



THE LITTLE AP ENGLISH LITERATURE HandBOOK  
OF FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE,  
literary terms, and other stuff

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**Student Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Period:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Mr. Williams' AP English Literature Class**

Think Deeper! Think Deeper! Think Deeper!

Miami Jackson Senior High  
Miami Northwestern Senior High  
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**Alliteration:**

The repetition of beginning consonant sound of words.  
**The chocolate chip cookie was crunchy.**

**Allegory:**

An extended metaphor using objects, characters, and events to represent larger meanings; A narrative or description having a second meaning beneath the surface one. The interaction of characters, things, events is meant to reveal an abstraction or a truth. These characters, etc. may be symbolic of the ideas referred to.

**Ad Hominem Argument:**

This is an argument that appeals to emotion rather than reason – feeling rather than intellect.

**Allusion:**

A reference to well-known person, place, thing, or event that the writer assumes the reader will be familiar with.  
**She swoops in to help with Herculean strength.**

**Apostrophe:**

A digression in the form of an address to someone not present, or to a personified object or idea.  
**“O Death, where is thy sting?”**

**Assonance:**

The repetition of the vowel sounds within words.  
**I fly high when I dream of my lover.**

**Archetype:**

A theme, motif, symbol, or stock character that holds a familiar and fixed place in a culture’s consciousness. Most stories follow archetypical formats, in regards to characters, settings, ideas, etc.  
**In literature, resurrected characters literally or from the past are archetypes of Jesus Christ in the Western culture.**

**Ambiguity:**

Expression of an idea in words that may be interpreted in more than one way.

**Amplification:**

Figure of speech using restatement for emphasis.  
**Why, Why does this always happen to me?**

**Analogy:**

Comparison of apparently largely dissimilar objects to reveal similarities. See Metaphor.  
**Pets are like plants. If you give them lots of care and attention, they grow strong and healthy. If you neglect them, they become weak and sickly.**

**Anecdote:**

A brief story used to illustrate or make a point.

**Aphorism:**

This is a terse statement of known authorship which is an expression of insight and wisdom.

**Avant-Garde:**

Innovative style that challenges traditional and established forms.

**Anachronism:**

This is placing something in a time when it was not in existence.  
**The watch Merlyn wore in The Once and Future King.**

**Anaphora:**

Repetition of a word, phrase, or clause at the beginning of two or more sentences in a row. This device is a deliberate form of repetition and helps make the writer’s point more coherent.

**Angst:**

A term used in existential criticism to describe both the individual and the collective anxiety-neurosis of the period following the Second World War. Popular in works by Jean Paul Satre and Albert Camus.

**Antithesis:**

A balancing of two opposite or contrasting words, phrases, or clauses

**Argumentation:**

One of the 4 chief forms of discourse. The others being narration, exposition, and description. Its purpose is to convince by establishing the truth or falsity of a proposition.

**Aside:**

A dramatic convention by which an actor directly addresses the audience but it is not supposed to be heard by the other actors on the stage.

**Asyndeton:**

A series of words separated by commas (with no conjunction), e.g. **“I came, I saw, I conquered.”** The parts of the sentence are emphasized equally; in addition, the use of commas with no intervening conjunction speeds up the flow of the sentence.

**Aposiopesis:**

The breaking-off of speech, usually because of rising emotion or excitement.  
**“Touch me one more time, and I swear—”**

**Analysis:**

The methodical examination of the parts in order to determine the nature of the whole. Looking at the whys and now whats, rather than just the whats.

**Antecedent Action:**

Events that precede the starting point of the piece of literature.

**Bildungsroman:**

Novel narrating story of a young person's coming of age and development.

**Balance:**

Construction in which both halves of the sentence are of about the same length and importance, sometimes to emphasize contrast.

**Bucolic:**

Pertaining to descriptions of an idyllic, rural lifestyle.

**Ballad:**

A poem that tells a story, often meant to be performed out loud, often with a refrain.

**Blank Verse:**

A poem written in unrhymed verse; unrhymed iambic pentameter.

**Bombast:**

Inflated or extravagant expression.

**The boy is definitely the worst behaved child in the world.**

**Black Comedy:**

Disturbing or absurd material presented in a humorous manner, usually with the intention to confront uncomfortable truths.

**Burlesque:**

A humorous imitation of a serious work of literature. The humor usually arises from the incongruity between the imitation and the work being imitated.

**Coda:**

Concluding or summary part of a literary work.

**Conceit:**

An elaborate parallel between two seemingly dissimilar objects or ideas. Somewhat like a metaphor.

**Crisis:**

In the plot of a novel or play, the point at which the hero must either win or lose; the **decisive moment** of the conflict.

*Also, crisis scene*

**Character:**

A person, animal, or any thing with a personality that appears in a story. Types are:

**Protagonist:** main character. If he/she is admirable, then he/she becomes **hero/heroine**. If the main character challenges our views of what is admirable, then he/she becomes the **antihero/anti-heroine**.

**Antagonist:** the primary character or entity that acts to frustrate the goals of the protagonist. The antagonist is

typically a character but may also be a nonhuman force like nature.

**Stock Character:** a common character type that recurs throughout literature. Notable examples include the witty servant, the scheming villain, the femme fatale, the trusty sidekick, the old miser, and so on. A stock character that holds a central place in the culture's folklore or consciousness may be called an **archetype**.

**Foil:** A character who illuminates the qualities of another character by means of contrast.

**Round Character:** a character drawn with sufficient complexity to be able to surprise the reader without losing credibility. Also dynamic.

**Static/Flat:** These characters change little if at all.

**Catharsis:**

Process by which an unhealthy emotional state produced by an imbalance of feelings is corrected and emotional health is restored.

**Chiasmus:**

Arrangement of repeated thoughts in the pattern of X Y Y X. Chiasmus is often short and summarizes a main idea.

**"Ask not what your country can do for you; ask what you can do for your country."**

**Caesura:**

A break in poetic rhythm and structure. It usually ushers in the turn or shift in the work.

**Comedy of Manners:**

Deals with the relations and intrigues of gentlemen and ladies living in a polished and sophisticated society; it evokes laughter mainly at the violations of social conventions and decorum and relies on the wit and humor of the discourse for its effect.

**Cliché:**

Timeworn and commonplace expression; trite description.

**My love has been tried and true.**

**Colloquialism:**

Informal usage of words or phrases – not formal language.

**The cd was banging or Fiel; I think it's his greatest one yet.**

**Consonance:**

The repetition of consonant sounds anywhere within words, not just at the beginning.

**The sailor sings of ropes and things in ships upon the stormy seas.**

**Comic Relief:**

The inclusion of a humorous character or scene to contrast with the tragic elements of a work, therefore intensifying the next tragic event.

**Connotation:**

Interpretive level of a word based on its associated images rather than its literal meaning. Implications. **See Denotation.**

**Canto:**

Subdivisions or smaller parts (chapters) of the whole work.

**Courtly Love:**

Stylized code of conduct between lovers, esp. as depicted in Medieval literature.

**Cacophony:**

Harsh, dissonant sounds in recited poetry. It is deliberately used by the poet to bring reader's attention to the content (syn. Dissonance); (**Ant. Euphony**)

**Caricature:**

A description or characterization that exaggerates or distorts a character's prominent features, usually to elicit mockery.

**Carpe Diem Poetry:**

"Seize the day" an admonition that means more "pluck, as a ripe fruit or flower." It is a common theme of 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> century English Love poetry: yield to love while you are still young and beautiful.

**Catalog:**

A rhetorical device which lists people, things, or attributes, used in epics (heroes, ships, armor), the Bible (genealogy), and Elizabethan sonnets (the physical attributes of the beloved).

**Common Meter:**

Alternating lines of iambic tetrameter and iambic trimeter, in four-line stanzas typically rhyming *abab* or *abcb*. Also called **hymn meter** and **ballad meter**.

**Complaint:**

A lyric poem of lament, regret, and sadness which may explain the speaker's mood, describe its cause, discuss remedies, and appeal for help. The blues is a musical counterpart to the literary form.

**Context:**

The matter that surrounds the word or text in question, lending it significance, even irony. An accurate analysis of a word or portion of text depends upon a full understanding of the overall context.

**Continuous Form:**

Poetry not divided into stanzas.

**Cadence:**

The rhythm of phrases or sentences created through repetitive elements. (See Syntax)

**Denotation:**

Literal or dictionary meaning of a word.

**See Connotation.**

**Deus ex Machina:**

Anyone or thing that appears at the end of a play and untangles, resolves, or reveals keys to the plot.

**Dénouement:**

This is the final unfolding of the plot; resolution or outcome of the work.

**Dystopic Literature:**

Genre of fiction that presents an imagined future society that purports to be perfect and utopian, but the author presents to the reader as horrifyingly inhuman. Usually the author intends to warn contemporary readers that their own society resembles, or is in danger of resembling this flawed future world.

**Diction:**

The author's choice of words and expressions. It can represent the educational, social, and emotional state of the characters or narrator. Patterns of diction can be predominantly formal, informal, or neutral; positive or negative in connotation; euphonious or cacophonous in sound; concrete or abstract; specific or general; mono- or polysyllabic.

**Dialect:**

Speech within the same language with marked social or regional differences.

**Double Rhyme:**

Rhyming stressed syllables followed by identical unstressed syllables. If both syllables are identical, it is sometimes called compound rhyme. This pattern was once called "feminine rhyme", an allusion to its being weaker than full or perfect rhyme (masculine rhyme). Too much double rhyme in a serious poem can have an inadvertent comic effect.

**Diatribes:**

Bitter argument, accusation, or harangue.

**Didactic:**

The primary aim of these works is to teach or instruct, esp. the teaching of moral or ethical principles.

**Dialogue:**

Discourse or conversation between characters.

**Doggerel:**

Unimportant or bad poetry; it is considered of little literary value.

**Euphony:**

The pleasant, mellifluous presentation of sounds in a literary work.

**Epistle/Epistolary:**

Letter, esp. formal or elegant one.  
Works in the form of possessing letters.

**Epilogue:**

Appended summary to the end of a literary piece.

**Elegy:**

Song, poem, or speech lamenting one who is dead.

**Elision:**

The omission of a part of a word to make pronunciation easier or to achieve a rhythmic effect. For example, e'er for ever, there's for there is.

**Epithet:**

An adjective or phrase that describes a prominent feature of a person or thing. **Richard 'the Lionheart'.** Characterizing word or phrase used with or in place of name, usually a disparaging abusive term.  
**The old, blind mongoose of a man didn't know how to treat people.**

**Epigram:**

A terse, witty poem, often paradoxical saying with a clever twist at the end or a concise and witty statement.

**Erotica:**

Literary work devoted to sexual themes.

**End Rhyme:**

Rhymes that occur at the end of lines of poetry.  
**I was angry with my friend,  
I told my wrath, my wrath did end.**

**Eye Dialect:**

Use of misspellings to convey character's poor education or humorous dialect pronunciations.

**Euphemism:**

Less offensive, more agreeable words and expressions that substitute other more harsh words.  
**The slow-witted girl stood speechless in front of the class.**

**Epic:**

Literary work recounting deeds of legendary hero; this work usually deals with an important theme.

**Ennui:**

A persistent feeling of tiredness or weariness which often afflicts existential man, often manifesting as boredom.

**Enthymeme:**

A syllogism in which one of the premises—often the major theme—is unstated, but meant to be understood.

**"Children should be seen and not heard. Shut up John."**

**Enjambment/Enjambed:**

A sentence or clause runs into the next line without a break. This creates a sense of suspense or excitement and gives added emphasis to the word at the end of the line.

**End-Stopped Line:**

A line of poetry that ends when the grammatical unit ends. Its opposite is enjambment.

**Emphasis:**

The weighting and development of particular elements by means of climactic order, placement, repetition, accumulation of detail, or contrast, emphasis indicates the relative importance of such elements to the text.

**Emblem:**

A concrete object that represents something abstract.  
**The star of David is always emblematic of Judaism.**

**Envoy/Envoi:**

A conventionalized stanza at the close of a poem, which is addressed to a prince or a patron, usually having four lines rhyming *abab*, and sometimes repeating the refrain line of the poem. **The envoy may provide a summary or simply serve to dispatch the poem.**

**Epiphany:**

A realization by a fictional character about the essential nature of being or an event. A sudden perception, an intuitive flash of recognition.

**Explication:**

The close analysis of the meanings, relationships, and ambiguities of words, images, and other small units of a literary work.

**Electra Complex:**

Sigmund Freud's theory that a female child feels unconscious jealousy toward her mother and lust for her father. Opposite: **Oedipus Complex.**

**Eponym:**

A person, real or mythical, who is so commonly associated with a certain characteristic that his or her name becomes a figure of speech for that attribute. **For example,** "He is an Adonis" means that a man is handsome. "Ok, she's a Beyonce!" means a female can sing and dance well.

**Episodic:**

Appearing in episodes, a long string of short, individual scenes, stories, or sections, rather than focusing on the sustained development of a single plot.

**Flashback:**

Technique in which a writer interrupts a story to go back and explain an earlier event.

**Foil:**

A character whose traits are the exact opposite of another.

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**Flat Character:**

A character constructed around a single idea or quality; a flat character is immediately recognizable.

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**Fable:**

A short prose or narrative verse that illustrates a lesson or moral, which often is stated explicitly at the end. Frequently, Fables utilize animals as the major characteristics embodying them with human traits.

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**Feminine Rhyme:**

A rhyme consisting of a stressed syllable followed by an unstressed syllable, as in the rhyme between "mother" and "brother."

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**Freight-Train:**

Sentences consisting of three or more very short independent clauses joined by conjunctions.

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**Free Verse:**

Unrhymed poetry with lines of varying lengths and containing no specific metrical pattern.

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**Foreshadowing:**

Hints or clues that a writer uses to suggest what will happen next in the story.

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**Frame Story:**

A narrative that is a framework for another story or stories. The frame usually explains or sets up the interior story; often the narrative returns to the frame situation to provide closure at the end. *See subplots.*

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**Form:**

The organization or pattern of the elementary parts of a work of literature in relation to the total effect. Verse form refers to the rhythmic units; stanza form refers to groups of lines. Open form refers to free-verse poems that do not follow a conventional pattern, but nonetheless have organic forms.

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**Foot:**

See meter.

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**Gothic:**

Fiction with emphasis on horror and macabre, mysterious, or violent events, often in desolate, remote settings.

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**Grounds:**

The aspects of the vehicle that apply to the tenor of a metaphor. *See vehicle and tenor.*

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**Genre:**

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French word, depicting a type of literary form; classifications. E.g. tragedy, comedy, novel, essay, poetry, etc.

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**Hubris:**

Overwhelming pride or insolence that results in the misfortune of the protagonist of a tragedy. It is the particular form of tragic flaw that results from excessive pride, ambition, or overconfidence. Also called *hybris*.

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**High Comedy:**

Comedy that employs subtle characterizations and witty language, often to satirize upper class lifestyles.

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**Homily:**

Literary device found in writings that tend to involve moral or spiritual advice.

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**Hyperbole:**

Conscious exaggeration used to heighten effect.

**"And fired the shot heard around the world."**

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**Humor:**

A mode of comedy that is sympathetic and tolerant toward human nature, exposing the ridiculous, ludicrous, and comical in human affairs. Its cousin, wit, is intellectual, and tends to be satirical and less tolerant. *See Comedy and Wit.*

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**Haiku:**

A compact form of Japanese poetry written in three lines of five, seven, and five syllables, respectively.

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**Invective:**

Emotional violent, verbal denunciation or attack using strong, abusive language.

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**Irony:**

An implied discrepancy between what happens and what was intended or expected to happen. Verbal, situational, and dramatic are the different types.

**Verbal:** when an author says one thing and means something else.

**Situational:** discrepancy between the expected results and the actual results.

**Dramatic:** when an audience perceives what a character in literature does not.

\* **The portly man, called Slim by his friends, made it to the party.**

\* **The trash can stood in the midst of the swarming garbage.**

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**Idiom:**

Words used in a special way that may be different from their actual meaning. They are usually universally popular expressions also known as *adages*.

**Speak up! Cat's got your tongue?**

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**Imagery:**

The use of words to represent things, actions, or ideas by sensory details and descriptions. These sensory details describe, arouse emotions, and create atmosphere.

Sometimes these images are symbolic. Visually stimulating language and devices.

### **Inversion:**

Variation of the normal word order (subject first, then verb, then compliment) which puts a modifier or the verb as first in the sentence. The element that appears first is emphasized more than the subject.

### **In Medias Res:**

Latin for: "In the middle of things." This term refers to refers to the technique of starting a narrative in the middle of the action.

### **Internal Rhyme:**

A rhyme between two or more words within a single line of verse.

**"And all is seared with trade; bleared, smeared with toil."**

### **Invocation:**

A prayer for inspiration to a god or muse, usually placed in the beginning of an epic.

### **Intertextuality:**

The various relationships a text may have with other texts, through allusions, borrowing of formal or thematic elements, or simply by reference to traditional literary form. It is argued that texts relate primarily to one another and not to an external reality.

### **Incongruity:**

The linking of two incompatible things. Such a lack of correspondence may be humorous.

### **Idyll:**

A lyric poem or passage that describes a kind of ideal life or place.

### **Jeremiad:**

A prolonged lamentation or complaint.

### **Juxtaposition:**

Putting two words, ideas, or graphics together to create a new, often ironic meaning.

**Oh, the joys of winter blizzards!**

### **Juvenilia:**

Writings produced in an author's youth.

### **Litotes:**

Opposite of hyperbole; litotes intensifies an idea understatement by stating through the opposite.

**"It wasn't my best day." *versus***

**"It was my worst day."**

### **Leitmotif:**

Prevailing recurring theme or idea in a work.

### **Legend:**

A story about a heroic figure, derived from oral tradition and is based partially on facts and fiction. Usually stories are from historical events.

**King Arthur, Robin Hood, Paul Bunyan.**

### **Lyric:**

A short poetic composition that describes the thoughts of a single speaker. Most modern poetry is lyrical, employing such common forms of the ode and sonnet. It is often melodic and euphonious, and creates a single, unified impression. Sonnets, odes, elegies, and countless nonce forms are lyrics, the most frequent used poetic expression.

### **Lampoon:**

Harsh satire directed against an individual.

### **Low Comedy:**

Often farcical comedy of action with simple characters, burlesque, and horseplay.

### **Local Color:**

Use of details that are common in a certain place. **A story that takes place on a seacoast would probably contain details about the water and life of people near it.**

### **Line Length:**

The terms for different line lengths use a numerical prefix (one – eight) and "meter," or measure: monometer, dimeter, trimeter, tetrameter, pentameter, hexameter, heptameter, and octameter.

### **Literal Language:**

The factual sort of discourse that is without embellishment, though not necessarily flat; the opposite of figurative.

### **Literary Present Tense:**

By convention, the present tense is used when writing about imaginative literature, except when discussing antecedent action.

### **Light Verse:**

A type of poetry, usually short and humorous, which comes in many different varieties, including parody, epigrams, and limericks.

### **Limerick:**

A fanciful five-line poem with an AABBA rhyme scheme in which the first, second, and fifth lines have three feet and the third and fourth have two feet.

### **Metonymy:**

The name of a subject is substituted by a name closely related to it.

Calling the head of a committee a **CHAIR**, the king the **CROWN**, a newspaper the **PRESS**, or the old people the **GRAY HAIRS**.

### **Masculine Rhyme:**

A rhyme consisting of a single stressed syllable, as in the rhyme between "car" and "far."

### **Mood:**

An atmosphere created by a writer's word choice (diction) and the details selected. Syntax is also a determiner of mood because sentence strength, length, and complexity affect pacing.

### **Moral:**

The lesson drawn from a fictional or nonfictional story. A heavily didactic story.

### **Metaphor:**

A comparison of two things without using like or as, and the things are usually unrelated. They may be in one sentence or may be the entire work.

**Thievery is the disease that eats at the heart of society.**

Types of metaphors are:

**Dead:** So overused that its original impact has been lost.

**Extended:** one developed at length and involves several points of comparison.

**Mixed:** 2 metaphors that produce a contradictory or confused image.

The actual subject may be called the **tenor**, and the thing with which it is identified may be called the **vehicle**. The **grounds** are the aspects of the vehicle that apply to the tenor.

### **Meiosis:**

Intentional understatement, as, for example, in Romeo and Juliet, when Mercutio is mortally wounded and says it is only a "scratch." Opposite of *Hyperbole*.

### **Myth:**

A story about the origins of a culture's beliefs and practices, or of supernatural phenomena, usually derived from oral tradition and set in an imagined supernatural past. Possess both fictional characters and events.

### **Monologue:**

Long speech given by one individual; dramatic soliloquy. It usually gives insight to the individual situation or thoughts.

Types are:

**Dramatic:** The occurrence of a single speaker saying something to a silent audience. A dramatic monologue is used to reveal both the situation at hand and the character him/herself.

**Interior:** A record of a character's thoughts, unmediated by a narrator. Interior monologue sometimes takes the form of stream-of-consciousness narration, but is not as structured and logical as stream-of-consciousness.

### **Mimesis:**

Imitation or mimicry of another's style or language.

### **Motivation:**

The combination of a character's moral nature and the circumstances he or she is in. The reasons, justifications, or explanations for a character's actions.

### **Malapropism:**

A humorous misuse of language that results from substituting an incorrect word for one with similar sound.

### **Meter:**

The repeated pattern of stressed and unstressed syllables in a line of poetry. Of the four common meters in English, two are duple (two syllables in a foot) and two are triple (three syllables in a foot). Each kind of foot may be either rising (accented syllable at the end) or falling (accented syllable at the beginning). **The Greek names for the meters are iambic for duple rising, trochaic for duple falling, anapestic for triple rising, and dactylic for triple falling. The meter is a predominant pattern, with judicious substitutions for varied and emphasis, variations on a theme.**

**Iamb:** an unstressed syllable followed by a stressed syllable: "today"

**Trochee:** a stressed syllable followed by an unstressed syllable: "carry"

**Dactyl:** A stressed syllable followed by two unstressed syllables: "difficult"

**Anapest:** Two unstressed syllables followed by a stressed syllable: "it is time"

**Spondee:** Two successive syllables with strong stresses: "stop, thief"

**Pyrrhic:** Two successive syllables with light stresses: "up to"

### **Motif:**

A phrase, idea, or event that though repetition serves to unify or convey a theme in an essay or other discourse.

### **Noir:**

A fiction genre, popularized in the 1940s, with a cynical, disillusioned, loner protagonist. Noir often involves crime or the criminal underworld.

### **Nonce Form:**

A stanzaic form that a poet uses for only one poem—no other type is written in that form.

### **Novella:**

A work of fiction of middle length, often divided into a few short chapters.

### **Novel:**

A fictional prose narrative of significant length. Types of these are:

**Autobiographical:** autobiographical in nature, but may use fictional dialogue and anecdotes, to add color, immediacy, or thematic unity.



**Bildungsroman:** German term that chronicles the development of a child or adolescent as he/she ventures on a quest for identity. **Coming of Age.**

**Epistolary:** novel written in the form of letters exchanged by characters in the story.

**Historical:** Set in an earlier historical period that features a plot shaped by the historical circumstances of that period.

**Novel of Ideas:** the author uses the novel as a platform to discuss ideas. Character and plot are of secondary importance.

**Novel of Manners:** works that focus on the social customs of a certain class of people, often with a sharp eye for irony.

**Picaresque:** A realistic novel detailing the a scoundrel's exploits.

**Social Protest:** work in which the author's aim is to tell a story that illuminates and draws attention to contemporary social problems with a goal of inciting change for the better.

**Verse:** a full-length fictional that is novelistic in nature but written in verse rather than prose.

### **Ode:**

A poem in praise of something, usually divine, or expressing some noble idea. It frequently uses apostrophe.

### **Onomatopoeia:**

The use of a word whose sound makes you think of its meaning.

**The dripping of the water kept me up all night.**

### **Oxymoron:**

Two words with opposite meanings put together for a special effect; juxtaposed opposites.

**Jumbo shrimp, deafening silence, old news**

### **Oedipus Complex:**

Sigmund Freud's theory that a male child feels unconscious jealousy toward his father and lust for his mother. Opposite: **Electra Complex.**

### **Occasion:**

The immediate context of a poetic utterance; the situation which motivated the persona's words.

### **Octave:**

Any eight-line stanza, but most frequently applied to the first eight lines of an Italian sonnet, typically rhyming *abbabba* and ending with a full stop.

**See Sonnet.**

### **Parable:**

A short story from which a lesson may be drawn by means of allegory.

**The Prodigal Son and 12 Virgins**

### **Pastiche:**

A work that imitates the style of a previous author, work, or literary genre. Alternatively, the term may refer to a work that contains a hodgepodge of elements or fragments from different sources or influences. Pastiche

differs from a parody in that its imitation is not meant as a form of mockery. **John Fowle's The French Lieutenant's Woman was written in the 1960s but imitates the style of the Victorian novel.**

### **Paradox:**

A statement that is true even though it seems to be saying two different or opposite things.

**The more free time I have, the less I get done.**

### **Personification:**

Giving human characteristics to animals, objects, or ideas. **The low-hanging clouds ran and hid behind the mountains; the sun had come out to play.**

### **Platonic Criticism:**

A type of literary criticism that judges a work according to its usefulness for non-artistic purposes, or its extrinsic value. E.g. whether or not the work has a moral or expresses an ideal.

### **Parody:**

An exaggerated imitation of a usually more serious work for humorous purposes. The writer of a parody uses the quirks of style of the imitated piece in extreme or ridiculous ways.

### **Prosody:**

Principles of versification, especially meter, line length, rhyme scheme, and stanza form.

### **Peripety:**

Reversal in the hero's fortune.

### **Pathos:**

Qualities of a fictional or nonfictional work that evoke sorrow or pity. Over-emotionalism can be the result of an excess of pathos.

### **Paralipsis:**

Technique of drawing attention to something by claiming not to mention it.

### **Parallelism:**

Similarities between elements in a narrative (such as two characters or two plot lines).

**Grammatically:** the use of similar structures or word order in two sentences or phrases to suggest a comparison or contrast between them.

### **Prothalamion:**

Song or poem written to celebrate a marriage.

### **Pun:**

The usage of words that seemingly bring a funny effect. The similarity in sound between two words with distinctly different meanings.

**The fisherman thought that something fishy when he saw that his bait was missing.**

### **Paraenesis:**

Written piece containing advice and admonition.

### **Prose:**

Any composition not written in verse. The basic unit of prose is the sentence, which distinguishes it from free verse.

### **Pastoral:**

A celebration of the simple, rustic life of shepherd and shepherdesses, usually written by a sophisticated, urban writer.

### **Persona:**

A writer often adopts a fictional voice to tell a story. Persona or voice is usually determined by a combination of subject matter and audience.

### **Play:**

A story meant to be performed in a theater before an audience. Most plays are written in dialogue form and are divided into several acts. Many include stage directions and instructions for sets and costumes. Types include:

**Comedy:** a light-hearted play characterized by humor and a happy ending.

**Farce:** a form of high-energy that plays on confusions and deceptions between characters and features a convoluted and fast-paced plot. It uses slapstick, buffoonery, and stock characters to provoke uproarious laughter.

**Miracle:** Plays of the Middle Ages featuring saints or miraculous appearances by the Virgin Mary.

**Morality:** written in the 15<sup>th</sup>/16<sup>th</sup> centuries that presents an allegory of the Christian struggle for salvation.

**Mystery:** a short play based on a biblical story.

**Problem:** these confront a contemporary social problem with the intent of changing public opinion on the matter.

**Tragedy:** A serious play that ends unhappily for the protagonist.

**One-Act:** Consisting of a single act, without intermission and running usually less than an hour.

### **Periodic Sentence:**

Sentence that places the main idea or central complete thought at the end of the sentence, after all introductory elements.

**"Across the stream, beyond the clearing, from behind a fallen tree, the lion emerged."**

### **Pathetic Fallacy:**

The attribution of human feelings or motivation to a nonhuman object, especially an object found in nature. John Keats uses this in "Ode to Melancholy."

### **Polysyndeton:**

Sentence which uses and or another conjunction, with no commas, to separate the items in a series, usually appearing in the form X and Y and Z, stressing equally each member of the series. It makes the sentence slower and the items more emphatic than in the asyndeton.

### **Purple Prose:**

Excessively affected or sentimental writing intended to manipulate reader's feelings and emotions.

### **Plot:**

System of actions represented in a dramatic or narrative work.

#### **Elements of plot:**

**Exposition:** Introduces the story's characters and setting.

**Rising Action:** Develops and builds momentum and narrative's conflict.

**Climax:** Moment of highest tension, at which the conflict comes to a head. An **anticlimax** occurs when the plot builds up to an expected climax only to tease the reader with a frustrating non-event.

**Falling Action:** Also called the denouement, this is the latter part of the narrative, during which the protagonist responds to the events of the climax and various plot elements introduced in the rising action are resolved.

**Reversal:** Sometimes called **peripetia**, a reversal is sudden shift that sends the protagonist's fortunes from good to bad or vice versa.

**Resolution:** an ending that satisfactorily answer all the questions raised over the course of the plot.

#### **Types of Plot:**

**Chronological Plot:** events are arranged in the sequence in which they occur. Straightforward from beginning to the end.

**Achronological Plot:** events not arranged in the sequence in which they occur. Incorporates flashbacks and digressions.

**Climactic Plot:** all the action focuses toward a single climax.

**Episodic Plot:** A series of loosely connected events.

**Non Sequitur Plot:** more of an "anti-plot"; does not follow the traditional logic by presenting events without any clear sequence and characters without any clear motivation.

**Subplot:** a secondary plot that is less important to the overall story but may serve as a point of contrast or comparison to the main plot.

### **Poetic Diction:**

The use of specific types of words, phrases, or literary structures that are not common in contemporary speech or prose. Using old language in newer works.

### **Point of View:**

The perspective from which a fictional or nonfictional story is told.

**First-Person narration:** the narrator tells the story from his/her own point of view and refers to him/herself as "I." The narrator may be an active participant or just an observer.

Third-Person Narration: the narrator remains outside the story and describes the characters in the story using proper names and third-person pronouns: "he," "she," "they," or "it."

**3<sup>rd</sup> person Omniscient:** the narrator knows all the actions, feelings, and motivations of all the characters.

**3<sup>rd</sup> person Limited Omniscient:** the narrator knows the actions, feelings, and motivation of only one or a handful of characters.

**Free Indirect Discourse:** the narrator conveys a character's inner thoughts while staying in the 3<sup>rd</sup> person.

Objective narration: a style in which the narrator reports neutrally on the outward behavior of the characters, but offers no interpretation of their actions or their inner states.

Unreliable narration: the narrator is revealed over time to be an untrustworthy source of information.

Stream-Of-Consciousness: the narrator conveys a subject's thoughts, impressions, and perceptions exactly as they occur, often in disjointed fashion and without the logic and grammar of typical speech and writing. See Interior Monologue.

### **Poetic License:**

When authors use their liberty to sometimes change the ordinary rules of syntax and grammar, employing unusual vocabulary, metrical devices, or figures of speech or committing factual errors in order to strengthen a passage of writing. Works by e.e. cummings uses this a lot.

### **Portmanteau:**

Two or more words are joined together to coin a new word. A portmanteau word is formed by blending parts of two or more words but it always refers to a single concept. South + Beach = SoBe.

### **Perfect Rhyme:**

An exact match of sounds in a rhyme.

### **Rest:**

As in music, a pause counted as an element of prosody, for example a short line of poetry followed by a dramatic silence.

### **Repetition:**

Words, phrases, sounds, lines, or elements of syntax may repeat within a poem. Sometimes they add meaning to a work, but other times they dilute or dissipate the meaning. Types include: alliteration, assonance, and refrain.

### **Refrain:**

A phrase or group of lines that is repeated at significant moments within a poem, usually at the end of a stanza.

### **Rhetorical Question:**

A question that is asked not to elicit a response but to make an impact or call attention to something.

### **Rhetorical Accent/Stress:**

In opposition to metrical accent, a stress on what would normally be an unaccented syllable, which clarifies the meaning or intention of the sentence.

### **Rhetorical Devices:**

Figures of speech that are not the figurative language of metaphor. These include anaphora, antithesis, apostrophe, parallelism, balance, pun, and the rhetorical question.

### **Rime Royal:**

See Stanza.

### **Rhetorical Criticism:**

A type of literary criticism that analyzes the devices of rhetoric (the art of persuasion) used by an author to induce the reader to interpret the work as the author intends.

### **Roman a Clef:**

A novel based on real persons and events. For example, F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Far Side of Paradise* and Ernest Hemingway's *The Sun Also Rises*.

### **Romance:**

Unrealistic fiction with extravagant characters, remote and exotic settings, heroic events, passionate love, and elements of mystery and the supernatural. This mode is free of the restrictions of realism and verisimilitude. Although love often plays a significant role, the association of "romance" with "love" is a modern phenomenon. Romances were popular in the Middle Ages and Renaissance. **Chivalric Romances:** a romance that describes the adventures of medieval knights and celebrates their strict code of honor, loyalty, and respectful devotion to women.

### **Slant Rhyme:**

An imperfect rhyme, also called **oblique rhyme** or **off rhyme**, in which the sounds are similar but not exactly the same, as between "port" and "heart." Modern poets often use slant rhyme as a subtler alternative to perfect rhyme.

### **Simile:**

Figure of speech that compares two, often dissimilar, things using like or as.

**The ice cubes glistened like little diamonds in my glass.**

### **Satire:**

A work that ridicules as it criticizes the foibles and follies of society without necessarily finding a solution; it is usually funny or outlandish. These works while they ridicule the shortcomings of individuals, institutions, and society, they often make a political point. There are major two types:

**Horatio:** Satire which is indulgent, tolerant, amused, and witty, wryly and gently ridiculing human absurdities and follies, exemplified by the dramatic form known as the comedy of manners.

**Juvenalian:** This mode of satire attacks vice and

error with contempt and indignation. It is realistic and harsh in tone.

A minor Satire:

**Mock Epic:** A satiric mode that applies the lofty style of the epic to a trivial subject, giving it dignity which it does not deserve and thus ridiculing it. This mode may also mock epics themselves, and the absurdity of the epic hero's pretentious qualities. Also called burlesque.

Sarcasm:

A simple form of **verbal irony** in which it is obvious from context and tone that the speaker means the opposite of what he/she says. Sarcasm usually, but not always, expresses scorn.

Setting:

Locale and period in which the action takes place. Typically, setting is important to pay attention to as it dictates the actions, feelings and emotions of some characters. **Setting may include the geographical location, the daily manner of living, the epoch or season or time of day, the atmosphere, and the general environment, including religious, mental, moral, social, or emotional conditions and their symbolic meaning.** Setting usually symbolizes some things and can sometimes represent the antagonist.

Suspense:

Use of uncertainty and anxiety to build excitement. It uses the element of anticipation.

Syntax:

The arrangement of words in a sentence. Includes sentence length and complexity; the variety and pattern of sentence form; inversion of natural word order; unusual juxtaposition; repetition; parallelism; use of active or passive voice; level of discourse (see Usage); order, including emphatic or subordinate position of elements, etc.

Stream of Consciousness:

Technique of writing that undertakes to reproduce the raw flow of consciousness, with the perceptions, thoughts, judgments, feelings, associations, and memories. Characters train-of-thoughts are involved.

Scansion:

The system of dividing the rise and falls (syllables) of a line of poetry. It is related to the number and type of feet in a line.

Symbolism:

An object, character, figure, or color that is used to represent an abstract idea or concept. Unlike an emblem, a symbol may have different meanings in different contexts.

Synecdoche:

A form of metonymy in which a part of an entity is used to refer to the whole.

**"All hands on deck!" is frequently used by mariners. Hands represent the whole person/sailor. "threads" for clothes; "wheels" for cars.**

Stanza:

A major subdivision in a poem. Some of the subdivisions are:

Couplet: two rhymed lines.

Heroic Couplet: A pair of rhyming lines in iambic pentameter.

Tercet: a grouping of three lines, often bearing a single rhyme.

Quatrain: a four-line stanza.

Heroic Quatrain: written in iambic pentameter with an ABAB rhyme scheme.

Terza rima: a system of interlaced tercets linked by common rhymes: ABA BCB CDC etc.

Ottava rima: an eight-line stanza with rhyme scheme: ABABABCC

Sestina: six six-line stanzas followed by a three-line stanza. The same six words are repeated at the end of lines throughout the poem in a predetermined pattern. The last word in the last line of one stanza becomes the last word of the first line of the next. All six end-words appear in the final three-line stanza.

Shift:

See turn/volta.

Style:

The choice in diction, tone, and syntax that a writer makes. In combination, they create a work's manner of expression. Style is thought to be conscious and unconscious and may be altered to suit specific occasions. *Styles can be flowery, laconic, explicit, succinct, incisive, rambling, or bombastic, and commonplace.*

Syllogism:

An argument or deductive system of logic that presents two premises that inevitably lead to a conclusion. The two premises are (1) major and (2) minor.

**Major Premise: All men are mortal.**

**Minor Premise: Socrates is a man.**

**Conclusion: Therefore, Socrates is mortal.**

Synaesthesia:

The use of one kind of sensory experience to describe another, such as in the line **"Herald melodies are sweet" in Keats's "Ode on a Grecian Urn."**

Soliloquy:

When a character in a play speaks his thoughts aloud--usually by him or herself.

Sonnet:

A single-stanza lyric poem containing fourteen lines written in a fixed rhyme scheme. In some formulations, the first eight lines (**octave**) pose a question or dilemma that is resolved in the final six-lines (**sestet**). There are 3 major types:

Italian or Petrarchan sonnet: developed by the Italian poet Petrarchan, this sonnet is divided into an octave with the rhyme scheme **ABBAABBA** or **ABBACDDC** and a sestet with the rhyme scheme **CDECDE** or **CDCCDC**.

Shakespearian Sonnet: Also called the **English** or **Elizabethan** sonnet, this poetic form, which Shakespeare made famous, contains three quatrains and a final couplet. The rhyme scheme is **ABAB CDCD EFFE GG**.

Spenserian Sonnet: A variant that the poet Edmund Spenser developed from the Shakespearian sonnet. The Spenserian sonnet has the rhyme scheme **ABAB BCBC CDCD EE**; this sonnet utilizes an interlocking rhyme scheme.

### **Stage Directions:**

Added to the text of a play to indicate movement, attitude, manner, style, or quality of speech, character, or action.

### **Staccato Phrases:**

Phrases composed of a series of short, sharp sounds or words.

### **Sentimentalism:**

Overindulgence in emotion, especially the conscious effort to induce emotion in order to enjoy it; often an excess of romanticism. The reader is asked for an emotional response in excess of what the occasion merits; emotion replaces ethical and intellectual judgment.

### **Sibilance:**

Hissing sounds represented by *s*, *z*, or *sh*.

### **Stereotype:**

May be a character who lacks individualizing traits; the word also refers to any oversimplified mental pictures or judgments.

### **Short Story:**

A work of prose fiction that is much shorter than a novel (rarely more than 40 pages) and focused more tightly on a single event.

### **Theme:**

Main message or central idea that offers insights to life; underlying ideas that the author illustrates through characterization, motifs, language plots, argument, etc.

### **Tone:**

A writer's attitude toward his/her subject matter (implied or related directly) that is revealed through the use of diction, figurative language, and syntax; the general atmosphere created in the story. **Some words that describe tone are playful, serious, businesslike, sarcastic, humorous, formal, ornate, cheeky, and somber.** Shifts in tone may be indicated by transitional words (*but, yet, nevertheless, however, although*) that signal a turn; by a sharp contrast in diction; or by a change in sentence length. See Voice.

### **Tragedy:**

Representations of serious actions which turn out to be disastrous and tragic.

### **Tragic Hero:**

A basically good person of noble birth or exalted position who has a fatal flaw or commits an error in judgment that leads to his downfall. The tragic hero must have a moment realization and live and suffer.

### **Tragic Flaw:**

Tragic error in judgment; a mistaken act which changes the fortune of the tragic hero from happiness to misery, also known as *hamartia*.

### **Tenor:**

The main subject of a metaphor; it is the main thing being compared. See Metaphor.

### **Thesis:**

An attitude or position on a problem taken by a writer with the intention of proving or supporting it with specific evidence. ***What is the premise of the work? What claim is the author making?*** Also known as the literary argument.

### **Trope:**

A category of figures of speech that extend the literal meanings of words by inviting a comparison to other words, things, or ideas. Metaphor, metonymy and simile are three common tropes.

### **Turn:**

A rhetorical figure that provides a change in thought signaled by words like *but, however, and yet*. In the Italian sonnet, a turn begins the sestet (line 9); in the Elizabethan sonnet, it may occur after the quatrains, as the couplet begins in line 13. A turn also may be indicated by the break between stanzas. Also called a *shift*. **See Sonnet.**

### **Title:**

In a work of literature, a title may function to set expectations, suggest interpretations, name the occasion or the literary type, or address someone directly. The title is a part of the work, and often helps to illuminate its theme.

### **Understatement:**

Deliberately representing something as much less than it really is.

***"Last week I saw a woman flayed, and you will hardly believe how much it altered her appearance."*** –Jonathon Swift.

### **Unity:**

A work of fiction or nonfiction is said to be unified as all the parts are related to one central idea or organizing principle. Thus, unity is dependent upon coherence.

### **Usage:**

In literature, refers to the level of discourse; characteristics of those words that are not standard and require a dictionary level, such as: informal, slang, offensive, cliché, jargon, regional, technical, archaic, obsolete, and chiefly British. Use of such nonstandard words may help create characterization and tone in a work of literature.

**Verisimilitude:**

Depiction of characters and setting, giving them the appearance of truth; realism.

**Vehicle:**

The point of comparison in a metaphor; the thing that is being compared to the tenor.

**See Metaphor.**

**Vignette:**

Brief, incident, scene or story.

**Voice:**

Author's distinguishing style, tone, point of view, and use of language. May be used by the author explicitly or through the speaker of the work.

**Verse:**

Poetry; a line of poetry.

**Villanelle:**

A nineteen line long poem consisting of five tercets and one concluding quatrain. There are two refrains,

alternating between the ends of each tercet and then forming the last two lines of the quatrain.

**Versification:**

This term includes all the elements of poetic composition, including accent, rhythm, meter, rhyme, verse form, stanza form, assonance, onomatopoeia, and alliteration.

**Wit:**

Intellectually amusing language that indicates the speaker's verbal prowess in creating ingenious and perceptive remarks. It uses terse language that makes a pointed statement. A form of wordplay, usually depicting humor.

**Most sitcoms, works by Jane Austen.**

**Word Play:**

Use of rhetorical figures of speech and verbal wit to enhance literary work.

**Zeugma:**

The writer uses one word to govern several successive words or clauses; the word may imply two different meanings.

**She discovered New York and her world.**

**Mr. Pickwick took his hat and his leave.**

## Literary Terms

### Arranged by Category

#### Character

And anything related to it

Antagonist  
 Caricature  
 Characterization  
     Direct and Indirect\*  
 Dynamic/Round Character  
 Foil  
 Motivation  
 Narrator/Persona/Speaker  
 Stereotype  
 Static/Flat character  
 Stock Character

#### Context

And anything related to it

Atmosphere  
 Frame  
 Mood  
 Occasion  
 Setting  
 Speaker/Persona  
 Stream of Consciousness

#### Diction

And anything related to it

Abstract Language  
 Ambiguity  
 Cliché  
 Concrete Language  
 Connotation  
 Denotation  
 Dialect  
 Epithet  
 Euphemism  
 Literal Language  
 Usage

#### Drama

And anything related to it

Aside

Crisis  
 Dialogue  
 Soliloquy  
 Stage Directions  
 Subtext

#### Figurative Language

And anything related to it

Apostrophe  
 Conceit  
 Metaphor
 

- Grounds
- Tenor
- Vehicle
- Extended
- Dead
- Mixed

Metonymy  
 Personification  
 Simile  
 Symbol/Symbolism  
 Synecdoche  
 Synesthesia

#### Fixed Forms of Poetry

And anything related to it

Ballad  
 Cinquain\*  
 Epic  
 Sestina  
 Sonnet
 

- Elizabethan (Shakespearian)
  - Couplet
  - Quatrain
- Italian (Petrarchan)
  - Octave
  - Sestet
  - Turn
- Spenserian
  - Interlocking
  - Variation on Elizabethan

Villanelle

#### Imagery

And anything related to it

**Auditory\***  
**Gustatory\***  
**Olfactory\***  
**Tactile\***  
**Visual\***

Literary Criticism, Terms  
And anything related to it

<b>Analysis</b>	<b>Explication</b>
<b>Inference*</b>	<b>Literary Present Tense</b>
<b>Paraphrase*</b>	<b>Summary*</b>
<b>Thesis</b>	
<b>Rhetorical Criticism</b>	
<b>Platonic Criticism</b>	

Literary Devices  
And anything related to it

<b>Archetype</b>	<b>Epiphany</b>
<b>Motif</b>	<b>Poetic Justice</b>
<b>Theme</b>	<b>Title</b>

Literary Modes  
And anything related to it

**Carpe Diem**  
**Comedy/Comedy of Manners**  
**Complaint**  
**Dramatic Monologue**  
**Elegy, elegiac verse\***  
**Epic/Mock Epic/Mock Heroic**  
**Lyric Verse**  
**Ode**  
**Light Verse**  
**Parody**  
**Romance**  
**Satire:**

- **Horatian Satire**
- **Juvenalian Satire**

**Tragedy**

Plot  
And anything related to it

<b>Antecedent Action</b>	<b>Climax</b>
<b>Conflict</b>	<b>Denouement</b>
<b>Exposition</b>	<b>Falling Action</b>
<b>Flashback</b>	<b>Foreshadowing</b>
<b>Frame/Frame Story</b>	<b>Resolution</b>
<b>Rising Action</b>	<b>Subplot</b>

Meter/Prosody/Versification

And anything related to it

**Duple meters:**

- **Iambic (rising)**
- **Trochaic (falling)**

**Falling Meter**  
**Foot, Feet**

**Line Length (note prefixes):**

- **Monometer**
- **Dimeter**
- **Trimeter**
- **Tetrameter**
- **Pentameter**
- **Hexameter**
- **Septameter**
- **Octameter**

**Metrical Substitutions:**

- **Pyrrhic**
- **Rest**
- **Spondee**
- **Trochee**

**Rising Meter**  
**Scansion**  
**Stress/Accent**  
**Triple Meters:**

- **Anapestic (rising)**
- **Dactylic (falling)**

Poetic Forms  
And anything related to it

**Blank Verse**  
**Common meter/Hymn Meter/Ballad Stanza**  
**Continuous Form**  
**Couplet:**

- **Closed Couplet\***
- **Heroic Couplet**
- **Open Couplet**

**Epigram**  
**Free Verse (also vers libre)**  
**Nonce Form**  
**Verse Paragraph\***

Poetic Line  
And anything related to it

**Caesura**  
**End-Stopped Line**  
**Enjambment Line/Enjambment**

Point of View  
And anything related to it

**Interior Monologue**  
**Narrator:**

- **First person**
- **Limited Omniscient**



- Naïve
- Objective
- Omniscient
- Second Person
- Unreliable

**Stream OF Consciousness**

Sound Devices  
And anything related to it

**Alliteration**  
**Assonance**  
**Cacophony**  
**Consonance**  
**Euphony**

Rhetorical Devices  
And anything related to it

<b>Allusion</b>	<b>Analogy</b>
<b>Anaphora</b>	<b>Anticlimax</b>
<b>Antithesis</b>	<b>Caesura/Rhetorical Pause</b>
<b>Catalog</b>	<b>Incongruity</b>
<b>Oxymoron</b>	<b>Paradox</b>
<b>Parallelism</b>	<b>Pun</b>
<b>Repetition</b>	<b>Rhetorical Accent/Stress</b>
<b>Rhetorical Question</b>	<b>Structure</b>
<b>Turn</b>	
<b>Rhetorical Criticism</b>	

Rhyme  
And anything related to it

<b>Couplet</b>	<b>Double Rhyme</b>
<b>End Rhyme</b>	<b>Full/Perfect/True Rhyme</b>
<b>Internal Rhyme</b>	<b>Rhyme Scheme</b>
<b>Slant/Near/Partial/Imperfect/Half Rhyme</b>	
<b>Triple Rhyme</b>	

Stanza Form  
And anything related to it

**Ballad Stanza/Hymn Stanza**  
**Cinquain\***  
**Couplet**  
**Envoy**  
**Nonce Form**  
**Ottava Rima**  
**Quatrain**  
**Refrain**  
**Rime Royal**  
**Septet**  
**Sestet**  
**Spenserian Stanza**

**Tercet**

Syntax  
And anything related to it

**Emphasis**                      **Juxtaposition**  
**Malapropism**  
Inversion of word order (grammatical inversion)  
Level of Discourse (usage)

Order:

- **Emphatic position**
- **Subordinate Position**

**Sentence length, complexity, variety, pattern**  
**Sentence Type:**

- **Loose Sentence**
- **Periodic Sentence**

**Usage/Level of Discourse**

**Voice:**

- **Active vs. Passive\***

Tone  
And anything related to it

**Authorial Voice\***

**Humor**                              **Hyperbole**

**Irony:**

- **Dramatic**
- **Situational**
- **Verbal**

**Sarcasm**  
**Sentimentalism**  
**Understatement**  
**Wit**