Reference list of Literary Terms for Middle School students.

1\textsuperscript{st} person point of view - the events are told by a character in the story.

3\textsuperscript{rd} person point of view - the events are told by someone outside the story.

alliteration - the repetition of similar initial consonant sounds in order to create a musical or rhythmic effect, to emphasize key words or to imitate sounds. Example: “He was reluctant to return to the room he called home.”

allusion - a reference to a well-known person, place, event, literary work, or work of art, often used to help make a comparison.

biography - a form of non-fiction in which a writer tells the life story of another person.

character trait – the quality of a character; what a character is like.

climax – the highest point of action in a story, often the turning point.

direct characterization – the writer directly states the character’s traits or characteristics.

dynamic character – a character who changes over the course of a story

external conflict – a problem or struggle between a character and an outside force:
    character vs. character
    character vs. group
    character vs. nature
    character vs. society
    character vs. fate

fable - a brief story, usually with animal characters, that teaches a lesson or a moral.

fiction – writing that tells about imaginary characters and events.

flashback - a section in a literary piece that interrupts the sequence of events in order to relate an earlier incident or set of events.

foreshadowing – an author’s use of hints or clues to give a reader an idea of what may happen next.

free-verse - poetry that has irregular lines and may or may not rhyme.
generalization – a vague or indefinite statement that is made to cover many cases. Example: “All human beings hope for something.”

hyperbole – use of extreme exaggeration.

idiom - a word or phrase which means something different from what it says – it is usually a metaphor. An idiom is an expression peculiar to a certain group of people and/or used only under certain circumstances.

imagery – words or phrases that appeal to one or more of the five senses and help to create a vivid description for the reader.

indirect characterization – the writer allows the reader to draw his/her conclusions as to what a character is like, based on the appearances, words, actions, and interactions with other characters.

inference – a conclusion drawn by the reader based on available information.

internal conflict – a problem within a character (character vs. self).

irony - a situation where the opposite of what is expected to occur or exist does occur or exist.

metaphor - a figure of speech in which something is described as if it were something else; a comparison made without using “like” or “as”.

mood – the atmosphere or feeling an author creates within the piece of writing.

moral – a lesson taught by a literary work.

motivation – a reason that explains or partially explains a character’s thoughts, feelings, actions, or speech.

narrative – writing or speech that tells a story.

narrator – the speaker or character who is telling the story.

non-fiction - writing that tells about real people, places, objects, or events.

objective details – details that are factual and true to life.

oxymoron – the close placement of words having opposite or near opposite meanings in order to create a unique description.
parable – a short tale that illustrates a universal truth, a belief that appeals to all people of all civilizations.

personification – a type of figurative language in which a non-human subject is given human characteristics.

plot – the sequence of events in a literary work.

point of view – the perspective from which a story is told.

pun – a humorous play on words.

repetition – the repeated use of words or phrases in order to emphasize a point.

resolution – the events that occur in the falling action of a story’s plot.

setting – the time and location of the events described in a literary work.

simile – a comparison between two things, using “like” or “as”.

speaker – the imaginary voice assumed by the writer of a poem, the one describing the events in a poem.

stanza – a group of lines in a poem.

static character – a character who does not undergo a change over the course of a story.

subjective details – details that reveal the author’s feelings, attitudes, or judgments.

symbol /symbolism – anything that stands for or represents something else.

theme – a central message, idea, or concern that expressed in a literary work.

tone – the attitude of an author toward the subject that he/she is writing about.

character - refers to what someone is like – what their qualities are
(Someone’s character refers to their character traits.)

narrative poetry - poetry that tells a story

subject - what the story or poem is about (the topic)