

Keystone Exams: Literature

Glossary to the Assessment Anchor & Eligible Content

The Keystone Glossary includes terms and definitions associated with the Keystone Assessment Anchors and Eligible Content. The terms and definitions included in the glossary are intended to assist Pennsylvania educators in better understanding the Keystone Assessment Anchors and Eligible Content. The glossary does not define all possible terms included on an actual Keystone Exam, and it is not intended to define terms for use in classroom instruction for a particular grade level or course.



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Affix	One or more letters occurring as a bound form attached to the beginning, end, or base of a word and serving to produce a derivative word or an inflectional form (e.g., a prefix or suffix).
Allegory	A form of extended metaphor in which objects, persons, and actions in a narrative are equated with meanings that lie outside the narrative itself. The underlying meaning may have moral, social, religious, or political significance, and characters are often personifications of abstract ideas such as charity, greed, or envy.
Alliteration	The repetition of initial sounds in neighboring words.
Allusion	An implied or indirect reference in literature to a familiar person, place, or event.
Analysis	The process or result of identifying the parts of a whole and their relationships to one another.
Antonym	A word that is the opposite in meaning to another word.
Argument/Position	The position or claim the author establishes. Arguments should be supported with valid evidence and reasoning and balanced by the inclusion of counterarguments that illustrate opposing viewpoints.
Author's Purpose	The author's intent either to inform or teach someone about something, to entertain people or to persuade or convince his/her audience to do or not do something.
Bias	The subtle presence of a positive or negative approach toward a topic.

Biography	A written account of another person's life.
Character	A person, animal or inanimate object portrayed in a literary work.
Characterization	The method an author uses to reveal characters and their various traits and personalities (e.g., direct, indirect).
Climax	The turning point in a narrative; the moment when the conflict is at its most intense. Typically, the structure of stories, novels, and plays is one of rising action, in which tension builds to the climax.
Compare/Contrast	Place together characters, situations, or ideas to show common and/or differing features in literary selections.
Conflict/Problem	A struggle or clash between opposing characters, forces, or emotions.
Connotation	The range of associations that a word or phrase suggests in addition to its dictionary meaning.
Context Clues	Words and phrases in a sentence, paragraph, and/or whole text, which help reason out the meaning of an unfamiliar word.
Cultural Significance	The generally accepted importance of a work representing a given culture.
Defense of a Claim	Support provided to mark an assertion as reasonable.

Dialect	A variety of a language distinct from the standard variety in pronunciation, grammar, or vocabulary.
Dialogue	In its widest sense, dialogue is simply conversation between characters or speakers in a literary work; in its most restricted sense, it refers specifically to the speech of characters in a drama.
Diction	An author's choice of words, phrases, sentence structures and figurative language, which combine to help create meaning and tone.
Differentiate	Distinguish, tell apart, and recognize differences between two or more items.
Drama	The genre of literature represented by works intended for the stage; a work to be performed by actors on stage, radio, or television; play.
Dramatic Script	The written text of a play, which includes the dialogue between characters, stage directions and often other expository information.
Draw Conclusion	To make a judgment or decision based on reasoning rather than direct or implicit statement.
Elements of Fiction	Traits that mark a work as imaginative or narrative discourse (e.g., plot, theme, symbol).
Elements of Nonfiction	Traits that mark a work as reportorial, analytical, informative or argumentative (e.g., facts, data, charts, graphics, headings).

Evaluate	Examine and judge carefully. To judge or determine the significance, worth or quality of something; to assess.
Explain	To make understandable, plain or clear.
Explicit	Clearly expressed or fully stated in the actual text.
Exposition	A narrative device, often used at the beginning of a work that provides necessary background information about the characters and their circumstances.
Fact	A piece of information provided objectively, presented as true.
Falling Action	The part of a literary plot that is characterized by diminishing tensions and the resolution of the plot's conflicts and complications.
Fiction	Any story that is the product of imagination rather than a documentation of fact. Characters and events in such narratives may be based in real life, but their ultimate form and configuration is a creation of the author.
Figurative Language	Language that cannot be taken literally since it was written to create a special effect or feeling.
First Person	The "first person" or "personal" point of view relates events as they are perceived by a single character. The narrating character may offer opinions about the action and characters that differ from those of the author.

Flashback	An organizational device used in literature to present action that occurred before current (present) time of the story. Flashbacks are often introduced as the dreams or recollections of one or more characters.
Focus	The center of interest or attention.
Foreshadowing	An organizational device used in literature to create expectation or to set up an explanation of later developments.
Generalization	A conclusion drawn from specific information that is used to make a broad statement about a topic or person.
Genre	A category used to classify literary works, usually by form, technique or content (e.g., prose, poetry).
Headings, Graphics and Charts	Any visual cues on a page of text that offer additional information to guide the reader's comprehension. Headings typically are words or phrases in bold print that indicate a topic or the theme of a portion of text; graphics may be photographs, drawings, maps or any other pictorial representation; charts (and tables or graphs) condense data into a series of rows, lines or other shortened lists.
Hyperbole	An exaggeration or overstatement (e.g., <i>I had to wait forever.</i>)
Imagery	Descriptive or figurative language in a literary work; the use of language to create sensory impressions.
Implicit	Though unexpressed in the actual text, meaning that may be understood by the reader; implied.

Inference	A judgment based on reasoning rather than on a direct or explicit statement. A conclusion based on facts or circumstances; understanding gained by “reading between the lines.”
Informational Text	Nonfiction written primarily to convey factual information. Informational texts comprise the majority of printed material adults read (e.g., textbooks, newspapers, reports, directions, brochures, technical manuals).
Interpret	To give reasons through an explanation to convey and represent the meaning or understanding of a text.
Irony	The use of a word or phrase to mean the exact opposite of its literal or usual meaning; incongruity between the actual result of a sequence of events and the expected result.
Key/Supporting Details	Points of information in a text that strongly support the meaning or tell the story. Statements that define, describe, or otherwise provide information about the topic, theme, or main idea.
Key Words	Specific word choices in a text that strongly support the tone, mood, or meaning of the text.
Literary Device	Tool used by the author to enliven and provide voice to the text (e.g., dialogue, alliteration).
Literary Element	An essential technique used in literature (e.g., characterization, setting, plot, theme).
Literary Form	The overall structure or shape of a work that frequently follows an established design. Forms may refer to a literary type (narrative, short story) or to patterns of meter, lines, and rhymes (stanza, verse).

Literary Movement	A trend or pattern of shared beliefs or practices that mark an approach to literature (e.g., Realism, Naturalism, Romanticism).
Literary Nonfiction	Text that includes literary elements and devices usually associated with fiction to report on actual persons, places, or events. Examples include nature and travel text, biography, memoir and the essay.
Main Idea	The author's central thought; the chief topic of a text expressed or implied in a word or phrase; the topic sentence of a paragraph.
Metaphor	The comparison of two unlike things in which no words of comparison (<i>like</i> or <i>as</i>) are used (e.g., <i>The speech gave me food for thought.</i>)
Monologue	An extended speech spoken by one speaker, either to others or as if alone.
Mood	The prevailing emotions or atmosphere of a work derived from literary devices such as dialogue and literary elements such as setting. The mood of a work is not always what might be expected based on its subject matter.
Motif	A recurring subject, theme, or idea in a literary work.
Multiple-meaning Words	Words that have several meanings depending upon how they are used in a sentence.
Narrative	A story, actual or fictional, expressed orally or in text.

Narrator	A person, animal, or thing telling the story or giving an account of something.
Nonfiction	Text that is not fictional; designed primarily to explain, argue, instruct or describe rather than entertain. For the most part, its emphasis is factual.
Opinion	A personal view, attitude, or appraisal.
Personification	An object or abstract idea given human qualities or human form (e.g., <i>Flowers danced about the lawn.</i>)
Plot	The structure of a story. The sequence in which the author arranges events in a story. The structure often includes the rising action, the climax, the falling action, and the resolution. The plot may have a protagonist who is opposed by an antagonist, creating what is called conflict.
Poetry	In its broadest sense, text that aims to present ideas and evoke an emotional experience in the reader through the use of meter, imagery and connotative and concrete words. Some poetry has a carefully constructed structure based on rhythmic patterns. Poetry typically relies on words and expressions that have several layers of meaning (figurative language). It may also make use of the effects of regular rhythm on the ear and may make a strong appeal to the senses through the use of imagery.
Point of View	The position of the narrator in relation to the story, as indicated by the narrator's outlook from which the events are depicted (e.g., first person, third person limited, third person omniscient, etc). The perspective from which a speaker or author recounts a narrative or presents information. The author's manner in revealing characters, events, and ideas; the vantage point from which a story is told.
Prefix	Groups of letters placed before a word to alter its meaning.

Propaganda	Information aimed at positively or negatively influencing the opinions or behaviors of large numbers of people.
Propaganda Techniques	<p>Propaganda techniques and persuasive tactics are used to influence people to believe, buy or do something. Students should be able to identify and comprehend the propaganda techniques and persuasive tactics listed below.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Name-calling is an attack on a person instead of an issue.2. Bandwagon tries to persuade the reader to do, think or buy something because it is popular or because “everyone” is doing it.3. Red herring is an attempt to distract the reader with details not relevant to the argument.4. Emotional appeal tries to persuade the reader by using words that appeal to the reader’s emotions instead of to logic or reason.5. Testimonial attempts to persuade the reader by using a famous person to endorse a product or idea (for instance, the celebrity endorsement).6. Repetition attempts to persuade the reader by repeating a message over and over again.7. Sweeping generalization (stereotyping) makes an oversimplified statement about a group based on limited information.8. Circular argument states a conclusion as part of the proof of the argument.9. Appeal to numbers, facts, or statistics attempts to persuade the reader by showing how many people think something is true.
Resolution	The portion of a story following the climax in which the conflict is resolved. The resolution of Jane Austen’s <i>Northanger Abbey</i> is neatly summed up in the following sentence: “Henry and Catherine were married, the bells rang and everybody smiled.”
Rising Action	The part of a story where the plot becomes increasingly complicated. Rising action leads up to the climax, or turning point.

Satire	A literary approach that ridicules or examines human vice or weakness.
Sentence Variety	Various sentence structures, styles, and lengths that can enhance the rhythm of or add emphasis to a piece of text. The presence of multiple sentence structures in a text (simple, complex, compound, compound-complex) and/or various sentence beginnings (e.g., dependent and independent clauses, phrases, single words).
Sequence of Steps	A literary organizational form that presents the order in which tasks are to be performed.
Setting	The time and place in which a story unfolds.
Simile	A comparison of two unlike things in which a word of comparison (<i>like</i> or <i>as</i>) is used (e.g., <i>The ant scurried as fast as a cheetah.</i>)
Soliloquy	A dramatic speech, revealing inner thoughts and feelings, spoken aloud by one character while alone on the stage.
Sound Devices	Elements of literature that emphasize sound (e.g., assonance, consonance, alliteration, rhyme, onomatopoeia).
Speaker	The voice used by an author to tell/narrate a story or poem. The speaker is often a created identity, and should not automatically be equated with the author. See also narrator and point of view.
Stage Direction	A playwright's written instructions provided in the text of a play about the setting or how the actors are to move and behave in a play.

Structure of Poem	The rhyming pattern, meter, grammar, and imagery used by a poet to convey meaning.
Style	The author's choices regarding language, sentence structure, voice, and tone in order to communicate with the reader.
Suffix	Groups of letters placed after a word to alter its meaning or change it into a different kind of word, from an adjective to an adverb, etc.
Summarize	To capture all of the most important parts of the original text (paragraph, story, poem), but express them in a much shorter space, and as much as possible in the reader's own words.
Symbolism	A device in literature where an object represents an idea.
Synonym	A word that is similar in meaning to another word (e.g., sorrow, grief, sadness).
Syntax	The ordering of words into meaningful verbal patterns such as phrases, clauses, and sentences.
Text Organization/Structure	The author's method of structuring a text; the way a text is structured from beginning to end. In literary works, the structure could include flashback and foreshadowing, for example. In nonfiction works, the structure could include sequence, question-answer, cause-effect, etc.
Theme	A topic of discussion or work; a major idea broad enough to cover the entire scope of a literary work. A theme may be stated or implied. Clues to the theme may be found in the prominent and/or recurring ideas in a work.

Third Person	A perspective in literature, the “third person” point of view presents the events of the story from outside of any single character’s perception, much like the omniscient point of view, but the reader must understand the action as it takes place and without any special insight into characters’ minds or motivations.
Tone	The attitude of the author toward the audience, characters, subject or the work itself (e.g., serious, humorous).
Universal Character	A character that symbolically embodies well-known meanings and basic human experiences, regardless of when or where he/she lives (e.g., hero, villain, intellectual, dreamer).
Universal Significance	The generally accepted importance or value of a work to represent human experience regardless of culture or time period.
Voice	The fluency, rhythm, and liveliness in a text that make it unique to the author.

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