

GRADE 11 STUDY GUIDE | 2025

Literature -- Novel, Drama and Short Stories

English Home Language

1. How to Approach a Literature Question

- Know the plot, characters, themes and setting thoroughly before the exam
- Answer the SPECIFIC question asked -- do not write everything you know
- Use evidence: quotes or close paraphrase from the text
- Explain HOW the evidence supports your point -- do not just quote and move on
- Plan essay answers before writing (theme + 3-4 supporting points)

2. Key Literary Concepts

Plot and Structure

- Exposition: introduction of characters, setting and conflict
- Rising action: development of conflict and tension
- Climax: the turning point -- highest point of tension
- Falling action: consequences of climax play out
- Resolution (denouement): conflict resolved; outcome revealed

Characterisation

- Direct characterisation: author tells you directly what a character is like
- Indirect characterisation: SAID (speech), THOUGHT (inner thoughts), EFFECT (effect on others), ACTION (behaviour), LOOKS (physical appearance) -- STEAL
- Protagonist: main character
- Antagonist: character who opposes protagonist
- Round character: complex; changes and develops
- Flat character: one-dimensional; does not change

3. Themes

A THEME is a central idea or message the author explores -- NOT just a topic. Instead of "love", the theme is "love requires sacrifice."

- Identify the theme, then explain HOW the author develops it through plot, character and language
- Common themes in Grade 11 texts: identity, power and oppression, justice, belonging, coming of age, betrayal

4. Setting and Atmosphere

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Physical setting: where and when the story takes place

- Social/historical setting: the world the characters live in (apartheid SA, colonial era, etc.)
- Atmosphere: the emotional feeling created -- dark, hopeful, tense, peaceful
- How setting creates atmosphere: weather, time of day, description of environment

5. Drama-Specific Concepts

- Stage directions: instructions for actors and directors; reveal character and setting
- Dramatic irony: audience knows something a character does not
- Soliloquy: character speaks thoughts aloud when alone on stage
- Aside: character speaks to audience without other characters hearing
- Conflict: internal (within a character) or external (between characters)