Middle School Reading Literary Terms

1. Main Idea- what a piece of writing is mostly about
2. Summary- gives the main idea and important details of a passage
3. Theme- a more generally stated topic concerning a passage’s main ideas
4. Genre- a classification of literature, such as fiction, drama, poetry, etc.
5. Fiction- a type of literature that tells a made-up story
6. Non-fiction- a type of lit. that tells about real-life people, places, events, things, etc.
7. Drama- a play written to be performed by actors
8. Myth- a folktale (fictional story) about gods and goddesses (mythology)
9. Tall Tale- an American hero folktale full of extreme exaggerations
10. Fable- a folktale, usually with talking animals, that always has a moral to it
11. Analogy- a comparison that shows a relationship between two things
12. Simile- a comparison of two unlike things using the words “like” or “as”
13. Metaphor- a comparison of two unlike things not using the words “like” or “as”
14. Paraphrase- restating something using different words (re-phrasing)
15. Context Clues- words, phrases, or sentences that give meaning to unknown words
16. Denotation- the dictionary definition of the word - the literal meaning
17. Connotation- the extra sense that the word implies - pos. or neg. (cheap/inexpensive)
18. Repetition- creating a “special effect” by repeating a sound or word
19. Suspense- a feeling of uncertainty or dread about what will happen next
20. Sarcasm- an expression that is personal, jeering, and intended to hurt
21. Oxymoron- a seemingly contradictory combination of words (jumbo shrimp)
22. Onomatopoeia- a word or phrase that imitates a sound (whoosh)
23. Plot- the action of the story
24. Resolution- the final outcome of the story- or the solution of the problem
25. Character- a person or other creature in a story
26. Setting- the time and place of the story’s events
27. Climax- the point of greatest interest or suspense in the story
28. Conflict- the main problem the character faces (with others, self, or nature)
29. Personification- gives animals or objects human qualities or characteristics
30. Hyperbole- the deliberate use of exaggeration
31. Symbolism- the use of one thing to stand for or represent another
32. Imagery- the use of vivid description to create a picture in the reader’s mind
33. Foreshadow- gives clues that suggest what might happen in the future
34. Flashback- interrupting the story with events from the past
35. Irony - a statement meaning the opposite of what is literally stated
36. Idiom - a saying that can not be literally translated
37. Allusion - a reference to a well-known work of literature, art, music, etc.
38. Audience - the person or persons to whom the writing is addressed
39. Author - the person who wrote the story or passage, etc.
40. Narrator - the person who is telling the story
41. Point of View - the relationship of the narrator to the story (viewpoint)
42. 1st Person PoV - when a character in the story tells the story (using I, me, my, we, etc.)
43. 3rd Person PoV - when someone not in the story tells the story (like an invisible observer)
44. Dialogue - when the characters in a story speak (usually set off by quotation marks)
45. Style/Voice - the way the author uses phrases and sentences to make his story distinctive
46. Tone - the author's attitude about his topic - can be positive, negative, or neutral
47. Mood - the feeling or atmosphere in the story set by the author
48. Inference - a guess based on a known fact, a conclusion
49. Cause/Effect - a TS exploring the reason something happened (cause) and the result (effect)
50. Compare/Contrast - a TS showing similarities (comparisons) and differences (contrasts)
51. Problem/Solution - a TS examining how conflicts or obstacles (problems) are overcome (resolved)
52. Chronology - a TS presenting events in the order in which they occur (sequencing)
53. Inductive - a TS that starts with specific ideas and works toward a general idea
54. Deductive - a TS that starts with a general idea and works toward specific ideas
55. Spatial Order - a TS that shows where things are
56. Categorization - a TS that puts things in categories
57. Fact - a statement that can be proved or disproved
58. Opinion - a statement that can not be proven - someone's own belief
59. Bias - a strong prejudice for one side over another - favoring only one side
60. Objective - a work based on fact, having no bias or partiality
61. Propaganda - persuasion techniques
62. Synonyms - words that have similar meanings
63. Antonyms - words that have opposite meanings