AP LITERATURE TERMS MASTER CHART

**LITERARY TERM DEFINITION  ONGOING EXAMPLES-THREE REQUIRED**

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| **NARRATIVE STRUCTURE** | | The **PLOT**, or sequence of events in a narrative (fiction story) |  |
| Allegory | | An extended [metaphor](http://www.poetryfoundation.org/learning/glossary-term/Metaphor) in which the characters, places, and objects in a narrative carry figurative meaning. Often an allegory’s meaning is religious, moral, or historical in nature. | \*George Orwell’s *Animal Farm*  \*Edmund Spencer’s *The Faeirie Queene*  *\**William Golding’s *The Lord of the Flies* |
| Allusion | | A casual reference in literature to a person, place, event, or another passage of literature, often without explicit identification. Allusions can originate in mythology, biblical references, historical events, legends, geography, or earlier literary works. Authors often use allusion to establish a tone, create an implied association, contrast two objects or people, make an unusual juxtaposition of references, or bring the reader into a world of experience outside the limitations of the story itself. Authors assume that the readers will recognize the original sources and relate their meaning to the new context. |  |
| Anachronism | | Someone or something placed in an inappropriate period of time | Ross: That now Sweno, the Norways' king, craves composition: Nor would we deign him burial of his men Till he disbursed at Saint Colme's inch Ten thousand dollars to our general use.  Here, use of the term 'dollar' is inappropriate and hence, it is an accidental anachronism on Shakespeare's part. Use of the word 'dollar' is anachronistic because it was not the word choice during Macbeth's time. In fact, the word 'dollar' belonged to Shakespeare's era, but as he didn't know what it was called in the past (during Macbeth's time), he used the same word to refer to currency. |
| Archetype | | A basic model from which copies are made; a prototype. According to psychologist Carl Jung, archetypes emerge in literature from the “collective unconscious” of the human race. Northrop Frye, in his Anatomy of Criticism, explores archetypes as the symbolic patterns that recur within the world of literature itself. In both approaches, archetypical themes include birth, death, sibling rivalry, and the individual versus society. Archetypes may also be images or characters, such as the hero, the lover, the wanderer, or the matriarch |  |
| Chronological Plot | | The sequence of events in the narrative are in chronological order of their occurrence |  |
| Comic Relief | | Funny event or scene in a tense situation used to relieve stress in order to rebuild tension |  |
| Exposition | | Background information, introduction of characters, setting established, plot starts rolling |  |
| Fable | | A brief story illustrating human tendencies through animal characters. Unlike the parables, fables often include talking animals or animated objects as the principal characters. The interaction of these animals or objects reveals general truths about human nature |  |
| Falling Action/Denouement | | Conflict moves toward its resolution; denouement means “untying the knot” |  |
| Flashback | | A method of narration in which present action is temporarily interrupted so the reader can witness past events--usually in the form of a character's memories, dreams, narration, or even authorial commentary (such as saying, "But back when King Arthur had been a child. . . .").  Flashback allows an author to fill in the reader about a place or a character, or delay important details until just before a dramatic moment. |  |
| Folklore | | Sayings, verbal compositions, stories, and social rituals passed along by word of mouth rather than written down in a text. Folklore includes superstitions; modern "urban legends"; proverbs; [**riddles**](https://web.cn.edu/kwheeler/lit_terms_R.html#riddle_anchor); spells; nursery rhymes; songs; legends or lore about the weather, animals, and plants; jokes and [**anecdotes**](https://web.cn.edu/kwheeler/lit_terms_A.html#anecdote_anchor); tall tales, rituals at births, deaths, marriages, and yearly celebrations; and traditional dance and plays performed during holidays or at communal gatherings. Many works of literature originated in [**folktales**](https://web.cn.edu/kwheeler/lit_terms_F.html#folktale_anchor) before the narratives were written down. | Examples in American culture include the story of George Washington chopping down the cherry tree; George Washington throwing a silver dollar across the Potomac river; Paul Bunyon cutting lumber with his blue ox, Babe; Pecos Bill roping a twister; and Johnny Appleseed planting apples across the west over a 120-year period.  ALSO: folklore flavor in Zora Neale Hurston’s ***Their Eyes Were Watching God*** |
| Foreshadowing | | Hints or “clues” along the way that hint at what occurs later in a narrative | The ungodly smell coming from Miss Emily’s home in *A Rose for Emily* by William Faulkner |
| Frame Story | | The result of inserting one or more small stories within the body of a larger story that encompasses the smaller ones. | \*The 1001 Arabian Nights is a famous Middle Eastern frame narrative. Here, in Bagdad, Scheherazade must delay her execution by beguiling her Caliph with a series of nightly “[**cliffhangers**](https://web.cn.edu/kwheeler/lit_terms_C.html#cliffhanger_anchor)**.”**  \*In Geoffrey Chaucer’s *Canterbury Tales*, the overarching frame narrative is the story of a band of pilgrims traveling to the shrine of Thomas a Becket in Canterbury. The band passes the time in a storytelling contest. The framed narratives are the individual stories told by the pilgrims who participate. |
| In Medias Res | | (Latin: "In the middle[s] of things"): The classical tradition of opening an [**epic**](https://web.cn.edu/kwheeler/lit_terms_E.html#epic_anchor) at the midway point of the story. Later on in the narrative, the hero will recount verbally to others what events took place earlier. Usually *in medias res* is a technique used to heighten dramatic tension or to create a sense of mystery. Cross reference FLASHBACK |  |
| Parenthetical Observation | A comment or “observation” set apart in the text parentheses | |  |
| Mood/Atmosphere | | A feeling, emotional state, or disposition of mind--especially the predominating atmosphere or “vibe” of a literary work. Most pieces of literature have a prevailing mood, but shifts in this may function as a counterpoint, provide comic relief, or echo the changing events in the plot. The term mood is often used synonymously with [atmosphere](https://web.cn.edu/kwheeler/lit_terms_A.html#atmosphere_anchor) and [ambiance](https://web.cn.edu/kwheeler/lit_terms_A.html#ambiance_anchor). Students should be able to point to specific diction, description, setting, and characterization to illustrate what literary elements set the mood. |  |
| Myth | | A traditional often archetypal tale of deep cultural significance to a people in terms of philosophy, **spirituality, theology**, ritual practice, or models of appropriate and inappropriate behavior. The myth often (but not always) deals with gods, supernatural beings, or ancestral heroes. The culture creating or retelling the myth may or may not believe that the myth refers to literal or factual events, but it values the mythic narrative regardless of its historical authenticity for its (conscious or unconscious) insights into the human condition or the model it provides for cultural behavior. |  |
| Narrative Pace | | How rapidly or slowly a narrator tells a story. Events can be speeded up or slowed down depending on what the writer wants to focus on. | \*In Jane Eyre, the author takes us from an 8-year-old Jane to an 18-year-old Jane is a few paragraphs to speed up the narrative pace (and get to the good parts where she meets and falls in love with Edward Rochester!) |
| Narrator | | The "voice" that speaks or tells a story; aka authorial voice; storyteller  Cross reference: Point of View |  |
| Parody | | Humorous and exaggerated DIRECT imitation of an original artistic or literary work | Shakespeare’s Sonnet 13 (My Mistress’ eyes…)  Every Weird Al music video |
| Resolution | | Conflict resolved, one way or another; closure; ending of the story |  |
| Rising Action | | External/Internal Conflict(s) introduced, Complications arise in actions and reactions, like “tying a knot” |  |
| Setting | | The time and place of a narrative |  |
| Suspense | | Uncertainty or anxiety about what’s going to happen; anticipation |  |
| Unreliable Narrator | | A storyteller who "misses the point" of the events or things he describes in a story, who plainly misinterprets the motives or actions of characters, or who fails to see the connections between events in the story. The author herself, of course, must plainly understand the connections, because she presents the material to the readers in such a way that readers can see what the narrator overlooks. This device is sometimes used for purposes of irony or humor. |  |
| **CHARACTERIZATION** | | Authors “create” fictional characters through: **physical description, words, thoughts, behaviors, other characters’ opinions and reactions**  Authors may add to their characters via names, significant objects and surroundings.  **Direct Characterization:** the writer tells you DIRECTLY about a character’s personality, looks, beliefs, etc.  **Indirect Characterization:** The writer reveals the personality, looks, beliefs, etc. of a character through other means, such as how another character reacts to him/her. |  |
| 1-dimensional/flat | | Shallow predictable characters with one or two personality traits revealed |  |
| Antagonist | | The character (or other entity, such as a storm at sea) that is in conflict with the protagonist and his or her goals |  |
| Caricature | | A drawing, cartoon style, that exaggerates (hyperbolizes) certain physical features for comic and often sarcastic effect | Obama’s ears Clinton’s nose |
| Dynamic | | A character who DOES undergo noticeable change during the story (emotional, physical, intellectual, and/or spiritual) |  |
| Foil | | A character that serves by contrast to highlight or emphasize opposing traits in another character | In Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, Laertes, the young, unthinking man of action, is a foil to the intelligent but reluctant Hamlet. |
| Multi-dimensional/round | | More “real” and “believable” characters with many facets to their personalities; complex |  |
| Protagonist | | Main character (could be good, bad, or anywhere in between) |  |
| Static | | A character who DOES NOT undergo any kind of noticeable change during the story (emotional, physical, intellectual, and/or spiritual) |  |
| Stereotype | | A character who is an oversimplified representation of a type, gender, class, religious group, or occupation. Stereotypes tend to be negative and biased |  |
| Stock | | A character type that appears repeatedly and who has certain conventional attributes or attitudes. Stock characters in Elizabethan drama include the braggart soldier, the heroine disguised as a handsome young man, and the gullible country bumpkin. Stock characters in Medieval romances include the damsel in distress, the contemptuous dwarf, the chivalrous, handsome young knight, the wild man of the woods, and the ugly old man married to a younger girl. In modern detective fiction you may see the prostitute-with-a-heart-of-gold, the hard-drinking P.I., and the corrupt police-officer. Stock characters in western films might include the noble sheriff, the whorehouse madam, the town drunkard, and the quick-draw gunman |  |
| **IMAGERY**  **AKA SENSORY LANGUAGE** | | Descriptive writing that focuses on the five senses to convey the experience in a story |  |
| Sight | | Visual images are especially powerful when described in detail |  |
| Smell | | Describing specific odors can really bring a text to life! Think about the smells of a wet dog, a BBQ, a gym locker room, an Indian spice market |  |
| Sound | | Sound descriptions can create a particular mood/atmosphere…think of sounds associated with a haunted house. A circus. A summer storm. A football game. A night camping out under the stars. |  |
| Taste | | Convey an experience of eating squid, swishing minty mouthwash, crunching caramel popcorn, licking a stamp, sucking a lemon, nibbling chocolate-dipped grasshoppers! |  |
| Touch or movement | | Includes texture, temperature, and movement descriptions |  |
| **POINT OF VIEW** | | The way a story gets told and who tells it. It is the method of narration that determines the position, or angle of vision, from which the story unfolds. Point of view governs the reader's access to the story |  |
| 1st person | | A narrative mode in which a character narrates the story with *I-me-my-mine* in his or her speech |  |
| 2nd person | | A narrative mode in which the narrator uses 2nd person pronouns (you, your/yours) in his or her speech.  Although not common, 2nd person POV has been used in modern and post-modern literary works | *“You are not the kind of guy who would be at a place like this at this time of the morning. But here you are, and you cannot say that the terrain is entirely unfamiliar, although the details are fuzzy. You are at a nightclub talking to a girl with a shaved head.” -Jay McInerney’s* ***Bright Lights, Big City*** |
| 3rd person Limited | | A narrative mode in which the narrator enters only **one** character’s mind, either throughout the entire work or in a specific section. |  |
| 3rd person Omniscient | | A narrative mode in which the thoughts of every character are open to the narrator who can share them with the reader |  |
| Objective | | A narrative mode in which the narrator only reveals what can literally be seen and heard; like in a video |  |
| Stream of  Consciousness | | A difficult to follow literary writing style that records a character’s unedited thought processes. Sometimes, writers avoid punctuation altogether in order to prevent artificial breaks in the “stream”  Often such writing makes no distinction between various levels of reality--such as dreams, memories, imaginative thoughts or real sensory perception |  |
| **FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE** | | A deviation from what speakers of a language understand as the ordinary or standard or literal use of words in order to achieve some special meaning or effect. |  |
| Apostrophe  (NOT the punctuation mark!) | | A [figure of speech](http://grammar.about.com/od/fh/g/figuresterms.htm) in which the speaker addresses some abstraction or personification that is not physically present or not capable of understanding. | \*John Donne commands in his Holy Sonnet 10, "Oh, Death, be not proud." |
| Double Entendre | | A figure of speech that has two different meanings  Oxford Dictionary says that it “conveys an indelicate meaning.” Often the first meaning is usually straightforward while the second meaning is ironic, risqué or inappropriate |  |
| Euphemism | | A type of understatement where one describes harsh or offensive things in kinder, gentler ways so as to avoid offending or shocking anyone | Referring to “torture” as “enhanced interrogation”  Referring to an “exam” as an “opportunity to display knowledge” |
| Hyperbole | | An extravagant statement; exaggeration for the purpose of emphasis or a heightened, “larger than life” effect |  |
| Litotes | | A figure of speech in which an affirmative is expressed by negating its opposite.  Litotes are a discreet way of saying something unpleasant without directly using negativity | No ordinary city = an impressive city  The food was not bad = The food was acceptable/good  Don’t fail me now! = Help me!  He was not unkind = He was kind |
| Metaphor | | A figurative and DIRECT comparison between two unlike things WITHOUT using “like,” “as,” or “seems”  (A is B) | “The coastal plain rivers in leaden serpentine across the wasted farmland.” –*The Road* |
| Metonymy | | The use of the name of one thing for that of another of which it is an attribute or with which it is associated | American journalists employ *metonymy* whenever they say "the White House" in place of "the president and his administration." Or they say “Detroit” when referring to the big American automakers Ford, General Motors, and Chrysler, or “Hollywood” when referring to celebrities, producers, movie studios, or even the movie industry’s liberal reputation.  Here is a double metonymy: The PEN is mightier than the SWORD |
| Motif | | A repeating pattern, sensory image, or design in a literary work. Not as complex or multi-faceted as a symbol | Flute music in *Death of a Salesman* by Arthur Miller  Sleep and Insomnia in *Macbeth* |
| Personification | | A figure of speech in which an inanimate object or abstract concept is endowed with human qualities or abilities |  |
| Poetic Diction | | The use of poetic devices, such as figurative language and sensory language (imagery). Prose authors may also employ poetic diction in their narrative writing, like when you are reading a book and think, “The writing style is very poetic!” “ | “…she hears the tamarinds shiver and the jays shriek and the dune grass burn; she feels the great granite fist, sunk deep into the earth’s crust, on which Saint-Malo sits, and the ocean teething at it from all four sides, and the outer islands holding steady against the swirling tides…” --*All the Light We Cannot See* |
| Pun | | A play on words using the definitions, pronunciations, and spellings of words to create multiple meanings. |  |
| Simile | | A figurative and INDIRECT comparison between two unlike things using “like,” “as,” or “seems”  (A is like B) | “…the days more gray each one than what had gone before. Like the onset of some cold glaucoma dimming away the world.” –The Road  “Ogres are like onions…we both have layers.” –Shrek |
| Synecdoche | | A figure of speech in which a part of something is used to represent the whole or the whole for a part | *ABCs* for *alphabet (part = whole)*  *England won the World Cup (whole=part)* |
| Trope | | General term for figures of speech |  |
| Understatement | | A figure of speech in which a writer or speaker deliberately makes a situation seem less important or serious than it is. You know…”less is more.” |  |

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| **DICTION** | Word Choice; more specifically, choosing certain words over others for their connotative meanings |  | |
| Abstract diction | Intangible words that represent ideas, concepts, such as “love,” or “justice” |  | |
| Colloquialism | A word or phrase or expression that is not formal or literary, typically one used in ordinary or familiar conversation; common, everyday speech |  | |
| Concrete diction | Tangible words that one can see, such as “dog,” or “table” |  | |
| Connotation | Positive and/or negative implications/associations/connections that words carry…like emotional “baggage” | E.g. For a girl, the word “skinny” carries positive connotations; but for boys, it carries negative connotations | |
| Denotation | Literal or dictionary definitions of words |  | |
| Dialect | The language of a particular district, class, or group of persons. The term dialect encompassesthe sounds, spelling, grammar, and diction employed by a specific people as distinguished from other persons either geographically or socially. Dialect is a major technique of characterization that reveals the social or geographic status of a character. |  | |
| Malapropism | The mistaken use of a word in place of a similar-sounding one, often with unintentional comic effect. |  | |
| Selection of Detail | Analyzing how and why authors focus and describe certain parts of the story moreso than others; then analyzing the effect produced by the selection of details an author chooses to include in a story |  | |
| Repartee | Conversation or speech characterized by quick, witty comments or replies |  | |
| **SATIRE** | Writing that mocks or ridicules with the purpose of inspiring change |  | |
| Horatian Satire | Focuses lightly on laughter and ridicule, but it maintains a playful tone. Generally, the tone is sympathetic and good humored, somewhat tolerant of imperfection and folly even while expressing amusement at it. The name comes from the Roman poet Horace (65 BCE-8 CE), who preferred to ridicule human folly in general rather than condemn specific persons |  | |
| Juvenalian Satire | **Uses harsh,** withering criticism, insults, and a slashing attack. The name comes from the Roman poet Juvenal (60-140 CE), who frequently employed the device, but the label is applied to British writers such as Swift and Pope as well who wrote about more serious topics in a satirical manner. |  | |
| Sarcasm | The use of derision, mockery, verbal irony or scorn to belittle and disparage someone or something |  | |
| Wit | Refers to elements in a literary work designed to make the audience laugh or feel amused; unlike the more generic word “humor,” wit connotes intellectual originality, ingenuity, and mental acuity--especially in the sense of using paradoxes, making clever verbal expressions, and coining concise or deft phrases. |  | |
| **IRONY** | An **incongruity** between expectation and reality  **\*Incongruity** is when things are not in harmony or in keeping with the surroundings or other aspects of something: for example-  "The tattered brown coat looked incongruous with the elegant black dress she wore underneath." |  | |
| Cosmic Irony | The idea that fate, destiny, or a god controls and toys with human hopes and expectations; also, the belief that the universe is so large and man is so small that the universe is indifferent to the plight of man; also called [fate](http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/irony%20of%20fate) |  | |
| Dramatic Irony | (In a play), the audience knows something a character(s) do not  (In a poem), the poet is not the same as the persona/voice/speaker in the poem |  | |
| Situational Irony | The situation in a text (or life!) turns out unexpectedly, like a “twist” or surprise ending |  | |
| Socratic Irony | a pretense of ignorance and of willingness to learn from another assumed in order to make the other’s false conceptions conspicuous by adroit questioning |  | |
| Verbal Irony | Saying one thing but meaning another; often sarcastic in tone |  | |
| **PARADOX** | A seemingly absurd or contradictory idea or statement that, when investigated or explained, may prove to be true and reasonable |  | |
| Oxymoron | A specific type of paradox in which opposite words appear side by side | Jumbo Shrimp Mercy Killing Teacher Pay | |
| **SYMBOL** | Usually an object, person, event, place, or color with multiple meanings. Symbols add depth and comprehension to a story by creating multi-dimensional meanings associated with that object, person, event, place or color |  | |
| Contextual/Literary | Created specifically by a writer to convey meaning. The object has no additional symbolic value outside of the story’s specific context. A literary symbol is created by repetition, emphasis, and even placement in the story. | In *The Road*, the tattered map symbolizes the journey, the past, the disappearance of civilization, direction and purpose | |
| Cultural or Conventional | Have meaning for a certain culture through tradition and experience; e.g. in Western culture, water is equated with birth, rebirth and cleansing; whereas red is associated with passion and hatred. In other cultures, these symbols may have very different meanings. Also, watch for author using a familiar symbol in an ironic sense. (Western where good guys wear black, etc.) | In *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, the various shades of brown/black skin color represent racial views held by different black people in Eatonville, Florida | |
| Universal | Transcend time, place, religion, culture and to speak to basic human experience. Seen most often in myths, fables, legends, religious beliefs, to explain natural phenomenon. | In *The Road*, the man and boy are symbols of heroes on a hero’s journey overcoming obstacles and gaining knowledge and redemption in the end. | |
| **THEME** | Theme is defined as a main idea or an underlying meaning of a literary work which may be stated directly or indirectly in a complete sentence(  Do not confuse with a “topic.” For example:  The “topic” of *All Quiet on the Western Front* is WWI, but the “theme” is war is a curse upon humanity grotesquely aggrandized to naive young men desiring honor and glory. |  | |
| **TONE** | Overall attitude of the writer toward his/her subject  Tone is not necessarily stagnant. It may shift or radically change within a text.  Tone is not the same as mood and atmosphere (emotional ambience of a story’s setting)  Tone is identified primarily by diction and the positive and negative denotations and connotations words carry.Tone words are usually adjectives.  Do not express tone generically as “negative” or “positive.” That’s a good place to start, but you need to be more specific and precise.  Express tone as \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ly + \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_  For example: **harshly critical** or **joyfully ecstatic** |  | |
| **E WORDS** | These words are often confused…and for good reason! |  | |
| Elegy (Funeral) | Poems written in tribute to the dead; a poem of mourning; a reflection on the death of someone  A piece of music with a sad and somber tone |  | |
| Epigram (Pithy Wit) | A short [poem](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Poem) or saying with a clever twist at the end or a concise and witty statement. E.g. Oscar Wilde: “Divorce is made in heaven” based on ironic /paradoxical reversal of a common cliché: “Marriage is made in heaven.” |  | |
| Epigraph (Inscription) | An [inscription](http://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/inscription), especially one on a building, etc. A [literary](http://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/literary) [quotation](http://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/quotation) placed at the beginning of a [book](http://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/book), chapter, etc. |  | |
| Epitaph (Tombstone) | A short text honoring a deceased person inscribed on his/her tombstone or plaque  An epitaph may be in verse; [poets](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Poets) have been known to compose their own epitaphs prior to their death. For example, the poet [W.B. Yeats](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/W.B._Yeats)’ epitaph is drawn from a poem he wrote: Cast a cold Eye/On Life, on Death/Horseman pass by. |  | |
| Epithet (Description) | A positive or negative [term](http://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/term) used to [characterize](http://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/characterize) or substitute for a [person](http://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/person) or [thing](http://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/thing). | *Terrible* in *Ivan the Terrible*; *Jack the Ripper; Grey-eyed Athena; The Only Begotten of the Father; The Once and Future King; The Boy Who Lived; The City of Lights* | |
| Eulogy (Praise) | A [speech](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Speech_%28public_address%29) or writing in praise of a person or thing. The term "eulogy" may refer to a [funeral](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Funeral) [oration](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Public_speaking) given in tribute to a person or people who have recently [died](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Death). Eulogies can also praise a living person, which normally takes place on special occasions like [birthdays](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Birthday) or retirements |  | |
| **SOUND DEVICES** | Sound devices are resources used by poets to convey and reinforce the meaning or experience of poetry through the skillful use of sound. After all, poets are trying to use a concentrated blend of sound and imagery to create an emotional response. The words and their order should evoke images, and the words themselves have sounds, which can reinforce or otherwise clarify those images. |  | |
| Alliteration | The repetition of initial (i.e. at the beginning of the word) consonant sounds in a series of words within a phrase or verse line |  | |
| Anaphora | The repetition of the same word or group of words at the beginning of successive sentences or verses | **After the** torchlight red on sweaty faces /**After the** frosty silence in the gardens /**After the** agony in stony places… - from The Wasteland by T.S. Eliot | |
| Assonance | The repetition of vowel sounds; sometimes called vowel rhyme |  | |
| Cacophony  Aka Dissonance | Harsh, jarring or discordant sounds that make words hard to speak aloud or grating to the ear |  | |
| Consonance | The repetition of consonant sounds throughout words, not just at the beginning (alliteration) |  | |
| End Rhyme | Rhyme in which the last word at the end of each verse is the word that rhymes. |  | |
| Euphony | (From Greek "good sound"): Attempting to group letters and words together harmoniously, so that the consonants permit an easy and pleasing flow of sound when spoken |  | |
| Feminine Rhyme | A feminine rhyme is a rhyme that matches two or more syllables, usually at the end of respective lines, in which the final syllable or syllables are unstressed. It is also commonly known as **double rhyme.** | Stocking/shocking, glamorous/amorous | |
| Internal Rhyme | A poetic device in which a word in the middle of a line rhymes with a word at the end of the same metrical line. | Internal rhyme appears in the first and third lines in this excerpt from Shelley's "The Cloud":  I silently laugh at my own cenotaph, And out of the caverns of rain, Like a child from the **womb**, like a ghost from the **tomb**,  I arise and unbuild it again. | |
| Masculine Rhyme | A rhyme that matches only one syllable, usually at the end of respective lines. Often the final syllable is stressed. | Man/plan, line/decline | |
| Onomatopoeia | “Sound effect” words that imitate the natural sounds associated with the objects or actions they refer to, making the description more expressive and interesting | **Gushing** water | |
| Repetition | Repeating words, phrases, or clauses in a text to add emphasis or musicality to the text |  | |
| Slant Rhyme aka Half, Inexact, Imperfect, Near, Oblique, Off | Rhyme in which either the vowels or the consonants of stressed syllables are identical | Examples:  eyes, light  years, yours | |
| **PROSODY in POETRY** | The patterns of rhythm and sound used in poetry  Made by stressed and unstressed syllables |  | |
| Anapest/Anapestic Foot | **Anapest**-two unstressed syllables followed by one stressed syllable  (THINK QUEEN: WE WILL, WE WILL, ROCK YOU) | Through the beautiful morning the meadowlark sings. (4 anapestic feet=anapestic tetrameter) | |
| Blank Verse | **Unrhymed iambic pentameter** which most closely aligns with natural speaking rhythms in English Many of Shakespeare's most famous speeches are written in blank verse; a speech or scene in blank verse may end with a single rhyming couplet known as a capping couplet used to lend a final punch, a concluding flourish or a note of climax to the end of a speech or scene. |  | |
| Dactyl/Dactylic Foot | **Dactylic**-two stressed syllables followed by one unstressed syllable  (THINK WALTZ…1, 2, 3) | Beautiful morning with meadowlark harmony. (4 dactylic feet=dactylic tetrameter) | |
| Dimeter | 2 feet in the line of verse |  | |
| Heptameter | 7 feet in the line of verse |  | |
| Hexameter | 6 feet in the line of verse |  | |
| Iamb/Iambic Foot | **Iamb**-one unstressed syllable followed by a stressed syllable  (THINK HEARTBEAT…da DUM, da DUM) | I amb alone and no one knows how all alone I amb. (7 iambic feet=iambic septameter) | |
| Metrical Variation | Not all lines in a poem will have 100% PURE metrical patterns…look for the PREDOMINANT patterns of accented & unaccented syllables. All art consists of **repetition** and **variation**. Too much repetition =monotony; too much variety kills poetic meter.  Perhaps 80% of metered poetry in English is iambic |  | |
| Monometer | 1 poetic foot in the line of verse |  | |
| Octameter | 8 feet in the line of verse |  | |
| Pentameter | 5 feet in the line of verse |  | |
| Poetic Foot | A single measurement of a syllable pattern in a verse (line of poetry) |  | |
| Poetic Meter | A measurement of how many poetic feet are in a line of verse |  | |
| Spondee/Spondaic Foot | **Spondee**-two stressed syllables sometimes creating a “pounding” effect | Break, break, break, On thy cold grey stones, O Sea! | |
| Tetrameter | 4 feet in the line of verse |  | |
| Trimeter | 3 feet in the line of verse |  | |
| Trochee/Trochaic Foot | **Trochee**-one stressed syllable followed by an unstressed syllable  (THINK TURKEYS) | Trochee Turkeys gobble. (3 trochaic feet=trochaic trimester) | |
| **POETIC STRUCTURE AND FORMS** |  |  | |
| Ballad | A popular narrative song passed down orally. In the English tradition, it usually follows a form of rhymed (abcb) [quatrains](http://www.poetryfoundation.org/learning/glossary-term/Quatrain) alternating four-stress and three-stress lines | Folk (or traditional) ballads are anonymous and recount tragic, comic, or heroic stories with emphasis on a central dramatic event; examples include [“Barbara Allen”](http://www.poetryfoundation.org/archive/poem.html?id=180616) and [“John Henry.”](http://www.poetryfoundation.org/archive/poem.html?id=171628)  Beginning in the Renaissance, poets have adapted the conventions of the folk ballad for their own original compositions. Examples of this “literary” ballad form include John Keats’s [“La Belle Dame sans Merci,”](http://www.poetryfoundation.org/archive/poem.html?id=173740) Thomas Hardy’s [“During Wind and Rain,”](http://www.poetryfoundation.org/archive/poem.html?id=184087) and Edgar Allan Poe’s [“Annabel Lee.”](http://www.poetryfoundation.org/archive/poem.html?id=174151) | |
| Caesura | A stop or pause in a metrical line, often marked by punctuation or by a grammatical boundary, such as a phrase or clause. A medial caesura splits the line in equal parts, as is common in Old English poetry as in the Anglo Saxon epic [Beowulf](http://www.poetryfoundation.org/archive/poem.html?id=180445) | Medial (in the middle of the line) caesurae (plural of caesura) can be found throughout contemporary poet Derek Walcott’s [“The Bounty.”](http://www.poetryfoundation.org/archive/poem.html?id=177934) When the pause occurs toward the beginning or end of the line, it is termed, respectively, initial or terminal. Elizabeth Barrett Browning’s [“Mother and Poet”](http://www.poetryfoundation.org/archive/poem.html?id=172984) contains both initial (“Dead! One of them shot by sea in the east”) and terminal caesurae (“No voice says ‘My mother’ again to me. What?”) | |
| Dramatic Monologue | A somewhat lengthy poem in which an imagined speaker addresses a silent listener, usually not the reader | Robert Browning’s [“My Last Duchess”](http://www.poetryfoundation.org/archive/poem.html?id=173024)  T.S. Eliot’s [“The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock”](http://www.poetryfoundation.org/archive/poem.html?id=173476)  Ai’s [“Killing Floor.”](http://www.poetryfoundation.org/archive/poem.html?id=171244) | |
| End-Stopped Line | In poetry, a line ending in a full pause, often indicated by appropriate punctuation such as a period or semicolon or a space between stanzas |  | |
| English Sonnet aka  Shakespearean Sonnet  \***Sonnet**: 14-lined metrical, rhyming poem  **\*Sonnet** originated in Italy; means “little song” | Uses three quatrains; each rhymed differently, with a final, independently rhymed couplet that makes an effective, unifying climax to the whole. Its alternating rhyme scheme is **abab**, **cdcd**, **efef**, **gg**. Typically, the final two lines follow a “turn” or a “volta,” because they reverse, undercut, or turn from the original line of thought to take the idea in a new direction. |  | |
| Enjambment | AKA Run-On Line; here the reader does NOT pause at the end of the line of poetry, but rather keeps reading smoothly and uninterruptedly until the end of the thought (or sentence/clause) is reached. | The way a crow  Shook down on me  The dust of snow  From a hemlock tree… --Robert Frost | |
| Epic | A long narrative poem in which a heroic protagonist engages in an action of great mythic or historical significance. | Notable English epics include [Beowulf](http://www.poetryfoundation.org/archive/poem.html?id=180445), [Edmund Spenser’s](http://www.poetryfoundation.org/bio/6467) The Faerie Queene (which follows the virtuous exploits of 12 knights of King Arthur); [John Milton’s](http://www.poetryfoundation.org/bio/4771) Paradise Lost, dramatizing Satan’s fall from Heaven; *The Iliad* about the Trojan War and the homeward trek of Odysseus back home from war in *The Odyssey* | |
| Free Verse Poetry | Non-metrical, non-rhyming lines that follow closely the natural rhythms of speech. Free verse poetry breaks the text into lines and sometimes stanzas and employs “poetic devices” such as figurative language and imagery and sound/musical devices to create rhythmical units or cadences. “Probably more than 50% of published contemporary poetry is written in free verse” (S&S Chapter 12). |  | |
| Haiku | A traditional form of Japanese verse, written in 17 syllables divided into 3 lines of 5, 7, and 5 syllables, and employing highly evocative allusions and comparisons, often on the subject of nature or one of the seasons. |  | |
| Heroic Couplet | A pair of successive rhyming lines, usually of the same length written in iambic pentameter |  | |
| Italian Sonnet aka  Petrarchan Sonnet | Has an eight line stanza (called an octave) followed by a six line stanza (called a sestet). The octave has two quatrains rhyming **abba**, **abba**, the first of which presents the theme, the second further develops it. In the sestet, the first three lines reflect on or exemplify the theme, while the last three bring the poem to a unified end. The sestet may be arranged **cdecde**, **cdcdcd**, or **cdedce**. |  | |
| Lyric | Originally a composition meant for musical accompaniment. The term refers to a short poem in which the poet, the poet’s persona, or another speaker expresses personal feelings. | Louise Glück’s [“Vita Nova”](http://www.poetryfoundation.org/archive/poem.html?id=177182) | |
| Metaphysical Conceit | An elaborate or unusual comparison--especially one using unlikely metaphors, similes, hyperboles, and contradictions. | John Donne’s “A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning” | |
| Ode | A formal lyric poem  The odes of the English Romantic poets vary in stanza form. They often address an intense emotion at the onset of a personal crisis or celebrate an object or image that leads to revelation | Samuel Taylor Coleridge’s [“Dejection: An Ode,”](http://www.poetryfoundation.org/archive/poem.html?id=173229)  John Keats’s [“Ode on a Grecian Urn,”](http://www.poetryfoundation.org/archive/poem.html?id=173742) [“Ode to a Nightingale,”](http://www.poetryfoundation.org/archive/poem.html?id=173744) and [“To Autumn”](http://www.poetryfoundation.org/archive/poem.html?id=173749)). | |
| Panegyric Poem | A poem of effusive praise closely related to the ode and the eulogy | Ben Jonson’s “[To the Memory of My Beloved the Author, Mr. William Shakespeare](http://www.poetryfoundation.org/archive/poem.html?id=173731)” | |
| Pastoral Poem | Poetry that romanticizes and idealizes a simple, virtuous rural life: shepherds, maidens, lambs, flowers, love, etc. | “The Passionate Shepherd to His Love” –Christopher Marlowe  “The Nymph’s Reply to the Shepherd” –Sir Walter Raleigh | |
| Prose Poem | A prose composition that, while not broken into verse lines, demonstrates other traits such as [symbols,](http://www.poetryfoundation.org/learning/glossary-term/Symbol) [metaphors,](http://www.poetryfoundation.org/learning/glossary-term/Metaphor) and other [figures of speech](http://www.poetryfoundation.org/learning/glossary-term/Figure%20of%20speech) common to poetry. | See Amy Lowell’s [“Bath,”](http://www.poetryfoundation.org/archive/poem.html?id=171732) [“Metals Metals”](http://www.poetryfoundation.org/archive/poem.html?id=182349) by Russell Edson, [“Information”](http://www.poetryfoundation.org/archive/poem.html?id=172191) by David Ignatow, and Harryette Mullen’s [“[Kills bugs dead.]”](http://www.poetryfoundation.org/archive/poem.html?id=182300)  Carolyn Forche’s The Colonel | |
| Rondeau | Originating in France, a mainly octosyllabic poem consisting of between 10 and 15 lines and three stanzas. It has only two rhymes, with the opening words used twice as an unrhyming refrain at the end of the second and third stanzas. The 10-line version rhymes ABBAABc ABBAc (where the lower-case “c” stands for the refrain). The 15-line version often rhymes AABBA AABc AABAc. | Geoffrey Chaucer’s [“Now welcome, summer”](http://www.poetryfoundation.org/archive/poem.html?id=173192) at the close of The Parlement of Fowls is an example of a 13-line Rondeau. | |
| Scansion | Literally marking unstressed syllables with a “u” and stressed syllables with a “/” to show rhythmic patterns in verse |  | |
| Sestet | 6-lined stanza or the final 6 lines in an Italian Sonnet |  | |
| Sestina | A complex French verse form, usually unrhymed, consisting of six stanzas of six lines each and a three-line envoi ([stanza).](http://www.poetryfoundation.org/learning/glossary-term/Envoi%20(or%20Envoy)) The end words of the first stanza are repeated in a different order as end words in each of the subsequent five stanzas; the closing envoy contains all six words, two per line, placed in the middle and at the end of the three lines. | John Ashbery’s [“Farm Implements and Rutabagas in a Landscape,"](http://www.poetryfoundation.org/archive/poem.html?id=177258) | |
| Stanza | A poetry “paragraph” | Quatrain: 4-lined stanza  Couplet: 2-lined stanza | |
| Tercet | 3-lined stanza rhymed or unrhymed | Thomas Hardy’s “The Convergence of the Twain” rhymes AAA BBB  Wallace Steven’s “The Snow Man” is structured in unrhymed tercets | |
| Terza Rima | An Italian form of **iambic** verse consisting of eleven-syllable lines arranged in **tercets**, the middle line of each tercet rhyming with the first and last lines of the following tercet. |  | |
| Villanelle | French verse form consisting of five three-line stanzas and a final quatrain, with the first and third lines of the first stanza repeating alternately in the following stanzas. These two refrain lines form the final couplet in the quatrain. | Dylan Thomas’ “Do Not Go Gentle into That Good Night” | |
| **DRAMA TERMS** including Classical Greek Tragedy | The earliest origins of drama are found in 7th century BC Athens where ancient hymns, called **dithyrambs**, were sung in honor of the god **Dionysus**. These hymns were later adapted for choral processions in which participants would dress up in costumes and masks. Eventually, certain members of the chorus evolved to speak individual lines. According to tradition, in 534 or 535 BC, **Thespis**, a wandering and talented bard astounded audiences by leaping on to the back of a wooden cart and reciting poetry as if he were an individual speaker outside the chorus. In doing so he became the world's first actor, and it is from him that we get the world **thespian**. |  | |
| Anagnorisis  aka Epiphany | in ancient Greek tragedy) the critical moment of recognition or discovery, especially preceding **peripeteia**. |  | |
| Aside | A remark or passage by a character in a play that is intended to be heard by the audience but unheard by the other characters in the play |  | |
| Catharsis | The purging of the emotions or relieving of emotional tensions of the reader/audience through the humanities: art, music, dance, literature, drama |  | |
| Comic Relief | A humorous [**scene**](https://web.cn.edu/kwheeler/lit_terms_S.html#scene_anchor), incident, [**character**](https://web.cn.edu/kwheeler/lit_terms_C.html#character_anchor), or bit of [**dialogue**](https://web.cn.edu/kwheeler/lit_terms_D.html#dialogue_anchor) occurring after some serious or tragic moment. Comic relief is deliberately designed to relieve emotional intensity and simultaneously heighten and highlight the seriousness or tragedy of the action. |  | |
| Deus Ex Machina | In ancient Greek and Roman drama, a god interrupts the action in the play to resolve the entanglements of the plot.  In general, this term has come to mean any artificial or improbable device resolving the difficulties of a plot |  | |
| Ethos | The credibility of a source; part of the rhetorical triangle; can also refer to the ancient Greek “world view” or understanding of the cosmos |  | |
| Greek Chorus | The chorus was the central feature of Greek drama. Composed of similarly costumed men, they performed alongside the actors; they observed and commented on the action of the actors. Dialogue consisted of long, formal speeches in verse. The Chorus importantly represented the “voice of the people” aka public opinion. |  | |
| Hamartia | A term from Greek tragedy that literally means "missing the mark." Originally applied to an archer who misses the target, a *hamartia* came to signify a tragic flaw, especially a misperception, a lack of some important insight, or some blindness that ironically results from one's own strengths and abilities. In Greek tragedy, the [protagonist](https://web.cn.edu/kwheeler/lit_terms_P.html#protagonist_anchor) frequently possesses some sort of *hamartia* that causes catastrophic results after he fails to recognize some fact or truth that could have saved him if he recognized it earlier. The idea of *hamartia* is often ironic; it frequently implies the very trait that makes the individual noteworthy is what ultimately causes the protagonist's decline into disaster. | What ennobles Brutus is his unstinting love of the Roman Republic, but this same patriotism causes him to kill his best friend, Julius Caesar. (Shakespeare’s *Julius Caesar*) | |
| Hubris | A negative term implying both arrogant, excessive self-pride or self-confidence. It is especially odious in ancient Greek culture because it suggests man is superior to the Gods. |  | |
| Logos | The rational, logical side of man that relies upon reason and analysis; part of rhetorical triangle |  | |
| Oracle | Greek prophets/seers who channeled revelation from the Olympian gods |  | |
| Pathos | The emotional, compassionate side of man; part of the rhetorical triangle |  | |
| Peripeteia | A sudden turn of events or an unexpected reversal, especially in a literary work. |  | |
| Soliloquy | A [**monologue**](https://web.cn.edu/kwheeler/lit_terms_M.html#monologue_anchor) spoken by an actor at a point in the play when the character believes himself to be alone. The technique frequently reveals a character's innermost thoughts, including his feelings, state of mind, motives or intentions. The soliloquy often provides necessary but otherwise inaccessible information to the audience. The dramatic convention is that whatever a character says in a soliloquy to the audience must be true, or at least true in the eyes of the character speaking (i.e., the character may tell lies to mislead other characters in the play, but whatever he states in a soliloquy is a true reflection of what the speaker believes or feels). |  | |
| Sophocles | Sophocles was the second of the 3 greatest Greek writers of tragedy (with [Aeschylus](http://ancienthistory.about.com/library/weekly/aa111197.htm) and [Euripides](http://ancienthistory.about.com/od/medeaeuripides/p/Euripides.htm)). He is known best for what he wrote about [Oedipus](http://ancienthistory.about.com/cs/grecoromanmyth1/g/oedipus.htm), the mythological figure who proved central to Freud and the history of psychoanalysis. He lived through most of the 5th century, experiencing [the Age of Pericles](http://ancienthistory.about.com/od/greeceancientgreece/a/ClassicalGreece.htm) and the [Peloponnesian War](http://ancienthistory.about.com/cs/peloponnesianwar/a/timepelopwar.htm).  Sophocles was a priest of Halon and helped introduce the cult of [Asclepius](http://ancienthistory.about.com/od/asclepius/a/Asclepius.htm), god of medicine, to Athens. He was honored posthumously as a hero.  Only 7 out of more than 100 survive; fragments exist for 80-90 others. | More on Sophocles: In 468, Sophocles defeated the first of the three great Greek tragedians, Aeschylus, in a dramatic competition; then in 441, the third of the tragedian trio, Euripides, beat him. During his long life Sophocles earned many prizes, including about 20 for 1st place. Sophocles increased the number of actors to 3 (thereby reducing the importance of the [chorus](http://ancienthistory.about.com/od/greekliterature/a/GreekTheater_4.htm)). He broke from Aeschylus' thematically-unified trilogies, and invented skenographia (scene painting), to define the background.   * *Oedipus Tyrannus* * *Oedipus at Colonus* * *Antigone* * *Electra* * *Trachiniae* * *Ajax* * *Philoctetes* | |
| **DRAMA GENRES** |  |  | |
| Comedy of Manners | Depicts young lovers in a sophisticated and sometimes cynical way; socially satirical, often of the haughtiness and shallowness of the upper classes |  | |
| Contemporary Drama | Recent plays | *Between Riverside and Crazy* is a 2014 play by [Stephen Adly Guirgis](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stephen_Adly_Guirgis). The play won the 2015 [Pulitzer Prize for Drama](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pulitzer_Prize_for_Drama) and the 2015 [New York Drama Critics Circle Award](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/New_York_Drama_Critics_Circle_Award) for Best Play | |
| Domestic Tragedy | Drama in which the tragic protagonists are ordinary middle-class or lower-class individuals, in contrast to classical tragedy in which the protagonists are of kingly or aristocratic rank and their downfall is an affair of state as well as a personal matter. | Henrik Ibsen’s *A Doll’s House* (1879)  Arthur Miller’s *Death of a Salesman* (1949)  Eugene O’Neill’s *Long Day’s Journey into Night* (1956) | |
| Elizabethan Drama  aka Renaissance Drama | 16th/17th century British plays whose major playwrights were Shakespeare, Marlowe, Webster, Jonson | *Macbeth* by Shakespeare | |
| Farce | A form of [low](https://web.cn.edu/kwheeler/lit_terms_L.html#low_comedy_anchor) [comedy](https://web.cn.edu/kwheeler/lit_terms_L.html#low_comedy_anchor) designed to provoke laughter through highly exaggerated caricatures of people in improbable or silly situations. Traits of farce include **(1)** physical bustle such as slapstick, **(2)** sexual misunderstandings and mix-ups, and **(3)** broad verbal humor such as puns | Noises Off!  Run for your Wife  Charley’s Aunt  Charlie Chaplin films  Monty Python Search for the Holy Grail | |
| High Comedy | High Comedy depends primarily on verbal wit and sophisticated, clever characters; appeals to an educated and cultured audience |  | |
| Low Comedy | Low Comedy is characterized by physical humor (like slipping on a banana peel), fast-paced action, crass verbal humor |  | |
| Modern Drama | Plays from the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries | *Pygmalion* by George Bernard Shaw  *The Importance of Being Earnest* by Oscar Wilde | |
| Morality Play | Medieval allegorical plays by anonymous playwrights depicting the struggle between good and evil for one’s soul; the characters represent various moral attributes of man (e.g. wisdom, good deeds, Death, Angel, vanity) | *Everyman* (anonymous) | |
| Romantic Comedy | Love affairs, disguises, obstacles to love, joyful endings |  | |
| Theater of the Absurd | Unconventional 20th Century drama questioning life’s meaning in a godless universe (Existentialist thought) Most famous playwright for this genre was Samuel Beckett and his post WWII 1949 play called [*Waiting for Godot*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Waiting_for_Godot) |  | |
| Tragedy | A serious play in which the chief character, by some peculiarity of psychology, passes through a series of misfortunes leading to a final, devastating [catastrophe](https://web.cn.edu/kwheeler/lit_terms_C.html#catastrophe_anchor). |  | |
| Tragicomedy | Contains both high/low characters/situations; ends well but could have been a disaster |  | |
| **LEFTOVER TERMS WE MAY HAVE MISSED** |  |  |
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**RESOURCES FOR LITERARY TERMS/AP LIT**

* <http://www.wwnorton.com/college/english/nawol3/literaryterms.aspx>

The website above is from the Norton Anthology of World Literature. It has an extensive (understatement) glossary feature as well as a FlashCard feature.

* <http://literarydevices.net/>

The website above has a good list of lit terms on the left linked individually plus some excellent review information on the right regarding literary devices.