



A GLOSSARY OF LITERARY TERMS

ABSTRACTION is the process of removing an element from its unifying design.
e.g. a discussion of the disease images in Hamlet.

ABSURDISM a philosophy based on the belief that man exists in an irrational and meaningless universe and that his search for order brings him into conflict with his universe.

ACCENT is the stress thrown upon a syllable.
e.g. ad dréss (verb); ád dress (noun)

AESTHETIC (also ESTHETIC) suggests an appreciation of that which is beautiful; sensitive to beauty. Literature, drama, music, and ballet are termed aesthetic arts.

ALLEGORY is a derivative of the Greek allegoria, meaning “to imply something else”. Thus an allegory is a story, essay, play, or poem in which specific characters in concrete situations are intended to represent wider, general truths about human experience. In short, the story is symbolic.
e.g. Bunyan’s Pilgrim’s Progress; the parables of Jesus, Aesop’s fables

ALLITERATION is the repetition of the first consonant sound in a consecutive series of words, usually for the purpose of heightening rhythmic effect or suggesting an emotion or sensation.
e.g. round the rugged rocks; the sun sank slowly

ALLUSION is a casual reference to a work, person, place, or event which is assumed to be familiar to the reader, and which depends on this familiarity for its significance.
e.g. “You’ve met your Waterloo” alludes to the defeat of Napoleon at Waterloo.
e.g. “the face that launched a thousand ships” refers to Helen of Troy

BIBLICAL ALLUSION has reference to the Holy Bible.
e.g. “another flood is coming” requires a familiarity with the story of Noah for clarity

AMBIGUITY is a vagueness or lack of clarity of meaning or expression which makes possible more than one interpretation.

AMERICAN DREAM, THE, based on both the Puritan work ethic that hard work and industry breed success and the promise of a brave new world, The American Dream is at once an elusive and illusory aspiration. The works of such writers as F. Scott Fitzgerald, John Steinbeck, Ernest Hemingway, and Arthur Miller illustrate the number of treatments of the theme, ranging from a bitter indictment of American values, to the sham and shame of a false and unattainable promise, to the cultural barrenness, moral and spiritual emptiness of 20th-century America. (*Benét’s Readers’ Encyclopedia*)

ANAPEST, a three syllable metrical FOOT consisting of two unaccented syllables followed by an accented syllable, as in the word *buccaneer*. In the following line, the feet are divided by slashes, and since there are four feet, the line can be described as anapestic TETRAMETER.

For the moon / never beams, / without bring / ing me dreams...
Poe, "Annabel Lee"

ANACHRONISM is the misplacement of a person or object in time.
e.g. a clock in Shakespeare's Julius Caesar.

ANALOGY is the likeness in some ways between things which are otherwise unlike.
e.g. There is an analogy between a pump and the human heart.

ANASTROPHE, inversion of the usual order of the parts of a sentence, primarily for emphasis or to achieve a certain rhythm or rhyme. Oliver Wendell Holmes' line "Wrecked is the ship of pearl", is a reversal or inversion of the normal order of subject-verb-object (complement), "The ship of pearl is wrecked."

ANECDOTE is a short, personal story employed to illustrate a thought or argument.

ANTAGONIST is the character in a drama or novel who presents the greatest opposition to the central figure (protagonist).
e.g. sympathetic antagonist like Macduff in Macbeth or villainous antagonist like Iago in Othello

ANTEBELLUM, existing before a war, often in reference to the American Civil War.

ANTECEDENT ACTION, action that takes place before the story line opens.

ANTICLIMAX is the falling off or letdown in events or statements, sometimes gradual and sometimes abrupt (in which case the result is usually ludicrous).

ANTITHESIS is the placement of ideas in sharp contrast; the direct contrast of structurally parallel word-groupings. Thus an antithetic sentence is a balanced sentence in which ideas or words are in opposition, more strikingly so because of the balance.
e.g. "To err is human, to forgive divine"; sink or swim; stand or fall

APATHY, a lack of interest.

APHORISM (1) a terse, pithy statement in poetry or prose expressing a general thought, maxim, or proverb; (2) a concise and perceptive statement of principle, lacking the witty quality of the epigram but gaining effectiveness from its blunt expression.

e.g. "This above all: to thine own self be true."

APOSTROPHE is a figure of speech in which animate or inanimate objects are addressed in the second person (thou, you) as though present.

e.g. "Rise you rugged rocks and do battle in my cause
"The answer, my friend, is blowing in the wind".

ARCHAISM is an antiquated word or expression.

e.g. in sooth, methinks, forswear, forsooth

ARCHETYPE is an original type which others imitate. A literary archetype is a character or theme that recurs frequently.

e.g. the heroic adventurer, the death and re-birth idea in mythology; and the isolation and self-recognition motif in tragedy

ARGUMENT is a mode of writing intended to influence a person to believe differently through reason

ASIDE is a brief, often sarcastic or revealing comment made by an actor to the audience and not meant to be heard by the other stage characters. It allows the spectators to hear significant and sometimes foreshadowing comments.

e.g. Iago's aside in Othello: "With as little a web as this will I/Ensnare as great a fly as Cassio."

ASPIRATES are sounds designated by the letters "h", "w", and "wh".

ASSONANCE is the repetition of the vowel sounds in a series of words

e.g. "The winds that will be howling at all hours,/And are up-gathered now like sleeping flowers;" – the words "howling", "hours", "now", and "flowers" have the same vowel sound and so are said to have assonance.

ATMOSPHERE is the emotional tone and overall effect of a narrative or descriptive passage.

e.g. Poe creates an atmosphere of pervading horror through his lavishly described settings.

ATTITUDE is the feeling that a writer has toward his subject; conveyed to the reader through the writer's tone.

e.g. One writer may feel awe toward the subject of mountains; another writer may feel terror.

BALANCED SENTENCE is one in which phrases or clauses “balance” each other by virtue of their likeness of structure, their direct contrast or similarity in meaning and their approximate equality of length.
e.g. “He maketh me to lie down in green pastures/He leadeth me beside the still waters”

BALLAD, a NARRATIVE of unknown authorship passed on in the oral tradition. It often makes use of repetition and DIALOGUE. A ballad whose author is known is called a literary ballad.

BALLAD STANZA, a STANZA usually consisting of four alternating lines of IAMBIC TETRAMETER and TRIMETER and rhyming the second and fourth lines.

*We cross the prairie as of old / The Pilgrims crossed the sea,
To make the West, as they the East, / The homestead of the free.*
Whittier, “The Kansas Emigrants”

BATHOS refers to a sudden comedown from the grand to the ridiculous. (Also used to refer to overly sentimental presentations or passages as in soap operas and many Hollywood films – play on the word “pathos”).
e.g. highly implausible and artificial speeches of Macduff’s children before they are murdered in Macbeth

BIOGRAPHY, an account of a person’s life. (See Ulibarri’s “My Grandmother Smoked Cigars”.) Autobiography is the story of all of a person’s life written by the person who lived it. (See Hansberry’s “To Be Young, Gifted and Black”.)

BLANK VERSE is unrhymed iambic pentameter.

e.g. “Night’s candles are burnt out, and jocund day / Stands tiptoe on the misty mountain top.” Shakespeare

BURLESQUE (see SATIRE)

CACOPHONY is a series of unpleasant, discordant sounds.

e.g. “I wish my tongue were a quiver the size of a huge cask / packed and crammed with long black venomous rankling darts” Poe, “The Bells”
(see also EUPHONY)

CADENCE is the rhythm of a series of sounds, determined by the pattern of accented and unaccented sounds. The fall of voice in reading or speaking.

CAESURA, a pause in a line of verse, usually dictated by the sense of the line and often greater than a normal pause. For purposes of study, the mark indicating a caesura is two short vertical lines (||). A caesura can be indicated by punctuation, the grammatical construction of a sentence, or the placement of lines on a page. It is used to add variety to regular meter and therefore to add emphasis to certain words.

CARICATURE, exaggeration of prominent features of appearance or character.

CARPE DIEM, Latin for “seize the day”, the name applied to a **THEME** frequently found in **LYRIC** poetry: “enjoy life’s pleasures while you are able”.

CATASTROPHE is that part of a tragedy in which ruin or death befalls one or some of the central characters. This point in the play is termed a catastrophe only when the conflict involves a protagonist with praiseworthy qualities.

CATHARSIS refers to the releasing effect which the arousal of emotions has on the person experiencing them; an emotional purification or release.

CHARACTER is a person in a play, short story, or novel.

ROUND CHARACTER – complex, many-sided, fully developed by the author

FLAT CHARACTER –characterized by one or two traits only; often minor

STOCK CHARACTER – is the stereotyped figure who has occurred so often in fiction that his nature is immediately known;
e.g. the strong, silent sheriff; the mad scientist

STATIC CHARACTER – same sort of person at the end of the story as he was at the beginning

DYNAMIC or DEVELOPING CHARACTER – undergoes a permanent change in some aspect of his character, personality, or outlook

CHRONOLOGY, measuring time and dating events.

CHRONOLOGICAL, arrangement of events in the order of their appearance.

CIRCUMLOCUTION is a roundabout way of speaking; verbosity.

e.g. “the wife of your father’s brother” instead of “your aunt”

CLASSICAL is a term which originally referred to the literary works of early Greece and Rome.

CLICHÉ refers to an expression which was once original, but has since been used so frequently that it has become trite.

e.g. high and dry, sober as a judge, doing his own thing

CLIMAX is the highest point of emotional response when the conflict is being resolved favourably or unfavourably; the high point, the decisive confrontation in any play or novel. A novel or play may have many minor climaxes.

COHERENCE is the clarity given to a piece of writing through a definite method of development and transitional devices.

COMEDY is a play written largely for entertainment; in its broadest meaning, a drama which ends happily.

COMEDY OF MANNERS – form ridiculing social rather than individual faults. The characters are laughed at because they represent social types with characteristic foibles of fashion and morality (The Importance of Being Earnest)

FARCE – type of comedy wherein situations or behaviour are so ludicrous as to be incredible. Farce is achieved by placing one-dimensional characters in highly amusing situations which ignore all standards of probability (some television comedies).

COMPARISON is the similarity between two or more objects or situations.

COMPLICATION is an event which introduces or intensifies conflict.
e.g. in the play Macbeth, Duncan's naming of his son Malcolm as a potential successor to the throne is a complication to Macbeth.

CONCEIT is an elaborate image or metaphor in which two dissimilar objects or situations are compared.
e.g. in "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock", T. S. Eliot compares the evening sky to a "patient etherized upon a table"

CONCRETE, not theoretical or abstract.

CONFLICT is a clash between two opposing forces. The clash may be physical, mental, emotional, moral, social, etc.
Conflict is the struggle between two opposing forces. The four basic kinds of conflict are:

1. a person against another person ("The Cask of Amontillado");
2. a person against nature ("The Bear");
3. a person against society ("Harrison Bergeron"); and
4. two elements within a person struggling for mastery ("The Haunted Boy"). More than one kind of conflict can be and often is present in a work. As Robert Penn Warren put it, "no conflict, no story."

CONNOTATION, CONNOTATIVE MEANING is the suggested meaning of words because of personal or cultural experience as opposed to DENOTATION which is the dictionary meaning.
e.g. 'portly', 'corpulent', and 'obese' all mean fleshy, but 'portly' connotes dignity, 'corpulent' connotes bulk, and 'obese' connotes an unpleasant excess of fat.

CONSONANCE is the repetition of a consonant sound within a series of words to produce a harmonious effect.
e.g. "And each slow dusk a drawing-down of blinds" from Owen's "Anthem for Doomed Youth". The repetition of the 'd' and 's' sounds here produces a slow weighted line appropriate to the poem's mood of mourning.

CONTINUANTS are the sounds designated by letters 'm', 'n', 'r', and 'l'.
Continuants tend to slow the pace in a prose passage or the rhythm in a poem.

CONTRAST is the dissimilarity between two or more objects or situations, pointed out directly or implicitly. Such literary devices as paradox, juxtaposition, antithesis, character foils, and irony are all means of producing contrasts.

CONVENTION is any established literary practice which, although often unrealistic, is accepted by the reader or audience.
e.g. omniscient narrator, soliloquy, walls removed from stage rooms, symbolic scenery, manipulated time sequences; in movies or television, full orchestral accompaniment to singing by persons ostensibly alone

CRISIS is the turning point in the fortunes of the protagonist. There may be several minor crises in a play or novel.
e.g. Fleance's escape in Macbeth; Antony's speech in Julius Caesar

DEDUCTION is the reasoning from the general to the particular; reasoning from a generalization or a universal law to prove a specific case.

DENOTATION is the specific dictionary meaning of words.

DENOUEMENT (from the French verb denouer, meaning "to untie") is sometimes used to refer to the entire unravelling sequence which follows the climax of a novel or drama. More commonly, however, it refers simply to the final rounding off of the action.

DESCRIPTION is writing in which sensory details are used to evoke the scene of the action or an impression.

DEUS EX MACHINA (meaning literally “god out of a machine”) is a term used to describe the entry into a dramatic sequence of some implausible event or coincidence; when the coming is contrived or artificial.
e.g. last-minute rescue (as in Lord of the Flies); miraculous recovery; improbable escape

DIALOGUE, the conversation between two or more people in a literary work. Dialogue can serve many purposes, among them

1. CHARACTERIZATION of both of those speaking and of those spoken about, as in “Winter Dreams”;
2. the creation of MOOD or ATMOSPHERE, as in “The Fall of the House of Usher”,
3. the advancement of the PLOT as in “The Cask of Amontillado”; and
4. the development of a THEME, as in “The Leader of the People”.

DICTION is the choice of words in literature; usually classified under such terms as abstract or concrete, precise or vague, technical or figurative or commonplace, connotative or denotative.
e.g. for the word ‘man’ - ‘cat’, slang; ‘guy’ - colloquial; ‘human being’ - formal; ‘homo sapiens’ - technical; ‘poor barefooted animal’ - figurative; etc.

DIDACTIC literature is that whose purpose is to instruct as well as entertain.
e.g. direct statements of principle accompanied by proof (formal essay); moral lessons translated into narratives (Aesop’s Fables, Pilgrim’s Progress); drama (G. G. Shaw’s plays); poetry (Pope’s Essay on Man).

DIRECT PRESENTATION is the presentation of character, theme, subject through explicit statement.

DISCREPANCY, to be in disagreement; at variance.

DISSONANCE is discord, lack of harmony.

DOGGEREL is a derogatory term to describe inferior poetry.
e.g. Emily’s verse in Huckleberry Finn is deliberate doggerel.

DRAMATIC CONVENTION, any of several devices which the audience accepts as a substitution for reality in a dramatic work. For instance, the audience accepts that an interval between acts is a substitute for a passage of time greater than the interval, that a bare stage may be a meadow, that a balcony is attached to a house instead of an invisible scaffold, that an audible dialogue is really supposed to be whispered, or that dawn approaches with a rosy spotlight.

DRAMATIC MONOLOGUE is a poem involving an uninterrupted speech by a character to a silent second figure. It is meant to reveal the personality of the speaker through his manner of speech, the attitudes his remarks disclose, and the implied reactions of his listener.
e.g. Robert Browning's "My Last Duchess"

DRAMATIC POETRY is theatrical drama in a poetic form.
e.g. Shakespeare's plays; T. S. Eliot's Murder in the Cathedral

DRAMATIS PERSONAE are the dramatic characters in a play.

ELEGY is a formal song or poem which expresses sorrow and usually praise for the one who is dead.
e.g. Milton's "Lycidas"; Shelley's "Adonais"
"When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloom'd" is Walt Whitman's elegy written on the death of Abraham Lincoln.

ELLIPSIS is the omission of words or phrases grammatically necessary to a sentence. The omitted words, however, are implied.
e.g. "I am not Prince Hamlet, nor was meant to be;/Am an attendant lord..."

EMANCIPATION, the act or process of freeing from control, restraint, or the power of another; to free from bondage; to free from any controlling influence such as traditional mores or beliefs.

EMPATHY is the projecting of oneself into the personality of a character and thereby understanding him/her.

END RHYME, the rhyming of words at the ends of lines of poetry. (See also INTERNAL RHYME)

END-STOPPED LINE, a line of poetry that contains a complete thought, thus necessitating the use of a semicolon or period at the end.
The ship, becalmed, at length stands still;
The steed must rest beneath the hill;
Thoreau, "Though All the Fates"
(See also RUN-ON LINE)

ENJAMBEMENT is the running together of cadence and thought in two consecutive lines of poetry.
e.g. Porphyria's Lover: "...she guessed not how / Her darling one wish would be heard."

EPIC is a long narrative poem, written in an elevated style and recounting the deeds of a legendary or historical hero. Epics are characterized by an invocation; a setting of immense proportions; ‘in medias res’ beginning; great battle or long journey; intervention of supernatural forces; catalogues of descriptive detail.

e.g. Homer’s The Iliad; Virgil’s The Aeneid; Beowulf; Milton’s Paradise Lost

EPIPUREANISM is a philosophy advocating that happiness and active enjoyment is life’s highest good, that pleasure is the proper end of man’s efforts, but that true pleasures depend upon self-control, moderation, and honourable behaviour.

EPIGRAM is a terse and witty poem or statement, usually ending with an ingenious turn of thought, a wry twist.

e.g. “There is no sin except stupidity”, Oscar Wilde; “Patriotism is the last refuge of a scoundrel”, Samuel Johnson

*Let us all be happy and live within our means,
even if we have to borrow the money to do it
with.*

Artemus Ward

(Compare with MAXIM and PROVERB)

EPIGRAPH is a quotation at the beginning of a literary work for the purposes of illuminating the theme of the work.

e.g. the quotation from T. S. Eliot’s “The Hollow Men” appears at the beginning of Shute’s On the Beach

EPILOGUE (literally “to say in addition”) is a section following the actual plot conclusion of a narrative or drama. Of no fixed length, it usually sums up or rounds out the overall design of the work.

e.g. G. B. Shaw’s Saint Joan

EPITHET is a descriptive expression, adjective, noun, or even a clause, expressing some quality or attribute.

e.g. ‘crafty’ in ‘crafty Ulysses’; ‘Lion Hearted’ in Richard the Lion Hearted

ESSAY, a prose composition that presents a personal point of view. An essay may present a viewpoint through formal analysis and argument, as in “Civil Disobedience”: by Thoreau, or it may be informal in style, as in “The Two-Wheeled ATV.”

EUPHEMISM is an inoffensive expression used in place of one which is clearer, but disagreeable.

e.g. ‘gifted underachiever’ is a euphemism for a perpetually lazy student; ‘pass away’ for ‘die’

EUPHONY is the quality of a passage of writing which sounds pleasant or musical.
e.g. Keats' "Of candied apple, quince and plum and gourd;/With jellies smoother than the creamy curd."
(See also CACOPHONY for a comparison)

EUPHUISM is flowery, artificial writing or language introduced by John Lyly (1554-1606) in "Euphues"; any affected or pedantic style.

EXISTENTIALISM, a chiefly twentieth century philosophical movement embracing diverse doctrines but centering on analysis of individual existence in an unfathomable universe and the plight of the individual who must assume ultimate responsibility for his acts of free will without any certain knowledge of what is right or wrong or good or bad.

EXPOSITION is writing designed to convey information or ideas not fully known to the reader.
It also means that part of a plot, usually in the opening chapters or scenes, which sets the situation and provides the necessary background for subsequent dramatic action.
The author sets the ATMOSPHERE and TONE, explains the SETTING, introduces CHARACTERS, etc.
e.g. King Lear's conferral of property on his three daughters in King Lear

EXTENDED METAPHOR, a figure of speech that is used throughout an entire work or a great part of it. It is common in poetry but is often used in prose as well. The spiritual "Swing Low, Sweet Chariot," contains an extended metaphor, with home representing "heaven" throughout and the chariot representing the means by which the believer will be transported to heaven.

FABLE is a term which refers to a fictitious story or legend with supernatural occurrences (e.g. talking animals); a simple tale usually symbolic and implying a moral.
e.g. "The Fox and the Grapes"; "The Pied Piper of Hamelin"

FALLING ACTION is the letdown stage following a dramatic crisis.
e.g. the period after Antony's funeral speech in Julius Caesar

FANTASY is writing in which our known natural laws are willingly suspended but in which situations are logical in terms of the initial supposition.
e.g. John Wyndam's "The Trouble with Lichen" supposes a drug that could triple man's life span; what would be some of the consequences?

FEMININE ENDING is the name given to the last syllable of a line of poetry when that syllable is unstressed (as occurs with words ending 'ing' or 'ed').

FEMININE RHYME occurs when the last syllable of rhyming words is unaccented. Both the accented and unaccented syllables must rhyme. e.g. 'row / ing', 'flow / ing'; 'pil / low', 'wil / low'

FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE, language used in a nonliteral way to express a suitable relationship between essentially unlike things. When Twain compares the jaw of a bulldog to the "fo'castle of a steamboat" or says that a frog whirled in the air "like a doughnut," he is using a figure of speech or figurative language. The more common figures of speech are SIMILE, METAPHOR, PERSONIFICATION, HYPERBOLE, and SYNECDOCHE.

FLASHBACK is the recounting, in fleeting or extended form, of past incident(s) in a character's life, usually for the purpose of clarifying present events. Films often use the flashback technique. e.g. Steinbeck's "Molly Morgan"; Faulkner's The Sound and the Fury

FOIL is any character who by his contrast to another character brings out the personality of the latter. e.g. Banquo to Macbeth in Macbeth; Fortinbras and Laertes to Hamlet in Hamlet

FOLKLORE, the customs, proverbs, legends, superstitions, songs, and tales of a people or nation. Literature often borrows elements from folklore. For instance, the belief that the devil can assume human form and the old legend (common to the folklore of many countries) of someone who strikes a bargain with the devil were incorporated into "The Devil and Tom Walker" by Washington Irving.

FOOT, in verse, a group of syllables usually consisting of one accented syllable and all unaccented syllables associated with it. (A foot may occasionally, for variety, have two accented syllables. See SPONDEE.)

In the following lines feet are divided by slashes:

*At mid / night in / the month / of June,
I stand / beneath / the mys / tic moon.*

Poe, "The Sleeper"

FORESHADOWING is an indication or hint of a later event. e.g. gathering rocks in "The Lottery"

FREE VERSE is poetry which has rhythm but no consistent pattern of stresses (meter), usually rich in poetic devices, and possessing, as all good poetry does, aesthetic qualities and a universal appeal. e.g. Ferlinghetti's "Junkman's Obbligato"; Arnold's "Dover Beach"

GENRE is a type or class of literature. The term is a very loose one, however, so that subheadings under these would themselves also be called genres, for instance, the MYTH and the epic.

e.g. the Elizabethan revenge play, the modern detective story, novel, poetry.

GOTHIC FICTION is fiction which concentrates on the eerie and the grotesque for the purpose of evoking terror.

e.g. most tales of Edgar Allen Poe

GOTHIC ROMANCE is a romance which takes place in an eerie setting, generally an old mansion.

e.g. the novels of Mary Stewart

GUTTURALS are the sounds designated by the letters 'g', 'k', and 'ch' (as in Machiavelli)

HAIKU POETRY is an ancient Japanese verse form of three unrhymed lines containing seventeen syllables in all (five, seven, five).

e.g. The falling flower/I saw drift back to the branch/Was a butterfly.

HAMARTIA is the Greek word for the 'tragic flaw' of a character, a flaw which leads to his eventual downfall or destruction.

e.g. Macbeth's ambition

HEROIC COUPLET, a pair of rhymed verse lines in IAMBIC PENTAMETER.

*Trust not yourself: but your defects to know,
Make use of every friend – and every foe.
Pope, from An Essay on Criticism*

HEXAMETER a verse line of six feet.

HUBRIS is a Greek word meaning 'excessive or overbearing pride'. In tragedy, hubris is often the 'tragic flaw' which causes the hero's downfall by pushing him beyond the bounds of moral or divine law.

e.g. this flaw of pride is present in King Lear

HYPERBOLE is a figure of speech employing deliberate exaggeration.

e.g. he drank oceans of tea.

IAMB, a two – syllable metrical FOOT consisting of one unaccented syllable followed by one accented syllable, as in the word 'decide'.

IDYLL (meaning literally 'little picture') is a short pastoral poem whose description suggests a mood of innocence and peace. The term has also come to be applied to longer narrative poems which are idealized in content and serious in theme.

e.g. Wordsworth's "The Solitary Reaper"; Tennyson's "Idylls of the King"

IMAGE is, as the word suggests, a picture. The picture may appeal to any of our senses (including sensations of heat, pressure, and motion as well as of sight, smell, taste, touch, and hearing).

IMAGERY is the collective images in any piece of literature
e.g. the imagery of poison in Hamlet is both literal and figurative.

IMAGISM, a movement in American poetry during the early 1900s, led by Ezra Pound, Amy Lowell, and others, which endorsed the use of precise IMAGERY and freedom of subject selection and metrical rhythms.

IMITATIVE HARMONY is produced by a group of words whose sound “imitates” that which they are describing.
e.g. “And trailed his yellow-brown slackness soft-bellied down”
(D. H. Lawrence’s “Snake”); the sound of the verse suggests the feel, sound, and rhythm of the snake
(See ONOMATOPOEIA)

IMPRESSIONISM, a manner of writing in which scenes, characters, or moods are presented from a particular vantage point rather than as they actually are. The sights and events in The Red Badge of Courage are filtered through Henry Fleming’s impressions so that, for example, the entire regiment appears as “grunting bundles of blue.”

IN MEDIAS RES is a Latin term meaning “in the thick of things”. Thus a piece of literature commencing “in medias res” is one in which there is no introduction; instead, the reader is plunged directly into the action. Background information is usually revealed later through such devices as flashback, allusions in dialogue, or narrative explanation.

INDIRECT PRESENTATION is the presentation of character, theme, subject through implicit statement.

INDUCTION is the reasoning from the particular to the general; examination of specific cases to form a universal law.

INFERENCE, a reasonable conclusion about the behaviour of a character or the meaning of an event drawn from the limited information presented by the author. After reading “In Another Country,” one might infer that this is a story, not about war but about human isolation. Further, one could conclude that the physical wounds of the soldiers symbolize the emotional scars of alienation.

INTERIOR MONOLOGUE, a technique used by writers to present the **STREAM OF CONSCIOUSNESS** of a fictional character, either directly by presenting what is passing through the character's mind or indirectly by the author's selection of and comments upon the character's thoughts.

INTERNAL MONOLOGUE refers to the words of a literary character who is talking or thinking to himself. While the soliloquy is the convention in drama for such self-addresses, the internal monologue is the convention employed in short stories, novels, and poems. The monologue may proceed in more or less conventional speech patterns or it may reflect the jumbled structure of the imaginative processes, in which case it is referred to as stream of consciousness.
e.g. Salinger's Catcher in the Rye; Tennyson's Ulysses; Joyce's novels

INTERNAL RHYME is rhyme within a single line, serving to speed up the poem's rhythm or enhance its lyrical quality.
e.g. Robert Service's "The Cremation of Sam Magee"; Alfred Noyes' "The Highwayman"
e.g. "I spy a fly upon the rye."

INVECTIVE is vigorous verbal denunciation and abuse.
e.g. Hamlet's angry cry against Claudius; "Bloody, bawdy villain./Remorseless, treacherous, lecherous, kindless villain."

INVERSION is a rhetorical device in which normal sentence pattern is altered or reversed to create an emphatic or rhythmic effect. The placement of the verb before the subject is that standard form of inversion.
e.g. Tender is the night; Blessed are the meek
(See ANASTROPHE)

INVOCATION is the direct addressing of a divine power by a writer, in the process of his composition. Invocation usually occurs at the beginning of a poem (as in most epics) where the author requests the inspiration and guidance of the appropriate muses.
e.g. Milton's Paradise Lost; Homer's The Iliad

IRONY is the result of a statement saying one thing while meaning the opposite, or of situations developing contrary to expectation.

VERBAL IRONY refers to a statement in which the opposite of what is said is meant.
e.g.. Mark Twain: "It's easy to quit smoking. I've done it hundreds of times".

DRAMATIC IRONY is based on the same principle of opposition between appearance and reality, but here the speaker is unaware of the opposition, and thus his ironic statements are not intentional as they are with verbal irony. The audience, though, often recognizes the ironic implications of such speech.

e.g. When Brutus says, "And for Mark Antony, think not of him,/For he can do no more than Caesar's arm/When Caesar's head is cut off.", it is not until much later that he discovers the opposite to be true.

SITUATIONAL IRONY is a discrepancy between expectation and realization.

e.g. a man who develops an elaborate plot to kill his wife is trapped in his own device

JARGON is language that is either incoherent or ugly sounding because of its excessive use of circumlocution, technical terms, Latinate terms, slang, or general fuzziness of expression.

e.g. "meanwhile, in general proximity with the area of the development commonly given over to the dispensation of spirituous liquors, there sat, projecting an aura at the same time ebullient and lubricious, a noble gentleman, known to his peer group as Dangerous Dan McGrew."

JUSTIFICATION, to prove right or reasonable.

JUXTAPOSITION is a poetic and rhetorical device in which normally unassociated ideas, words, or phrases are placed next to one another, creating an effect of surprise, wit, or irony.

e.g. "foolish, mulish, religious donkeys" (Dylan Thomas); irreverent juxtaposition of "religious" with words of stubbornness and stupidity

KENNING is a compound metaphor common to early Germanic literature in which a figurative name is used to present an object.

e.g. In the Anglo-Saxon *Beowulf*, the expression 'ring-giver' is used for 'king', 'swan-road' for 'sea', and 'twilight-spoiler' for 'dragon'

LEGEND, a traditional anonymous story which may have some basis in fact.

There are many legends about Johnny Appleseed, for example, who was a real person named John Chapman, but about whom relatively little is actually known. Both Betsy Ross and George Washington figure in legends. Places, too, sometimes prompt legends – cliffs from which unhappy lovers are said to have leaped, for instance. (See MYTH)

LITOTES (a form of irony) is a rhetorical device wherein a claim is deliberately played down or "understated". The effect is usually one of wit.

e.g. Mark Twain: "The reports of my death are greatly exaggerated."

LOOSE SENTENCE is one in which the main point is made at the beginning and then followed by material which fills this point. Although such a structure might seem to leave the latter section of the sentence in an anticlimactic position, skillfully structured loose sentences effectively develop and qualify the initial material in this second part so that no letdown occurs.

LYRIC was originally a song sung to the accompaniment of a lyre. It now refers to a poem which expresses, in rhythmic language, some personal emotion or sentiment. An ode, therefore, is a long lyric; an elegy is a lyric about someone who is dead; and a sonnet, a lyric of fourteen lines. In its more restricted sense, however, a lyric is characterized by these four qualities:

1. singleness of theme
2. brevity
3. strong personal feeling
4. musical quality

e.g. Keats' "To a Nightingale"; Shakespeare's sonnets; Dylan Thomas' "Do Not Go Gentle Into That Good Night"

MALAPROPISM (named after Mrs. Malaprop in The Rivals) is the ludicrous misuse of a word in mistake for one resembling it.
e.g. She paid an exuberant price for her hat.

MASCULINE ENDING is the last syllable in a line of poetry when that syllable is stressed.

MASULINE RHYME occurs when the final rhyming syllables to two or more lines of poetry are stressed.

e.g. "A Book of Verses underneath the bough/A jug of wine, a loaf of bread and Thou." (Omar Khayyam)

MAXIM, a brief saying embodying a moral, such as "Diligence is the mother of good luck" (Franklin). It is sometimes also called an APHORISM.

MELODRAMA is drama featuring stereotyped characters, exaggerated situations, and gushy sentimentalism in which good and evil characters are pitted against each other, credibility of plot is sacrificed for emotional impact, and the ending is one of retributive justice.

e.g. Dickens' novels; Charlotte Bronte's Jane Eyre; many films and television plays

METAMORPHOSIS, an alteration in appearance or character.

METAPHOR is a rhetorical device in which one object is directly compared to another object.

e.g. "All the world's a stage" (Shakespeare)

METER, the pattern of stressed and unstressed syllables in poetry.
(See RHYTHM and FOOT)

METONYMY is a figure of speech in which one object is named which replaces another object closely associated with it.
e.g. In “Scepter and crown must tumble down” (James Shirley), the words ‘scepter and crown’ replace ‘king’ or ‘monarch’

MIRACLE AND MORALITY PLAYS were a form of medieval verse drama. The miracle play dramatized a famous Biblical event or saintly feat, while the morality play was, as the term suggests, a play with a Christian moral, usually in an allegorical framework.
e.g. Everyman presents on stage the trials and lessons of a man after he has been summoned by death

MOCK EPIC is a literary form meant to ridicule a situation by using the epic form. The situation becomes trivial in terms of the importance of situations in epics.
e.g. Alexander Pope’s “The Rape of the Lock” ridicules a young woman’s anger over the loss of a lock of her hair.

MODERNISM, a general term applied retrospectively to the wide range of experimental and avant-garde trends in the literature of the early 20th century. Modernist writers (such as William Faulkner, James Joyce, Virginia Woolf, T. S. Eliot, et. al.) rejected 19th-century traditions and disturbed their readers by adopting complex and difficult new forms and styles (i.e. upsetting of chronology, stream-of-consciousness style, fragmentary images, themes of urban cultural dislocation).
(*Oxford Dictionary*)

MONOLOGUE, an extended speech given by one speaker. Sometimes a distinction is made between a SOLILOQUY and a monologue, with the term soliloquy describing the extended speech of a character on stage who is in effect talking to himself or herself and expressing inner thoughts aloud. Gene, in “I Never Sang For My Father”, expresses his inner thoughts when he speaks resentfully of his father and labels himself “a gentleman who gave way at intersections.”: These musings are supposed to be known only to the audience and not to other characters. The term monologue is usually used to express any rather long speech given by one person – a character in a story or a real person. Amanda’s lengthy speech about her social life in her youth, made to Laura as they await the arrival of Tom and Jim for dinner in “The Glass Menagerie”, is a monologue.

MOOD is the unifying attitude of any work. It is conveyed in literature through description of setting, nature of incident and characterization, rhythm of language, diction, and so on. It differs from atmosphere in that it refers to the author's state of mind rather than to the outside world.
e.g. A. E. Housman and Thomas Hardy display a strong mood of pessimism in much of their writing.

MOTIF is any recurring image or idea in an artistic work which serves to unify its diverse elements. Many motifs are adapted from lore, such as the man fatally caught in the spell of a lady in Keats' "La Belle Dame Sans Merci". Often a work's motif is indicated by the author's deliberate repetition of a significant phrase (repetition of 'evermore' in Poe's "The Raven").
e.g. the images of rebirth in Steinbeck's The Grapes of Wrath

MOTIVATION, the portrayal of circumstances and aspects of personality that makes a character's actions and reactions plausible or believable. In "A New England Nun", Louisa Ellis' decision not to marry Joe seems plausible because of the author's description of events and Louisa's thoughts about her future.

MYTH, a traditional tale of unknown authorship involving gods and goddesses or other supernatural beings. A myth often attempts to explain aspects of nature such as the seasons or creation.

NARRATION is writing in which a series of events are related.

NARRATIVE, a story or account of an event or a series of events. It may be told either in poetry or prose; it may be either fictional or true. Amy Lowell's "Patterns," Sara Kemble Knight's account, and "April 2005: Usher II," are all examples of narratives.

NARRATOR, the teller of a story. The Teller may be a character in the story, as in "The Cask of Amontillado"; the author himself, as in "Escape: A Slave Narrative": or an anonymous voice outside the story, as in "A Worn Path". A narrator's attitude toward his or her subject is capable of much variation; it can range from one of apparent indifference to one of extreme conviction and feeling. When a narrator appears to have some bias regarding his or her subject, as in "Soldiers of the Republic," it becomes especially important to determine whether the narrator and the author are to be regarded as the same person.
(See also PERSONA and POINT OF VIEW)

NATURALISM, writing that depicts events as rigidly determined by the forces of heredity and environment. Stephen Crane has been called a naturalist because his writing expounds the philosophy that the world can be understood by examining cause-and-effect relationships and that all events are determined by antecedent causes.

NEMESIS (from the goddess of retribution) is the dealing out of justice at the end of a drama; the good are rewarded, the evil punished.

NOVEL, a long work of prose fiction dealing with characters, situations, and **SETTINGS** that imitate those of real life.

NOVELLA, a brief tale, especially the early tales of French and Italian writers, considered to be the form which engendered the later **NOVEL**. Novella is also used as a synonym for novelette, or short novel.

ODE is a lengthy lyric poem comprised of formally written stanzas which express a sentimental or serious theme. The ode always makes use of the device of apostrophe.
e.g. Shelley's "Ode to the West Wind"; Keats' "Ode on a Grecian Urn"

ONOMATOPOEIA, (also referred to as **IMITATIVE HARMONY**) use of a word or words whose sounds imitate the sound of the thing spoken about. Words such as hiss, mumble, caw, and mew are onomatopoeic words. In the following example, the author has tried to convey the sound of rustling leaves.

*The treetops faintly rustle beneath the
breeze's flight,
A soft and soothing sound, yet it whispers
of the night...*

Bryant, "Waiting by the Gate"

OCTAV RIMA is an eight-line stanza, characterized by an a-b-a-b-a-b-c-c rhyme scheme.
e.g. Byron's "Don Juan"

OXYMORON is the deliberate combination of incongruous or contradictory words, usually for the purpose of shocking the reader into awareness; a condensed paradox.
e.g. "harmonious madness"; "the wisest fool in Christendom"; "bitter sweet"

PACE is the rate of speed at which any literary work moves.

PARABLE is a short and symbolic story which illustrates a truth or moral through the narration of non-supernatural occurrence.
e.g. the stories of Jesus; Franz Kafka's The Couriers

PARADOX is any statement which appears self-contradictory but has, in fact, real sense.
e.g. Jesus: "For whosoever will save his life shall lose it."; Socrates: "The more you know, the more you know you don't know."

PARALLELISM refers to the grammatical or structural similarity between sentences or parts of a sentence.
e.g. Churchill's "...they still have it in their power to sweep away the horrors and miseries which surround them, and to allow the streams of freedom, happiness, and abundance to begin again their healing flow."
Parallelism is also a literary term, indicating likeness between components of plot.

e.g. the two parent-child conflicts in King Lear; the parallel launching of the ship and iceberg, two mighty forces which will eventually be pitted against one another in E. J. Pratt's poem "The Titanic"

PARODY is a comic work in which a particular style or literary composition is ridiculed through imitation. W. H. Auden has called it the "highest form of criticism" because it requires depth of insight into the work being parodied.
e.g. Don Quixote is a parody of the chivalric romance, exhibiting a penetrating insight into the technique and ideas of this form.
(See SATIRE.)

PARENTHETICAL, a word, phrase, or passage inserted within parentheses to explain or modify a thought.

PASTORAL (from the Greek pastor, meaning 'shepherd') is, broadly, any literary work which deals with rural life. In doing so, it usually celebrates the simple, rustic existence in contrast to urban artificiality and decadence.
e.g. Wordsworth's "Michael"

PATHETIC FALLACY is a literary device involving the personification of nature, which is portrayed as being emotionally sensitive to the plights of man. The ascription of human feelings to nature was considered by John Ruskin (coiner of the phrase 'pathetic fallacy') as a wrong ascription of emotion.

e.g. The storms in Shakespearean drama almost always occur as reflections of civil disorder or human distress.

PATHOS (from the Greeks, meaning 'suffering') is a term used to describe scenes or passages in literature which evoke pity or sorrow. Sometimes an artist's effort to create pathos fails, resulting in sentimentalism or bathos.

e.g. Pathos occurs in Hemingway's The Old Man and the Sea when the aged Santiago loses his battle with the sharks over his great fish

PENTAMETER, a metrical line of five feet. (See also FOOT.)

O star / of morn / ing and / of lib / erty!
O bring / er of / the light, / whose splen / dor shines
Above / the dark / ness of / the Ap / pennines
Forerun / ner of / the day / that is / to be!
 Longfellow, "Divina Commedia"

PERIODIC SENTENCE is one in which the important part of the sentence is held back until the end. Usually, a long series of clauses and/or phrases provides a buildup to this climax. The periodic sentence can be used to create suspense.

PERSONA, the mask or voice which a writer assumes in a particular work. Persona is derived from a Latin word meaning "mask." Eliot is the author of "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock," but the persona is Prufrock, through whom Eliot speaks. In "The Devil and Tom Walker," Irving has assumed a voice or persona, gently ironic, somewhat indulgent, in telling the story.

PERSONIFICATION is a type of imagery where human qualities are attributed to non-human phenomena.
 e.g.. Shakespeare's "The earth's a thief that feeds and breeds."

PERSUASION is writing designed to influence a person, through reasoning or argument, to perform an action.

PLOSIVES are the sounds designated by the letters 'b', 'p', 'd', and 't'.

PLOT, in the simplest sense, a series of happenings in a literary work; but the word is often used to refer to the action as it is organized around a CONFLICT and builds through complication to a CLIMAX followed by a DENOUEMENT or resolution.

POETIC JUSTICE occurs at the end of a drama or story, at which time the good are rewarded and the evil punished. Justice of this nature occurs in most western and spy dramas where the rewards and punishments are fastidiously appropriate.

POETIC LICENSE is the freedom to violate normal conventions of language or truth in the interests of forceful writing. The nongrammatical structures in poetry (meter, rhyme, unorthodox word choice and order, etc.) exemplify this license. Other examples of poetic license are the nonpunctuated stream of consciousness passages in prose and distortions of historical fact.

POINT OF VIEW refers to the perspective from which the events in a short story, poem, or novel are narrated.

EMOTIONAL POINT OF VIEW refers to the mood of a literary work.

MENTAL POINT OF VIEW refers to the degree to which a narrator can determine the thoughts of the characters in a story.

PHYSICAL POINT OF VIEW refers to the narrator's, and therefore the reader's physical position in a scene.

POINT OF VIEW, the relationship assumed between the teller of a story, and the characters in it. The teller, or **NARRATOR**, may be a character, in which case the story is told from the **first person point of view**, as in "In Another Country". A writer who describes, in the third person, both the thoughts and actions of one or all of the characters is said to use the **omniscient point of view**. "The First Seven Years" is told from the omniscient point of view. Writers who confine themselves in the third person, to describing thoughts and actions of a single character are sometimes said to use the **limited omniscient point of view**. (See "The Jilting of Granny Weatherall".) An author who describes only what can be seen and heard, like a newspaper reporter, is said to use the **dramatic or objective point of view**. The narrator may then be a minor character in the story who plays the roles of eyewitness and confidant.

POST-MODERNISM, a disputed term that occupies much recent debate about contemporary culture since the early 1980's. It refers generally to the phase of 20th century Western culture that succeeded the reign of modernism, more often applied to a cultural condition prevailing since the 1960's characterized by disconnected images and styles – most notably in television, advertising, commercial design and pop video. Post-modernism may be seen as a continuation of modernism's alienated mood and disorientating techniques; however, the post modernist sees contemporary existence as absurd or meaningless (i.e. Kurt Vonnegut, Italo Calvino, Angela Carter, Jeanette Winterson). (*Oxford Dictionary*)

PREMISE, in logic, is a statement assumed to be true and used to draw a conclusion.

e.g. Major Premise: Children should go to school.
Minor Premise: John is a child.
Conclusion: John should go to school.

PROLOGUE is a prefatory statement to a narrative or drama. It is usually a spoken or sung introduction to a stage performance.

e.g. the opening sonnet of Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet

PROPAGANDA, writing that directly advocates a certain doctrine as the solution to some social or political problem. Writing that tends to support views opposite to one's own is most frequently termed propaganda, but the term should legitimately be applied to the advocacy of any doctrine. Thomas Paine was writing propaganda in The American Crisis.

PROPOSITION is what a writer has to say about his subject.
e.g. a writer's subject may be dogs; his proposition may be that dogs should be banned within city limits or it may be that every child should own a dog

PROSE POEM, a piece of writing set down as prose but having the rhythms, language, and imaginative quality usually associated with poetry.

PROTAGONIST is the central character of a drama or narrative.

PROVERB, a brief, traditional saying that makes an observation on character or conduct or contains some bit of popular wisdom such as "Red sky at morning, sailors take warning" or "A watched pot never boils" or "Cold hands, warm heart."
(Compare MAXIM and EPIGRAM.)

PUN is a play on words having similar sounds but different meanings, usually for comic effect. It is the simultaneous use of two or more different senses of the same word, or different words with the same sound. Puns are used for expressive or humorous effect, as in the following epitaph:

*In her eyes,
the love light lies;
and lies and lies,
and lies.*

PURPLE PASSAGE is a heightening of emotion and language (usually intentional) so that a literary passage stands out from its surrounding context. The term is also used derogatorily as a synonym for 'melodramatic' as in the overplayed last pages of Dickens' A Tale of Two Cities.

PURPOSE is the reason a writer has for writing a particular piece of work. Sometimes a writer may have more than one purpose in any particular passage.
e.g. Corey Ford's essay "How to Build an Outdoor Fireplace" is intended to entertain as well as to propose that outdoor living should be left to the fools.

QUATRAIN, verse STANZA of four lines, as in the following epitaph. Emerson's poem "Brahma" is written in quatrains, as are Robinson's poems "Miniver Cheevy" and "Richard Cory".

QUIXOTIC is an adjective referring to any character who is a bungling idealist. The term is derived from Cervantes' hero Don Quixote, who possessed these qualities.
e.g. Henrik Ibsen's Hjalmar Ekdal in The Wild Duck; Al Capp's Fearless Fosdick

REALISM is a general term which is applied to writers who are concerned with presenting life as it actually is, not as they or their reader would like it to be. Protest against realism, however, often comes from the romanticist and the idealist, who hold that the realist approach tends to ignore the power and beauty of the inner and the unseen.

REFRAIN, the repetition of one or more lines in each STANZA of a poem.
"Clementine" has a refrain.

REGIONALISM, the emphasis in fiction on the dialect, dress, customs, and traditions of a particular region and on the effect that setting has on character development. In "A Wagner Matinee," Aunt Georgiana's character is revealed through descriptions of her life on a Nebraska homestead. Local colour writing, as practiced by Bret Harte, Kate Chopin, and Mary Wilkins Freeman during the 1800s, was a less-complex form of regional writing which described the West, the South, and New England, respectively.

REPARTEE is a series of quick and skillful replies occurring in a contest of wits between two or more people.
e.g. Oscar Wilde's "The Importance of Being Earnest"

REPETITION is a rhetorical device in which words, sounds, and ideas are used more than once for the purpose of enhancing rhythm and creating emphasis. There is also repetition of a non-rhetorical sort in much literature; within an overall narrative (modes of darkness in Conrad's Heart of Darkness) or within a people's entire cultural heritage (in the myth of the hero-redeemer).

RHETORIC is the skillful manipulation of language. Some of the favourite devices used towards this end are antithesis, balance, climax, contrast, inversion, juxtaposition, parallelism, periodic sentences, repetition, rhetorical question. Poetic techniques involving rhythm, sound, and imagery are often a part of a writer's or speaker's rhetorical equipment as well.

RHETORICAL QUESTION is one which expects no answer. Instead, it is used to draw attention to a point and is generally stronger than a direct statement.

e.g. Mark Antony's "Did this in Caesar seem ambitious?" is rhetorical. Mark Antony is not really questioning; he is accusing.

RHYME, exact repetition of sounds in at least the final accented syllable of two or more words. (See also INTERNAL RHYME, END RHYME, and SLANT RHYME.)

RHYME SCHEME, any pattern of rhyme in a STANZA. For purposes of study, the pattern is labeled as shown below, with the first rhyme labeled *a*, as are all the words rhyming with it; the second rhyme labeled *b*, the third rhyme labeled *c*, and so on.

<i>And what is so rare as a day in June?</i>	<i>a</i>
<i>Then, if ever, come perfect days;</i>	<i>b</i>
<i>Then Heaven tries earth if it be in tune,</i>	<i>a</i>
<i>And over it softly her warm ear lays;</i>	<i>b</i>
<i>Whether we look, or whether we listen,</i>	<i>c</i>
<i>We hear life murmur, or see it glisten;</i>	<i>c</i>

Lowell, "The Vision of Sir Launfal"

RHYTHM, the arrangement of stressed and unstressed syllables in speech or writing. Rhythm, or METER, may be regular, taDUM, taDUM, taDUM, or it may vary within a line or work. The four most common meters are IAMB or iambus, TROCHEE, ANAPEST, and DACTYL.

RISING ACTION refers to the building up of events and conflicts in a drama or narrative which leads eventually to the climax.

ROMANTICISM, unlike REALISM, Romanticism tends to portray the uncommon. The material selected tends to deal with extraordinary people in unusual experiences. In Romantic literature there is often a stress on the past and an emphasis on nature.

e.g. Wordsworth "It is a Beauteous Evening" and Keats' "Ode to a Nightingale"

RUN-ON LINE, a line in which the thought continues beyond the end of the poetic line. There should be no pause after 'might' in the stanza below, the unbroken rhythm making a run-on line.

*Oh, dumb be passion's stormy rage,
When he who might
Have lighted up and led his age,
Falls back in night.*

Whittier, "Ichabod"

(See ENJAMBEMENT.)

SARCASM, the use of language to hurt, wound, or ridicule. It is less subtle in TONE than IRONY.

SATIRE is any work which criticizes people, ideas, or institutions by holding them up to ridicule. It usually differs from other forms of laughter-evoking literature in its more serious content.

e.g. Johnathan Swift's "A Modest Proposal"; Joseph Heller's Catch 22;
Franz Kafka's The Trial

SCANSION is the determination of the number and kind of poetic feet in a line of poetry.

SENSORY IMAGES are impressions derived from literary passages; visual (sight), auditory (hearing), olfactory (smell), gustatory (taste), tactile (touch), thermal (heat), kinesthetic (motion).

SENTIMENTALISM is the excessive play by a work on the pity and sympathy of a reader or audience.

e.g. television soap operas

SETTING, the time (both time of day or season and period in history) and place in which the action of a NARRATIVE occurs. The setting may be suggested through DIALOGUE and action, or it may be described by the NARRATOR or one of the characters. Setting contributes strongly to the MOOD or ATMOSPHERE and plausibility of a work. The detailed, precise description of the swamp in "The Devil and Tom Walker," for example, convinces us that if the devil is ever going to appear in the flesh, he will do so in this fiendish setting.

SIBILANTS are the sounds designated by the letters 's', 'z', 'sh', and 'zh'. A passage containing an abundance of these sounds is said to have SIBILANCE.

SIMILE is a figure of speech in which the words 'like' or 'as' are used to effect a comparison.

e.g. Dylan Thomas' "Fern Hill"; "Though I sang in my chains like the sea"
and "fire green as grass"

SLANT RHYME, rhyme in which the vowel sounds are not quite identical, as in the first and third lines that follow:

*By the rude bridge that arched the flood,
Their flag to April's breeze unfurled,
Here once the embattled farmers stood
And fired the shot heard round the world.*
Emerson, "Concord Hymn"

SOLILOQUY is a speech made by a character alone on the stage. The device is used to reveal to the audience the private workings of a central character's mind and to fill in important background information. It can also provide motivation or foreshadow future events. The soliloquy, popular in Elizabethan drama, has almost disappeared in the modern drama.

SONNET, a LYRIC poem with a traditional form of fourteen IAMBIC PENTAMETER lines. Sonnets fall into two groups, according to their RHYME SCHEMES. The *Italian* or *Petrarchan* (after the Italian poet Petrarch) sonnet is usually rhymed *abbaabba/cdecde* (with variations permitted in the *cdecde* rhyme scheme), forming basically a two-part poem of eight lines (octave) and six lines (sestet) respectively. These two parts are played off against each other in a great variety of ways. See "Whoso List to Hunt." The *English* or *Shakespearean* sonnet is usually rhymed *abab/cdcd/efef/gg*, presenting a four-part structure in which an idea or theme is developed in three stages and then brought to a conclusion in the COUPLET. See Shakespeare's sonnets.

SPONDEE, a metrical FOOT of two accented syllables ("). It serves occasionally as a substitute foot to vary the meter, as in the first foot below:

Tom, Tom, / the pi / per's son...

SPOONERISM is a term used to describe the reversal of initial sounds in two consecutive words; used to elicit laughter.
e.g. Cinderella retold "the sugly isters" or "sisty uglers"

STANZA, a group of lines which form a division in a poem.

STEREOTYPE, a conventional character, plot, or setting, which thus possesses little or no individuality. There are some situations, characters, and settings that are frequently predictable, usually because of the author's treatment. Examples of such stereotypes include "the dead body in the library," "the wandering, lone hero," or "the poet starving in a garret."

STOCK CHARACTERS are characters whose type and role have occurred frequently in fiction. The villain, the hero, and the chaste young woman all conform to a certain personality pattern and have done so from the eras previous to the Elizabethan tragedy to the modern melodrama. The equally typical situations in which they find themselves are called STOCK SITUATIONS. In order to make stock characters successful, the writer must effectively combine the unique with the typical. The success of the presentation of stock material depends on not relying on it as an end in itself, but using it as a skeletal frame for something more substantial.
e.g. Hamlet and Iago are well-known Renaissance types: the melancholic thinker and the Italian conspirator

STOICISM is a classical school of philosophy which teaches that virtue and happiness depend on an unflinching resignation to the laws of the universe. 'Stoical' is a term which has since come to be applied generally to any human behaviour which exhibits quiet, unbreakable courage. e.g. Ernest Hemingway's heroes

STREAM OF CONSCIOUSNESS is a narrative style which ignores the usual grammatical and logical patterns of writing in order to portray the actual flux and rhythm of a character's thoughts. All the mental associations and feelings connected with an event or object in the fictional character's life are recorded by the author in a 'stream' of impressions, without conventional punctuation or sentence structure. The result is a flow of language which often seems chaotic, but may be rich in its implications and truer to actual thought than more orthodox syntax of the ordinary internal monologue.

e.g. Katherine Anne Porter's Pale Horse, Pale Rider; James Joyce's Ulysses; Salinger's Catcher In The Rye

STYLE is the way in which an author expresses what he has to say. It is analyzed in terms of the writer's use of sound, diction, sentence structure, rhythm, and imagery.

SUBJECT is the thing or idea about which a writer writes.

SUBPLOT is a minor plot in a story, related to the major plot and often developing parallel to it. Despite the wide and effective use of subplot in drama, Aristotle condemned it in his Poetics as faulty technique and a violation of unity of plot.

e.g. the relationship between Gloucester and his sons in King Lear is a subplot which, besides being of interest in itself, mirrors, promotes, and intensifies the movement of the main plot involving King Lear and his daughters.

SUSPENSE is the tension and anxiety felt by the audience towards one or more characters whose fate is uncertain. Suspense is aroused at various critical moments of the rising action, during which time the audience (or reader) feels an intensified emotional identification with some of the characters.

SYLLOGISM, a form of logical argument that derives a conclusion from two premises.

e.g. all poets are alcoholics, Jane is a poet, therefore, Jane is an alcoholic.

SYMBOL is a concrete entity standing for some general idea (a cross is the idea of Christianity). In literature, symbols may be conventional or personal. Some important conventional symbols are the elements of fire and water (for passion and redemption respectively); the colours white, grey, green, black (for purity, dullness, fertility or immaturity, and evil respectively); the names of any number of mythical heroes (for whatever quality the figures in question most exemplify); light (for goodness or wisdom); the rose (for love); natural storms (for human agony and disorder). Like mythology, to which it is closely related, symbolism is a crucial part of artistic communication.

SYMBOLISM, the use in literature of objects or events to represent something other than themselves, frequently abstract ideas or concepts. In "The Chambered Nautilus," the shell symbolizes the body and the animal in the shell, the soul.

SYNECHDOCHE is a figure of speech in which

1. a part of something is used to represent the whole (all hands on deck)
2. a whole is used to represent a part (Canada met the Soviet Union at hockey)
3. the material from which something is made is used for the thing itself (the quarterback threw the pigskin fifty yards downfield).

SYNTHESIS is the bringing together of varied elements by some unifying design. e.g. a discussion of several of Shakespeare's plays under the unifying subject of imagery

TALL TALE, a humorous, simple NARRATIVE which recounts extraordinary, impossible happenings. A distinctly American Genre, it originated on the American frontier when "yarn-spinners" passed on the legendary feats of such folk heroes as Paul Bunyan and Babe the Blue Ox, Mike Fink (the Mississippi Riverman), and John Henry. The tall tale found its way into the American Literary tradition after the Civil War, and its form is preserved in "The Celebrated Jumping Frog of Calaveras County."

TECHNIQUE, the craftsmanship used by an author to give a work form and meaning. Also a specific literary device, such as SYMBOLISM or SATIRE, may be referred to as a technique.

TERCET, a stanza of three rhyming lines:

*Maiden! With meek, brown eyes,
In whose orbs a shadow lies
Like the dusk in evening skies!*
Longfellow, "Maidenhood"

TETRAMETER, a metrical line of four feet:

*One au / tumn night, / in Sud / bury town,
Across / the mead / ows bare / and brown.
Longfellow, "Tales of a Wayside Inn"*

THEME of any work of art is the main unifying idea behind the plot, character, and setting.

THESIS is the author's opinion about his subject.
(see PROPOSITION)

TONE is a manner of speaking or, in writing, the spirit or character which suggests a writer's attitude. Although tone in speech is indicated by pitch as well as by words, in writing it is indicated by diction alone.

TOPIC (see SUBJECT)

TRAGIC FLAW (see HAMARTIA)

TRAGEDY, dramatic or narrative writing in which the main character suffers disaster after a serious and significant struggle but faces his or her downfall in such a way as to attain heroic stature.

TRANSCENDENTALISM, a mystical philosophy which expresses the belief that within human beings there is an insight or intuition which transcends sensory experience and logic and makes it possible to recognize universal truths. Romantic idealism and self-determination are characteristics of transcendental writing. The works of Emerson and Thoreau are representative of American Transcendentalism.

TRANSITIONAL DEVICES are devices for achieving clarity between two ideas or subjects. Some transitional devices are pronouns, relative pronouns, subordinate and coordinate conjunctions, adverbial conjunctions, parallelism, and repetition.

TRIMETER, metrical line of three feet:

*Oft to / his fro / zen lair
Tracked I / the gris / ly bear ...
Longfellow, "The Song of Hiawatha"*

UNITY is a singleness of idea. It involves relating everything relevant to a topic and eliminating everything that is irrelevant.

UNITIES (ARISTOTELIAN) are the unities of time, place, and action, all three of which, according to Aristotle in his poetics, are necessary for a good tragedy. The unity of time means that the play should take place within a single day; the unity of place, that the action should be confined to a single setting; and the unity of action, that there should be no subplots. e.g. Sophocles' Oedipus Rex observes all three of the unities.

VERBAL IRONY (see IRONY)

VERSE, in its most general sense, a synonym for poetry. Verse also may be used to refer to poetry carefully composed as to RHYTHM and RHYME scheme, but of inferior literary value.

VICTORIANS, of or pertaining to the sixty-three-year reign (1837-1901) of Queen Victoria, to the English people of the period, to their sentiments, beliefs, tasks, and accomplishments. The first 30 years were characterized by political reform, rapid industrial growth, enormous population growth, and the rise of the middle class whose struggles with the working class and aristocracy form the dominant theme of Victorian literature. The second 30 years were marked by nationalism, mass unemployment and economic crisis, the science vs. religion debate reflected in the literature by a growing disillusion with traditional moral values. Writers of the period include Charles Dickens, Robert Browning, and Alfred Lord Tennyson. (*Benét's Readers' Encyclopedia*)

VIGNETTE, a brief NARRATIVE or description written with precision and grace, and intended to give a vivid impression of a personality or scene. Whitman's "Cavalry Crossing a Ford" is a vignette.

VOICE (see PERSONA)