Literary Elements Notes

*Bleachers*
By John Grisham

**Foreshadow**

What is foreshadowing?
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Example from *Bleachers*:
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**Irony**

What is irony?
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Example from *Bleachers*:
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**Tone**

What is tone?
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Example from *Bleachers*:
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**Mood**

What is mood? ______________________________________________________________________
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Example from *Bleachers*:
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**Theme**

What is theme? ______________________________________________________________________
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Example from *Bleachers*:
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**Protagonist/Antagonist**

What is a protagonist? ______________________________________________________________________
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What is an antagonist? _____________________________________________________________________
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Example from *Bleachers*:
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Foreshadowing is a literary technique used by many different authors to provide clues for the reader to be able to predict what might occur later on in the story. It is a literary device in which an author drops hints about the plot and what may come in the near future. It suggests certain plot developments will come later in the story and gives hints about what's going to happen next.

Irony is the contrast between what is expected or what appears to be and what actually is.

Verbal Irony
The contrast between what is said and what is actually meant.

Irony of Situation
This refers to a happening that is the opposite of what is expected or intended.

Dramatic Irony
This occurs when the audience or reader knows more than the characters know.

It was ironic that the coaches also took a vow of silence after the ‘87 championship game.
2. Ironically, Neely remembers how Coach had once told him to harness his fear and use……

TONE/MOOD

Tone
The author’s attitude, stated or implied, toward a subject. Some possible attitudes are pessimism, optimism, earnestness, seriousness, bitterness, humorous, and joyful. An author’s tone can be revealed through choice of words and details.

Mood
The climate of feeling in a literary work. The choice of setting, objects, details, images, and words all contribute towards creating a specific mood. For example, an author may create a mood of mystery around a character or setting but may treat that character or setting in an ironic, serious, or humorous tone.

The mood is often somber, bitter, and filled with regret. However, it is also uplifting as so many people come to realize the great influence Eddie Rake had on their lives. It is also uplifting, because the reader realizes that when a man can apologize as both Eddie and Neely do to those they have hurt, then nothing but good can come of it in so many ways.
THEME

The main idea or underlying meaning of a literary work. A theme may be stated or implied. Theme differs from the subject or topic of a literary work in that it involves a statement or opinion about the topic. Not every literary work has a theme. Themes may be major or minor. A major theme is an idea the author returns to time and again. It becomes one of the most important ideas in the story. Minor themes are ideas that may appear from time to time.

It is important to recognize the difference between the theme of a literary work and the subject of a literary work. The subject is the topic on which an author has chosen to write. The theme, however, makes some statement about or expresses some opinion on that topic. For example, the subject of a story might be war while the theme might be the idea that war is useless.

Four ways in which an author can express themes are as follows:

1. Themes are expressed and emphasized by the way the author makes us feel. By sharing feelings of the main character you also share the ideas that go through his mind.

2. Themes are presented in thoughts and conversations. Authors put words in their character’s mouths only for good reasons. One of these is to develop a story’s themes. The things a person says are much on their mind. Look for thoughts that are repeated throughout the story.

3. Themes are suggested through the characters. The main character usually illustrates the most important theme of the story. A good way to get at this theme is to ask yourself the question, what does the main character learn in the course of the story?

4. The actions or events in the story are used to suggest theme. People naturally express ideas and feelings through their actions. One thing authors think about is what an action will "say". In other words, how will the action express an idea or theme?

FORGIVENESS The first and most important theme is that of forgiveness. Eddie Rake slapped Neely for losing the first half of the championship game in 1987 which prompted Neely to knock his coach out. Neely himself had drifted through the last 15 years of his life, bitter about his knee injury and his wife leaving him. Now, Neely must not only forgive his coach for all that he had done to him, but he must also forgive himself for his own bitterness, his weakness in being unable to give up football, and his cruelty to others like Cameron. Through the vigil for Eddie Rake, he also sits a vigil for who he used to be. He leaves his town better able to live with who he’s become, and the town he leaves is better able to live with the rift created by the death of one of Eddie Rake’s players.

WHAT MAKES TRUE GREATNESS The second theme is what makes true greatness? Eddie Rake was a flawed human just as we all are. He made mistakes that eventually led
to his losing his job and from some of his players feeling bitter toward him. However, at his death vigil and funeral, the reader is allowed to see that he was a truly great man. He loved his players even though he couldn’t show it. He loved his family even though he dominated them. He wanted to win for all the right reasons even though he didn’t know how to lose. What’s more, he believed in justice and sincerely cared for people in need. His greatness came about in the way he influenced all those whose lives he touched. Even while they hated his tactics, those young football players could never get his voice out of their heads when they were about to do something wrong and couldn’t bear the shame when they misbehaved anyway. He helped mold their characters for the better and ached for them and with them when they fell short. As a result, he passed on to the next generation through them a true way to live life properly. What he taught will be passed on to the children of his players and perhaps even farther and that’s what makes a man truly great.

**Life isn’t Always Fair** Another important theme is that life isn’t always fair. This is a lesson Neely has a hard time learning. He spends 15 years of his life feeling bitter, because he suffers a career-ending knee injury that prevents him from ever playing professional football and because his wife leaves him after suffering two miscarriages (even though he drove a former girlfriend to an abortion clinic to destroy his first child). He is also bitter about what Coach Rake had done to him in the locker room during the championship game of 1987. He has never been able to forgive the man until he returns to his old hometown for the first time in 15 years to sit a death vigil for the man. It is only when he goes home again that Neely learns that life isn’t always fair, but that a man of true character finds a way to overcome the bitterness and live a life that brings him happiness.

**Misplaced Priorities** A final theme concerns the idea of misplaced priorities. There is a sense that for these young men the pressure of being a championship football team exacts terrible consequences. The worst of these is the belief that they are nothing if they cannot play football, and some go through life never coming to terms with high school graduation. For a town like Messina, there is the loss that other students have to face if they are not football players. Their sports and academics never receive the funding that the football team does, and it’s terrible to imagine how their potential might have been fulfilled if they had been given the same opportunities. This is a lesson that the author subtextually alludes to, but nonetheless makes the reader think about. Where do we put our funds that will do the most good for the most students, and how do we deal with citizens who only want to see a winning team so that they have bragging rights over other towns? It is a conundrum that much of America faces, especially in small towns where the funding is the smallest.