In this unit we have examined key elements of literature, including: plot, character, setting, point of view, and theme, through a close reading of several short stories and resources. I will help you get a better understanding of each of the elements of literature we have studied and the elements within the context of *The Cask of Amontillado*. The first element we focused on was plot.

Plot is how the events of a story take place and why. The first part of plot is the exposition. The exposition is the introduction to characters and their situations. Exposition sets the tone and mode of the story. Inciting incident follows the exposition. The purpose of the inciting incident is to introduce the central conflict. Rising action comes after the inciting incident. This part of the plot develops conflicts, events along the way, and complications. Following rising action is the climax. The climax is the high point of interest or the turning point of a story. Falling action is the next step in plotting. Falling action basically follows the climax and leads to the resolution. The resolution is when the central conflict has ended. A key thing to remember when figuring out the resolution is that it has to associate with the inciting incident. The final step of plotting is the denouement. The importance of the denouement is to tie up loose ends.

An example of exposition from *The Cask of Amontillado* is when Montresor describes his disgusted feeling for Fortunato and the want of revenge. This then introduces the characters and their issues relating the story. In *The* *Cask of Amontillado*, the inciting incident is when Montresor explains that Fortunato has injured Montresor and then insulted him, and the fact that he has finally had enough of it when he says, “I must not punish, but punish only with impunity.” This indicates that he is going to get revenge somehow. Rising action in *The Cask of Amontillado* includes Montresor telling Fortunato that he received a pipe of what passes for him but he still has his doubts, the deep and dark vaults below the vacant house making the wine area mysterious, and the drunk feeling that Fortunato begins to feel as he drinks wine. The climax in *The Cask of Amontillado* is when Montresor strikes Fortunato with a rock, then approaches him while stunned, and chains him to the wall. As these events happen, the author creates tons of other questions for the readers. When Montresor begins to uncover the building stones and build a wall to trap Fortunato is the falling action in *The Cask of Amontillado*. While we come to the falling action questions are beginning to be answered. When Montresor puts the final building stone in place to finish Fortunato off for good is part of the resolution. An example of the association between the resolution and inciting incident is when Montresor finally gets his revenge on Fortunato by building up a wall to trap him inside because it ties into the inciting incident since the inciting incident was Fortunato insulting and injuring Montresor. When Edgar Allan Poe tells us what happens would be considered the denouement. The denouement is when Fortunato disappears behind the wall and doesn’t reply which shows that he ends up dying.

Climax

Inciting Incident

Resolution

Falling Action

Rising Action

Exposition

Denouement

After plot we learned about characters and defining characterization. There are many different character types, and most usually go along with each other in pairs. The first character type is major or central character. The major characters are what the central conflict resolves around. In *The Cask of Amontillado* there are 2 major characters: Montresor and Fortunato. Without either one of these characters there would not be a story. Minor characters are just the opposite of major characters. These characters help support the main characters. Luchesi would be an example. He doesn’t play a huge role, but he still has some importance.

A dynamic character is one who changes their personality or opinion about things over time. Right at the beginning of the story you notice that Montresor went from a patient, nice, loving guy to someone who wants major revenge. He would be a dynamic character. Static characters go along with dynamic characters because they are their opposites. A static character doesn’t change through the story and stays the same. Fortunato is a static character because he hasn’t changed majorly.

Round characters are those that have a bright personality and have many opinions or features. Montresor represents a round character because he is good at tricking people, and building walls. The opposite of round is flat. Flat characters are known for one specific trait. They are almost the most boring characters. Fortunato is a flat character because he is known for his knowledge about wine.

Stock characters are the ones that you can always picture. The stereotypical characters. In a way, Fortunato is a stock character because he’s one that will joke around, but then pretend to be nice any other time, and is almost dumb about it.

Then we have the protagonists and antagonists. The protagonists are the heroes and sometimes villains or the main characters of the story. Montresor is a villain protagonist. Antagonists are the characters that go against the protagonists. So Fortunato is the antagonist in *The Cask of Amontillado.*

Another type of character is the anti-hero. This is a major character, normally the protagonist who lacks nobility of mind and struggles for values not deemed universally admirable. The character that goes along with anti-hero is foil. A foil is the character with qualities that contrast another’s.

The final type of character is symbolic. A symbolic character symbolizes something important in the story. In *The Cask of Amontillado*, the symbolic character could be Fortunato. Fortunato is a symbolic character because he represents freedom in a way and not having to care, which explains how he gets himself into trouble.

Defining characterization is the process that you go through to decide which type of character someone is. Characterization can be revealed in 2 different ways: directly and indirectly. If an author were to directly reveal to you the type of character someone was they would tell you. But, if the author wanted to indirectly show characterization that means you have to decide on your own. Important things to remember when making inferences about characterization are the speech, thoughts, effect on others, actions, and looks of a character. The speech would help by noticing what the character says and how they speak. Thoughts of a character are also important because it infers what type of person they are, like whether or not they are friendly or viscous. By looking at the effect the character has on others also helps because it shows if people are trusted or not. The actions of a character help as well because it shows how they want to do things. A character’s looks help more with the stock character and being stereotypical.

Another element of literature we explored was setting. Setting is the time and place a story takes place at. The importance of setting is to describe where and when a story takes place. This could be the time of day, time of year, a time in history, the scenery, type of weather, or location of the characters. Setting builds background knowledge and creates images inside the reader’s mind. When describing setting the 5 senses are commonly used. Setting can add important dimension of meaning, reflecting character, and embodying theme. The setting in *The Cask of Amontillado* was noticed when Montresor states that it was about dusk during carnival season, and then later on in the story, the mention of all the dampness and darkness in his underground vault.

Point of view or POV is yet another element. POV is the way an author allows you to see and hear what is going on in a story. There are 3 different types of point of view. The first kind is first-person. In this view the main character narrates the story using words such as I, me, my, and mine in their speech. A benefit of first-person is that you are able to hear this character’s thoughts. Something to keep in mind while reading a story in first-person is whether or not the narrator is credible. This means can the narrator be trusted. If not, the narrator is an unreliable narrator and is biased and does not tell the truth. Second-person point of view is when the author uses words like you and your. This type of point of view is very rare because it makes you personally part of the story. The final type of POV is third-person. For a story to be told in third-person, the outsider will be looking in on the story. In third-person the reader won’t always enter a character’s mind but if they do then it will be one and only one character’s mind. *The Cask of Amontillado* is told in first-person because Montresor is telling the story. You can conclude this because the words I and me are used. Plus, when Fortunato talks to the narrator you know it’s Montresor because you can “hear” his thoughts about Fortunato.

Narrator and voice are part of point of view. The writer’s choice of narrator determines the point of view. Other types of POV include omniscient and third-person limited. Omniscient means that the narrator is not a character in the story. The omniscient narrator knows all, and can tell everything about every character. Third-person limited won’t even give you the thoughts of the character that is narrating.

Tone plays an important part too. Tone is the attitude the writer takes toward a subject. This makes a story humorous, suspenseful, or gloomy. Tone can be positive, negative, humorous, depressing, or neutral. Words used to help with the tone of a story are cheerful, jovial, benevolent, brash, passive, wrathful, amused, malicious, sharp, aggravated, nervous, mournful, baffled, and lyrical. Voice is the writer’s distinctive use of language and his or her overall style, including accents. Diction is the tone and choice of words the author picks. Diction is used to help create voice.

The final element of literature we discussed is theme. Theme is the main idea about life or living life expressed through a story. It is often thought as the message the writer wants to send to the reader. Determining the subject of a story like love, friendship, war, greed, hope, etc. can help you when finding the theme. Hints for deciphering the theme are the looking at the title, noticing any symbols used, looking for allusions that were made, any important details, what the characters learn, if there is a directly stated theme, and the importance of the story. Not every story has just one theme though. Novels tend to have multiple themes because they contain a lot more information. Short stories usually have just one theme because there is less discussion. Other key points to remember when choosing a theme is that the theme of a fable is its moral. The theme of a parable is its teaching. The theme of a piece of fiction is its view about life and how people behave. You will want to extract the theme from the characters, actions, and setting that make up the story.

The title didn’t really give me any clues for *The Cask of Amontillado* because it just describes the bottle in which the wine is being held in. The only thing that might be a symbol is the want for revenge. I think that this is a symbol because this is basically what the story is based off of. An allusion is a reference made to another noun outside of the story that the reader is supposed to known of. There was not a useful allusion made that helps with the theme. Important details, are Montresor getting mad at Fortunato and then killing him for revenge. Something that the characters learned was, Montresor finally learning that Fortunato was not going to understand that it offended him when he insulted and hurt him. So then the result of that is death for poor Fortunato. *The Cask of Amontillado* does not have a directly stated theme. By using all the hints for theme I came up with the theme being, think of others before yourself. This is my conclusion because the subject was war in a way. And if Fortunato would have put himself in Montresor’s shoes he would have understood that it was very offensive for him. This then would mean that Fortunato could have lived a longer life and not gotten himself into trouble.

Overall, the elements of literature are very important when figuring out a story. The plot in a story helps you understand what’s going on. Characterization plays an important role because if you didn’t have any type of characters your story would be dull and boring. Characters bring interest into the story and help keep it moving. They are what the story is centered on whether they are major, or minor characters, round or flat, dynamic or static; they all play an important part. Setting is important in a story because it gives you the time and place of which the story takes place. Without setting, a reader would easily get the wrong impression of things and will then become confused. If you didn’t specify the point of view of a story as an author, then the reader wouldn’t be able to read the story and understand the characters as well. The most common type of POV is third person because it is the just about the easiest to use when writing. Theme is the effect the story has on the reader when the story is finished. Without a theme, a story is pointless. The importance of a story is pretty much what theme is. Now the next time you read a confusing story, apply all these elements of literature to help you understand it in a better way.