**Inferences & Conclusions:** When you **make inferences** or **draw conclusions,** you make guesses about things not directly stated in the passage. You use details provided by the author along with what you know of real life to make conclusions and inferences.

**Inferences:**  are evidence-based guesses. They are the conclusions a reader draws about the unsaid based on what is actually said. Inferences drawn while reading are much like inferences drawn in everyday life. Making an inference is the same thing as drawing a conclusion or making a generalization.

**Argument and Support:** You probably think of arguments as disagreements that turn into yelling matches, but an argument is not necessarily a fight. An **argument** is a side or a position that someone takes on an issue.

**Theme:** The **theme** is the most important message in a story. The theme will say something about life or human nature. Sometimes the theme is a **moral** or short lesson about life. Because the theme is a message, it must be expressed in a complete sentence. Sometimes the author does not tell you the theme. Instead, you have to figure it out from the text.

**Some Common Themes Found in Literature:**

* Man is his own worst enemy.
* Good is stronger than evil.
* A person grows by facing obstacles.
* Treat others the way you want to be treated.

**Tips for Identifying Theme:**

* Look closely at the title. Sometimes you will find a clue about the theme.
* Look for ideas that are repeated more than once.
* Look for lessons that the character learns.
* Think about what happens in the story and how it can apply to life. For example, if the main character must survive an approaching tornado, the theme may be, "Nature is at war with mankind."

**Summarization:** A **summary** is a shorter way to tell the events or details of a passage. Only the most important details are conveyed in a summary. A summary allows the reader to see what the passage is about. Look at the passage and its summary below for an example.

**Plot and Conflict:** The **plot** is the sequence of events that happen in a story. It shows how characters meet and resolve a conflict—a problem or struggle. Every plot is made up of a series of causes and effects.

**Setting and Plot:** It is important to know the ways in which the **setting** and the **plot** of a story are related.

**Setting**: The setting is the background for the story's plot. It includes elements such as place, time, and weather. The setting is more important in some stories than in others.

**Plot**: The plot is the series of events that occur in a story. The way that these events relate to each other and affect the characters in the story are what make each plot different. Usually a plot will have five parts: the exposition, the rising action, the climax, the falling action, and the resolution or denouement.

**Character Analysis:** You can understand stories better when you understand characters. This is called **character analysis.** When you analyze characters, think about the following items.

**Trait:** a special quality or something special about someone's personality.

**Motivation:** what causes someone to act in a certain way. It can be an emotion, desire, need, etc. A motivation is the reason we do something.

**Conflict:** when characters have different interests or goals.

**Point of View:** the side from which a story is told. It can affect how facts are shown and how we look at the characters.

**Relationships:** the connection of people in friendship, family, work, school, or other activities.

**Simile and Metaphor**

**Similes** and **metaphors** are used in figurative language to compare and contrast different objects or ideas. They are formed when words are put together so skillfully they bring up pictures in your mind.

**Simile:** is when two things are directly compared because they share a common feature. The word AS or LIKE is used to compare the two words.

**Metaphor:**  also compares two things, but it does so more directly WITHOUT using "as" or "like."

**Allusions:** is a reference to a real or fictitious person, event, place, work of art, or another work of literature within writing.

You can commonly find allusions to well-known works:

* Roman/Greek mythology
* the Bible
* Shakespearean plays
* fairy tales

**Tone:** is the reflection of an author's attitude toward his or her subject.

**Situational irony** occurs when a reader or character expects one thing to happen, but something entirely different happens. In other words, it is when something unexpected (or inappropriate) happens. Writers use situational irony to make their stories interesting or humorous. Sometimes this forces readers to think about their own thoughts and values.

**Dramatic irony** is the contrast between what a character thinks to be true and what the readers know to be true. It occurs when the meaning intended by a character's words or actions is opposite of the true situation. The character cannot see or understand the contrast, but the audience or reader can.

**Verbal irony** is when someone says one thing but means something different. This type of irony is very similar to sarcasm.

**Dramatic Irony, Suspense, Humor:**

**Dramatic irony** is used to show that the audience knows more than the character on stage. A character does or says something of greater importance than he or she knows. The audience, however, understands the meaning and importance of the act or speech. Dramatic irony is often used to produce suspense or humor.

**Suspense:** The difference in the knowledge of characters and the audience can produce suspense. Generally, dramatic irony is used to create suspense in tragedies or mysteries.

**Humor**: The difference in the knowledge of characters and the audience can produce humor as well. Dramatic irony is mostly used to create humor in comedies.

**Compare and Contrast: e**There are almost endless ways two stories or passages can differ. It's up to you to notice how. Here are a couple of definitions to get you started.