Les Miserables Literary Terms

**Allegory** A character or story element that conveys a double meaning, one literal and the other abstract

**Alliteration**

**Allusion** a reference to a person, place, poem, book, event, which is not part of the story, that the author expects the reader will recognize

**Ambiguity** The multiple meanings of a word, phrase, sentence or passages

**Analogy** Comparison between two different things, clarifying the meaning of one.

**Anaphora** Repetition of a word, phrase, or clause at the beginning of word groups occurring one.

**Antagonist** The person or force that the main character (protagonist) struggles against –

**Antecedent** word, phrase, clause referred to by a pronoun.

**Antithesis** The opposition of contrast of ideas

**Aphorism** quote stating a general truth or moral principle stated by author

**Apostrophe** A figure of speech that directly addresses an absent or imaginary person or abstraction

**Atmosphere** emotional feeling reader/audience gets when reading a piece

**Caricature** a description meant to comically exaggerate or distort a person’s features.

**Characterization** the methods, incidents, speech, etc, an author uses to reveal the people in the book. What the person says, what others say, and by his or her actions.

**Colloquial** slang in speech or writing.

**Conceit** a fanciful expression, usually in form of a surprising analogy between two very different things.

**Conflict** the struggle that moves the action forward in a work of literature (man vs. man, man vs. nature, man himself)

**Connotation** feelings or attitudes associated with a word. Abstract. Usually no quote.

**Denotation** the literal dictionary definition.

**Diction** Decisions regarding the writers word choices in terms of correctness, clearness, or effectiveness.

**Didactic** intended or inclined to teach, preach, instruct.

**Euphemism** a nice way to say something ugly

**Extended metaphor** developed metaphor

**Figurative language** illustrative writing or speech.

**Genre** major category into which a literary work fits.

Historic Fiction Epic Tragedy Fairytales Fiction Non-fiction

**Homily** serious talk, speech or lecture involving moral or spiritual advice.

**Hyperbole** Exaggeration; overstatement.

**Idealism** behavior or thought based on a vision of things as they ought to be, rather than as they really are

**Imagery** A word or group of words in a literary work that appeals to one or more of the senses. Description to arouse emotion.

**Inference** drawing conclusion from information presented.

**Invective** an attack on someone using strong and abusive language.

**Irony** difference between what is stated and what is meant

1. Verbal: words state opposite of meaning
2. Situational: events are opposite of what expected
3. Drama: facts unknown to character, but know to reader/audience

**Litotes** making an affirmation point by denying something.

**Loose sentence/Subordinating style** sentence with main clause followed by one or more dependent clauses

**Metaphor** a comparison of unlike things in which one is described in terms of the other (similarity)

**Metonymy** the name of one subject is substituted for something closely related to it.

**Mood** the emotional aspect of the work, which contributes to the feeling the reader gets from the book

**Narrator** the one who tells the story, first-person is by character, third person is anonymous

**Onomatopoeia** natural sounds are imitated by sounds of words.

**Oxymoron** contradictory terms are grouped together to suggest a paradox.

**Paradox** a self-contradicting statement that holds some degree of truth

“It seemed that he beheld Satan by the light of paradise.

**Parallelism** framing of words, phrases, sentences, paragraphs to give structural similarity.

**Parody** mocks the style or content of another work

**Pedantic** words, phrases, general tone is show-offy.

**Periodic Sentence / Subordinating style** sentence that presents its central meaning in a main clause at the end; preceded by dependent clauses.

**Personification** Assigning human attributes to something inanimate. Makes objects and their actions easier to visualize, and more interesting.

**Point of View** perspective from which the story is told

1st person: “I” 3rd person: view from character or narrator

**Protagonist** the central or main character in a story around whom the plot centers

**Repetition** duplication of any element – sound, word, phrase, clause, sentence, grammatical pattern.

**Romanticism** an 18th and 19th century literary movement that is frequently characterized by the following: characters with emotion and imagination, beauties of nature, settings in exotic or remote locations like castles and mansions, hero/ine who rebels against the social norms of his society, irrational realms of dreams, superstitions, legends

**Sarcasm** bitter caustic language that is meant to hurt or ridicule someone/something.

**Satire** targets human vices and follies, often includes irony, wit, parody, caricature, hyperbole, understatement, sarcasm.

**Simile** A comparison using like or as, Monsieur like giving a cup of water to a thirsty man on the ocean

**Style** the way an author chooses and uses words, phrases, and sentences to tell the story.

1. Evaluation of choices an author makes in blending diction, syntax, figurative language, and other literary devices.
2. Comparing author to a time period or other authors.

**Syllogism** two premises are presented (1 major 1 minor) and a sound conclusion is made.

**Symbol** an object, person, or place that has a meaning in itself and also stands for something larger than itself, usually an idea or concept; some concrete thing that represents an abstraction. Represents itself and stands for something universal.

**Synecdoche** part of something represent the whole.

**Theme** the central or dominant idea behind the story, emerges from how the book treats its subject, expressed indirectly and is a statement about humanity - Redemption, transformation, identity, the importance of love and compassion; social injustice in nineteenth-century France; the long-term effects of the French Revolution on French society

**Tone** authors attitude toward material, audience, both.