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Дрогобицький державний педагогічний університет
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GLOSSARY OF ESSENTIAL LITERARY TERMS

ГЛОСАРІЙ ОСНОВНИХ ЛІТЕРАТУРОЗНАВЧИХ ТЕРМІНІВ

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«Глосарій основних літературознавчих термінів» укладено відповідно до робочої програми навчальної дисципліни «Література Великої Британії» для підготовки фахівців першого (бакалаврського) рівня вищої освіти спеціальності 014 «Середня освіта (Англійська мова та зарубіжна література)», освітньої програми «Середня освіта (Мова і література (англійська, німецька))», затвердженої вченою радою Дрогобицького державного педагогічного університету імені Івана Франка.

У «Глосарії...» розкрито зміст основних літературознавчих понять, які характеризують специфіку художньої літератури, її функціонування у суспільстві. Розрахований на літературознавців, викладачів, студентів-філологів, учителів-словесників, а також усіх, хто цікавиться мистецтвом художнього слова.

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“Glossary of Essential Literary Terms” was compiled in accordance with the syllabus of the educational discipline "Literature of Great Britain" for the training of specialists of the first (Bachelor's) level of higher education, speciality 014 "Secondary Education (English Language and Foreign Literature)", educational programme "Secondary Education (Language and Literature (English, German))", approved by the academic council of Drohobych Ivan Franko State Pedagogical University.

“Glossary...” reveals the meaning of the main literary concepts that characterize the specificity of literature and its functioning in the society. It is intended for literary experts, critics, teachers, students of philology, and everyone who is interested in the art of a word.

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PREFACE

Studying English literature is an absorbing thing. However, what is the best way to enjoy it? One of the most important parts of this process – literary terms. Sound knowledge of them makes it convenient for students to understand literature, to interpret, analyse and write about a literary work. Our Glossary is an essential reference tool, a helpful book to comprehend literary terms and their definitions, an up-to-date guide to critical and theoretical concepts available to students of literature at all levels.

Alphabetically arranged, this Glossary provides clear and concise definitions of the most troublesome literary terms – from *acrostic* to *zeugma*. It offers readers increased coverage of the widest array of literary terms, genres, forms, motifs, themes, styles, theories, schools of British and American poetry, verse forms, life writing, concepts, ideas and character types that are used in the study of literature. It defines and discusses modern critical theories and movements, and points of view commonly used in the analysis and interpretation of literary works. Besides it includes extensive coverage of traditional drama, versification, rhetoric, and literary history. Our Glossary also presents literary devices, which refer to the typical structures used by writers in their works to convey his or her messages in a simple manner to the readers.

The descriptions of literary terms are simple and, therefore, easy to understand. Simple terms have shorter definitions. Complex terms, concepts or theories, schools of authors or anything that requires explanation have detailed descriptions. In addition to definitions, all the entries include examples or illustrative passages. They seek to clarify the meaning and use of the terms in practical criticism, to illustrate and explain the concepts and to help greatly in understanding how authors use and adapt them in their writings.

This Glossary is a must-have for the one who wants to master literary theory and criticism. Voluminous and comprehensive, it will widen the horizon of understanding of any student, will help him to appreciate, interpret and analyze literary works, and will make the life of a literature lover comfortable.

ПЕРЕДМОВА

Одним із найважливіших складових процесу вивчення іноземної літератури – є засвоєння літературних термінів. Їх ґрунтовне опрацювання полегшує розуміння суті художнього твору, допомагає інтерпретувати та аналізувати його. Глосарій є важливим довідковим інструментом для студентів-філологів, настільною книгою для розуміння ними літературних термінів та їх визначень, посібником із критичних і теоретичних концепцій, важливих для всіх, хто вивчає літературу.

Глосарій містить чіткі та лаконічні визначення основних літературних термінів – від *акровірша* до *зюгми*. Він пропонує читачам найширший спектр літературних жанрів, форм, мотивів, тем, стилів, теорій, шкіл британської та американської поезії, віршованих форм, концепцій, ідей і типів персонажів. Глосарій дає визначення сучасним критичним теоріям та рухам, а також точкам зору, які стають у нагоді при аналізі та інтерпретації літературних творів. Він також пропонує дефініції літературних прийомів та типових структур, які письменники використовують у своїх творах, щоби ефективно донести свої думки читачам.

Запропоновані визначення літературних термінів прості, а відтак – зрозумілі. Прості терміни мають коротші визначення. Складні терміни, концепції чи теорії, школи авторів або будь-яке поняття, що потребує пояснення, має детальний опис. Окрім визначень, усі терміни містять приклади чи ілюстративні уривки з літературних творів. Їхнє завдання – окреслити значення та використання термінів у художній практиці, проілюструвати їх вживання та допомогти зрозуміти, як саме автори реалізують чи адаптують їх у своїх творах.

Глосарій є обов'язковим для кожного, хто прагне опанувати теорію літератури та її критику, адже він безумовно розширить кругозір будь-якого поціновувача художнього слова.

INTRODUCTION

**“This dictionary’s virtues and its plain spokenness make it
as apt to the bedside table as to the desk
(Dr. Baldick)**

Literary terms refer to the technique, style, and formatting used by writers and speakers to masterfully emphasize, embellish, or strengthen their compositions. Literary terms can refer to playful techniques employed by comedians to make us laugh or witty tricks wordsmiths use to coin new words or phrases. They can also include the tools of persuasion that writers use to convince and drive audiences to action. With their carefully crafted speeches geared towards both logical and emotional thinking, they challenge our everyday modes of thinking.

Literary terms also include powerful figurative language that writers use to summon emotion ranging from guilt to anger to bliss, and to allow us to see the world in new and magical ways. Words can be arranged to give poems, songs, and prose alike, rhythm and musicality. They can animate a story with such wealth of detail, character development, and action that as readers, we are taken by a story, and feel as if the people on the page are real. Literary terms have a wide range of application, from the poet’s beauty, to the speaker’s persuasion, to the novelist’s story development.

Literary terms are important in a wide variety of ways. They allow writers and speakers to make comments on society, politics, and trends. Rhetorical devices can be used to strengthen arguments which persuade and convince audiences. Poetic figurative language can summon emotions and visions of nature and the world in unique and compelling ways. Literary terms have the power to create serious, comedic, or whimsical moods via tools of persuasion, poeticism, and wordplay.

When to use Literary Terms? This depends. The variety of uses for literary terms spans across genres and is remarkably wide-ranging based on the goals or needs of the writer. Below we have categorized this vast subject.

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LITERARY TERMS

WITH DEFINITIONS AND EXAMPLES

A

Acrostic

Definition: *Acrostic* is a poem or other form of writing in which the first letter, syllable, or word of each line, paragraph, or other recurring feature in the text spells out a word or a message.

Example: Elizabeth it is in vain you say

“Love not” – thou sayest it in so sweet a way:

In vain those words from thee or L. E. L.

Zantippe’s talents had enforced so well:

Ah! if that language from thy heart arise,

Breathe it less gently forth — and veil thine eyes.

Endymion, recollect when Luna tried

To cure his love – was cured of all beside –

His folly – pride – and passion – for he died.

Action

Definition: *Action* (also called *action-adventure*) is a genre of film, TV, literature, etc., in which the primary feature is the constant slam-bang of fights, chases, explosions, and clever one-liners. Action stories typically do not explore complex relationships between human beings or the subtleties of psychology and philosophy.

Examples: The “Hunger Games” by Suzanne Collins, “Catching Fire” by Suzanne Collins, “Mockingjay” by Suzanne Collins, “The Da Vinci Code” by Dan Brown, “The Lightning Thief” by Rick Riordan, “Angels & Demons” by Dan Brown, “Divergent” by Veronica Roth, “Stormbreaker” by Anthony Horowitz.

Ad Hominem

Definition: *Ad hominem* is Latin for “against the man” and refers to the *logical fallacy* (error) of arguing that someone is incorrect because they are unattractive, immoral, weird, or any other bad thing you could say about them as a person.

Example: “Woody Allen’s films are terrible because his adopted daughter, Dylan, accused him of abuse”. Allen’s personal life has nothing to do with the merits of his films.

Adage

Definition: *Adage* is a brief piece of wisdom in the form of short, philosophical, and memorable sayings. The adage expresses a well-known and simple truth in a few words.

Examples: Don't judge a book by its cover, Appearances can be deceptive, Strike while the iron is hot.

Adventure novel

Definition:

A novel where exciting events are more important than character development and sometimes theme. Adventure novels are sometimes described as “fiction” rather than “literature” in order to distinguish books designed for mere entertainment rather than thematic importance.

Example: H. Rider Haggard, *King Solomon’s Mines*, Baroness Orczy *The Scarlet Pimpernel*, Alexandre Duma *The Three Musketeers* and *The Count of Monte Cristo*.

Allegory

Definition: *Allegory* is a story within a story. It has a “surface story” and another story hidden underneath. For example, the surface story might be about two neighbors throwing rocks at each other’s homes, but the hidden story would be about war between countries.

Examples: Edmund Spenser, *The Faerie Queene*; William Langland, *Piers Plowman*; C. S. Lewis, *The Chronicles of Narnia*; Nathaniel Hawthorne, *The Scarlet Letter*; Guillaume de Lorris, *Roman de la Rose*.

Alliteration

Definition: In *alliteration*, words that begin with the same sound are placed close together. Although alliteration often involves repetition of letters, most importantly, it is a repetition of sounds. Alliteration can add emphasis, playfulness, or rhythm.

Example: Had *we* but *world* enough, and time,

This *coyness*, lady, were no *crime*.

We would sit down, and think *which way*

To *walk*, and pass our *long love's* day (Andrew Marvell, *To His Coy Mistress*)

Allusion

Definition: *Allusion* is a reference to something (or somebody) else. It's when a writer mentions some other work, or refers to an earlier part of the current work. In literature, it's frequently used to reference cultural works (e.g. by alluding to a Bible or Greek myth).

Examples: I'm Juliet to your Romeo (alludes to William Shakespeare), Sad rom-coms are my kryptonite (alludes to Superman comics and media).

Ambiguity

Definition: *Ambiguity* is an idea or situation that can be understood in more than one way. This extends from ambiguous sentences (which could mean one thing or another) up to ambiguous storylines and ambiguous arguments.

Example: Mercutio is dying from his wound, but he attempts to remain lighthearted. The word "grave" has an ambiguous meaning: Ask for me tomorrow and you shall find me a *grave* man (W. Shakespeare, *Romeo and Juliet*)

Amplification

Definition: *Amplification* involves extending a sentence or phrase in order to further explain, emphasize, or exaggerate certain points of a definition, description, statement or argument.

Example: The tree was magnificent / The large oak tree, spanning five feet across at the trunk and with branches reaching out at least 20 feet, stood magnificent and proud, draped in green leaf jewels and fine threads of Spanish moss.

Anagram

Definition: *Anagram* is a type of word play in which the letters of a word or phrase are rearranged to create new words and phrases.

Example: an anagram of the word “anagram” would be “nag a ram!”

Anadiplosis

Definition: *Anadiplosis* is a repetition of the last word of one clause at the beginning of the following clause to gain a special effect.

Example: "Labour and care are rewarded with success, success produces confidence, confidence relaxes industry, and negligence ruins the reputation which diligence had raised" (Samuel Johnson, *The Rambler No. 21*)

Analogy

Definition: *Analogy* is a literary technique in which two unrelated objects are compared for their shared qualities. Unlike a simile or a metaphor, an analogy is not a figure of speech, though the three are often quite similar. Instead, analogies are strong rhetorical devices used to make rational arguments and support ideas by showing connections and comparisons between dissimilar things.

Example: "O, Captain! My Captain!" draws an analogy between Abraham Lincoln and a captain of a ship. This is a common analogy - a leader of a nation to a captain of a ship (Walt Whitman)

Anaphora

Definition: *Anaphora* is when a certain word or phrase is repeated at the beginning of clauses or sentences that follow each other. This repetition emphasizes the phrase while adding rhythm to the passage, making it more memorable and enjoyable to read.

Example: "It is too rash, too unadvised, too sudden, too like the lightning" (W. Shakespeare, *Romeo and Juliet*)

Anastrophe

Definition: *Anastrophe* is inversion of the normal syntactic order of words.

Examples: "It only stands our lives upon, to use our strongest hands."
(W. Shakespeare, *Antony and Cleopatra*), "Deep into that darkness peering, long I
stood there wondering, fearing" (Edgar Allan Poe, *The Raven*).

Anecdote

Definition: *Anecdote* is a very short story that is significant to the topic at hand;
usually adding personal knowledge or experience to the topic.

Example: When talking to her children about the dangers of running in the house, a
mother includes an anecdote about falling in her own home as a little girl and
breaking her arm.

Antagonist

Definition: *Antagonist* is the opposite of the protagonist, or main character. Typically,
this is a villain of some kind, but not always! It's just the opponent of the main
character, or someone who gets in their way.

Example: In the Harry Potter series, Lord Voldemort is Harry's antagonist, as are, at
various points, Draco Malfoy and Severus Snape.

Anthimeria

Definition: *Anthimeria* (also known as antimeria) is the usage of a word in a new
grammatical form, most often the usage of a noun as a verb.

Example: "Let me not suppose that she dares go about Emma Woodhouse-ing me!"
(Jane Austen, *Emma*)

Anthropomorphism

Definition: *Anthropomorphism* is giving human traits or attributes to animals,
inanimate objects, or other non-human things. It comes from the Greek words
anthropo (human) and *morph* (form).

Examples: Many classic Disney characters are anthropomorphized: Mickey and
Minnie Mouse, Donald and Daisy Duck, Goofy and Pluto.

Anticlimax

Definition: *Anticlimax* is the term used to describe a disappointing turn of events or
"let down" that occurs after tension builds in a text. In a typical plot, action rises until
a climax, the point at which a character must make a decision that changes the course

of action or at which events come to a head and one outcome or another is inevitable. When a story has an anticlimax, the plot has built up, but then something disappointing or "boring" happens.

Example: "He has seen the ravages of war, he has known natural catastrophes, he has been to singles bars" (Woody Allen, *Speech to the Graduates*).

Antimetabole

Definition: *Antimetabole* is a literary and rhetorical device in which a phrase or sentence is repeated, but in reverse order. Writers or speakers use antimetabole for effect-calling attention to the words, or demonstrating that reality is not always what it seems by using the reversal of words.

Examples: "Fair is foul and foul is fair" (W. Shakespeare, *Macbeth*); "Ask not what your country can do for you, but ask what you can do for your country" (John F. Kennedy, *Inaugural Address*); "It is not even the beginning of the end but is perhaps, the end of the beginning" (Winston Churchill).

Antithesis

Definition: *Antithesis* literally means "opposite" – it is usually the opposite of a statement, concept, or idea. In literary analysis, an antithesis is a pair of statements or images in which the one reverses the other. The pair is written with similar grammatical structures to show more contrast.

Examples: "It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness" (Charles Dickens, *A Tale of Two Cities*); "And let my liver rather heat with wine than my heart cool with mortifying groans (W. Shakespeare, *The Merchant of Venice*).

Antonomasia

Definition: *Antonomasia* is a literary term in which a descriptive phrase replaces a person's name. Antonomasia can range from lighthearted nicknames to epic names.

Examples: A lover - "Cassanova"; a smart, scientific person - "Einstein"; a wise person - "Solomon"; Napoleon - "The Little Corporal"; Elvis Presley - "The King of Rock"; Johnny Cash - "The Man in Black".

Aphorism

Definition: *Aphorism* is a short, concise statement of a general truth, insight, or good advice. It's roughly synonymous with "a saying". Aphorisms often use *metaphors* or creative imagery to get their point across.

Examples: A friend in need is a friend indeed; A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush; If you lay down with dogs, you will get up with fleas; A jack of all trades is a master of none; A stitch in time saves nine; Never look a gift horse in the mouth; Don't count your chickens before they hatch.

Aphorismus

Definition: *Aphorismus* is a term in which the speaker questions whether a word is being used correctly to show disagreement. Aphorismus is often written as a rhetorical question such as "How can you call this music?" to show the difference between the usual meaning of a word and how it is being used. So, the point is to call attention to the qualities of the word, suggesting that how it is being used is not a good example of the word.

Example: For you have but mistook me all this while.

I live with bread like you, feel want,

Taste grief, need friends: subjected thus (W. Shakespeare, *Richard II*)

Apologue

Definition: *Apologue* is a short story or fable which usually provides a simple moral lesson. Apologues are often told through the use of animal characters with many symbolical elements.

Examples: "Animal Farm" by George Orwell, "The Jungle Book" by Rudyard Kipling.

Aporia

Definition: *Aporia* in literature, is an expression of insincere doubt. It's when the writer or speaker pretends, briefly, not to know a key piece of information or not to understand a key connection. After raising this doubt, the author will either respond to the doubt, or leave it open in a suggestive or "hinting" manner.

Example: To be, or not to be? That is the question-

Whether 'tis nobler in the mind to suffer
The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune,
Or to take arms against a sea of troubles,
And, by opposing, end them? (W. Shakespeare, *Hamlet*)

Aposiopesis

Definition: *Aposiopesis* is when a sentence is purposefully left incomplete or cut off. It's caused by an inability or unwillingness to continue speaking. This allows the ending to be filled in by the listener's imagination.

Example: Almira Gulch, just because you own half the county doesn't mean that you have the power to run the rest of us. For 23 years I've been dying to tell you what I thought of you! And now – well, being a Christian woman, I can't say it! (Frank Baum, *The Wizard of Oz*)

Appositive

Definition: *Appositives* are noun phrases that follow or precede another noun, and give more information about it.

Example: My sister Anna likes to eat chocolate ice cream; Alex, the tallest boy in our class, is going to hold the flag at graduation; Courtney, the girl wearing the blue sweater, has a letter for you.

Archaism

Definition: *Archaism* is an old word or expression that is no longer used with its original meaning or is only used in specific studies or areas.

Examples: "To thine own self be true" (W. Shakespeare, *Hamlet*); "O, Romeo, Romeo - wherefore art thou Rome?" (W. Shakespeare, *Romeo and Juliet*).

Archetype

Definition: *Archetype* (ARK-uh-type) is an idea, symbol, pattern, or character-type in a story. It's any story element that appears for many times again and again in stories from cultures around the whole world and symbolizes something universal in the human experience.

Examples: The hero (protagonist), The villain (antagonist), The wise old man (mentor or sage), The princess (anima), Allies (friends), Magical animal (guide).

Argument

Definition: *Argument* is a work of persuasion. You use it to convince others to agree with your claim or viewpoint when they have doubts or disagree.

Examples: "It is a truth universally acknowledged, that a single man in possession of a good fortune, must be in want of a wife" (Jane Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*); "Whether I shall turn out to be the hero of my own life, or whether that station will be held by anybody else, these pages must show" (Charles Dickens, *David Copperfield*).

Assonance

Definition: *Assonance* is the repetition of the same or similar vowel sounds within words, phrases, or sentences.

Examples: "And so all the night-tide, I lie down by the side of my darling-my darling-my life and my bride" (repetition of the long *i* sound) (Edgar Allan Poe, *Annabelle Lee*); "Tyger, Tyger burning bright in the forest of the night" (repetition of the long *i* sound) (William Blake, *Tyger*); "A host of golden daffodils" (repetition of the long *o* sound) (William Wordsworth, *Daffodils*).

Asyndeton

Definition: *Asyndeton* is skipping one or more conjunctions (*and, or, but, for, nor, so, yet*) which are usually used in a series of phrases. In literature asyndeton is also known as asyndetism.

Examples: "Are all thy conquests, glories, triumphs, spoils, shrunk to this little measure?" (W. Shakespeare, *Julius Caesar*); "That was the inexhaustible charm that rose and fell in it, the jingle of it, the cymbals' song of it" (F. Scott Fitzgerald, *The Great Gatsby*).

Autobiography

Definition: *Autobiography* is a self-written life story. It is different from a *biography*, which is the life story of a person written by someone else. Some people may have their life story written by another person because they don't believe they can write well, but they are still considered an author because they are providing the information.

Examples: *The Diary of Anne Frank* is considered an autobiography, as it chronicles the events of the Holocaust from the perspective of young Anne, a Jewish girl in hiding with her family; *The Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin* was written by Benjamin Franklin, and chronicles how his hard work led to a prosperous life-the "American Dream."

Autobiographical novel

Definition: *Autobiographical novel* is a novel based on the author's life experience. More common that a thoroughly autobiographical novel is the inclusion of autobiographical elements among other elements. Many novelists include in their books people and events from their own lives, often slightly or even dramatically altered. Nothing beats writing from experience, because remembrance is easier than creation from scratch and all the details fit together.

Examples: "Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man" by James Joyce, "Look Homeward, Angel" by Thomas Wolfe.

B

Ballad

Definition: Historically, *ballads* were story songs passed down orally; thus, they usually cannot be traced to particular authors. Ballads usually offer dramatic, short, and impersonal stories. Literary ballads are narrative poems that are written in a form that imitates traditional ballads.

Examples: a *traditional* ballad: "Get Up and Bar the Door":

<http://www.bartleby.com/40/20.html>

a *literary* ballad: John Keats "La Belle Dame Sans Merci":

<http://www.bartleby.com/126/55.html>

Ballad Stanza

Definition: The ballad stanza, named because it is frequently used in ballads, consists of four lines. The first and third lines have eight syllables (tetrameter); the second and fourth have six (trimeter). Usually, only the second and fourth lines rhyme.

Example:

The Sun came up upon the left,
Out of the sea came he!
And he shone bright, and on the right
Went down into the sea (Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*)

Bathos

Definition: *Bathos* is text that abruptly turns from serious and poetic, to regular and silly.

Example: Richard Nixon talks about a "gift" he received after the election (the insinuation that it was inappropriate): "It was a little cocker spaniel dog in a crate that he'd sent all the way from Texas. Black and white spotted. And our little girl – Tricia, the six-year old – named it Checkers. And you know, the kids, like all kids, love the dog, and I just want to say this right now, that regardless of what they say about it, we're gonna keep it" (Richard M. Nixon, "Checkers Speech," September 23, 1952)

Bildungsroman

Definition: *Bildungsroman* is a novel whose principal subject is the moral, psychological, and intellectual development of a usually youthful main character.

Example: *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* by James Joyce (1916): Tracks a young man named Stephen and his religious and intellectual awakening as he questions the teachings of the Catholic church. As he matures, his new beliefs trigger a rebellion and he exiles himself to Europe.

Biography

Definition: Biography is the story of a person's life, presumed to be factual. An autobiography is a story one writes about one's own life.

Example: *The Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass* is an autobiographical account of slavery.

Blank Verse

Definition: *Blank Verse* is an unrhymed iambic pentameter. Shakespeare's plays are largely blank verse, as are other Renaissance plays. Blank verse was the most popular in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries in England.

Example: "Indeed this counselor

Is now most still, most secret, and most grave,

Who was in life a foolish prating knave" (W. Shakespeare, *Hamlet* Act III, Scene 4).

Buzzword

Definition: *Buzzword* is a word or phrase that has little meaning but becomes popular during a specific time.

Examples: Think outside the box (and other variations, like “step out of the box,” an “out of the box” idea, etc.), Giving back your time, To not know what you don’t know.

C

Cacophony

Definition: *Cacophony* is the use of a combination of words with loud, harsh sounds – in reality as well as literature. In literary studies, this combination of words with rough or unharmonious sounds are used for a noisy or jarring poetic effect. Cacophony is considered the opposite of euphony which is the use of beautiful, melodious-sounding words.

Example: "Beware the Jabberwock, my son!

The jaws that bite, the claws that catch!

Beware the Jubjub bird, and shun

The frumious Bandersnatch!" (Lewis Carroll, *Jabberwocky*)

Caesura

Definition: *Caesura* refers to a break or pause in the middle of a line of verse. It can be marked as || in the middle of the line, although generally it is not marked at all – it’s simply part of the way the reader or singer pronounces the line.

Examples: The lyrics to “The Star-Spangled Banner” contain many caesurae, including the opening line: “Oh, say can you see || by the dawn’s early light...”; Children’s rhymes often have caesurae as well, for example in the rhyme “Song of Sixpence,” which contains the line “Four and twenty blackbirds, || baked in a pie.”

Catharsis

Definition: *Catharsis* refers to the release of emotions of pity or fear at the end of a tragedy. As audience members watch a play and see the misfortunes of the characters, they might feel scared or sorrowful for them, but at the end, these negative emotions are “purged”, tensions are released, and viewers are left calm.

Example: When watching or reading William Shakespeare’s *Romeo and Juliet*, the scene when Romeo believes Juliet to be dead might make us recall our own lost loves and thus to release our emotions.

Characters

Definition: *Characters* play roles in a story’s narrative. Although they can be based on real people, characters are fictional (and sometimes fictionalized) figures created specifically for storytelling. Characters don’t necessarily have to be human. They can be animals, aliens, mythical creatures, inanimate objects, or abstract concepts. In literature characters cause and develop conflict, shape its narrative, and reveal its themes. They also entertain, educate, and in some stories, persuade readers.

Example: Winston Smith, the everyman protagonist in George Orwell’s *1984*; Elphaba, the protagonist in Gregory Maguire’s *Wicked* and the antagonist in L. Frank Baum’s *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*; Jung Dae-hyun, a supporting character and the husband of the protagonist in Cho Nam-joo’s *Kim Ji-Young, Born 1982*; Lindo Jong, one of the eight protagonists in Amy Tan’s *The Joy Luck Club*; Scout Finch, the narrator and protagonist in Harper Lee’s *To Kill a Mockingbird*

Children’s novel

Definition: *Children’s novel* is a novel written for children and discerned by one or more of these: (1) a child character or a character a child can identify with, (2) a theme or themes (often didactic) aimed at children, (3) vocabulary and sentence structure available to a young reader. Many adult novels, such as *Gulliver’s Travels*, are read by children. The test is that the book be interesting to and – at some level – accessible by children.

Examples: Tom Sawyer, *Mark Twain*; L. M. Montgomery, *Anne of Green Gables*; Booth Tarkington, *Penrod and Sam*.

Characterization

Definition: Characterization is the representation of the traits, motives, and psychology of a character in a narrative. Characterization may occur through direct description, in which the character's qualities are described by a narrator, another character, or by the character him or herself. It may also occur indirectly, in which the character's qualities are revealed by his or her actions, thoughts, or dialogue.

Example: They were careless people, Tom and Daisy – they smashed up things and creatures and then retreated back into their money or their vast carelessness, or whatever it was that kept them together, and let other people clean up the mess they had made (F. Scott Fitzgerald, *The Great Gatsby*).

Chiasmus

Definition: *Chiasmus* comes from a Greek word “crossed” and refers to a grammatical structure that inverts a previous phrase. That is, you say one thing, and then you say something very similar, but flipped around.

Example: The city sleeps and the country sleeps,
The living sleep for their time, the dead sleep for their time,
The old husband sleeps by his wife and the young husband sleeps by his wife;
And these end inward to me, and I tend outward to them (Walt Whitman, *Song of Myself*).

Cinquain

Definition: *Cinquain* can refer to two different things. Historically, it referred to *any* stanza of five lines written in any type of verse. More recently, cinquain has come to refer to particular types of five-line poems that have precisely defined features, such as their meter or the number of syllables they contain in each line. The most common of these specific types of cinquains is the American cinquain.

Example: Helen, thy beauty is to me
Like those Nicean barks of yore,
That gently, o’er a perfumed sea,
The weary, way-worn wanderer bore
To his own native shore (Edgar Allan Poe, *To Helen*).

Circumlocution

Definition: *Circumlocution* means “talking around” or “talking in circles”. It’s when you want to discuss something, but don’t want to make any direct reference to it, so you create a way to get around the subject. The key to circumlocution is that the statement has to be unnecessarily long and complicated.

Example: At the flats, the sun conspired with the salt to make a gas of brightness and heat pouring in all directions, its reflected rays bouncing up from the hammered-white ground and burning the backs of my thighs right through my leathers (Rachel Kushner, *The Flamethrowers*).

Cliché

Definition: *Cliché* is a saying, image, or idea which has been used so much that it sounds terribly uncreative. The word “cliche” was originally French for the sound of a printing plate, which prints the same thing over and over.

Examples: W.Shakespeare`s phrases that have become clichés:

Break the ice (*The Taming of the Shrew*), The world's my oyster (*The Merry Wives of Windsor*), What's done is done (*Macbeth*), Kill with kindness (*The Taming of the Shrew*), Heart of gold (*Henry V*).

Climax

Definition: *Climax* is the highest point of tension or drama in a narrative’s plot. Often, climax is also when the main problem of the story is faced and solved by the main character or protagonist.

Example: Beauty is but a vain and doubtful good;

A shining gloss that fadeth suddenly;

A flower that dies when first it gins to bud;

A brittle glass that’s broken presently:

A doubtful good, a gloss, a glass, a flower, Lost, faded, broken, dead within an hour (W. Shakespeare, *The Passionate Pilgrim*).

Coherence

Definition: *Coherence* describes the way anything, such as an argument (or part of an argument) “hangs together”. If something has coherence, its parts are well-connected and all heading in the same direction. Without coherence, a discussion may not make sense or may be difficult for the audience to follow. It’s an extremely important quality of formal writing.

Example: Demonstrating Cause and Effect, Using Logical Reasoning, Avoiding Fallacies and Heuristics, Staying on Topic, Using Clear Language, Using Clear Transitions Between Ideas, Using Relevant Examples, Addressing and Debunking Counterarguments.

Colloquialism

Definition: *Colloquialism* is the use of informal words or phrases in writing or speech. Colloquialisms are usually defined in geographical terms, meaning that they are often defined by their use within a dialect, a regionally-defined variant of a larger language. Colloquialisms can include aphorisms, idioms, profanity, or other words.

Example: The Widow Douglas, she took me for her son, and allowed she would sivilize me; but it was rough living in the house all the time, considering how dismal regular and decent the widow was in all her ways; and so when I couldn’t stand it no longer, I lit out (Mark Twain, *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*).

Comedy

Definition: *Comedy* is a broad genre of film, television, and literature in which the goal is to make an audience laugh. It exists in every culture on earth (though the specifics of comedy can be very different from one culture to another), and has always been an extremely popular genre of storytelling.

Examples: Here is a list of some well-known Shakespearean comedies:

All’s Well That Ends Well, As You Like It, The Comedy of Errors, Love’s Labour’s Lost, Measure for Measure, The Merchant of Venice, The Merry Wives of Windsor, A Midsummer Night’s Dream, Much Ado About Nothing, The Taming of the Shrew, The Tempest, Twelfth Night, The Two Gentlemen of Verona, The Winter’s Tale

Conceit

Definition: A *conceit* is a fanciful metaphor, especially a highly elaborate or extended metaphor in which an unlikely, far-fetched, or strained comparison is made between two things.

Example: Her snowie necke lyke to a marble towre,
And all her body like a pallace fayre,
Ascending uppe with many a stately stayre,
To honors seat and chastities sweet bowre (Edmund Spenser, *Epithalamion*).

Concrete Poem

Definition: *Concrete poems* use typography to make a picture of the subject on the page.

Example: Take a look at George Herbert's *Easter-Wings*:

<http://www.poetryfoundation.org/poem/173626>

Conflict

Definition: *Conflict* is the dramatic struggle between two forces in a story. There are several kinds of conflict common in fiction: human vs. human, human vs. nature, human vs. society, human vs. self.

Example: In *The Hunger Games*, Katniss Everdeen is involved in all of these kinds of conflict. Her battles against the "Careers" are human vs. human. Her struggles to find water and food are human vs. nature. Her struggles to bring down her corrupt government are human vs. society. Her difficulty in deciding whether or not she loves Peeta is human vs. self.

Connotation

Definition: *Connotation* is a common feeling or association that a word has, in addition to its literal meaning (the denotation). Often, a series of words can have the same basic definitions, but completely different connotations – these are the emotions or meanings implied by a word, phrase, or thing.

Example: Both "house" and "home" can mean a structure in which one lives, but they have different connotations. A "house" is just a building; but a "home" is a space filled with warm and fuzzy feelings.

Consonance

Definition: *Consonance* is when the same consonant sound appears repeatedly in a line or sentence, creating a rhythmic effect.

Example: Not at the first sight, nor with a dribbed shot,

Love gave the wound, which, while I breathe, will bleed (Sir Ph. Sidney, *Sonnet 2*).

Conundrum

Definition: *Conundrum* is a difficult problem, one that is impossible or almost impossible to solve. It's an extremely broad term that covers any number of different types of situations, from moral dilemmas to riddles.

Example: Sophocles' *Antigone* is based around the moral dilemma of family loyalty vs loyalty to society at large. In order to honor her deceased brother, she must disobey a direct command from the king, who was her brother's enemy. For Antigone, her loyalty to society (expressed through reverence to the king's command) is not as valuable as her love for her brother.

Couplet

Definition: A *couplet* is a unit of two lines of poetry, especially lines that use the same or similar meter, form a rhyme, or are separated from other lines by a double line break.

Example: In this short Life that only lasts an hour

How much – how little – is within our power

Let me not thirst with this Hock at my Lip,

Nor beg, with domains in my pocket (Emily Dickinson, *Distichs*).

D

Denotation

Definition: *Denotation* is a word's or thing's "dictionary definition", i.e. its literal meaning.

Example: *House* and *Home*.

Denotation: Both words denote a place where people live;

Connotation: A "home" also connotes warmth and love, while a house lacks such a connotation and refers more to the structure of the building than the feeling inside it.

Denouement

Definition: *Denouement* is the very end of a story, the part where all the different plotlines are finally tied up and all remaining questions answered.

Example: At the end of *Romeo and Juliet*, after Romeo and Juliet have killed themselves, there comes a brief *dénouement* in which Montague and the Capulets (Romeo and Juliet's parents) come to see their children's dead bodies. The Friar explains what has happened, and Prince Escalus, in turn, curses the two families, saying that their hate is so terrible that "heaven finds means to kill your joys with love." The prince's remark effectively contextualizes all that has transpired – including the death of the two star-crossed lovers – within a broader, familial narrative, thereby imbuing the story with a sense of cosmic irony. In response to their children's deaths, the two families vow to end their feud and erect a golden statue of the couple. This *dénouement*, though it follows a tragic ending, gives the play a sense of resolution by (1) tying up the loose ends, (2) explaining the plot succinctly, (3) showing how the events of the story impact the lives of those involved, and (4) giving the audience a sense that there is some justice despite the injustice of the main characters' deaths.

Deus ex machina

Definition: *Deus ex machina* is Latin for "a god from the machine". It's when some new character, force, or event suddenly shows up to solve a seemingly hopeless situation. The effect is usually much too abrupt, and it's often disappointing for audiences.

Example: Edgar Allan Poe opens his short story "The Pit and the Pendulum" with an unnamed narrator condemned of committing heresy against the Catholic Church, and then imprisoned and put through terrible psychological and physical torture by shadowy representatives of the Spanish Inquisition. Just as it seems that his death is imminent, though, a French general, who has seized the prison from the Spanish, saves him. This abrupt aid allows the narrator to live and tell the story, so Poe's *deus*

ex machina resolution is a necessary narrative trick. In addition, it has thematic resonance: the protagonist is propelled by reason, not faith, and he ultimately isn't saved by someone from the Church, but rather by an outsider. Thus, the *deus ex machina* in this story – though it evokes divine intervention – suggests that reason, not belief in God or the Church, is man's only true salvation.

Diacope

Definition: *Diacope* is when a writer repeats a word or phrase with one or more words in between.

Example: It was **falling** on every part of the dark central plain, on the treeless hills, **falling softly** upon the Bog of Allen and, farther westward, **softly falling** into the dark mutinous Shannon waves (James Joyce, *The Dead*).

Dialect

Definition: *Dialects* are particular ways of speaking that are associated with groups of people from different regions, races/ethnicities, or social classes. Dialect provides a way for writers to contrast their characters' backgrounds.

Example: Think about the differences between the dialect of Jim, an escaping slave, and Huck, a poorly educated Midwestern boy, in this excerpt from Mark Twain's *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*.

[Jim] says: "I doan' want to go fool'n 'long er no wrack. We's doin' blame' well, en we better let blame' well alone, as de good book says. Like as not dey's a watchman on dat wrack."

Dialogue

Definition: *Dialogue* means "conversation". In the broadest sense, this includes any case of two or more characters speaking to each other directly. But it also has a narrower definition, called the dialogue form. The dialogue form is the use of a sustained dialogue to express an argument or idea.

Example:

BENVOLIO: Good-morrow, cousin.

ROMEO: Is the day so young?

BENVOLIO: But new struck nine.

ROMEO: Ay me! sad hours seem long (W. Shakespeare, *Romeo and Juliet*).

Diction

Definition: *Diction* refers to word choice and phrasing in any written or spoken text. Many authors can be said to have their own “diction”, because they tend to use certain words more than others or phrase things in a unique way.

Example: Both of these sentences convey essentially the same message – *be quiet* – but the differences in diction make them feel and mean differently: *Shut yer trap, will ye?*; *Please resume a respectful silence.*

Doppelgänger

Definition: *Doppelgänger* is a twin or double of some character, usually in the form of an evil twin. They sometimes impersonate a character or cause confusion among the love interests.

Example: The most obvious example of a doppelgänger in literature is Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde in the novella *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* by Robert Louis Stevenson. Dr. Henry Jekyll is a man conflicted with his inner, darker self, and decides through a series of experiments to let that side run free in the form of Edward Hyde, a sinister creature who is barely a man, and fully evil. Eventually, Hyde becomes so strong that Dr. Jekyll is unable to control his transitions, so he poisons himself to prevent Hyde from committing any more murders in the city.

Drama

Definition: *Drama* is a literary genre. It is used in plays and other performances. It portrays the human experiences through performance and uses audience emotions.

Examples: William Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Oscar Wilde's *The Importance of Being Earnest*, William Shakespeare's *Much Ado About Nothing*.

Dramatic Irony

Definition: *Dramatic irony* involves a situation in which the reader knows something that the character does not know. Because of our knowledge, we can recognize that the character’s actions are inappropriate to the circumstances or that he/she expects the opposite of what fate holds in store.

Example: In *Romeo and Juliet*, Romeo believes Juliet to be dead when we know she is not. As a result, he makes a bad decision that we in the audience perceive as ironic.

Dramatic Monologue

Definition: Dramatic monologue is a kind of poem in which the speaker addresses a silent audience imagined to be present.

Example: And indeed there will be time

To wonder, “Do I dare?” and, “Do I dare?”

Time to turn back and descend the stair,

With a bald spot in the middle of my hair

(They will say: “How his hair is growing thin!”)

My morning coat, my collar mounting firmly to the chin,

My necktie rich and modest, but asserted by a simple pin

(They will say: “But how his arms and legs are thin!”)

Do I dare

Disturb the universe? (T.S. Eliot, *The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock*)

Dynamic character

Definition: A *character* which undergoes substantial internal changes as a result of one or more plot developments. The dynamic character's change can be extreme or subtle, as long as his or her development is important to the book's plot or themes.

Example: At the beginning of *To Kill a Mockingbird* the main character, Scout, is a young girl who, like most young kids, is generally self-focused and lacking in empathy, as evidenced by her voyeuristic curiosity in her strange neighbor Boo Radley. By the end of the novel, after seeing the impact of poverty, racism, and other injustices, she has grown and is able to see the world from Boo Radley's point of view.

Dystopian literature

Definition: Dystopian literature is very common and has been around since at least the late 19th century. One of the first dystopian fiction novels is *Erewhon* (1872) by Samuel Butler, an early commentary on the dangers of artificial intelligence.

Examples: *The Iron Heel* (1908) by Jack London, which prophecies the extreme class divides and fascist regimes of the 20th century. Other famous dystopian novels

include: *Brave New World* (1932) by Aldous Huxley, *Fahrenheit 451* (1953) by Ray Bradbury, *Lord of the Flies* (1954) by William Golding, *A Clockwork Orange* (1962) by Anthony Burgess, *V for Vendetta* (1982) by Alan Moore and David Lloyd, *The Handmaid's Tale* (1985) by Margaret Atwood, *The Children of Men* (1992) by P.D. James.

E

Elegy

Definition: An *elegy* is a melancholy contemplative lyric poem written in memory of someone who has died. These poems often end with peace and consolation.

Example: The following oft-quoted stanza is from Alfred Lord Tennyson's "In Memoriam" perhaps the most famous elegy of all time.

I hold it true, whate'er befall;
I feel it, when I sorrow most;
'Tis better to have loved and lost
Than never to have loved at all.

End rhyme

Definition: *End rhyme* refers to rhymes that occur in the final words of lines of poetry.

Example: The ladies men admire, I've **heard**,
Would shudder at a wicked **word** (Dorothy Parker, *Interview*).

End-stopped line

Definition: An *end-stopped line* is a line of poetry in which a sentence or phrase comes to a conclusion at the end of the line. If a line of poetry contains a complete phrase whose meaning doesn't change in light of what follows, it is considered to be end-stopped. However, an end-stopped line is often the end of a longer sentence that stretches across several lines.

Example: Ithaca gave you the marvelous journey.

Without her you wouldn't have set out.

She has nothing left to give you now (C.P. Cavafy, *Ithaka*)

Enjambment

Definition: *Enjambment* is continuing a line after the line breaks. Whereas many poems end lines with the natural pause at the end of a phrase or with punctuation as end-stopped lines, enjambment ends a line in the middle of a phrase, allowing it to continue onto the next line as an enjambed line.

Example: I can hear little clicks inside my dream.

Night drips its silver tap
down the back.

At 4 A.M. I wake. Thinking
of the man who
left in September.

His name was Law (Anne Carson, *The Glass Essay*).

Enthymeme

Definition: *Enthymeme* is a kind of *sylogism*, or logical deduction, in which one of the *premises* is unstated.

Example: All men are mortal
Socrates is a man
Therefore, Socrates is mortal

Epanalepsis

Definition: *Epanalepsis* is a figure of speech in which the beginning of a clause or sentence is repeated at the end of that same clause or sentence, with words intervening.

Example: Do I dare

Disturb the universe?

In a minute there is time

For decisions and revisions which a minute will reverse (T.S. Eliot, *The Lovesong of J. Alfred Prufrock*).

Epic

Definition: *An epic* is a long narrative poem, told in a formal style, which chronicles a heroic journey and events significant to a culture or a nation. Epics often include

superhuman deeds, highly stylized language, and a blending of the lyric and the drama.

Example: Homer's *Odyssey* and *Illiad*

Epigram

Definition: *Epigram* is a short but insightful statement, often in verse form, which communicates a thought in a witty, paradoxical, or funny way.

Example: Sir, I admit your general rule,

That every poet is a fool,

But you yourself may serve to show it,

That every fool is not a poet (Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *Poem*).

Epigraph

Definition: An *epigraph* is a short quotation, phrase, or poem that is placed at the beginning of another piece of writing to encapsulate that work's main themes and to set the tone.

Example: Did I request thee, Maker, from my clay

To mould me Man, did I solicit thee

From darkness to promote me? (the epigraph of Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* is taken from Milton's *Paradise Lost*, and establishes the book's main theme (i.e., the relationship of contempt between creators and their creations).

Epilogue

Definition: *Epilogue* a) A short poem or speech spoken directly to the audience following the conclusion of a play. b) A short addition or concluding section at the end of a literary work, often dealing with the future of its characters. Also called an afterword.

Example: A glooming peace this morning with it brings;

The sun for sorrow will not show his head.

Go hence to have more talk of these sad things,

Some shall be pardoned, and some punished,

For never was a story of more woe

Than this of Juliet, and her Romeo (W. Shakespeare, *Romeo and Juliet*)

Epiphany

Definition: *Epiphany* is an “Aha!” moment. As a literary device, epiphany is the moment when a character is suddenly struck with a life-changing, enlightening revelation or realization which changes his or her perspective for the rest of the story.

Example: "Where is the other twin?" I asked, suddenly stricken. I had forgotten him. In my anxiety for his sister, I had completely forgotten him.... Hours later walking home, my boots crunching on the snow, I bent my head backward to drink in the crystal stars. And clearly, as though the voice came from just behind me, I heard a melody so sweet and pure that I had to hold myself to keep from shattering: I wonder as I wander out under the sky (Katherine Paterson, *Jacob Have I Loved*).

Epistle

Definition: *An epistle* is a letter in verse form. When novels are written in the form of letters, they are written in *epistolary form*.

Example: Elizabeth Bishop’s “Letter to N.Y.”:

<http://writersalmanac.publicradio.org/index/index.php?date=2006/07/22>

Epistrophe

Definition: *Epistrophe* is when a certain phrase or word is repeated at the end of sentences or clauses that follow each other. This repetition creates a rhythm while emphasizing the repeated phrase. Epistrophe is also known as epiphora and antistrophe.

Example: If you had known the virtue of the ring,

Or half her worthiness that gave the ring,

If you did know for whom I gave the ring,

And would conceive for what I gave the ring

And how unwillingly I left the ring

When nought would be accepted but the ring

You would abate the strength of your displeasure (Shakespeare, *The Merchant of Venice*).

Epitaph

Definition: *Epitaph* is a short statement about a deceased person, often carved on his/her tombstone. Epitaphs can be poetic, sometimes written by poets or authors themselves before dying.

Example: And alien tears will fill for him,
Pity's long-broken urn,
For his mourners will be outcast men,
And outcasts always mourn (Oscar Wilde, *The Ballad of Reading Gaol*)

Epithet

Definition: *Epithet* is a glorified nickname. Traditionally, it replaces the name of a person and often describes them in some way.

Example: Did I request thee, Maker, from my clay
To mould me man? Did I solicit thee
From darkness to promote me?
Hail Son of God, Saviour of Men, thy Name
Shall be the copious matter of my Song
Henceforth, and never shall my Harp thy praise
Forget, nor from thy Father's praise disjoin (John Milton, *Paradise Lost*).

Epizeuxis

Definition: *Epizeuxis* is a figure of speech in which a word or phrase is repeated in immediate succession, with no intervening words.

Example: Hamlet responds to a question about what he's reading by saying "Words, words, words" (W. Shakespeare, *Hamlet*).

Eponym

Definition: *Eponym* refers to a person or thing after which something else is named. A person or thing's name can come to be associated with the name of another character, person, product, object, activity, or even a discovery.

Example: The word “panic” is actually derived from the Greek god Pan who was known for sneaking up on herds of sheep and goats to surprise them. Easily scared, they would break into uncontrollable fear, also known as panic.

Equivocation

Definition: *Equivocation* (commonly known as “doublespeak”), is the use of vague language to hide one’s meaning or to avoid committing to a point of view.

Example: In a famous letter to his son, the Roman philosopher Cicero begins by admonishing the young man not to pursue “honor,” i.e. fame and glory. However, in other parts of the letter he uses the same word to refer to honorable behavior, i.e. just and ethical conduct. This equivocation was probably an accident on Cicero’s part, but nonetheless it has led to some confusion among scholars, who have found it difficult to pin down exactly what Cicero’s stance on honor is.

Essay

Definition: *Essay* is a form of writing in paragraph form that uses informal language, although it can be written formally. Essays may be written in first-person point of view (I, ours, mine), but third-person (people, he, she) is preferable in most academic essays.

Example: John Locke’s *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*.

Etymology

Definition: *Etymology* is the investigation of word histories. Every word in every language has a unique origin and history; words can be born in many ways, and often their histories are quite adventurous and informative. Etymology investigates and documents the lives (mainly the origins) of words.

Examples: Avocado (Origin: Nahuatl), Cappuccino (Origin: Italian/German), Disaster (Origin: Italian/Greek), Handicap (Origin: English), Jeans (Origin: Italian), Salary (Origin: Latin), Trivial (Origin: Latin), Whiskey (Origin: Gaelic).

Euphemism

Definition: *Euphemism* is a polite, mild phrase that we substitute for a harsher, blunter way of saying something uncomfortable.

Example: Using “passed away” instead of “died”.

Euphony

Definition: *Euphony* is agreeable sound, especially in the phonetic quality of words

Example: Shall I compare thee to a summer's day?

Thou art more lovely and more temperate.

Rough winds do shake the darling buds of May,

And summer's lease hath all too short a date (W. Shakespeare, *Sonnet 18: Shall I compare thee to a summer's day?*).

Excursus

Definition: *Excursus* is a moment where a text moves away from its main topic – it's roughly similar to “digression”.

Example: Herman Melville was famous for including excursus in his novels. He left in entire chapters about rope, cetology (the study of whales) and other elaborate discussions of topics related to whaling. Readers who are only interested in the action aboard the *Pequod* may be irritated by these digressions, but for other readers they add texture and detail to the world of the novel.

Exemplum

Definition: *Exemplum* is just Latin for “example”. And that's all it is. It's an example, story, or anecdote used to demonstrate a point.

Example: Once there was a boy who lived in a village. He liked to call out “Wolf!” and laugh as the villagers ran around in a panic, only to realize that there was no wolf at all. One day, the boy was playing in the forest, and ran into an actual wolf. He cried “Wolf! Wolf!” but no one believed him anymore. Everyone thought he was lying again, and no one came to save him.

Exposition

Definition: *Exposition* of a story is the first paragraph or paragraphs in which the characters, setting (time and place), and basic information is introduced.

Example: Many plays start with prologues to cue viewers into the setting and characters. A classic example of exposition can be found in Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*. Its prologue gives us background information such as the families

involved, where they are, why there is a problem with Romeo and Juliet's affection for each other, and the result of their feelings. So, *Prologue* is an exposition example.

Extended Metaphor

Definition: *Extended metaphor* is a metaphor that is developed in some detail by being used in more than one phrase, from a sentence or a paragraph, to encompassing an entire work.

Example: *The Wizard of Oz* by L. Frank Baum. This is a story that employs extended metaphors within other extended metaphors. While the greater story can be seen as a commentary on social and political situations during the time it was written, the characters themselves are extended metaphors exploring human characteristics. The Lion seeks courage, the scarecrow seeks a brain, and the tin man seeks a heart.

F

Fable

Definition: *Fable* (pronounced fey-buhl) is a short fictional story that has a moral or teaches a lesson. Fables use humanized animals, objects, or parts of nature as main characters, and are therefore considered to be a sub-genre of fantasy.

Example: Aesop's fables are believed to be the first collected fables:

<http://www.sacred-texts.com/cla/aesop/>

Fairy Tale

Definition: *Fairy tale* is a story, often intended for children, that features fanciful and wondrous characters such as elves, goblins, wizards, and even, but not necessarily, fairies. The term "fairy" tale seems to refer more to the fantastic and magical setting or magical influences within a story, rather than the presence of the character of a fairy within that story.

Example: The three major collections of European fairy tales are Charles Perrault's *Contes de ma mère l'Oye* (better known to readers of English as *The Tales of Mother Goose*), *Kinder und Hausmärchen* (or *Household Tales*) by the brothers Grimm, and Hans Christian Andersen's *Fairy Tales*.

Fantasy

Definition: *Fantasy*, from the Greek *φαντασία* meaning ‘making visible’, is a genre of fiction that concentrates on imaginary elements (the fantastic). This can mean magic, the supernatural, alternate worlds, superheroes, monsters, fairies, magical creatures, mythological heroes – essentially, anything that an author can imagine outside of reality.

Example: Fantasy has a particularly large presence in popular culture, much more so than most other genres. Many now-famous books and films have developed massive fan bases seemingly overnight, from fantasy classics like *The Lord of the Rings* and *The Chronicles of Narnia*, to modern day favorites like the *Harry Potter* series, the *Twilight* saga, and *Percy Jackson and the Olympians*.

Farce

Definition: *Farce* is a comedy in which everything is absolutely absurd. This usually involves some kind of deception or miscommunication. When a comedy is based on a case of mistaken identity, for example, you can be sure that it’s going to be a farce. Slapstick humor and physical comedy are also common features of a farce. Although most farces are comedies, there is such a thing as a “tragic farce.” In a tragic farce, the humor is always very bleak, but still present – it’s a kind of “laugh so you don’t cry” situation.

Example: W. Shakespeare, in his sillier moods, loved a good farce. Many of his comedies are based on mistaken identity and the gradual piling-up of confusion and chaos. In *Comedy of Errors*, for instance, there are two sets of identical twins who frequently get confused for one another. (In fact, this play was so influential that “comedy of errors” is sometimes used as a general term to describe farcical stories).

Figurative Language

Definition: *Figurative language* is language that isn’t meant to be taken literally, at face value.

Example: metaphors, similes, hyperbole.

Figures of Speech

Definition: *Figure of speech* is a word or phrase using figurative language – language that has other meaning than its normal Definition: In other words, figures of speeches rely on implied or suggested meaning, rather than a dictionary Definition:

Example: metaphor, simile, alliteration, metonymy, synecdoche, personification, etc. Figures of speech allow writers to apply familiar ideas and imagery to less familiar concepts, and they are widespread in written and spoken language.

Flashback

Definition: *Flashback* is a device that moves an audience from the present moment in a chronological narrative to a scene in the past.

Example: All the scenes in the *Harry Potter* series in which older people remember what it was like when Voldemort took power the first time are flashbacks.

Foil character

Definition: *Foil* is one that by contrast underscores or enhances the distinctive characteristics of another.

Example: Beowulf and Unferth in *Beowulf* (Beowulf's bravery and heroism are juxtaposed with Unferth's jealousy and cowardice), Sir Gawain and the Green Knight in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* (Sir Gawain's chivalry and honor are contrasted with the Green Knight's supernatural qualities and challenges), Everyman and Fellowship in *Everyman* (In the morality play *Everyman*, Everyman's search for salvation contrasts with Fellowship's abandonment and worldly values).

Folklore

Definition: *Folklore* refers to the tales people tell – folk stories, fairy tales, “tall tales”, and even urban legends. Folklore is typically passed down by word of mouth, rather than being written in books. The key here is that folklore has no author – it just emerges from the culture and is carried forward by constant retelling.

Example: Washington Irving's “Rip Van Winkle,” about a man who sleeps through the American Revolution and parties with Henry Hudson in the Catskills, is based on German folklore.

Foreshadowing

Definition: *Foreshadowing* gives the audience hints or signs about the future. It suggests what is to come through imagery, language, and/or symbolism.

Example: Early in Herman Melville's *Moby-Dick*, a madman/prophet foresees the sinking of the Pequod and warns Ishmael and Queequeg.

Free Verse

Definition: *Free verse* refers to poetry that doesn't conform to patterns of meter, rhyme, and stanza. Since the section breaks in free verse aren't regular, these sections aren't referred to as stanzas – instead, they are called *verse paragraphs*.

Example: Walt Whitman's "Crossing Brooklyn Ferry":

<http://www.bartleby.com/142/86.html>

G

Genre

Definition: *Genre* is a category of literature identified by form, content, and style. Genres allow literary critics and students to classify compositions within the larger canon of literature. May be of different types: poetry, drama, prose, fiction.

Example: *Paradise Lost* by John Milton is an epic poem, *Romeo and Juliet* by William Shakespeare is a drama, *The Year of Magical Thinking* by Joan Didion is an example of prose, *To Kill a Mockingbird* by Harper Lee is a fictional novel with a narrative plot structure, *The Diary of a Young Girl* by Anne Franke is nonfiction, given that it is nothing more than a historical figure's preserved diary.

Graphic Novel

Definition: *Graphic novel* is a book-length story developed in comic-strip format.

Example: Art Spiegelman's *Maus*

H

Haiku

Definition: *Haiku* is a specific type of Japanese poem which has 17 syllables divided into three lines of five syllables, seven syllables, five syllables. Haikus or haiku are typically written on the subject of nature.

Example: Freeway overpass –
Blossoms in graffiti on
Fog-wrapped June mornings (Michael R. Collins).

Hamartia

Definition: *Hamartia* is the tragic flaw or error that reverses a protagonist's fortune from good to bad.

Example: A classic example is from William Shakespeare's *The Tragedy of Othello, the Moor of Venice*. Othello's fatal flaw is his jealousy. Fueled by Iago's lies, Othello flies into a jealous rage and murders his wife. Having discovered that she is in truth innocent, he kills himself as well. Othello claims that he has not meant to cause so much pain, but that he has loved too much, meaning his love has caused his jealousy which has in turn driven him to extremes.

Historical Fiction

Definition: *Historical fiction* is a kind of fiction that reconstructs a particular historical moment imaginatively. The characters might be actually historical figures or they might be imagined characters placed into a real historical moment.

Example: Nathaniel Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter* is an example of historical fiction – though written in the mid-nineteenth century, it is set in colonial Massachusetts.

Homophone

Definition: *Homophone* is when two or more words have the same sound, but different meanings. They may be spelled the same or differently.

Example: *Baring* vs. *bearing*. *Baring* means "to bare," while *bearing* means "to bear."
Bolder vs. *boulder*. *Bolder* is more bold, and *boulder* is more rock.

Horror

Definition: *Horror* is a genre of fiction whose purpose is to create feelings of fear, dread, repulsion, and terror in the audience – in other words, it develops an atmosphere of horror.

Example: Edgar Allan Poe's short story "The Tell Tale Heart" is quintessential piece of the genre and have been inspiring horror authors for decades. William Faulkner's

short story “A Rose for Emily” uses subtle cues and an air of mystery throughout the plotline, without truly revealing Emily’s dark side until the end of the tale.

Hyperbaton

Definition: *Hyperbaton* is a figure of speech in which the typical, natural order of words is changed as certain words are moved out of order.

Example: Sweet, she was; Ever so lost and confused, I felt just then!; He was as he was strange, insane, confusing and complained! Piece of what an interesting fellow I met and said hello.

Hyperbole

Definition: *Hyperbole* is a figure of speech in which an author or speaker purposely and obviously exaggerates to an extreme. It is used for emphasis or as a way of making a description more creative and humorous.

Examples: I’m so hungry I could eat a horse!, That was the best performance I’ve ever seen in my entire life, I’d kill for a glass of Coca-Cola.

I

Iambic Pentameter

Definition: *Iambic pentameter* is a popular meter for poetry in English. Each line consists of 10 syllables, five pairs of an unstressed syllable followed by a stressed syllable.

Example: “But, soft! what light through yonder window breaks?

It is the east, and Juliet is the sun” (William Shakespeare, *Romeo and Juliet*).

Idiom

Definition: *Idiom* is a phrase that conveys a figurative meaning different from the words used. In this sense, idiom is pretty much synonymous with “figure of speech”, though with a slightly narrower definition: an idiom is part of the language.

Example: hitting the road, calling the shots, seeing eye to eye, pulling the wool over one’s eyes, pulling someone’s leg, raining cats and dogs.

Imagery

Definition: *Imagery* is language used to create images in the mind of the reader. Imagery includes figurative and metaphorical language to improve the reader's experience through their senses.

Example: "It was a rimy morning, and very damp. I had seen the damp lying on the outside of my little window, as if some goblin had been crying there all night, and using the window for a pocket-handkerchief. Now, I saw the damp lying on the bare hedges and spare grass, like a coarser sort of spiders' webs; hanging itself from twig to twig and blade to blade. On every rail and gate, wet lay clammy; and the marsh-mist was so thick, that the wooden finger on the post directing people to our village – a direction which they never accepted, for they never came there—was invisible to me until I was quite close under it" (Charles Dickens, *Great Expectations*).

Innuendo

Definition: *Innuendo* is when you say something which is polite and innocent on the surface, but indirectly hints at an insult or rude comment, a dirty joke, or even social or political criticism.

Example: Imagine a friend is dating someone in secret. A possible use of innuendo would be to say: *Mark's been spending a lot of time with Allison, if you know what I mean.* The use of "if you know what I mean" is a common way to signal to people that you are using innuendo. The comment implies Mark has been doing more than simply "spending time" with Allison. In this example, the statement is used to gossip in a way that is socially acceptable.

Intertextuality

Definition: *Intertextuality* is a fact about literary texts – the fact that they are all intimately interconnected. Every text is affected by all the texts that came before it, since those texts influenced the author's thinking and aesthetic choices.

Example: Steven Pressfield's novel *The Legend of Bagger Vance*, which was adapted into a movie starring Will Smith, was originally written as a re-telling of the Hindu epic *Bhagavad Gita* – the name "Bagger Vance" is supposed to sound like "Bhagavad." In the original Hindu epic, the god Krishna discusses the importance of

enlightenment and warrior virtues with Prince Arjuna – the novel/movie transplants this ancient story onto the links of a golf course.

Invective

Definition: *Invective* is the literary device in which one attacks or insults a person or thing through the use of abusive language and tone.

Examples: What, are you chicken?, You're afraid of your own shadow!, You're going to be alone forever with that bravery!, She's not interested in you anyway.

Irony

Definition: Irony uses contradictory statements or situations to reveal a reality different from what seems to be true. Sarcasm is a form of *verbal irony*, when someone says something but really means the opposite. *Dramatic irony* is created by a difference between what a character thinks and what the reader knows is true. *Situational irony* is created by a difference between what is expected to happen and what actually happens due to forces out of our control.

Example: Consider this short story by W. Somerset Maugham:

<http://www.k-state.edu/english/baker/english320/Maugham-AS.htm>

J

Jargon

Definition: *Jargon* is the specific type of language used by a particular group or profession.

Example: This is an excerpt from Robin Cook's medical thriller called *Fever: This man was an involuntarily un-domiciled*. This phrase is an example of unwanted, unnecessary jargon: jargon in the negative sense. Here, "involuntarily undomiciled" is a jargon-addled term which allows someone to avoid saying the less attractive phrase "homeless".

Juxtaposition

Definition: *Juxtaposition* is the placement of two or more things side by side, often in order to bring out their differences.

Example: A waitress is remarkably rude and impatient with a dotting couple. She is extremely kind, though, to a quiet man who is eating alone with a book (John Bruchac, *Prints*).

K

Kairos

Definition: *Kairos* in Ancient Greek meant “time” – but it wasn’t just any time. It was exactly the right time to say or do a particular thing. In modern rhetoric, it refers to making exactly the right statement at exactly the right moment.

Example: George Orwell’s *1984* was published in 1949, around the same time that political theorists were beginning to develop the concept of “totalitarianism.” Orwell’s book explained the horrors of a totalitarian system using a compelling narrative approach that was much more accessible to readers than books of political philosophy. But because the United States and Europe were hovering in between WWII and the Cold War, the issue of totalitarianism was very much in the public eye, making people much more receptive to Orwell’s book.

L

Legend

Definition: A legend is a story that lies somewhere between myth and verifiable fact. Legends are about particular individuals.

Example: Stories about King Arthur, Robin Hood, or Faust

Limerick

Definition: *Limerick* is a five-line poem with a strict rhyme scheme (lines 1, 2, and 5 rhyme together, while lines 3 and 4 rhymes together) and a reasonably strict meter (anapestic triameter for lines 1, 2, and 5; anapestic diameter for lines 3 and 4). Limericks are almost always used for comedy, and it’s usually pretty rude comedy at that – they deal with bodily functions, etc., and could be considered “toilet humor”.

Example: There was an Old Man with a beard,
Who said, ‘It is just as I feared!
Two Owls and a Hen,

Four Larks and a Wren,

Have all built their nests in my beard! (Edward Lear's *A Book of Nonsense*).

Lingo

Definition: *Lingo* is language or vocabulary that is specific to a certain subject, group of people, or region; including slang and jargon. The term lingo is relatively vague – it can mean any type of nonstandard language, and varies between professions, age groups, sexes, nationalities, ethnicities, location, and so on.

Example: In Mark Twain's short story *The Celebrated Jumping Frog of Calaveras County*, Twain adds depth and perspective to his character Simon Wheeler by drawing attention to his language and manner of speech: *Why, it never made no difference to him he would bet on any thing the dangdest feller. Parson Walker's wife laid very sick once, for a good while, and it seemed as if they warn's going to save her; but one morning he come in, and Smiley asked how she was, and he said she was considerable better thank the Lord for his inftnit mercy and coming on so smart that, with the blessing of Providence, she'd get well yet; and Smiley, before he thought, says, "Well, I'll risk two- and-a-half that she don't, any way."* The last sentence is an example of local lingo that must have been common during the time Twain was writing – as readers now, we don't know exactly how much Smiley was willing to bet.

Literary Device

Definition: *Literary device* in literature is any technique used to help the author achieve his or her purpose.

Example: *But soft, what light through yonder window breaks? It is the East, and Juliet is the sun!* (William Shakespeare, *Romeo and Juliet*). This famous line contains a *metaphor* – a literary device where a word is used in a non-literal sense to stand in for something else.

Litotes

Definition: *Litotes* is an understatement in which a positive statement is expressed by negating its opposite.

Example: The classic example of litotes is the phrase “not bad”. By negating the word “bad” you’re saying that something is good, or at least OK.

Lyric Poem

Definition: *Lyric* is a short poem that expresses the emotions and thoughts of one speaker (not to be confused with the poet herself). The dramatic monologue, elegy, haiku, and sonnet are all examples of lyric poetry.

Example: Elizabeth Barrett Browning’s “Sonnet 43”:

<http://www.poets.org/poetsorg/poem/how-do-i-love-thee-sonnet-43>

M

Malapropism

Definition: *Malapropisms* are incorrect words used in place of correct words; these can be unintentional or intentional, but both cases have a comedic effect.

Examples: *He is the very pineapple of politeness!* (example from Mrs. Malaprop, the character in Richard Sheridan’s comedy *The Rivals* who popularized the use of malapropisms. What Mrs. Malaprop means to say is that this man is the *pinnacle*, or greatest example, of *politeness*. She is, as usual, lost in translation. Some more examples: “Supposively” instead of “supposedly”, “For all intensive purposes” instead of “for all intents and purposes”, “Fortuitously” instead of “fortunately”.

Maxim

Definition: *Maxim* is a brief statement that contains a little piece of wisdom or a general rule of behavior.

Example: *Rome wasn’t built in a day.* This famous saying is a good example of a maxim with a metaphor in it. Rome is a metaphor for whatever you might be working on – a career, a relationship, a long-term project, etc. Whatever it is, the idea of “building Rome” reminds you that these things take time.

Metanoia

Definition: *Metanoia* is a self-correction. It’s when a writer or speaker deliberately goes back and modifies a statement that they just made, usually either to strengthen it or soften it in some way.

Example: “*I have my shortcomings, through my own fault and through my failure to observe the admonitions of the gods – and I may almost say, their direct instructions*” (Marcus Aurelius, *Meditations*). In this passage, Marcus Aurelius admits that even he falls short sometimes. This, he says, is because he does not follow the instructions of the gods, even when they are (in his view) plainly stated. This is an example of a “strengthening” metanoia.

Metaphor

Definition: *Metaphor* is a common figure of speech that makes a comparison by directly relating one thing to another unrelated thing (though these things may share some similarities). Unlike similes, metaphors do not use words such as “like” or “as” to make comparisons.

Examples: Her smile is the sun, He’s a black sheep, All the world’s a stage.

Meter

Definition: Meter refers to a rhythmic pattern of stresses in a poem. Meters get their names from the pattern of stresses and from the number of feet, or rhythmic units, in a line. Iambic pentameter is called iambic pentameter because each line contains five (“pent”) iambs (pairs of unstressed and stressed syllables). A foot customarily contains one stressed and one or two unstressed syllables. The process of determining meter is called *scansion*.

Metonymy

Definition: *Metonymy* is a figure of speech that replaces words with related or associated words. A metonym is typically a part of a larger whole, for example, when we say “wheels” we are figuratively referring to a “car” and not literally only the wheels.

Examples: saying “the White House” when we mean the president, or “suits” when we mean businessmen.

Mnemonic

Definition: *Mnemonic*, also known as a memory aid, is a tool that helps you remember an idea or phrase with a pattern of letters, numbers, or relatable

associations. Mnemonic devices include special rhymes and poems, acronyms, images, songs, outlines, and other tools.

Example: *EADGBE* – *Elephants and Donkeys Grow Big Ears*

This mnemonic is useful for remembering the strings of a guitar in proper order from left to right.

Mock Epic

Definition: A *mock epic* is a work of poetry that uses the lofty tone and language we associate with the epic to discuss a trivial subject in order to render the subject ridiculous.

Example: In *The Rape of the Lock*, Alexander Pope writes of a riff between two families resulting from a man cutting off a lock of a woman's hair. Check out the beginning of the poem:

What dire offence from am'rous causes springs,
What mighty contests rise from trivial things,
I sing – This verse to Caryl, Muse! is due:
This, ev'n Belinda may vouchsafe to view:
Slight is the subject, but not so the praise,
If she inspire, and he approve my lays.

Monologue

Definition: *Monologue* is a speech given by a single character in a story.

Example: “You know, I don't think what you are doing is funny. In fact, I think it is sad. You think you're cool because you grew faster than some people, and now you can beat them up? What is cool about hurting people? We are all here pretending that you're a leader, when really, I know that you're nothing but a mean bully! All this time I've been scared to say that, but just now, I realized that I'm not afraid of bullies – so, I won't be afraid of you!” (Mark Twain, *The Celebrated Jumping Frog of Calaveras County*).

Mood

Definition: *Mood* refers to the feeling the readers get from reading a piece, the atmosphere, the vibe. Setting, tone, and diction all contribute to the mood.

Example: Nathaniel Hawthorne in his *The Scarlet Letter* manages in a single paragraph to convey the fact that Puritan New England is a repressive place, but one where hope and beauty surprisingly remain. The description of the door gives the reader a gloomy, hopeless feel, which Hawthorne then reverses with his description of the fragile rose: *“Certain it is, that, some fifteen or twenty years after the settlement of the town, the wooden jail was already marked with weather-stains and other indications of age, which gave a yet darker aspect to its beetle-browed and gloomy front. The rust on the ponderous iron-work of its oaken door looked more antique than any thing else in the new world. Like all that pertains to crime, it seemed never to have known a youthful era. Before this ugly edifice, and between it and the wheel-track of the street, was a grass-plot, much overgrown with burdock, pig-weed, apple-peru, and such unsightly vegetation, which evidently found something congenial in the soil that had so early borne the black flower of civilized society, a prison. But, on one side of the portal, and rooted almost at the threshold, was a wild rose-bush, covered, in this month of June, with its delicate gems, which might be imagined to offer their fragrance and fragile beauty to the prisoner as he went in, and to the condemned criminal as he came forth to his doom, in token that the deep heart of Nature could pity and be kind to him.”*

Moral

Definition: The moral is the lesson to be learned from a literary text.

Example: Aesop’s fables: <http://www.sacred-texts.com/cla/aesop/>

Motif

Definition: *Motif* is a symbolic image or idea that appears frequently in a story. Motifs can be symbols, sounds, actions, ideas, or words.

Example: Margaret Atwood’s dystopian novel *The Handmaid’s Tale* examines life under a totalitarian government as told by a woman who is living enslaved as a handmaid. The theme of freedom is one of the largest: “There is more than one kind of freedom,” said Aunt Lydia. “Freedom to and freedom from. In the days of anarchy, it was freedom to. Now you are being given freedom from. Don’t underrate it.”; A rat in a maze is free to go anywhere, as long as it stays inside the maze; They

seemed to be able to choose. We seemed to be able to choose, then. We were a society dying of too much choice; We were the people who were not in the papers. We lived in the blank white spaces at the edges of print. It gave us more freedom.

Mystery

Definition: *Mystery* is a genre of literature whose stories focus on a mysterious crime, situation or circumstance that needs to be solved.

Example: Edgar Allan Poe's *The Murders in the Rue Morgue* is the first *mystery* story: <http://poestories.com/read/murders>

Myth

Definition: A myth is a story not taken to be factual involving supernatural beings. Myths usually explain how something came into being.

Example: The Ojibwe myth *How the Bear Lost His Tail*:

<http://www.uwosh.edu/coehs/cmagproject/ethnomath/legend/legend5.htm>

N

Narrative

Definition: *Narrative* is a story. The term can be used as a noun or an adjective. As an adjective, it describes the form or style of the story being told. As a noun, narrative refers to the story being told.

Examples: *Goodbye to All That* by Joan Didion, *Self-Reliance* by Ralph Waldo Emerson, *Notes of a Native Son* by James Baldwin, *My Life as an Heiress* by Nora Ephron, *Joy* by Zadie Smith.

Narrative Poem

Definition: A *narrative poem* is a poem that tells a story.

Example: Edgar Allan Poe's *The Raven*: <http://poestories.com/read/raven>

Nemesis

Definition: A *nemesis* (pronounced NEH-meh-siss) is an enemy, often a villain. A character's nemesis isn't just any ordinary enemy, though – the nemesis is the *ultimate* enemy, the arch-foe that overshadows all the others in power or importance. When a character is the nemesis of the hero, that character is the villain. Similarly,

the villain's nemesis is the hero. However, a nemesis isn't necessarily a main character like a hero or villain – they could be a side character who happens to be the nemesis of some other side character.

Example: In *Game of Thrones*, there are dozens of nemesis pairs. One of the most visible is Gregor Clegane (*The Mountain*) vs. Oberyn Martell (*The Red Viper*). The Mountain is a bitter, cruel and glowering loner while Oberyn is a pleasure-loving prince with many friends.

Neologism

Definition: *Neologism* is new word or phrase that is not yet used regularly by most speakers and writers.

Example: Shakespeare's *bedazzled* from *The Taming of the Shrew* (This word Shakespeare invented to describe the gleam of sunlight has come to describe rhinestone-embellished clothing). A recent neologism is "spork," meaning a combined spoon and fork.

Nursery Rhyme

Definition: *Nursery rhymes* have their origins in the oral tradition. They are collections of verses recited or sung by adults to very small children.

Example: *Old Mother Hubbard*.

O

Ode

Definition: *Ode* is a classical poem that has a specific structure and is aimed at an object or person. In the loose definition, an ode is any work of art or literature that expresses high praise.

Example: Friederich Schiller's *Ode to Joy* was a classical ode in praise of happiness itself, an optimistic poem envisioning brotherhood for all mankind. The poem would not have been particularly noteworthy (Schiller himself regarded it as a failure) but for the fact that Beethoven set it to music as part of his 9th Beethoven's triumphant melody has become one of the most recognizable works of classical music in the world.

Onomatopoeia

Definition: *Onomatopoeia* refers to words whose pronunciations imitate the sounds they describe. A dog's bark sounds like "woof", so "woof" is an example of onomatopoeia.

Examples: The explosion erupted with a "boom!"; the horses "clip-clopped" across the street; fall leaves "rustled" in the "whistling".

Oxymoron

Definition: *Oxymoron* is a figure of speech that puts together opposite elements. The combination of these contradicting elements serves to reveal a paradox, confuse, or give the reader a laugh.

Example: In W. Simpson's *Harmony* a woman has a thirty-five year old son who still lives in her attic, playing video games and refusing to get a real job. An oxymoronic name for him is used in this way: *That's my adult child. Poor thing still can't get himself into the real adult world.* An "adult child" literally does not make sense – you cannot have an adult who is also a child. This oxymoron, though, serves to describe an adult who refuses to act like an adult.

P

Palindrome

Definition: *Palindrome* is a type of word play in which a word or phrase spelled forward is the same word or phrase spelled backward. The word palindrome (pronounced 'pa-lən-,drōm) was invented in the early 1600s by the poet and playwright Ben Jonson, using Greek roots *palin* and *dromos* meaning "again" and "direction."

Examples: the protagonist in the novel *Holes* by Louis Sachar has a palindromic name: *Stanley Yelnats*. Perhaps such a name mirrors the whimsical yet strange nature of his story. Some more examples: *stressed becomes desserts*, *reviled becomes deliver*, *stop becomes pots*, etc.

Parable

Definition: *Parable* is a short story used to illustrate a moral or spiritual lesson. It comes from a Greek word meaning “comparison.”

Example: Each Canto (chapter) of Dante’s *Inferno* can be read as a short parable. In each chapter, the poet walks to a new region of Hell and sees a different kind of sinner being punished in a unique and poetically appropriate manner. These tales are intended to help the reader realize the nature of sin and of God’s design as a whole.

Paradox

Definition: *Paradox* is a statement that contradicts itself, or that must be both true and untrue at the same time.

Example: *I must be cruel only to be kind* (Hamlet III.IV.181)

This is a nice literary paradox, but not a logical one. *Cruel* and *kind* are apparent contradictions, but of course it’s perfectly logical to say that one must be cruel (in some minor way) in order to be kind (in some other, more important way). The character Hamlet, however, combines disparate attributes of kindness and cruelty, so his personality is loosely paradoxical.

Parallelism

Definition: *Parallelism*, also known as parallel structure, is when phrases in a sentence have similar or the same grammatical structure.

Example: "Give a man a fish, and you feed him for a day. Teach a man to fish, and you feed him for a lifetime." The grammatical structures of the first and second sentences parallel each other.

Paraphrase

Definition: *Paraphrase* is a restatement or rewording of text in order to borrow, clarify, or expand on information without plagiarizing.

Example: *I was mad when she started spreading rumors, making inappropriate comments, and disrespecting other guests at our dinner.* In this example from the nonfiction novel *Into the Wild* by Jon Krakauer there is a paraphrase, which interestingly rearranges the information provided in the original sentence.

Parody

Definition: A parody is a work that's created by imitating an existing original work in order to make fun of or comment on an aspect of the original. Parodies can target celebrities, politicians, authors, a style or trend, or any other interesting subject. The term parody (pronounced par-uh-dee) is derived from the Greek phrase *parodia* which referred to a type of poem which imitated the style of epic poems but with mockery and light comedy.

Example: *At the talent show, a group of boys wears matching outfits and prances around singing One Direction's "Best Song Ever." They sing very poorly and overly dramatically.* Here, the boys are parodying a popular band by imitating the way they dress, sing, and perform in a comedic way, commenting on the low talent level of many pop stars.

Pastiche

Definition: *Pastiche* is a creative work that imitates another author or genre. It's a way of paying homage, or honor, to great works of the past.

Example: Allen Ginsburg's *Howl* is a pastiche of *Song of Myself* by Walt Whitman. By employing Whitman's poetic form, Ginsburg hoped to speak to his generation in the same way Whitman did to his. Moreover, since *Song of Myself* is widely considered one of the greatest works of American poetry, Ginsburg's pastiche was a way of inserting himself into the great national artistic tradition.

Pathetic Fallacy

Definition: *Pathetic fallacy* is a figure of speech in which the natural world (or some part of it) is treated as though it had human emotions.

Example: I wandered lonely as a cloud

That floats on high o'er vales and hills,

When all at once I saw a crowd,

A host of golden daffodils;

Beside the lake, beneath the trees,

Fluttering and dancing in the breeze (W. Wordsworth, *I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud*).

Wordsworth's famous metaphor is particularly noteworthy since it changes the usual dynamic. There are many clichéd versions of the pathetic fallacy (happy clouds, angry stormclouds, etc.), but the idea of a *lonely* cloud was quite inventive.

Peripeteia

Definition: *Peripeteia* is a sudden change in a story which results in a negative reversal of circumstances. Peripeteia is also known as the turning point, the place in which the tragic protagonist's fortune changes from good to bad.

Example: "A conman has been getting away with huge cons for his entire life, but the police have slowly been getting closer to catching him. At last, he is caught just miles away from his getaway boat". In this example, peripeteia occurs as a change in circumstances.

Persona

Definition: *Persona* refers to the voice of a particular kind of character who is also the narrator within a literary work written from the first-person point of view.

Example: Diedrich Knickerbocker, a (fictional) Dutch historian, is a persona through whom Washington Irving narrates his historical work.

Personification

Definition: *Personification* is a kind of metaphor in which you describe an inanimate object, abstract thing, or non-human animal in human terms.

Example: Loveliest of trees, the cherry now

Is hung with bloom along the bough,

And stands about the woodland ride

Wearing white for Eastertide (A.E. Housman, *Loveliest of Trees*).

Plagiarism

Definition: *Plagiarism* is the act of using someone else's ideas, words, or thoughts as your own, without giving credit to the other person. When you give credit to the original author (by giving the person's name, name of the article, and where it was posted or printed), you are citing the source.

Example: Stephen Ambrose was accused of plagiarism in his book *The Wild Blue: The Men and Boys Who Flew the B-24s over Germany*. It was found that parts of it were very similar to a book by Thomas Childers.

Platitude

Definition: *Platitude* repeats obvious, simple, and easily understood statements that have little meaning or emotional weight. Examples: *We all die someday* (Although this platitude is true, it is not compelling, interesting, or insightful). *Everybody changes* (Sure, this is true, but what does it tell us about life and how to live?).

Pleonasm

Definition: *Pleonasm* is when one uses too many words to express a message. A pleonasm can either be a mistake or a tool for emphasis.

Examples: *I heard it with my own ears* (When one hears something, we can presume it is with one's own ears. The addition of "with my own ears" is a pleonasm), *He sees that you have arrived* (The insertion of the conjunction "that" is optional and considered unnecessary by some), *We're eating fried squid* (Because calamari is by definition fried squid, the adjective "squid" is a pleonasm which can be omitted).

Plot

Definition: The plot is the structure of a story, the arrangement of the story's events. Plot has five parts: *Exposition:* the start of the story, before the action starts; *Rising action:* the actions and conflict that lead to the climax; *Climax:* the turning point; *Falling action:* the events that lead to the resolution; *Resolution/Denouement:* the conclusion of the story. Note that a story (especially a long one) may go through this sequence more than once.

Example: In *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone*, the exposition occurs when the book begins at the Dursleys' house, describing Harry's miserable life before he learns he is a wizard. Hagrid's surprising visit to tell Harry his true past, Harry's acclimation to Hogwarts, and the development of the friendship between Harry, Ron, and Hermione, among other things, comprise the rising action. The climax of the book arrives when the three children go down the trap door to protect the stone and Harry faces off with Voldemort. The falling action includes Harry's recovery from

his encounter and explanations from Dumbledore. Finally, the resolution occurs when Gryffindor wins the house cup and the school year ends.

Poetry

Definition: *Poetry* is a type of literature based on the interplay of words and rhythm. It often employs rhyme and meter (a set of rules governing the number and arrangement of syllables in each line). In poetry, words are strung together to form sounds, images, and ideas that might be too complex or abstract to describe directly.

Example: The Greek poet Homer wrote epic poetry, which deals with gods, heroes, monsters, and other large-scale epic themes. Homer's poems tell stories of Greek heroes like Achilles and Odysseus, and have inspired countless generations of poets, novelists, and philosophers alike: *Of all creatures that breathe and move upon the earth, nothing is bred that is weaker than man* (Homer, *The Odyssey*)

Point of View

Definition: *Point of View* is the attitude or outlook of a narrator or character in a piece of literature, a movie, or another art form. *Objective Point of View:* The narrator tells the story without stating more than can be inferred from the action and dialogue. *Third Person Omniscient Point of View:* The narrator knows everything about the characters and shares their thoughts and feelings with the reader. *Third Person Limited Point of View:* The narrator can only see into the mind of a single character. *First Person Point of View:* The story is told by a character within it.

Example: Shirley Jackson's "The Lottery" is told in the objective POV. The Brothers Grimms' "Hansel and Gretel" is told in the third person omniscient POV; the narrator knows what both siblings and their parents are thinking. Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* is told in the third person limited POV; we're only in Elizabeth Bennet's head. F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby* is told in the first person POV; Nick Carraway, the narrator, is also a character in the story.

Polyptoton

Definition: *Polyptoton* is the repetition of a root word in a variety of ways, such as the words "enjoy" and "enjoyable". Polyptoton is a unique form of wordplay that provides the sentence with repetition in sound and rhythm.

Example: *To be ignorant of one's ignorance is the malady of the ignorant.*

In this quote from A. Bronson Alcott, the malady, or sickness, of ignorant people is that they do not realize they are ignorant due to, of course, their own ignorance! In this example, polyptoton is used to emphasize how ignorance prolongs ignorance.

Portmanteau

Definition: *Portmanteau* is a word formed by merging the sounds and meanings of two different words, as chortle, from chuckle and snort.

Examples: “Ah, yes, the portmanteau call, as you say in England” (*Murder on the Orient Express* by Agatha Christie), Yep, her name is a portmanteau word, which means it's made up of two different words (*Booked* by Kwame Alexander), He wore a new hat now, and a new broadcloth coat, so they knew what the portmanteau had contained (*Absalom, Absalom!* by William Faulkner), No one answered; but a form emerged from the closet; it took the light, held it aloft, and surveyed the garments pendent from the portmanteau (*Jane Eyre* by Charlotte Brontë).

Prologue

Definition: *Prologue* is a short introductory section that gives background information or sets the stage for the story to come.

Example: Two households, both alike in dignity,

In fair Verona, where we lay our scene,

From ancient grudge break to new mutiny,

Where civil blood makes civil hands unclean (William Shakespeare, *Romeo and Juliet*).

Prose

Definition: *Prose* is just non-verse writing. Pretty much anything other than poetry counts as prose.

Example: Although Shakespeare was a poet, his plays are primarily written in prose. He loved to play around with the difference between prose and verse, and if you look closely you can see the purpose behind it: the “regular people” in his plays usually speak in prose – their words are “prosaic” and therefore don't need to be elevated.

Protagonist

Definition: *Protagonist* is just another word for “main character”. The story circles around this character’s experiences, and the audience is invited to see the world from his or her perspective.

Example: Bilbo Baggins from *The Hobbit* is a good example of a supporting protagonist. The major events surround Thorin Oakenshield, the exiled Dwarf King, trying to reclaim his kingdom. But Bilbo, a simple member of Thorin’s company, is the main character in the narrative as told by Tolkien and Peter Jackson.

Proverb

Definition: *Proverb* is a short saying or piece of folk wisdom that emerges from the general culture rather than being written by a single, individual author.

Example: R.R. Tolkien was extremely adept at inventing proverbs for his made-up cultures in the *Lord of the Rings* series. The wizard Gandalf, for example, repeats a proverb that “not all those who wander are lost” – a phrase that has become extremely popular among Lord of the Rings fans.

Pun

Definition: *Pun* is a joke based on the interplay of *homophones* – words with the same pronunciation but different meanings.

Example: Oscar Wilde was also famous for his love of puns. One of his most famous plays is called *The Importance of Being Earnest*, and much of the comedy surrounds several characters all pretending to be someone named *Ernest*. Of course, in pretending to be *Ernest* they are not being *earnest*.

Q

Quest

Definition: *Quest* is a journey that someone takes in order to achieve a goal or complete an important task. Accordingly, the term comes from the Medieval Latin *questa*, meaning “search” or “inquiry.”

Example: One of literature’s best-loved quests can be found in J.R.R. Tolkien’s *Lord of the Rings* series, which tells the tale of Frodo Baggins and his quest to destroy the

Ring of Power. Unlike many quests, Frodo is no hero or warrior when he begins his journey, but this makes him special. Despite being a simple Hobbit and against all odds, he sets on a quest to Mount Doom in the dark lands of Mordor. His goal is to destroy the Ring, the only way to end evil and the Dark Lord Sauron's reign in Middle Earth.

R

Rebus

Definition: *Rebus* is a code or reference where pictures, letters, or symbols represent certain words or phrases.

Example: Perhaps the simplest and most common rebus in use today is “IOU” for “I owe you”.

Red Herring

Definition: *Red herring* is a misleading clue. It's a trick used by storytellers to keep the reader guessing about what's really going on.

Example: Red herrings are all over the place in the *Harry Potter In The Prisoner of Azkaban*. The plot initially surrounds the threat posed by Sirius Black, who has escaped from Azkaban and is coming to kill Harry. Everything about him, right down to his name, makes him appear to be a villain. It turns out, though, that Sirius Black is not coming after Harry at all – he is actually trying to get into Hogwarts so that he could protect Harry from Peter Pettigrew, who has been hiding in plain sight all along.

Repetition

Definition: Quite simply, *repetition* is the repeating of a word or phrase. It is a common rhetorical device used to add emphasis and stress in writing and speech.

Example: “The big stairs led up to a big house with a big front door. Breathe, breathe, breathe, I told myself. I only have to stay for one second, be afraid for one second, not scream for one second. I can do it. I can win the bet. I can prove I'm brave” (Charles Dickens, *A Tale of Two Cities*).

Resolution

Definition: *Resolution*, also known as the denouement, is the conclusion of the story's plot structure where any unanswered questions are answered, or "loose ends are tied".

Example: "Bobby was upset about his poor grades. He asked his mom for a tutor. After working with a tutor for about a month, he took a major math test. He aced the test! Thanks to hard work and studying, Bobby was becoming a star student". In this example, the resolution is that Bobby has begun to become a great student thanks to positive decisions.

Rhetoric

Definition: *Rhetoric* is the ancient art of persuasion, in the broadest sense. It is the way you present and make your views convincing or attractive to your audience.

Example: People sometimes use the word "rhetoric" in a negative light. They might say that a politician is "all rhetoric and no substance," meaning the politician makes good speeches but doesn't have good ideas. To use an example, John C. Calhoun was an extremely talented *rhetorician* who used his skills to argue in defense of slavery!

Rhetorical Device

Definition: *Rhetorical device* is any way of using language that helps an author or speaker achieve a particular purpose. Usually, the purpose is *persuasion*, since rhetoric is typically defined as the art of persuasion.

Rhetorical Question

Definition: *Rhetorical question* is a question that is not asked in order to receive an answer, but rather just to make a point.

Example: Why would anyone do such a thing? How much longer will we allow such injustices to exist? Are you kidding me?

Rhyme

Definition: *Rhyme* is the repetition of identical or similar last syllables in different words. Rhyme is usually a matter of sound, not spelling, so "prey" and "ray" rhyme, while "enough" and "bough" do not. Rhyme usually occurs at the end of lines of poetry, but not always. You can label a poem's rhyme scheme by placing the same lowercase letter next to each rhyming word.

Example: Some say the world will end in fire, (a)

Some say in ice. (b)

From what I've tasted of desire (a)

I hold with those who favor fire. (a)

But if it had to perish twice, (b)

I think I know enough of hate (c)

To say that for destruction ice (b)

Is And would suffice. (b)

So, the rhyme scheme of this poem is abaabcbcb (Robert Frost, *Fire and Ice*).

Rhythm

Definition: *Rhythm* is used to refer to the repetition of stressed and unstressed sounds in a poem. Prose also can have rhythm – reading aloud will help you to hear it.

Romance

Definition: *Romance* is a narrative genre in literature that involves a mysterious, adventurous, or spiritual a story line where the focus is on a quest that involves bravery and strong values, not a love interest. However, modern definitions of romance also include stories that have a relationship issue as the main focus.

Example: A modern romance would include: - The story of a character who keeps meeting the wrong type of people in his or her relationships or has run into a problem with a current love relationship. - The story would focus on the struggles the character faces. The whole focus would be the relationship, although the character may also be dealing with other struggles, such as losing a job, handling difficult parents, etc. These stories may be funny, sad, tragic, serious, or a mix.

S

Sarcasm

Definition: *Sarcasm* is a form of verbal irony that mocks, ridicules, or expresses contempt. You're saying the opposite of what you mean (verbal irony) and doing it in a particularly hostile tone.

Example: “*Oh yes, you've been sooooo helpful. Thanks sooooo much for all your heeeelp*”. Imagine someone saying this to a customer service agent, drawing out the

syllables and maybe rolling their eyes. You'd know pretty quickly that they meant the opposite of what they were saying. That verbal irony plus the mocking or derisive tone makes it sarcasm.

Satire

Definition: *Satire* is the use of humor, irony, exaggeration, or ridicule to expose and criticize people's stupidity or vices. It's an extremely broad category.

Example: Mark Twain's *Huckleberry Finn* is filled with satire. For example, when Huck decides he's willing to go to hell to protect Jim the slave from being reenslaved, we realize how corrupt Huck's culture is: Huck thinks helping another man achieve freedom is going to stop him from achieving salvation, when we know he is actually far more moral than the world in which he lives.

Science Fiction

Definition: *Science fiction* is a genre of fiction concerned with scientific experiment, technological development, and the future. Science fiction defies our received understandings of how science works.

Example: H.G. Wells, *The War of the Worlds*

Self-Fulfilling Prophecy

Definition: *Self-fulfilling prophecy* is a prediction that somehow causes itself to come true. The characters may try to prevent their fate, but in the end their actions simply cause that fate to come about.

Example: Self-fulfilling prophecies are common in Greek tragedy. The story of Oedipus is one especially famous example. In this story, Oedipus's parents are told that the young boy will grow up to kill his father and marry his mother. Horrified, the parents leave their child by the roadside to die. But Oedipus becomes a powerful hero.

Setting

Definition: *Setting* is the time and place (or when and where) of the story. It may also include the environment of the story, which can be made up of the physical location, climate, weather, or social and cultural surroundings.

Example: Charles Dickens' *A Tale of Two Cities* takes place in London and Paris during the turbulent days of the French Revolution.

Simile

Definition: *Simile* is a literary term where you use “like” or “as” to compare two different things, implying that they have some quality in common.

Example: Robert Burns' *A Red, Red Rose* contains multiple examples:

http://www.poetsgraves.co.uk/Classic%20Poems/Burns/a_red,_red_rose.htm

Soliloquy

Definition: *Soliloquy* is a kind of *monologue*, or an extended speech by one character. In a soliloquy, though, the speech is not given to another character, and there is no one around to hear it.

Example: In the graphic novel *Watchmen*, Dr. Manhattan delivers a chapter-length soliloquy on his decision to leave Earth for the solitude of Mars. Of course, there is no one around to hear him speak, but nonetheless he narrates his thoughts out loud, reflecting on his memories of Earth and the demands being placed on him by petty, warmongering earthlings.

Sonnet

Definition: *Sonnet* is a poem containing 14 lines, usually written in iambic pentameter. There are two main kinds, the Italian sonnet and the English sonnet, which differ mainly due to their rhyme schemes. The Italian sonnet is divided in an octave, a set of 8 lines that rhymes *abbaabba*, and a sestet, a set of 6 lines with no set rhyme scheme. The English sonnet is a kind of sonnet Shakespeare wrote. English sonnets are made up of three quatrains (groups of 4 lines) and a couplet (a pair of rhyming lines). The rhyme scheme for the English sonnet is *abab cdcd efef gg*.

Example: William Shakespeare's *Sonnet 18*:

<http://www.poets.org/poetsorg/poem/shall-i-compare-thee-summer's-day-sonnet-18>

Spoonerism

Definition: *Spoonerism* is transposition of sounds of two or more words, especially a ludicrous one.

Examples: "Is it kisstomary to cuss the bride?" (Is it customary to kiss the bride?), "The Lord is a shoving leopard" (The Lord is a loving shepherd), "A blushing crow" (A crushing blow), "A well-boiled icicle" (A well-oiled bicycle), "Is the bean dizzy?" (Is the Dean busy?), "Someone is occupewing my pie. Please sew me to another sheet" (Someone is occupying my pew. Please show me to another seat), "Let me sew you to your sheet" (Let me show you to your seat).

Stage Directions

Definition: Stage directions are a playwright's descriptive or interpretive comments that provide readers (and actors) with information about the dialogue, setting, and action of a play. Dialogue in a play is clearly marked by character; everything not marked by character is a stage direction.

Example: In *Peter Pan*, J.M. Barrie elevates the stage direction to an art form.

Stanza

Definition: In poetry, a *stanza* is a dividing and organizing technique which places a group of lines in a poem together, separated from other groups of lines by line spacing or indentation. There are many important pieces that together make up a writer's style; like tone, word choice, grammar, language, descriptive technique, and so on.

Example: It was many and many a year ago,
In a kingdom by the sea,
That a maiden there lived whom you may know
By the name of Annabel Lee;
And this maiden she lived with no other thought
Than to love and be loved by me.
I was a child and *she* was a child,
In this kingdom by the sea,
But we loved with a love that was more than love
I and my Annabel Lee
With a love that the wingèd seraphs of Heaven
Coveted her and me (Edgar Allan Poe, *Annabel Lee*).

Stream of Consciousness novel

Definition: The stream-of-consciousness novel commonly uses the narrative techniques of interior monologue. Uses Stream of Consciousness technique that presents the thoughts and feelings of a character as they occur.

Examples: James Joyce's *Ulysses* (1922), a complex evocation of the inner states of the characters Leopold and Molly Bloom and Stephen Dedalus; *Leutnant Gustl* (1901) by Arthur Schnitzler, an early use of stream of consciousness to re-create the atmosphere of pre-World War I Vienna; Virginia Woolf's *The Waves* (1931), a complex novel in which six characters recount their lives from childhood to old age.

Subtext

Definition: *Subtext* is the unspoken or less obvious meaning or message in a literary composition, drama, speech, or conversation.

Example: “*She smiled when she heard someone else had won, but knowing what she was thinking, the smile was a façade which covered her true disappointment at having lost the election*”. The subtext is the reality that what is below the surface – disappointment – does not match the surface – happiness and congratulations.

Surrealism

Definition: *Surrealism* is a literary and artistic movement in which the goal is to create something bizarre and disjointed, but still somehow understandable.

Example: M.C. Escher's art is “realistic” in a sense – it employs perspective, and contains physical objects. But it is ultimately irrational. For example, his famous lithograph *Relativity* shows a twisting knot of staircases going in all different directions. At first glance, it is a three-dimensional, fairly realistic drawing of staircases. But if you try to follow the staircases individually, you become hopelessly lost. The appearance of rationality turns out to be an illusion.

Symbol

Definition: *Symbol* is any image or thing that stands for something else. It could be as simple as a letter, which is a symbol for a given sound (or set of sounds).

Example: In Greek mythology, the Gods are all symbols for forces of nature – for example, Poseidon is a symbol for the sea. He is extremely powerful, but also

wrathful and unpredictable. By telling stories of Poseidon's vengeful fury, the Greeks (who were not great shipbuilders) symbolically delivered a message about how dangerous the sea can be.

Symbolism

Definition: *Symbolism* means imbuing a person, object, or event with meaning beyond the literal. Symbols can be shared across texts (a *red rose* as a symbol for *love*) or significant only in context (the *scarlet A* in *The Scarlet Letter*).

Example: The title of Elie Wiesel's *Night* alerts us to the fact that throughout the text, night will be used a symbol for the metaphorical darkness of the Holocaust.

Synecdoche

Definition: *Synecdoche* is figure of speech which allows a part of something to stand for a whole, or the whole to stand for a part.

Example: *A boy has been admitted to the hospital. The nurse says, "He's in good hands".* The boy is not literally being taken care of by two hands. Rather, he is being taken care of by an entire hospital system, including nurses, assistants, doctors, and many others. This is an example of microcosmic synecdoche, as a part signifies a whole.

Synesthesia

Definition: *Synesthesia* is a description of one kind of sense impression by using words that normally describe another.

Example: The following sentences provide several examples of synesthesia:

The bright field of wildflowers smelled like purple, magenta, yellow, white and green.

The stars sounded like piles of diamonds.

The scent of smoke burned my skin.

The blueberry tasted round in my mouth, the same flavor as a circle.

Synonym

Definition: *Synonym* is a word that has the same or nearly the same meaning as another word. When words or phrases have the same meaning, we say that they are synonymous of each other.

Examples: Bad: *awful, terrible, horrible*; Good: *fine, excellent, great*; Hot: *burning, fiery, boiling*; Cold: *chilly, freezing, frosty*; Easy: *simple, effortless, straightforward*; Hard: *difficult, challenging, tough*; Big: *large, huge, giant*; Small: *tiny, little, mini*.

Synopsis

Definition: *Synopsis* is a brief summary that gives audiences an idea of what a composition is about. It provides an overview of the storyline or main points and other defining factors of the work, which may include style, genre, persons or characters of note, setting, and so on.

Example: *Jack and Jill* is the story of a boy and a girl who went up a hill together. They went to fetch a pail of water, but unfortunately, their plan is disrupted when Jack falls and hits his head, and rolls back down the hill. Then, Jill falls too, and comes tumbling down after Jack. As you can see, the synopsis outlines what happens in the story. It introduces the main characters and the main plot points without being overly detailed or wordy.

T

Tall Tale

Definition: A *tall tale* is a greatly exaggerated story, usually about a hero with larger-than-life abilities. Tall tales are a kind of folklore.

Example: Mark Twain, *The Celebrated Jumping Frog of Calaveras County*.

Tautology

Definition: *Tautology* is defining or explaining something by saying exactly the same thing again in different words.

Example: *In my opinion, they're the best – better than all the other ones.*

This is simply the definition of 'best'; it doesn't add anything.

Theme

Definition: *Theme* is the central idea, topic, or point of a story, essay, or narrative.

Example: The subject of Nathaniel Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter* is the consequences faced by a woman who commits adultery with a minister in Puritan

New England. The theme, however, is that our social rules and judgments cause us to misunderstand others, mistaking saints for sinners and sinners for saints.

Thriller

Definition: *Thriller* is a genre of literature, film, and television whose primary feature is that it induces strong feelings of excitement, anxiety, tension, suspense, fear, and other similar emotions in its readers or viewers – in other words, media that *thrills* the audience.

Example: *The Housemaid* by Freida McFadden: A young woman starts working as a housemaid, but there is something deeply wrong with her new employer. She needs to discover why before she becomes a victim; *A Good Girl's Guide to Murder* by Holly Jackson: Pippa decides to study a 5-year-old shut case about a murder because the police reports don't add up; *The Girl on the Train* by Paula Hawkins: Every day, Rachel sees a perfect couple from the train on her daily commute. Then one day she sees something she shouldn't have and decides to investigate.

Thesis

Definition: *Thesis* is the main argument or point of view of an essay, nonfiction piece or narrative – not just the topic of the writing, but the main claim that the author is making about that topic.

Example: In “*The Mending Wall*” Robert Frost uses imagery, metaphor, and dialogue to argue against the use of fences between neighbors. In this example, the thesis introduces the main subject (Frost's poem *The Mending Wall*), aspects of the subject which will be examined (imagery, metaphor, and dialogue) and the writer's argument (fences should not be used).

Tone

Definition: *Tone* refers to the “feel” of a piece of writing. It's any or all of the stylistic qualities of the writing, such as formality, dialect, and atmosphere.

Example: sad, embittered, neutral, playful, nostalgic, satirical.

Tragedy

Definition: *Tragedy* is a drama or literary work in which the main character is brought to ruin or suffers extreme sorrow, especially as a consequence of a tragic flaw, moral weakness, or inability to cope with unfavorable circumstances.

Example: Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* is a classic tragedy, with themes are taken from Shakespeare and the Bible. A prosperous man's rash actions accidentally cause the death of another man in the village. After being accused of manslaughter, Okonkwo is abandoned by his friends and ultimately dies alone.

Trope

Definition: *Trope* can refer to any type of figure of speech, theme, image, character, or plot element that is used many times. Any kind of literary device or any specific example can be a trope.

Example: The trope of atonement or redemption is such a common trope that it *might* even be an archetype. In atonement stories, a character has done something wrong and must redeem his/her character or regain the trust of former allies. Often this is done through death, for example when Boromir makes up for trying to steal the Ring from Frodo (*Fellowship of the Ring*).

U

Understatement

Definition: *Understatement* is when a writer presents a situation or thing as if it is less important or serious than it is in reality.

Example: Holden Caulfield states the following in J.D. Salinger's *The Catcher in the Rye*: "I have to have this operation. It isn't very serious. I have this tiny little tumor on the brain".

Unreliable Narrator

Definition: An *unreliable narrator* is a narrator who can't be trusted due to his/her ignorance, bias, age, or mental instability. Unreliable narrators only appear in texts told in the first person.

Example: Scout Finch, who narrates Harper Lee's *To Kill a Mockingbird*, is an unreliable narrator because she is only 6 years old. Since she is so young, many aspects of Tom Robinson's case fall outside her life experience and understanding.

Utopia

Definition: *Utopia* is a paradise. A perfect society in which everything works and everyone is happy – or at least is supposed to be.

Example: In *The Republic*, Plato describes his perfect society. However, it may seem far from perfect – for example, Plato's society outlawed music! In fact, scholars still debate whether Plato really meant it to be a true utopia or whether he meant it as a criticism of utopian ideals, like most such stories.

V

Verse

Definition: *Verse* is a single metrical line in a poetic composition; one line of poetry; metrical or rhymed composition as distinct from prose; poetry.

Example: *Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening* by Robert Frost is an excellent example of verse. It narrates the account of a man standing deep in the woods torn between two choices. It follows a rhyme scheme of AABA BBCB CCDD DDDD and is divided into quatrains, or sets of four lines:

Whose woods these are I think I know.

His house is in the village though;

He will not see me stopping here

To watch his woods fill up with snow.

Verisimilitude

Definition: *Verisimilitude* simply means 'the quality of resembling reality' and a work of art, or any part of a work of art, has verisimilitude if it seems believably realistic. A verisimilitudinous story has details, subjects, and characters that seem similar or true to real life.

Example: "The sky is dark and cloudy at the beginning of a story. By the end of the day in the story, it has begun to rain". This is a simple yet important example of

verisimilitude: if you are writing a story and mention storm clouds, a storm must follow. Even the smallest details are of the utmost importance when it comes to creating a believably realistic story.

Villain

Definition: *Villain* is the bad guy, the one who comes up with diabolical plots to somehow cause harm or ruin. It is one of the archetype characters in many stories.

Example: A popular book series that has been turned into movies, “The Hunger Games” by Suzanne Collins, features a tyrant villain. President Snow, a ruthless dictator, keeps the people in line by forcing them to compete in grisly and deadly games that are televised to ensure the citizens stay in line. This leader believes that he is doing what’s best for the people by keeping a tight rein of control.

W

Wit

Definition: *Wit* is a biting or insightful kind of humor. It includes sharp comebacks, clever banter, and dry, one-line jokes. It is often cynical or insulting, which is what provides it with its characteristic sharpness.

Example: Ambrose Bierce wrote a book, *The Devil’s Dictionary*, that compiles all sorts of witty definitions. For example, the book defines “Congratulation” as “the civility of envy”.

Z

Zeugma

Definition: *Zeugma* is when you use a word in a sentence once, while conveying two different meanings at the same time.

Example: *He carried a strobe light and the responsibility for the lives of his men* (Tim O’Brien, “The Things They Carried”). In Tim O’Brien’s collection of stories, the word “carry” is often used in multiple senses – in addition to the items in their backpacks, the soldiers in these stories also figuratively “carry” abstract items such as fear, responsibility, and duty. The zeugma in this sentence is a tiny example of a concept that runs through the whole book.

BEST DICTIONARIES OF LITERARY TERMS

The following dictionaries provide definitions of terms that are used in the study of literature. Their explanations of literary techniques and the conventions of specific literary genres can help greatly in understanding how authors use and adapt them in their writings. Go through the list below and get the ones of your choice. (I suggest getting more than one (or all if you want) if you are serious about your studies).

1. A Contemporary Guide to Literary Terms: With Strategies for Writing Essays About Literature (Barton, Edwin; Hudson, Glenda, 2003)

Provides concise definitions for a wide range of literary terms. Entries discuss how the original meaning of the term has evolved. Examples seek to clarify the meaning and use of the terms in practical criticism. Many of the entries include cross-references to other entries. The second section of the book, "Strategies for Writing Essays About Literature", includes three annotated student essays. The authors provide background information on the challenges the students faced in writing each of the essays. Includes an Index of Authors and Works and an Index of Terms.

2. A Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Theory (Cuddon, J. A., 1998; ebook version, 2013)

Alphabetically arranged, this title provides definitions of technical terms, genres, forms, literary movements, motifs, themes, styles, and character types. In addition to a definition, many entries include the origin of the word, examples or illustrative passages. Good cross-references. Cuddon is the most international and inclusive of single-volume dictionaries of literary terms.

3. A Dictionary of Literary and Thematic Terms (Edward Quinn, 2000).

This content-rich, precise, and advanced dictionary of literary and thematic terms by Edward Quinn will widen the horizon of understanding of any student who already knows general terms and their definitions. For example, you will seldom find details

for cony-catcher, counterfactual fiction, determinism, and four levels of meaning (along with many others) in other dictionaries of literary terms. If you can spend a little more, this book will be helpful in many ways!

4. A Glossary of Contemporary Literary Theory (Jeremy Hawthorn, 2000)

Provides definitions of terms related to literary theory. Cross-references are used throughout. In the "Using the Glossary" section, *Schools and approaches* lists the major approaches for literary criticism and provides a list of terms associated with each approach. The section *Other useful glossaries and dictionaries* includes recommendations of other sources by the author. Includes a bibliography of books, book chapters, and articles.

5. A Glossary of Literary Terms (Abrams, M. H., 2005)

One of the most widely used dictionaries of literary terminology. Entries are in essay format going beyond simple definitions. Defines and discusses terms, critical theories and movements, and points of view commonly used in the analysis and interpretation of literary works. Especially useful for undergraduates. For clarity, concision and elegance Abrams has few peers and no superiors; plain spoken but not simplistic, his essays on critical methods are the best short treatments in the business.

6. A Glossary of Literary Terms (Joe Wilbur, 2009).

A popular book among English literature students, it helps to understand the most important literary terms. This Glossary should be the first on anyone's reading list who wants to start an adventure (in English literature). The descriptions of literary terms are simple and, therefore, easy to understand.

7. Essential Literary Terms: A Brief Norton Guide with Exercises (Sharon Hamilton, 2006)

This edition of literary terms is the most up-to-date guide to critical and theoretical concepts available to students of literature at all levels. Entries cover such topics as

genre, form, cultural theory and literary technique. Includes cross-references and suggestions for further reading. Supplemented by exercises.

8. Handbook of Literary Terms: Literature, Language, Theory (Kennedy, J. X., 2005)

Provides an alphabetical listing of 400 entries covering a wide array of literary terms and concepts with concise definitions and pronunciation guides. Examples are used to illustrate and explain the concepts. Cross-references are provided. All of the major schools of literary theory are included.

9. Life-Writing: A Glossary of Terms in Biography, Autobiography, and Related Forms. 2nd ed. (Albert Winslow, 1995)

Alphabetically arranged, this title provides a listing of terms used in biography, autobiography and related forms of writing. The definitions are succinct and include illustrative references to life-writers and their subjects as well as cross-references.

10. Literary Devices: Definitions and Examples of Literary Terms (www.literarydevices.net)

The edition presents literary devices and terms, which refer to the typical structures used by writers in their works to convey his or her messages in a simple manner to the readers. Effortlessly find words thanks to a clear, functional, and easy-to-use interface. Helps readers to appreciate, interpret and analyze a literary work. Also includes a list of literary devices with detailed definition and examples.

11. Key Terms in Literary Theory (Mary Klages, 2014).

This book is a must-have for those who want to master literary theory and criticism. No, it will not discuss any literary theory in detail! It'd rather discuss key terms that theorists, academicians, and scholars use while explaining complex ideas, discreet concepts, and perplexing discourse literary theorists propose. Words (and phrases) like hypertext, diachronic, logocentrism, monologia and many others feature in this

book by Mary Klages. If you want to understand major literary theories, you should go through this dictionary during your studies for the best help!

12. Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms. 3rd ed. (Chris Baldick, 2000)

Provides clear, concise, definitions for over 1,200 literary terms from abjection to zeugma. Coverage includes new terms from modern critical and theoretical movements, such as feminism, and schools of American poetry, Spanish verse forms, life writing, and crime fiction. It includes extensive coverage of traditional drama, versification, rhetoric, and literary history. An essential reference tool for students of literature in any language.

13. The Oxford Quick Reference (Chris Baldick, 2015)

It is an essential reference tool for students of literature in any language. It includes extensive coverage of traditional drama, versification, rhetoric, and literary history, as well as updated and extended advice on recommended further reading and a pronunciation guide to more than 200 terms. Completely revised and updated, this edition also features brand-new entries on terms such as distant reading, graphic novels, middle generation, and misery memoir. Many new bibliographies have been added to entries and recommended web links are available via a companion website.

14. Search Tools (a twenty-first century version of Roger Fowler's 1973 *Dictionary of Modern Critical Terms*).

It is the most up-to-date guide to critical and theoretical concepts available to students of literature at all levels. With over forty newly commissioned entries, this essential reference book includes:

- an exhaustive range of entries, covering such topics as genre, form, cultural theory and literary technique
- new definitions of contemporary critical issues such as *Cybercriticism* and *Globalization*

- complete coverage of traditional and radical approaches to the study and production of literature
- thorough accounts of critical terminology and analyses of key academic debates
- full cross-referencing throughout and suggestions for further reading.

15. Short Dictionary of Literary Terms (Richard Wilde, 2004).

Provides clear and concise definitions of the most troublesome literary terms from abjection to zeugma. It offers readers increased coverage of new terms from modern critical and theoretical movements, such as feminism, and schools of British and American poetry, verse forms, life writing, etc.

16. The Bedford Glossary of Critical and Literary Terms (Murfin, Ross & S. M. Ray, 2006)

This best-selling dictionary includes extensive coverage of traditional drama, versification, rhetoric, and literary history. New to this glossary are recommended entry-level web links. Boasting over 1000 entries, it is an essential reference tool for students of literature in the English language.

17. The Guide to Literary Theory & Criticism (Michael Groden, 2004)

The Guide consists of 241 alphabetically arranged entries on individual critics and theorists, critical and theoretical schools and movements, and critical and theoretical innovations of specific countries and historical periods. Each entry includes a selective primary and secondary bibliography and there are extensive cross references both within and at the conclusion of each entry. It includes an Index of Names, an Index of Topics, and a list of Contributors and the title(s) of their entries.

18. The Longman Dictionary of Literary Terms: Vocabulary for the Informed Reader (Dana Gioia, 2005)

In this dictionary there are terms, their definitions, and very little jargon unless it becomes necessary. Simple terms have shorter definitions with appropriate examples.

Complex terms, concepts or theories, a school of authors or anything that requires explanation have detailed descriptions, timelines and notes. In short, this is a non-nonsense dictionary containing important literary terms with appropriate definitions.

19. The Penguin Dictionary of Literary Theory (Cuddon, J. A., 2000)

The Penguin's dictionary is the most advanced, detailed and versatile. It covers almost everything – literary terms, theories, concepts and ideas. Voluminous and comprehensive, it makes the lives of literature students comfortable.

20. The Routledge Dictionary of Literary Terms (Peter Childs, 2005)

Covering both long-established terminology as well as the specialist vocabulary of modern theoretical schools, it is an indispensable guide to the principal concepts encountered in debates over literary studies in the twenty-first century. It helps students learn the meanings of literary terms convincingly.

SOURCES THAT COVER SPECIFIC ASPECTS OF LITERATURE

(for those who have read any dictionary of literary terms before)

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<https://quizlet.com/85847280/literary-terms-flash-cards/>
11. *Western Wind: An Introduction to Poetry*, by John Frederick Nims and David Mason / St. Martins LitGloss, <http://bcs.bedfordstmartins.com/litgloss/>

Електронне довідкове видання

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Ірина Сирко

GLOSSARY OF ESSENTIAL LITERARY TERMS

ГЛОСАРІЙ ОСНОВНИХ ЛІТЕРАТУРОЗНАВЧИХ ТЕРМІНІВ

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