen as absurd. Values have broken down.
4. One must accept one's own fear, loneliness and death as basic conditions of life. This provides a type of freedom.
5. The freedom is the freedom of choice, where you are not tied to anything. You can choose to take over your own life. You have also chosen responsibility.

Expressionism: A movement in literature and art which sought to give outward expression to internal feelings and visions. The Expressionist actively creates stylized, symbolic realities, rather than depicting objective reality. Expressionism reached its peak in Germany between 1910-1920.

Faust (1808 & 1832): A play by Johan Wolfgang von Goethe in which Faust promises his soul to the Devil in exchange for powers which enable him to pursue absolute knowledge. The Faust legend stems from the Middle Ages and has been frequently treated in literature.

Fascism: A form of government usually headed by a dictator which involves extreme patriotism, war-like policies, persecution of minorities, and total government control of political, economic, cultural, religious, and social activities.

Feminism: A reform movement aiming at the social, educational, and political equality of women with men. Feminist literary criticism focuses on how sex roles are depicted in literature and how they affect the writing of literature.

Feudalism: Social class system based on heredity in which land owners (kings and nobles) held supreme power. Land was farmed by tenants who usually paid a fee for its use.

Finnish Civil War: When Finland became independent from Russia in 1918, Communists (the Reds) took control of the Social Democratic Party. On January 28, 1918, the Reds seized Helsinki and other large industrial towns in Finland. The existing right-wing government (the Whites) fled to the West. With the help of the Germans, the Whites overcame the Reds by May. The revolution was suppressed and the Red revolutionaries were given harsh sentences or brutally executed.

First-Person Narrative: The narrator speaks as "I" and is him/herself a participant in the story.

Flaneur: A person who likes to walk the streets of a city in order to see other people and also to be seen. A common figure in turn-of-the-century writing.

Freethinker: A term used in the late 1800s to describe individuals holding views critical of established tradition, particularly those who advocated science over religion.

Freud, Sigmund (1856-1939): The founder of psychoanalytic psychology who held that cultural activity can be traced to the repression and sublimation of sexual desire. Authors of this century have been most influenced by Freud's interpretations of dream symbolism and his theories about the subconscious mind.

Freudian: Describes situations or utterances in which outright actions conceal deeper motives, usually rooted in a previous experience.

Genre: The type of literature. For example, the novel, poetry, drama, or the short story are all genres.

Humanism: A term which stresses an attitude/philosophy having the importance of human interests, i.e. history, poetry, culture and moral philosophy, at its centerpoint.

Irony: A term referring to the recognition of a reality different from its appearance with a root sense of dissembling or hiding what is actually the case, not necessarily to deceive, but to attain certain rhetorical or special effects. See "Romantic Irony."

Irreality: A term borrowed from the German "Irrealismus," to describe moments in literature that do not conform to the usual rules of our common, concrete reality.

Joyce, James (1882-1941): Irish poet and a great innovator of the modern novel with such works as Finnegan's Wake (1939) and Ulysses (1922). The unchallenged master of stream-of-consciousness narration. Through stream-of-consciousness, Joyce permits the reader to enter the consciousness of his main character and perceive the chaos of fragmentary conversations, physical sensations, and memories which register there. See "Stream-of-Consciousness Narrative."

Kafka, Franz (1883-1924): Czechoslovakian poet. His writing centers around the relationship of an individual to an incomprehensible world, and is characterized by symbolism, absurdity, and eerie situations. In The Metamorphosis (1915), Gregor Samsa awakes from troubled dreams to find that he has been transformed into a large beetle. See "Kafkaesque."

Kafkaesque: The term characterizes often bizarre or absurd situations involving social, psychological, political, or metaphysical instability or confusion.

Kierkegaard, Søren (1813-1855): Danish philosopher. Kierkegaard's writing contains much Romantic Irony and, among other things, Kierkegaard described an ironic mode of existence, in which the individual consciously plays a chosen role and views his/her own actions with detachment.

Literary Canon: A theoretical (not actual) list of literary works and authors which are deemed to possess high artistic merit and considered worthy of scholarly attention.

Machiavelli, Niccolò: (1469-1527) Italian writer and statesman, and original political theorist, whose principle work, The Prince, brought him a reputation of amoral cynicism. The Prince is justified in using any means at his disposal to retain power. Machiavelli coined the phrase: "The ends justifies the means."

Marx, Karl (1818-1883): German philosopher, social scientist, and revolutionary, who believed the ruling middle class will be overthrown by the working class resulting in a classless socialist society and then changing to a communist society.

Metaphor: A figure of speech containing an implied comparison, in which a word or phrase ordinarily and primarily used for one thing is applied to another. For example, "the pools of her eyes" or "all the world's a stage."

Middle Ages: Period of European history that lasted from 500 AD to approximately 1450 AD.

Narrator: The one who tells a story in writing or orally. Not identical to the author. The author creates and controls the narrator. Dr. Glas is the narrator of Dr. Glas; whereas Hjalmar Söderberg is the author.

Naturalism: The literary response to the belief in science and Darwinism. Individual behavior is determined by heredity, environment, and upbringing, and naturalistic writing pays close attention to these details.

Nietzsche, Friedrich (1844-1900): A German philosopher and poet. In *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* (1892), Nietzsche declares that God is dead and it is now time for the "Übermensch" - a being of superior intellect, the Superman - to take his place.

Nihilism: An attitude or doctrine that traditional values and beliefs are unfounded and that existence is senseless and useless.

Poetry: Literature written in stylized or specially structured language, which may include the use of rhyme or meter, or may involve disruption of normal syntax, or the use of extremely concentrated images or allusions.

Prose: The ordinary form of written or spoken language, without rhyme or meter. Novels, short stories, and essays are usually written in prose.

Objective: Where the author presents situations in an impersonal, concrete, and detached manner. The author seeks to create the illusion of presenting reality as it is. See "subjective."

Omniscient narrator: An "all-knowing" narrator, who can read his character's minds and understands all causes and effects.

Proletariat: The industrial working class who, possessing neither capital nor production means, must sell their labor to survive.

Protagonist: The most important character (usually the hero) in a story. See "antagonist."

Realism: Literature that incorporates truthful details of everyday life and common experience, in which the author's imagination and values are effaced.

Renaissance: From the French word for "rebirth," a label used for the period dating approximately from the mid-1400s to the end of the 1600s. During this period the term itself referred to a revival or rebirth of culture after the barbarism of the Middle Ages.

Romantic Irony: The introduction of paradox into a literary work, i.e. when the hero of a novel suddenly announces that the author of the novel has died and that he, the hero, will carry on the work. See "Irony."

Romanticism: A philosophical and artistic movement from the late 1700s and early 1800s which advocated freedom of form and spirit, an emphasis on feeling and originality and on the personality of the artist himself, and which expressed a sympathetic interest in primitive nature and the common man.

Satire: A literary work in which vices, follies, stupidities, abuses, etc. are held up to ridicule and contempt.

Scandinavia: The countries in Northern Europe, usually considered to be Norway, Sweden, Denmark,

Finland and Iceland.

Socialism: A state based on dictatorship of the proletariat and collective ownership of the means of production. Government favors peaceful methods to achieve their goals and anticipates no need for sudden change.

Stream of Consciousness Narration: A type of narration which attempts to capture the full spectrum and continuous flow of a character's mental process. The classic example is James Joyce's *Ulysses* (1922): "Freeeeeeefronnnng train somewhere whistling the strength those engines have in them like big giants and the water rolling all over and out of them all sides like the end of Loves old sweet sonnng the poor men that have to be out all the night from their wives and families..."

Subjective: Where the author incorporates his/her own persona into the work, expressing inward convictions, judgments, values, feelings, or an individual vision of the world. The author clearly presents a version of reality and does not pretend to present reality itself. See "objective."

Surrealism: A modern movement in art and literature, in which an attempt is made to portray or interpret the workings of the unconscious mind as manifested in dreams: it is characterized by an irrational, noncontextual arrangement of material.

Symbol: Something that stands for or represents another thing. A highly potent and richly suggestive situation, character, or detail given particular stress in a literary work.

Third-Person Narrative: The narrator is someone outside the story referring to characters in the story by name or as "he," "she," or "they."

Tragedy: A drama in which a dignified character, usually the protagonist, develops a conflict with a superior force. It usually ends with a sorrowful or disastrous conclusion.

Utopian: The dream of an ideal and perfect society or place which experiences a minimum of conflict.