

Literary Terms

Allegory

An extended narrative in prose or verse in which characters, events, and settings represent abstract qualities and in which the writer intends a second meaning to be read beneath the surface of the story; the underlying meaning may be moral, religious, political, social, or satiric.

EXAMPLE:

- 1) The apple that Adam receives from Eve is symbolic of the "knowledge of God and Evil" and is thus allegorical. The serpent is often read as an allegory signifying the tempter, or true evil.
- 2) In the *New Testament*, Christ makes frequent use of the parable to make statements about "people" in general. For example, the Good Samaritan is an allegory representing the right thinking and compassionate person. This is a specific rhetorical use of the allegory.
- 3) Plato's *Allegory of the Cave* describes the state of the unenlightened, who cannot even believe that enlightenment exists.

Alliteration

Repetition of consonant sounds at the beginning of words that are close to one another: Mickey Mouse; Donald Duck.

EXAMPLE:

- 1) But now I am cabined, gribbed, confined, bound into saucy doubts and fears.—Shakespeare.
- 2) Duncan is in his grave; after life's fitful fever he sleeps well—Shakespeare.

Allusion

A reference to a well-known person, place, or thing from literature, history, etc.

EXAMPLE:

- 1) Sir Lancelot fought with *Herculean* strength. (Reference to the mythological hero Hercules).
- 2) "I have met my *Waterloo*," the mountain climber said after returning from a failed attempt to conquer Everest. (Reference to the Belgian town where Napoleon lost a make-or-break battle).
- 3) Since my elementary-school days, math has always been my *Achilles heel*. (Reference to the weak spot of Achilles, the greatest warrior to fight in the Trojan War. When his mother submersed him in the River Styx after he was born, the magical waters made him invulnerable. His flesh was impervious to all harm—except for the heel of a foot. His mother was grasping the heel when she dipped him into the river. Because the river water did not touch his heel, it was the only part of his body that could suffer harm. He died when a poison-tipped arrow lodged in his heel. Hence, writers over the ages have used the term *Achilles heel* to refer to a person's most pronounced weakness.

Anachronism

Something that is misplaced in a story because it is out of time.

EXAMPLE:

In *Julius Caesar*, a clock strikes though there were no clocks in Caesar's day. In the movie *Ben-Hur*, Charlton Heston anachronistically wears a wristwatch during the chariot race.

Analogy

Comparison of two similar but different things, usually to clarify an action or a relationship.

EXAMPLE:

"Harrison Ford is like one of those sports cars that advertise acceleration from 0 to 60 m.p.h. in three or four seconds. He can go from slightly broody inaction to ferocious reaction in approximately the same time span. And he handles the tight turns and corkscrew twists of a suspense story without losing his balance or leaving skid marks on the film. But maybe the best and most interesting thing about him is that he doesn't look particularly sleek, quick, or powerful; until something or somebody causes him to gun his engine, he projects the seemly aura of the family sedan." (Richard Schickel, *Time Magazine* review of *Patriot Games*)

Anaphora

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

EXAMPLE:

"What we need in the United States is not division. What we need in the United States is not hatred. What we need in the United States is not violence and lawlessness; but is love and wisdom and compassion toward one another, and a feeling of justice toward those who still suffer within our country whether they be white or whether they be black." -- Robert F. Kennedy, Announcing the death of Martin Luther King

Anecdote

A short, simple narrative of an incident; often used for humorous effect or to make a point.

EXAMPLE: From Kurt Vonnegut's *Cat's Cradle*

In the autobiographical section of *The Books of Bokanon* he writes a parable on the folly of pretending to discover, to understand:

I once knew an Episcopalian lady in Newport, Rhode Island, who asked me to design and build a doghouse for Great Dane. The lady claimed to understand God and His Ways of Working perfectly. She could not understand why anyone should be puzzled about what had been or about what was going to be.

And yet, when I showed her a blueprint of the doghouse I proposed to build, she said to me, "I'm sorry, but I never could read one of those things."

"Give it to your husband or your minister to pass on to God," I said, "and, when God finds a minute, I'm sure he'll explain this doghouse of mine in a way that

even you can understand."

She fired me. I shall never forget her. She believed that God liked people in sailboats much better than He liked people in motorboats. She could not bear to look at a worm. When she saw a worm, she screamed.

She was a fool, and so am I, and so is anyone thinks he sees what God is Doing, [writes Bokonon].

Antithesis

The presentation of two contrasting images. The ideas are balanced by word, phrase, clause, or paragraphs.

EXAMPLE:

"I have a dream that my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character. I have a *dream* today!"

-- Martin Luther King, Jr., *I Have a Dream*

Aphorism

Short, often witty statement of a principle or a truth about life

EXAMPLE: From Shakespeare

- 1) It is not in the stars to hold our destiny, but in ourselves.
- 2) Life is a tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing.
- 3) He that is proud cats up himself; pride is his own glass, his own trumpet, his own chronicle.

Apostrophe

Usually in poetry but sometimes in prose; the device of calling out to an imaginary, dead, or absent person or to a place, thing, or personified abstraction

EXAMPLE:

For instance, John Donne commands, "*Oh, Death, be not proud.*" King Lear proclaims, "*Ingratitude! thou marble-hearted fiend, / More hideous when thou show'st thee in a child / Than the sea-monster.*" Death, of course, is a phenomenon rather than a proud person, and ingratitude is an abstraction that hardly cares about Lear's opinion, but the act of addressing the abstract has its own rhetorical power.

Approximate Rhyme

Imperfect rhyme, slant rhyme, half rhyme, approximate rhyme, near rhyme, off rhyme, oblique rhyme: These are all general terms referring to rhymes that are close but not exact: lap/shape, glorious/nefarious.

EXAMPLE: Emily Dickinson's "I heard a fly buzz when I died"

I heard a fly buzz when I died;

The stillness round my form
Was like the stillness in the air
Between the heaves of storm.

The eyes beside had wrung them dry,
And breaths were gathering sure
For that last onset, when the king
Be witnessed in his power.

I willed my keepsakes, signed away
What portion of me I
Could make assignable, - and then
There interposed a fly,

With blue, uncertain, stumbling buzz,
Between the light and me;
And then the windows failed, and then
I could not see to see.

Aside

In drama, a few words or a short passage spoken by one character to the audience while the other actors on stage pretend their characters cannot hear the speaker's words. It is a theatrical convention that the aside is not audible to other characters on stage.

EXAMPLE: Balcony scene-*Romeo and Juliet*

ROMEO [Aside.]: Shall I hear more, or shall I speak at this?

JULIET: 'Tis but thy name that is my enemy. Thou art thyself, though not a Montague...

Assonance

Repetition of vowel sounds between different consonants, such as in neigh/fade.

EXAMPLE: Lord Alfred Tennyson, 1809-1892

"The Lady of Shalott"

PART I

ON either side the river lie	side...lie (long i's - si and li)
Long fields of barley and of rye,	
That clothe the wold and meet the sky;	clothe...wold (long o's - clo
and wo)	
And thro' the field the road runs by	
To many-tower'd Camelot;	
And up and down the people go,	
Gazing where the lilies blow	
Round an island there below,	
The island of Shalott.	

Auditory Imagery A mental image that is similar to an auditory perception

EXAMPLE: From Matthew Arnold's "Dover Beach"-

"Listen! You hear the grating roar
Of pebbles which the waves draw back, and fling,
At their return, up the high strand,
Begin, and cease, and then again begin,
With tremulous cadence slow, and bring
The eternal note of sadness in."

Ballad A narrative poem consisting of quatrains of iambic tetrameter alternating with iambic trimeter. Common traits of the ballad are that **(a)** the beginning is often abrupt, **(b)** the story is told through dialogue and action **(c)** the language is simple or "folksy," **(d)** the theme is often tragic--though comic ballads do exist, and **(e)** the ballad contains a refrain repeated several times.

EXAMPLE:

An Eastern Ballad by Allen Ginsberg

I speak of love that comes to mind:
The moon is faithful, although blind;
She moves in thought she cannot speak.
Perfect care has made her bleak.

I never dreamed the sea so deep,
The earth so dark; so long my sleep,
I have become another child.
I wake to see the world go wild.

Ballad Stanza Traditionally, ballad measure consists of a four-line stanza or a quatrain containing alternating four-stress and three-stress lines with an **ABCB** or **ABAB** rhyme scheme. Works written in ballad measure often include such quatrains.

EXAMPLE: The opening stanza to "Earl Brand" illustrates the pattern. Note also the bits of Scottish dialect in phrases such as "hae" for *have* and "awa" for *away*.

Rise up, rise up, my seven brave sons,
And dress in your armour so bright;
Earl Douglas will hae Lady Margaret awa
Before that it be light.

Blank Verse Unrhymed lines of ten syllables each with the even-numbered syllables bearing the accents. Blank verse has been called the most "natural" verse form for dramatic works, since it supposedly is the verse form most close to natural rhythms of English speech.

EXAMPLE:

Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*-- Theseus' speech to Hippolyta

appears in blank verse:

The poet's eye, in a fine frenzy rolling,
Doth glance from heaven to earth, from earth to heaven;
And, as imagination bodies forth
The forms of things unknown, the poet's pen
Turns them to shapes and gives to airy nothing
A local habitation and a name. (5.1.12-17)

Cacophony

Harsh, awkward, or dissonant sounds used deliberately in poetry or prose; the opposite of euphony

EXAMPLE: From "Jabberwocky" by Lewis Carroll

'Twas brillig, and the slithy toves
Did gyre and gimble in the wabe;
All mimsy were the borogoves,
And the mome raths outgrabe.

Caesura

A rhythmic break or pause in the flow of sound which is commonly introduced in about the middle of a line of verse, but may be varied for different effects. Usually placed between syllables rhythmically connected in order to aid the recital as well as to convey the meaning more clearly, it is a pause dictated by the sense of the content or by natural speech patterns, rather than by metrics.

EXAMPLE: Emily Dickinson (first line)

I'm nobody! Who are you?
Are you nobody, too?
Then there's a pair of us - don't tell!
They'd banish us, you know!

How dreary to be somebody!
How public like a frog
To tell one's name the livelong day
To an admiring bog!

Catharsis

An emotional discharge that brings about a moral or spiritual renewal or welcome relief from tension and anxiety. According to Aristotle, catharsis is the marking feature and ultimate end of any tragic artistic work. He writes in his *Poetics* (c. 350 BCE): "Tragedy is an imitation of an action that is serious, complete, and of a certain magnitude; . . . through pity and fear effecting the proper purgation [*catharsis*] of these emotions" (Book 6.2).

Pity and fear are inspired in the audience by the suffering of someone who is morally typical: he or she is not overwhelmingly good or evil, but susceptible to error (as when acting unjustly through ignorance or passion). The protagonist's misfortune therefore inspires pity because it is worse than he or she deserves, and fear because the audience sees in it their own potential errors and suffering.

EXAMPLE:

Othello; Macbeth; John Proctor; Willy Loman

Characterization

An author or poet's use of description, dialogue, dialect, and action to create in the reader an emotional or intellectual reaction to a character or to make the character more vivid and realistic. Careful readers note each character's attitude and thoughts, actions and reaction, as well as any language that reveals geographic, social, or cultural background.

EXAMPLE: Holden Caulfield from *Catcher in the Rye*

"What I was really hanging around for, I was trying to feel some kind of a good-by. I mean I've left schools and places I didn't even know I was leaving them. I hate that. I don't care if it's a sad good-by or a bad good-by, but when I leave a place I like to *know* I'm leaving it. If you don't, you feel even worse."

Cliché

A hackneyed or trite phrase that has become overused. Clichés are considered bad writing and bad literature.

EXAMPLE:

fast and furious
his days are numbered
lightning strikes twice
read the tea leaves
out like a Light.
lick his wounds
killed his chances
poker face

Colloquialism

A word or phrase (including slang) used in everyday conversation and informal writing but that is often inappropriate in formal writing (y'all, ain't).

EXAMPLE:

YOU don't know about me without you have read a book by the name of *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*; but that ain't no matter. That book was made by Mr. Mark Twain, and he told the truth, mainly. There was things which he stretched, but mainly he told the truth. That is nothing; I never seen anybody but lied one time or another, without it was Aunt Polly, or the widow, or maybe Mary. Aunt Polly — Tom's Aunt Polly, she is — and Mary, and the Widow Douglas is all told about in that book, which is mostly a true book, with some stretchers, as I said before.

-Twain's opening to *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*

Conceit

An elaborate or unusual comparison—especially one using unlikely metaphors, simile, hyperbole, and contradiction. One of the most famous conceits is John Donne's "A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning," a poem in which Donne compares two souls in love to the points on a geometer's compass.

EXAMPLE:

A VALEDICTION FORBIDDING MOURNING.
by John Donne

AS virtuous men pass mildly away,
And whisper to their souls to go,
Whilst some of their sad friends do say,
"Now his breath goes," and some say, "No."

So let us melt, and make no noise, 5
No tear-floods, nor sigh-tempests move;
'Twere profanation of our joys
To tell the laity our love.

Moving of th' earth brings harms and fears; 10
Men reckon what it did, and meant;
But trepidation of the spheres,
Though greater far, is innocent.

Dull sublunary lovers' love 15
—Whose soul is sense—cannot admit
Of absence, 'cause it doth remove
The thing which elemented it.

But we by a love so much refined,
That ourselves know not what it is,
Inter-assured of the mind,
Care less, eyes, lips and hands to miss: 20

Our two souls therefore, which are one,
Though I must go, endure not yet
A breach, but an expansion,
Like gold to aery thinness beat.

If they be two they are two so

25

As stiff twin compasses are two ;
Thy soul, the fix'd foot, makes no show
To move, but doth, if th' other do.

And though it in the centre sit,
Yet, when the other far doth roam, 30
It leans, and hearkens after it,
And grows erect, as that comes home.

Such wilt thou be to me, who must,
Like th' other foot, obliquely run ;
Thy firmness makes my circle just, 35
And makes me end where I begun

Conflict

The opposition between two characters (such as a protagonist and an antagonist), between two large groups of people, or between the protagonist and a larger problem such as forces of nature, ideas, public mores, and so on. Conflict may also be completely internal, such as the protagonist struggling with his psychological tendencies (drug addiction, self-destructive behavior, and so on); William Faulkner famously claimed that the most important literature deals with the subject of "the human heart in conflict with itself."

EXAMPLE:

1) Examples of narratives driven mainly by conflicts between the protagonist and nature include Jack London's "To Build a Fire" (in which the Californian struggles to save himself from freezing to death in Alaska) and Stephen Crane's "The Open Boat" (in which shipwrecked men in a lifeboat struggle to stay alive and get to shore).

2) Examples of narratives driven by conflicts between a protagonist and an antagonist include Mallory's *Le Morte D'Arthur*, in which King Arthur faces off against his evil son Mordred, each representing civilization and barbarism respectively.

3) Examples of narratives driven by internal struggles include Daniel Scott Keyes' "Flowers for Algernon," in which the hero struggles with the loss of his own intelligence to congenital mental retardation, and Edgar Allan Poe's "The Tell-Tale Heart," in which the protagonist ends up struggling with his own guilt after committing a murder.

4) In complex works of literature, multiple conflicts may occur at once. For instance, in Shakespeare's *Othello*, one level of conflict is the unseen struggle between Othello and the machinations of Iago, who seeks to destroy him. Another level of conflict is Othello's struggle with his own jealous insecurities and his suspicions that Desdemona is cheating on him.

Consonance

Repetition of identical consonant sounds within two or more words in close proximity, as in boost/best; it can also be seen within several compound words, such as fulfill and nine-nong.

EXAMPLE:

Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening
by
Robert Frost (1874-1963)

Whose woods these are I think I know.
His house is in the village though;
He will not see me stopping here
To watch his woods fill up with snow.

Couplet

Two successive lines of poetry, usually of equal length and rhythmic correspondence, with end-words that rhyme. The couplet, for practical purposes, is the shortest stanza form, but is frequently joined with other couplets to form a poem with no stanzaic divisions.

EXAMPLE:

Where-e'er you find "the cooling western breeze,"
In the next line, it "whispers through the trees,"
If crystal streams "with pleasing murmurs creep,"
The reader's threatened (not in vain) with "sleep."
-Alexander Pope

Diction

Word choice, an element of style; it creates tone, attitude, and style, as well as meaning. Different types and arrangements of words have significant effects on meaning. An essay written using academic diction would be much less colorful, but perhaps more precise than street slang.

EXAMPLE: (informal vs. formal diction)

The layers of dirt were not messed up at all. The sedimentary levels were undisturbed.

Dystopian Novel

The *utopia* and its offshoot, the *dystopia*, are genres of literature that explore social and political structures. Utopian fiction is the creation of an ideal world, or utopia, as the setting for a novel. Dystopian fiction is the opposite: creation of a nightmare world, where utopian ideals have been subverted. Many novels combine both, often as a metaphor for the different directions humanity can take in its choices, ending up with one of two possible futures.

EXAMPLE:

Lord of the Flies, 1984, Anthem, Fahrenheit 451, Brave New World

Elegy

A sad and thoughtful poem lamenting the death of a person.

EXAMPLE: (from Walt Whitman's *O Captain, My Captain*, on the death of Abraham Lincoln)

O Captain! My Captain!

O Captain! my Captain! our fearful trip is done,
The ship has weathered every rack, the prize we sought is won,
The port is near, the bells I hear, the people all exulting,
While follow eyes the steady keel, the vessel grim and daring,

But O heart! heart! heart!
O the bleeding drops of red,
Where on the deck my Captain lies,
Fallen cold and dead.

End Rhyme

A rhyme occurring in the terminating word or syllable of one line of poetry with that of another line, as opposed to internal rhyme.

EXAMPLE: (from Robert Frost's "Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening")

Whose woods these are I think I know,
His house is in the village, though;
He will not see me stopping here
To watch his woods fill up with snow.

Enjambment

The continuation of the sense and therefore the grammatical construction beyond the end of a line of verse or the end of a couplet. This run-on device, contrasted with end-stopped, can be very effective in creating a sense of forward motion, fine-tuning the rhythm, and reinforcing the mood, as well as a variation to avoid monotony.

EXAMPLE: From Keats's "Endymion"

A thing of beauty is a joy forever:
Its loveliness increases; it will never
Pass into nothingness but still will keep
A bower quiet for us, and asleep
Full of sweet dreams, and health, and quiet breathing.

Epic

An extended narrative poem, usually simple in construction, but grand in scope, exalted in style, and heroic in theme, often giving expression to the ideals of a nation or race. Classical epics began with an argument and an invocation to a guiding spirit, then started the narrative *in medias res*.

EXAMPLE:

The Iliad and The Odyssey (Homer)
Beowulf
Paradise Lost (Milton)
Don Juan (Lord Byron)

<p>Epithet</p>	<p>An adjective or adjectival phrase, usually attached to the name of a person or thing.</p> <p>EXAMPLE:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) "Richard the Lion-Hearted." 2) Milton's "ivy-crowned Bacchus" in "L'Allegro" 3) Homer's "rosy-fingered dawn."
<p>Epigraph</p>	<p>The use of a quotation at the beginning of a work that hints at its theme.</p> <p>EXAMPLE:</p> <p>Hemingway begins <i>The Sun Also Rises</i> with two quotations. One of them is "You are all a lost generation" by Gertrude Stein.</p> <p>Mark Twain's <i>The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn</i> begins with two as well, one, more specifically, a warning: "Persons attempting to find a Motive in this narrative will be prosecuted; persons attempting to find a Moral in it will be banished; persons attempting to find a Plot in it will be shot."</p>
<p>Equivocation</p>	<p>Ambiguity or uncertainty of meaning in words; misapprehension arising from the ambiguity of terms; the using of a word or phrase in more than one sense.</p> <p>EXAMPLE:</p> <p>"The sign said 'fine for parking here', and since it was fine, I parked there."</p> <p>All trees have bark. All dogs bark. Therefore, all dogs are trees.</p> <p>"Consider that two wrongs never make a right, but that three lefts do." - "Deteriorata", National Lampoon.</p>
<p>Ethical Appeal (appeal to ethos)</p>	<p>When a writer tries to persuade the audience to respect and believe him or her based on a presentation of image of self through the text. Reputation is sometimes a factor in this type of appeal, but in all cases the aim is to gain the audience's confidence. (Ethos)</p> <p>EXAMPLE:</p> <p>Acme Gizmotronics, the company that you've trusted for over 100 years, has recently entered the World Wide Web! Now you can purchase our fine products through the internet. Our quality gizmos, widgets, and thingamabobs can be shipped to you within minutes. All come with the famous lifetime guarantee that makes Acme the company that the world depends on for its gizmo needs.</p> <p>Our spokesperson, Mr. Coyote says "I'm not really a coyote, but I play one on TV. I've used Acme products for years. Their slingshots rocket launchers</p>

crowbars, pogo sticks, and power pills are the best around. And don't forget their high-powered dynamite! I buy everything from Acme. They are the company that I trust the most."

ACME is currently supporting research into a form of clean, ultra-efficient, cesium-based power that promises to usher in a new period of cheap, globally available power. Based on a small island off the coast of Costa Rica, ACME Technology Research is one of our most significant divisions.

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Euphemism

A more acceptable and usually more pleasant way of saying something that might be inappropriate or uncomfortable.

EXAMPLE:

"He went to his final reward" is a common saying for "he died." These are also often used to obscure the reality of a situation. The military uses "collateral damage" to indicate civilian deaths in a military operation.

Existentialist Novel

A novel promoting existentialism, is a philosophical movement which posits that *individuals* create the meaning and essence of their lives, as opposed to deities or authorities creating it for them.

EXAMPLE: (from *The Stranger* –Camus)

"Throughout the whole absurd life I'd lived, a dark wind had been rising toward me from somewhere deep in my future, across years that were still to come, and as it passed, this wind leveled whatever was offered to me at the time, in years no more real than the ones I was living. What did other people's deaths or a mother's love matter to me; what did his God or the lives people choose or the fate they think they elect matter to me when we're all elected by the same fate."

Feminine Rhyme

A rhyme occurring on an unaccented final syllable, as in *dining* and *shining* or *motion* and *ocean*. Feminine rhymes are double or disyllabic rhymes and are common in the heroic couplet.

EXAMPLE: From Goldsmith's "Retaliation: A Poem"

Of old, when Scarron his companions invited
Each guest brought his dish, and the feast was united,

Figurative Language

Language that contains figures of speech, such as similes and metaphors, in order to create associations that are imaginative rather than literal.

EXAMPLE: (Robert Frost's "Nothing Gold Can Stay")

Nature's first green is gold,
Her hardest hue to hold.
Her early leaf's a flower

But only so an hour.
Then leaf subsides to leaf.
So Eden sank to grief,
So dawn goes down to day.
Nothing gold can stay.

Flashback

A method of narration in which present action is temporarily interrupted so that 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 it can be used to delay important details until just before a dramatic moment.

EXAMPLE:

"Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge" (Bierce)
"A Rose for Emily" (Faulkner)
In *The Great Gatsby* (Fitzgerald)

Foil

A character that serves by contrast to highlight or emphasize opposing traits in another character.

EXAMPLE: In Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, Laertes the unthinking man of action is a foil to the intelligent but reluctant Hamlet. ("I'll be your foil, Laertes; in mine ignorance / Your skill shall, like a star in the darkest night, Stick fiery off indeed.")

Folk Ballad

Primarily based on an older legend or romance, this type of ballad is usually a short, simple song that tells a dramatic story through dialogue and action, briefly alluding to what has gone before and devoting little attention to depth of character, setting, or moral commentary. It uses simple language, an economy of words, dramatic contrasts, epithets, set phrases, and frequently a stock refrain. The familiar stanza form is four lines, with four or three stresses alternating and with the second and fourth lines rhyming.

EXAMPLE:

It was in and about the Martinmas time,
When the green leaves were a falling,
That Sir John Graeme, in the West Country,
Fell in love with Barbara Allan
—"Bonny Barbara Allan"

Foot

A unit of rhythm or meter; the division in verse of a group of syllables, one of which is long or accented.

EXAMPLE-

"The boy | stood on | the burn | ing deck," has four iambic metrical feet. The most common poetic feet used in English verse are the *iamb*, *anapest*, *trochee*, *dactyl*, and *spondee*.

Foreshadowing The use of a hint or clue to suggest a larger event that occurs late in the work.

EXAMPLE:

In *Romeo and Juliet*, several times the two youths mention their longing to die. Once, Juliet even mentions that Romeo appears pale, as if he is in a tomb. These instances foreshadow the deaths of the lovers.

Free Verse A fluid form which conforms to no set rules of traditional versification. The *free* in free verse refers to the freedom from fixed patterns of meter and rhyme, but writers of free verse employ familiar poetic devices such as assonance, alliteration, imagery, caesura, figures of speech etc., and their rhythmic effects are dependent on the syllabic cadences emerging from the context.

EXAMPLE:

"By the Bivouack's Fitful Flame" (Whitman)

By the bivouac's fitful flame,
A procession winding around me, solemn and sweet and slow—but first I note,
The tents of the sleeping army, the fields' and woods' dim outline,
The darkness lit by spots of kindled fire, the silence,
Like a phantom far or near an occasional figure moving,

The shrubs and trees, (as I lift my eyes they seem to be stealthily watching me,)
While wind in procession thoughts, O tender and wondrous thoughts,
Of life and death, of home and the past and loved, and of those that are far away;
A solemn and slow procession there as I sit on the ground,
By the bivouac's fitful flame.

Genre a type of literary work

EXAMPLE:

novel, poem, short story, or play

Gustatory Imagery Imagery dealing with taste. This is opposed to **visual imagery**, dealing with sight, **auditory imagery**, dealing with sound, **tactile imagery**, dealing with touch, and **olfactory imagery**, dealing with scent.

EXAMPLE: From "To Earthward" by Frost

Love at the lips was touch

As sweet as I could bear;
And once that seemed too much;
I lived on air

That crossed me from sweet things,
The flow of- was it musk
From hidden grapevine springs
Down hill at dusk?

I had the swirl and ache
From sprays of honeysuckle
That when they're gathered shake
Dew on the knuckle.

I craved strong sweets, but those
Seemed strong when I was young;
The petal of the rose
It was that stung.

Now no joy but lacks salt
That is not dashed with pain
And weariness and fault;
I crave the stain

Haiku

Japanese form of poetry consisting of three unrhymed lines of five, seven, and five syllables. The elusive flavor of the form, however, lies more in its touch and tone than in its syllabic structure. Haiku are very brief descriptions of nature that convey some implicit insight or essence of a moment.

EXAMPLE: (by Liz Rosenberg)

Oh God, God! — Calm down
Says my son, looking at me,
Holding my big hand

Heroic Couplet

Two successive lines of rhymed poetry in iambic pentameter

EXAMPLE: From *Hamlet* (Shakespeare)

[...] I'll have grounds
*More relative than this. The play's the thing
Wherein I'll catch the conscience of the king.*

Hubris

The excessive pride of ambition that leads a tragic hero to disregard warnings of impending doom, eventually causing his or her downfall.

EXAMPLE:

Odysseus; Othello; Macbeth

Hyperbole

Deliberate exaggeration in order to create humor or emphasis.

EXAMPLE: (from Harper Lee's *To Kill a Mockingbird*)

People moved slowly then. There was no hurry for there was nowhere to go

nothing to buy and no money to buy it with, nothing to see outside the boundaries of Maycomb County.

Iamb

The most common metrical foot in English verse, it consists of two syllables, a short or unaccented syllable followed by a long or accented syllable, as in *a-VOID* or *the RUSH*.

EXAMPLE: (from the opening line of John Keats' "Ode to a Nightingale")

a DROW | -sy NUMB | -ness PAINS

Iambic Meter

The organized succession of groups of iambs at regular intervals in lines of poetry, according to definite metrical patterns.

EXAMPLE: Shakespeare's *Sonnet 130* in iambic pentameter

My mistress' eyes are nothing like the sun;
Coral is far more red than her lips' red;
If snow be white, why then her breasts are dun;
If hairs be wires, black wires grow on her head.
I have seen roses damask'd, red and white,
But no such roses see I in her cheeks;
And in some perfumes is there more delight
Than in the breath that from my mistress reeks.
I love to hear her speak, yet well I know
That music hath a far more pleasing sound;
I grant I never saw a goddess go;
My mistress, when she walks, treads on the
ground:
And yet, by heaven, I think my love as rare
As any she belied with false compare.

Imagery

Words or phrases that use a collection of images to appeal to one or more of the five senses in order to create a mental picture

EXAMPLE: (from James Joyce's "Araby")

"While she spoke she turned a silver bracelet round and round her wrist. She could not go, she said, because there would be a retreat that week in her convent. Her brother and two other boys were fighting for their caps, and I was alone at the railings. She held one of the spikes, bowing her head towards me. The light from the lamp opposite our door caught the white curve of her neck, lit up her hair that rested there and, falling, lit up the hand upon the railing. It fell over one side of her dress and caught the white border of a petticoat, just visible as she stood at ease."

In medias res

(Latin: "In the middle[s] of things"): The classical tradition of opening an epic not in the chronological point at which the sequence of events would start, but rather at the midway point of the story. Later on in the narrative, the hero will recount verbally to others what events took place earlier.

EXAMPLE:

In epic poetry-*The Odyssey*; in literature-*Heart of Darkness*; in film-*Star Wars*;
on television-*How I Met Your Mother*, *Lost*

Indirect Characterization

The writer reveals information about a character and his personality through that character's thoughts, words, and actions, along with how other characters respond to that character, including what they think and say about him; with direct characterization, the writer makes direct statements about a character's personality and tells what the character is like.

EXAMPLE: (direct vs. indirect characterization)

- 1) Ed Johnson scratched his head in confusion as the sales rep explained Dralco's newest engine performance diagnostic computer. The old mechanic hated modern electronics, preferring the old days when all he needed was a stack of manuals and a good set of tools.
- 2) "That Ed Johnson," said Anderson, watching the old mechanic scratch his head in confusion as the sales rep explained Dralco's newest engine performance diagnostic computer. "He hasn't got a clue about modern electronics. Give him a good set of tools and a stack of yellowing manuals with a carburetor needing repair, and he'd be happy as a hungry frog in a fly field."

Interior Monologue

Writing that records the conversation that occurs inside a character's head; the author does not attempt to provide (or provides minimally) any commentary, description, or guiding discussion to help the reader untangle the complex web of thoughts, nor does the writer clean up the vague surge of thoughts into grammatically correct sentences or a logical order.

EXAMPLE: (from Dorothy Parker's "A Telephone Call")

PLEASE, God, let him telephone me now. Dear God, let him call me now. I won't ask anything else of You, truly I won't. It isn't very much to ask. It would be so little to You, God, such a little, little thing. Only let him telephone now. Please, God. Please, please, please.

If I didn't think about it, maybe the telephone might ring. Sometimes it does that. If I could think of something else. If I could think of something else. Knobby if I counted five hundred by fives, it might ring by that time. I'll count slowly. I won't cheat. And if it rings when I get to three hundred, I won't stop; I won't answer it until I get to five hundred. Five, ten, fifteen, twenty, twenty-five, thirty, thirty-five, forty, forty-five, fifty.... Oh, please ring. Please.

Invective

A verbally abusive attack

EXAMPLE:

"A knave, a rascal, an eater of broken meats, a base, proud, shallow, beggarly

three-suited, hundred-pound, filthy worsted-stocking knave; a lily-livered, action-taking, whoreson, glass-gazing, super-serviceable, finical rogue; one-trunk-inheriting slave; one that wouldst be a bawd in way of good service, and art nothing but the composition of a knave, beggar, coward, pander, and the son and heir to a mongrel bitch: one whom I will beat into clamorous whining if thou deni'st the least syllable of thy addition."
(William Shakespeare, *The Tragedy of King Lear*, II.2)

Inversion

Reversing the customary (subject first, then verb, then complement) order of elements in a sentence or phrase; Inversion often gains power by focusing attention on the ends of sentences, where readers and listeners naturally pause.

EXAMPLE: (from President John F. Kennedy's inaugural address-1961)

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

Irony

A situation or statement in which the actual outcome or meaning is opposite to what was expected.

EXAMPLE: (from *Romeo and Juliet*)

Verbal irony. The words literally state the opposite of the writer's (or speaker's) true meaning. For example, the Prologue in Act I opens with "Two households, both alike in dignity, . . ." When you first read this, you may think that the two families are pretty dignified or honorable. As the play goes on, however, you realize that each family is violently competitive. They are similarly *undignified*.

Situational irony. Events turn out the opposite of what was expected. What the characters and audience think ought to happen isn't what eventually happens. In Shakespeare's play, the young lovers do end up spending eternity together, but not in the way the audience had hoped.

Dramatic irony (sometimes called *tragic irony*). Facts or events are unknown to a character in a play or story but known to you or other characters in the work. For example, the audience knows that Juliet took a sleeping potion and isn't really dead. Romeo's suicide affects the audience even more because of this knowledge.

Litotes

Understatement in which an affirmative is expressed by the negative of the contrary

EXAMPLE:

- 1) "The grave's a fine a private place,
But none, I think, do there embrace."
(Andrew Marvell, "To His Coy Mistress")
- 2) "for life's not a paragraph
And death I think is no parenthesis"
(e.e. cummings, "since feeling is first")
- 3) "We made a difference. We made the city stronger, we made the city freer,
and we left her in good hands. All in all not bad not bad at all "

(Ronald Reagan, Farewell Address to the Nation, January 20, 1989)

Logos

Logos is appeal based on logic or reason.

EXAMPLE: From Martin Luther King Jr.'s "Letter from a Birmingham jail"

"In any nonviolent campaign there are four basic steps: 1) Collection of the facts to determine whether injustices are alive. 2) Negotiation. 3) Self-purification and 4) Direct action. We have gone through all of these steps in Birmingham.

There can be no gainsaying of the fact that racial injustice engulfs this community. Birmingham is probably the most thoroughly segregated city in the United States. Its ugly record of police brutality is known in every section of this country. Its unjust treatment of Negroes in the courts is a notorious reality. There have been more unsolved bombings of Negro homes and churches in Birmingham than any city in this nation. These are the hard, brutal and unbelievable facts. On the basis of these conditions, Negro leaders sought to negotiate with the city fathers. But the political leaders consistently refused to engage in good faith negotiation."

Lyrical Poetry

A short poem (usually no more than 50-60 lines, and often only a dozen lines long) written in a repeating stanzaic form, often designed to be set to music. Unlike a ballad, the lyric usually does not have a plot (i.e., it might not tell a complete story), but it rather expresses the feelings, perceptions, and thoughts of a single poetic speaker (not necessarily the poet) in an intensely personal, emotional, or subjective manner. Often, there is no chronology of events in the lyrics, but rather objects, situations, or the subject is written about in a "lyric moment." Sometimes, the reader can infer an implicit narrative element in lyrics, but it is rare for the lyric to proceed in the straightforward, chronological "telling" common in fictional prose.

EXAMPLE: In William Wordsworth's "The Solitary Reaper," the reader can guess from the speaker's words that the speaker has come unexpectedly upon a girl reaping and singing in the Scottish Highlands, and that he stops, listens, and thinks awhile before continuing on his way. However, this chain of events is not explicitly a center of plot or extended conflict between protagonist and antagonist. Instead it triggers a moment of contemplation and appreciation. Thus it is not a *plot* in the normal sense of the word:

Behold her, single in the field,
Yon solitary Highland Lass!
Reaping and singing by herself;
Stop here, or gently pass!
Alone she cuts and binds the grain,
And sings a melancholy strain;
O listen! for the Vale profound
Is overflowing with the sound.

No Nightingale did ever chaunt
More welcome notes to weary bands
Of travellers in some shady haunt,
Among Arabian sands:

A voice so thrilling ne'er was heard
In spring-time from the Cuckoo-bird,
Breaking the silence of the seas
Among the farthest Hebrides.

Will no one tell me what she sings?--
Perhaps the plaintive numbers flow
For old, unhappy, far-off things,
And battles long ago:
Or is it some more humble lay,
Familiar matter of to-day?
Some natural sorrow, loss, or pain,
That has been, and may be again?

Whate'er the theme, the Maiden sang
As if her song could have no ending;
I saw her singing at her work,
And o'er the sickle bending;--
I listened, motionless and still;
And, as I mounted up the hill
The music in my heart I bore,
Long after it was heard no more.

Masculine Rhyme

A rhyme occurring in words of one syllable or in an accented final syllable, such as *light* and *sight* or *arise* and *surprise*.

EXAMPLE: From John Donne's "Lecture upon the Shadow"

Stand still, and I will read to **thee**
A lecture, love, in Love's philosophy
These three hours that we have **spent**
Walking here, two shadows **went**
Along with us, which we ourselves **produced**.
But now the sun is just above our **head**,
We do those shadows **tread**
And to brave clearness all things are **reduced**.

Maxim

A proverb, a short, pithy statement or aphorism believed to contain wisdom or insight into human nature.

EXAMPLE:

Benjamin Franklin included several celebrated examples in his *Poor Richard's Almanack* (1733-58), including the maxim 'Three may keep a secret, if two of them are dead.'

Memoir

An autobiographical sketch--especially one that focuses less on the author's personal life or psychological development and more on the notable people and events the author has encountered or witnessed.

EXAMPLE:

The Things They Carried(O'Brien); *Night* (Wiesel); *The Color of Water* (McBride); *Wait Till Next Year*(Kearns-Goodwin)

Metaphor

A figure of speech in which one thing is referred to as another.

EXAMPLE: "With this faith we will be able to transform the jangling discords of our nation into a beautiful symphony of brotherhood."

— Martin Luther King, *I Have a Dream*

Note here there are two metaphors which serve as a comparison for two different but related ideas: 1) racial problems = "jangling discords" and 2) racial problems solved through faith = "beautiful symphony of brotherhood"

Meter

A measure of rhythmic quantity; the organized succession of groups of syllables at basically regular intervals in a line of poetry, according to definite metrical patterns. In English the distinction is between accented and unaccented syllables. The unit of meter is the foot. Metrical lines are named for the constituent foot and for the number of feet in the line: *monometer (1)*, *dimeter (2)*, *trimeter (3)*, *tetrameter (4)*, *pentameter (5)*, *hexameter (6)*, *heptameter (7)*, and *octameter (8)*; thus, a line containing five iambic feet, for example, would be called *iambic pentameter*.

EXAMPLE: (from "The Robin" - Thomas Hardy)

When up aloft
I fly and fly,
I see in pools
The shining sky,
And a happy bird
Am I, am I!

When I descend
Toward the brink
I stand and look
And stop and drink
And bathe my wings,
And chink and prink.

Metonymy

A figure of speech that uses the name of an object, person, or idea to represent something with which it is associated, such as using "the crown" to refer to a monarch; Also, "The pen is mightier than the sword."

EXAMPLE: (from Robert Frost's "Out, Out—")

His sister stood beside him in her apron
To tell them "Supper." At the word, the saw,
As if it meant to prove saws know what supper meant,
Leaped out at the boy's hand, or seemed to leap -
He must have given the hand. However it was

Neither refused the meeting. But the hand!
 Half in appeal, but half as if to keep
The life from spilling. Then the boy saw all -
 Since he was old enough to know, big boy
 Doing a man's work, though a child at heart -
 He saw all was spoiled. "Don't let him cut my hand off -
 The doctor, when he comes. Don't let him, sister!"

(*life* replaces *blood*, which is associated with life)

Multicultural Novel

A novel written by a member of or about a cultural minority group, giving insight into non-Western or non-dominant cultural experiences and values, either in the United States or abroad.

EXAMPLE:

- Chinua Achebe, *Things Fall Apart*
- Amy Tan, *The Kitchen God's Wife*
- Forrest Carter, *The Education of Little Tree*
- Margaret Craven, *I Heard the Owl Call My Name*
- James Baldwin, *Go Tell It on the Mountain*
- Chaim Potok, *The Chosen*
- Isaac Bashevis Singer, *The Penitent*
- Alice Walker, *The Color Purple*

Situation, incident, idea, image, or character type that is found in many different literary works, folktales, or myths; or any element of a work that is elaborated into a more general theme.

EXAMPLE:

The Inward Struggle	Justice for All
The Quest	Born Again/Recalled to Life
The Faithful Friend	The Corruption of Power
The Love Triangle	Oppression of the Poor
The Betrayal	Big Brother is Watching
Revenge	The Wild Woman
Meeting the Supernatural	Madness
The Search for Identity	Separation

Narrative Poetry

The narration of an event or story, stressing details of plot, incident, and action. Along with dramatic and lyric verse, it is one of the three main groups of poetry.

EXAMPLE: From Coleridge's "The Rime of an Ancient Mariner"

Day after day, day after day,
 We stuck, nor breath nor motion;
 As idle as a painted ship
 Upon a painted ocean.

Water water everywhere

And all the boards did shrink;
Water, water, everywhere,
Nor any drop to drink

Naturalism

A literary movement seeking to depict life as accurately as possible, without artificial distortions of emotion, idealism, and literary convention. The school of thought is a product of post-Darwinian biology in the nineteenth century. It asserts that human beings exist entirely in the order of nature. Human beings do not have souls or any mode of participating in a religious or spiritual world beyond the biological realm of nature, and any such attempts to engage in a religious or spiritual world are acts of self-delusion and wish-fulfillment. Humanity is thus a higher order animal whose character and behavior are, as M. H. Abrams summarizes, entirely determined by two kinds of forces, hereditary and environment. The individual's compulsive instincts toward sexuality, hunger, and accumulation of goods are inherited via genetic compulsion and the social and economic forces surrounding his or her upbringing. Naturalists emphasize the smallness of humanity in the universe; they remind readers of the immensity, power, and cruelty of the natural world, which does not care whether humanity lives or dies.

EXAMPLE:

Stephen Crane's "The Open Boat," which pits a crew of shipwrecked survivors in a raft against starvation, dehydration, and sharks in the middle of the ocean, and Jack London's "To Build a Fire," which reveals the inability of a Californian transplant to survive outside of his "natural" environment as he freezes to death in the Alaskan wilderness.

Novel

Any extended fictional prose narrative focusing on a few primary characters but often involving scores of secondary characters. The fact that it is in prose helps distinguish it from other lengthy works like epics. We might arbitrarily set the length at 50,000 words or more as a dividing point with the *novella* and the short story. The English novel is primarily thought of as a product of the eighteenth-century.

EXAMPLE:

The Catcher in the Rye (Salinger); *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (Twain); *The Great Gatsby* (Fitzgerald); *Cat's Cradle* (Vonnegut)

Novella

An extended fictional prose narrative that is longer than a short story, but not quite as long as a novel. We might arbitrarily assign an approximate length of 20,000-50,000 words.

EXAMPLE:

Anthem (Rand); *Heart of Darkness* (Conrad); *The Stranger* (Camus); *Of Mice and Men* (Steinbeck)

Octave

A stanza of eight lines, especially the first eight lines of an Italian or Petrarchan sonnet.

EXAMPLE: The first eight lines of John Milton's Petrarchan sonnet

When I consider how my light is spent,
Ere half my days in this dark world and wide,
And that one talent which is death to hide
Lodged with me useless, though my soul more bent
To serve therewith my Maker, and present
My true account, lest He returning chide;
"Doth God exact day-labor, light denied?"
I fondly ask. But Patience, to prevent
That murmur, soon replies, "God doth not need
Either man's work or His own gifts. Who best
Bear His mild yoke, they serve Him best. His state
Is kingly: thousands at His bidding speed,
And post o'er land and ocean without rest;
They also serve who only stand and wait."

Oedipal/Electra

Oedipus complex: A Freudian term derived from Sophocles' tragedy *Oedipus the King*. It describes a psychological complex that is predicated on a boy's unconscious rivalry with his father for his mother's love and his desire to eliminate his father in order to take his father's place with his mother. The female equivalent of this complex is called the Electra complex.

EXAMPLE:

Hamlet; Norman Bates in *Psycho* (Hitchcock)

Olfactory Imagery

Imagery that stimulates the sense of smell.

EXAMPLE: (Robert Frost)

UNHARVESTED

A scent of ripeness from over a wall.
And come to leave the routine road
And look for what has made me stall,
There sure enough was an apple tree
That had eased itself of its summer load,
And of all but its trivial foliage free,
Now breathed as light as a lady's fan.
For there had been an apple fall
As complete as the apple had given man.
The ground was one circle of solid red.

May something go always unharvested!
May much stay out of our stated plan,
Apples or something forgotten and left

So smelling their sweetness would be no theft.

Onomatopoeia

The use of words that sound like what they mean, such as "hiss," "buzz," "slam," and "boom."

EXAMPLE: From Browning's "A Meeting at Night"

A tap at the pane, the quick sharp scratch
And blue spurt of a lighted match.

Oxymoron

A figure of speech composed of contradictory words or phrases, such as "wise fool," "bitter-sweet," "pretty ugly," "jumbo shrimp," "cold fire."

EXAMPLE: (from various famous poets)

- John Milton's description of God in *Paradise Lost* as "Dark with excessive bright"
- "And faith unfaithful kept him falsely true" from *Idylls of the King* by Alfred, Lord Tennyson
- "O miserable abundance, O beggarly riches!" by the poet John Donne from *Devotions on Emergent Occasion*
- "I do here make humbly bold to present them with a short account of themselves..." by the poet and author Jonathan Swift

Paeon

In modern usage, a hymn of praise, joy, or triumph.

EXAMPLE: From E.A. Poe's "A Paeon"

I.

How shall the burial rite be read?
The solemn song be sung?
The requiem for the loveliest dead,
That ever died so young?

II.

Her friends are gazing on her,
And on her gaudy bier,
And weep! - oh! to dishonor
Dead beauty with a tear!

III.

They loved her for her wealth -
And they hated her for her pride -
But she grew in feeble health,

And they love her - that she died.

Paradox

A statement that seems to contradict itself but that turns out to have a rational meaning.

EXAMPLE:

"I never found the companion that was so companionable as solitude."

--Henry David Thoreau

"I don't hustle with people who are dishonest."

-- Woody Harrelson (from the movie *White Men Can't Jump*)

Parallelism

The technique of arranging words, phrases, clauses, or larger structures by placing them side by side and making them similar in form.

EXAMPLE:

"Let every nation know, whether it wishes us well or ill, that we shall pay any price, bear any burden, meet any hardship, support any friend, oppose any foe to assure the survival and the success of liberty."

-- John F. Kennedy, *Inaugural Address*

Parody

A work that ridicules the style of another work by imitating and exaggerating its elements. It can be utterly mocking or gently humorous. It depends on allusion and exaggerates and distorts the original style and content.

EXAMPLE:

The Simpsons versions of *Hamlet*, "The Raven," or *A Streetcar named Desire*; *Saturday Night Live*

Pathetic Fallacy

The ascribing of human traits or feelings to inanimate nature for eloquent effect, especially feelings in sympathy with those expressed or experienced by the writer, as a "cruel wind," a "pitiless storm."

EXAMPLE: (from Shelley's *Adonais*)

Ocean in unquiet slumber lay,
And the Wild Winds flew round, sobbing in their dismay.

Pathos

The appeal to pathos-an element in experience or in artistic representation evoking pity or compassion

EXAMPLE: From *The Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass*

"I have often been awakened at the dawn of day by the most heart-rending shrieks of an old aunt of mine, whom he used to tie up to a joist, and whip upon her naked back till she was literally covered with blood. No words, no tears, no prayers, from his gory victim, seemed to move his iron heart from its bloody purpose. The louder she screamed, the harder he whipped; and where the blood ran fastest, there he whipped the longest. He would whip her to make her scream, and whip her to make her hush; and not until overcome by fatigue, would he cease to swing the blood-clotted cowskin. I remember the first time I ever witnessed this horrible exhibition. I was quite a child, but I well remember it. I never shall forget it whilst I remember any thing. It was the first of a long series of such outrages, of which I was doomed to be a witness and a participant. It struck me with awful force. It was the blood-stained gate, the entrance to the hell of slavery, through which I was about to pass. It was a most terrible spectacle. I wish I could commit to paper the feelings with which I beheld it."

Pentameter

A line of verse consisting of five metrical feet.

EXAMPLE: (Shakespeare's Sonnet 130)

My mistress' eyes are nothing like the sun;
Coral is far more red than her lips' red;
If snow be white, why then her breasts are dun;
If hairs be wires, black wires grow on her head.
I have seen roses damask'd, red and white,
But no such roses see I in her cheeks;
And in some perfumes is there more delight
Than in the breath that from my mistress reeks.
I love to hear her speak, yet well I know
That music hath a far more pleasing sound;
I grant I never saw a goddess go;
My mistress, when she walks, treads on the ground:
And yet, by heaven, I think my love as rare
As any she belied with false compare.

Personification

The attribution of human qualities to a nonhuman or an inanimate object.

EXAMPLE:

Two Sunflowers
Move in the Yellow Room.

"Ah, William, we're weary of weather,
said the sunflowers, shining with dew.
"Our traveling habits have tired us.
Can you give us a room with a view?"

They arranged themselves at the window
and counted the steps of the sun.

and they both took root in the carpet
where the topaz tortoises run.

-William Blake
(1757-1827)

Petrarchan Sonnet An Italian sonnet form perfected by Petrarch (1304-1374), characterized by an octave with a rhyme scheme of *abbaabba* and a sestet rhyming variously, but usually *cdecde* or *cdeccdc*. The octave typically introduces the theme or problem, with the sestet providing the resolution.

EXAMPLE: Edna St. Vincent Millay's Sonnet XLIII

What lips my lips have kissed, and where, and why,
I have forgotten, and what arms have lain
Under my head till morning; but the rain
Is full of ghosts tonight, that tap and sigh
Upon the glass and listen for reply,
And in my heart there stirs a quiet pain
For unremembered lads that not again
Will turn to me at midnight with a cry.
Thus in winter stands the lonely tree,
Nor knows what birds have vanished one by one,
Yet knows its boughs more silent than before:
I cannot say what loves have come and gone,
I only know that summer sang in me
A little while, that in me sings no more.

Plot The structure and relationship of actions and events in a work of fiction. In order for a plot to begin, some sort of catalyst is necessary. While the temporal order of events in the work constitutes the "story," we are speaking of plot rather than story as soon as we look at how these events relate to one another and how they are rendered and organized so as to achieve their particular effects.

EXAMPLE:

Exposition → Conflict → Rising Action → Turning Point → Falling Action → Resolution

Point of View The perspective from which a story is presented

EXAMPLE:

Interior Monologue—"This Is My Living Room" (McAfee)
Dramatic Monologue—"The Lady's Maid" (Mansfield)
Diary Narration—"Flowers for Alvernon" (Keves)

- Letter Narration-"A Bundle of Letters" (James)
- Subjective Narration-"A & P" (Updike)
- Detached Autobiography-"First Confession" (O'Connor)
- Observer Narration-"Johnny Bear" (Steinbeck)
- Anonymous Narration (Single Char. POV)-"The Stone Boy" (Berriault)
- Anonymous Narration (Dual Char. POV)-"Unlighted Lamps" (Anderson)
- Anonymous Narration (Multiple Char. POV)-"The Idiots" (Conrad)
- Anonymous Narration (No Char. POV)-"The Lottery" (Jackson)

Prose

Ordinary language people use in speaking or writing, as distinguished from the heightened language of poetry. In prose, the line is not treated as a formal unit, nor does it employ the repetitive patterns of rhythm or meter associated with many forms of poetic expression.

EXAMPLE: The first scene of *Romeo and Juliet* is written in prose, until Benvolio and Tybalt, the more important and higher born characters in the play, enter:

Abraham: Do you bite your thumb at us, sir?
 Sampson: No, sir, I do not bite my thumb at you, sir, but I bite my thumb, sir.
 Gregory: Do you quarrel, sir?
 Abraham: Quarrel, sir? No, sir.
 Sampson: But if you do sir, I am for you: I serve as good a man as you.
 Abraham: No better.
 Sampson: Yes, better, sir.
 Abraham: You lie.
 Sampson: Draw, if you be men.
Enter Benvolio
 Benvolio: Part fools! / Put up your swords. You know not what you do.
Enter Tybalt
 Tybalt: What, art thou drawn among these heartless hinds? / Turn thee, Benvolio, / Look upon thy death.
 Benvolio: I do but keep the peace. Put up thy sword, / Or manage it to part these men with me. (1.1.44-69)

Protagonist

The main character of a literary work.

EXAMPLE:

Equality (Rand's *Anthem*); Holden (Salinger's *Catcher in the Rye*); Willy Loman (Miller's *Death of a Salesman*)

Proverb

A brief, pithy, popular saying or epigram embodying some familiar truth, practical interpretation of experience, or useful thought

EXAMPLE:

A fool sees not the same tree that a wise man sees. (Blake)
 A man may well bring a horse to the water, but he cannot make him drink. (Heywood)
 As a dog returneth to his vomit, so a fool returneth to his folly. (Bible: Proverbs)

26:11)

Pun

A play on two words similar in sound but different in meaning.

EXAMPLE:

O dreamy eyes
They tell sweet lies of Paradise;
And in those eyes the lovelight lies
And lies--and lies--and lies!
--Anita Owen

Purple Patch

Used to describe passages, or sometimes entire literary works, written in prose so overly extravagant, ornate or flowery as to break the flow and draw attention to itself. Purple prose is sensuously evocative beyond the requirements of its context. It also refers to writing that employs certain rhetorical effects such as exaggerated sentiment or pathos in an attempt to manipulate a reader's response.

EXAMPLE: (from Edward Bulwer-Lytton's *Paul Clifford*)

It was a dark and stormy night; the rain fell in torrents—except at occasional intervals, when it was checked by a violent gust of wind which swept up the streets (for it is in London that our scene lies), rattling along the housetops, and fiercely agitating the scanty flame of the lamps that struggled against the darkness.

Quatrain

A poem, unit, or stanza of four lines of verse, usually with a rhyme scheme of *abab* or its variant, *xbyb*. It is the most common stanzaic form.

EXAMPLE: Note the three quatrains in Shakespeare's "Sonnet 18"

Shall I compare thee to a summer's day?
Thou art more lovely and more temperate.
Rough winds do shake the darling buds of May,
And summer's lease hath all too short a date.

Sometime too hot the eye of heaven shines,
And often is his gold complexion dimm'd;
And every fair from fair sometime declines,
By chance or nature's changing course untrimm'd;

But thy eternal summer shall not fade
Nor lose possession of that fair thou ow'st;
Nor shall Death brag thou wander'st in his shade,
When in eternal lines to time thou grow'st:

So long as men can breathe or eyes can see,
So long lives this, and this gives life to thee.

Quintet

A poem, unit, or stanza of five lines of verse.

EXAMPLE: From Coleridge's "Rime of an Ancient Mariner"

With throats unslaked, with black lips baked,
We could not laugh nor wail,
Through utter drought all dumb we stood!
I bit my arm, I sucked the blood,
And cried, A sail! a sail!

With throats unslaked, with black lips baked,
Agape they heard me call:
Gramercy! they for joy did grin,
And all at once their breath drew in,
As they were drinking all.

Realism

Any artistic or literary portrayal of life in a faithful, accurate manner, unclouded by false ideals, literary conventions, or misplaced aesthetic glorification and beautification of the world. It is a theory or tendency in writing to depict events in human life in a matter-of-fact, straightforward manner. It is an attempt to reflect life "as it actually is."

EXAMPLE:

The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn (Twain); *Red Badge of Courage* (Crane);
"An Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge" (Bierce)

Red Herring

A fallacy in which an irrelevant topic is presented in order to divert attention from the original issue. The basic idea is to "win" an argument by leading attention away from the argument and to another topic. This sort of "reasoning" has the following form:

1. Topic A is under discussion.
2. Topic B is introduced under the guise of being relevant to topic A (when topic B is actually not relevant to topic A).
3. Topic A is abandoned.

EXAMPLE:

"Argument" for making grad school requirements stricter:

"I think there is great merit in making the requirements stricter for the graduate students. I recommend that you support it, too. After all, we are in a budget crisis and we do not want our salaries affected."

Refrain

A stanza, line, part of a line, or phrase, generally pertinent to the central topic, which is repeated verbatim, usually at regular intervals throughout a poem, most often at the end of a stanza.

EXAMPLE: From Edgar Allan Poe's "The Raven"

"Prophet!" said I, "thing of evil! -- prophet still, if bird or devil!
By that heaven that bends above us -- by that God we both adore

Tell this soul with sorrow laden if, within the distant Aidenn,
It shall clasp a sainted maiden whom the angels name Lenore --
Clasp a rare and radiant maiden whom the angels name Lenore."
Quoth the Raven, "Nevermore."

"Be that word our sign of parting, bird or fiend!" I shrieked, upstarting --
"Get thee back into the tempest and the Night's Plutonian shore!
Leave no black plume as a token of that lie thy soul hath spoken!
Leave my loneliness unbroken! -- quit the bust above my door!
Take thy beak from out my heart, and take thy form from off my door!"
Quoth the Raven, "Nevermore."

Reiteration

Repetition as a point of emphasis

EXAMPLE: From Martin Luther King Jr.'s "I Have a Dream" speech

I say to you today, my friends, so even though we face the difficulties of today and tomorrow, I still have a dream. It is a dream deeply rooted in the American dream.

I have a dream that one day this nation will rise up and live out the true meaning of its creed: "We hold these truths to be self-evident: that all men are created equal."

I have a dream that one day on the red hills of Georgia the sons of former slaves and the sons of former slave owners will be able to sit down together at the table of brotherhood.

I have a dream that one day even the state of Mississippi, a state sweltering with the heat of injustice, sweltering with the heat of oppression, will be transformed into an oasis of freedom and justice.

I have a dream that my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character.

I have a dream today.

I have a dream that one day, down in Alabama, with its vicious racists, with its governor having his lips dripping with the words of interposition and nullification; one day right there in Alabama, little black boys and black girls will be able to join hands with little white boys and white girls as sisters and brothers.

I have a dream today.

Repetition

A basic artistic device, fundamental to any conception of poetry or rhetoric. It is a highly effective unifying force; the repetition of sound, syllables, words, syntactic elements, lines, stanzaic forms, and metrical patterns establishes cycles of expectation which are reinforced with each successive fulfillment.

EXAMPLE: Emily Dickinson's "I'm Nobody! Who are You?"

I'm nobody! Who are You?

I'm nobody! Who are you?
Are you nobody too?
Then there's a pair of us-don't tell!
They'd banish us you know.

How dreary to be somebody!
how public, like a frog.
To tell your name livelong day
To an admiring bog!

Rhyme

In the specific sense, a type of echoing which utilizes a correspondence of sound in the final accented vowels and all that follows of two or more words, but the preceding consonant sounds must differ, as in the words, *bear* and *care*. In a broader poetic sense, however, *rhyme* refers to a *close similarity* of sound as well as an *exact* correspondence; it includes the agreement of vowel sounds in *assonance* and the repetition of consonant sounds in *consonance* and *alliteration*.

EXAMPLE: Nikki Giovanni's "And I Have You"

Rain has drops Sun has shine
Moon has beams That make you mine
Rivers have banks Sands for shores
Hearts have hearbeats That make me yours
Needles have eyes Though pins may prick
Elmer has glue To make things stick
Winter has Spring Stockings feet
Pepper has mint To make it sweet
Teachers have lessons Soup du jour
Lawyers sue bad folks Doctors cure
All and all This much is true
You have me And I have you

Rhyme Scheme

The pattern established by the arrangement of rhymes in a stanza or poem, generally described by using letters of the alphabet to denote the recurrence of rhyming lines.

EXAMPLE: From Shakespeare's Sonnet 116 (abab rhyme scheme)

Let me not to the marriage of true minds
Admit impediments. Love is not love
Which alters when it alteration finds,
Or bends with the remover to remove:
O no! it is an ever-fixed mark
That looks on tempests and is never shaken;
It is the star to every wandering bark,
Whose worth's unknown, although his height be
taken.

Satire

A work that reveals a critical attitude toward some element of human behavior by portraying it in an extreme way. It doesn't simply abuse (as in invective) or get personal (as in sarcasm). It targets groups or large concepts rather than individuals.

EXAMPLE:

Catch-22 (Heller); *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (Twain); *Cat's Cradle* (Vonnegut); *Gulliver's Travels* (Swift)

Septet

A poetic stanza of seven lines.

EXAMPLE: from Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde*

Now here, now there, he hunted them so fast,
There was but Greeks' blood; and Troilus
Now him he hurt, now him adown he cast;
Ay where he went it was arrayed thus:
He was their death, and shield of life for us,
That as that day there durst him none withstand,
While that he held his bloody sword in hand.

Sestet

A term used for the last six lines of an Italian or Petrarchan sonnet to distinguish them from the preceding octave, or any six-line group that has reason to be similarly distinguished from its setting.

EXAMPLE: From Elizabeth Barrett Browning's "Sonnet LXIII"

I love thee with the passion put to use
In my old griefs, and with my childhood's faith.
I love thee with a love I seemed to lose
With my lost saints. - I love thee with the breath,
Smiles, tear, of all my life! - and, if God choose,
I shall but love thee better after death.

Setting

The general locale, historical time, and social circumstances in which the action of a fictional or dramatic work occurs; the setting of an episode or scene within a work is the particular physical location in which it takes place.

EXAMPLE:

An understanding and/or appreciation for the Puritan beliefs of sin, for instance, is essential for understanding and /or appreciating Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter*. In some instances, locations can represent forces: fields can suggest openness and opportunity, rooms can suggest seclusion or isolation,

Imagine the action taking place elsewhere, at another time, in another culture to realize the effect of a particular setting.

Shakespearean Sonnet

Uses three quatrains; each rhymed differently, with a final, independently rhymed couplet that makes an effective, unifying climax to the whole. Its 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.

EXAMPLE: Sonnet 29 (Shakespeare)

When, in disgrace with fortune and men's eyes,
I all alone beweep my outcast state
And trouble deaf heaven with my bootless cries
And look upon myself and curse my fate,
Wishing me like to one more rich in hope,
Featured like him, like him with friends possess'd,
Desiring this man's art and that man's scope,
With what I most enjoy contented least,
Yet in these thoughts myself almost despising,
Haply I think on thee, and then my state,
Like to the lark at break of day arising
From sullen earth, sings hymns at heaven's gate,
For thy sweet love remember'd such wealth brings
That then I scorn to change my state with kings.

Short Story

The short story is a literary genre of fictional, prose narrative that tends to be more concise and "to the point" than longer works of fiction. Short stories tend to be less complex than novels. Usually a short story focuses on only one incident, has a single plot, a single setting, a limited number of characters, and covers a short period of time.

EXAMPLE:

"The Gift of the Magi" (O Henry); "The Necklace" (de Maupassant); "Araby" (Joyce)

Simile

A figure of speech that uses like, as, or as if to make a direct comparison between two essentially different objects, actions, or qualities

EXAMPLE:

"People in the streets see it now. They're running towards the East River -- thousands of them dropping in like rats. Now the smoke's spreading faster. It's reached Times Square. People are trying to run away from it, but it's no use. They're falling like flies."

-- delivered by Orson Wells (from the original radio broadcast of War of the Worlds)

Soliloquy

A monologue 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).

EXAMPLE: from Shakespeare's *Hamlet*

HAMLET: To be, or not to be--that is the question:
Whether 'tis nobler in the mind to suffer
The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune
Or to take arms against a sea of troubles
And by opposing end them. To die, to sleep--
No more--and by a sleep to say we end
The heartache, and the thousand natural shocks
That flesh is heir to. 'Tis a consummation
Devoutly to be wished. To die, to sleep--
To sleep--perchance to dream: ay, there's the rub,
For in that sleep of death what dreams may come
When we have shuffled off this mortal coil,
Must give us pause. There's the respect
That makes calamity of so long life.
For who would bear the whips and scorns of time,
Th' oppressor's wrong, the proud man's contumely
The pangs of despised love, the law's delay,
The insolence of office, and the spurns
That patient merit of th' unworthy takes,
When he himself might his quietus make
With a bare bodkin? Who would fardels bear,
To grunt and sweat under a weary life,
But that the dread of something after death,
The undiscovered country, from whose bourne
No traveller returns, puzzles the will,
And makes us rather bear those ills we have
Than fly to others that we know not of?

Thus conscience does make cowards of us all,
And thus the native hue of resolution
Is sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought,
And enterprise of great pitch and moment
With this regard their currents turn awry
And lose the name of action. — Soft you now,
The fair Ophelia! — Nymph, in thy orisons
Be all my sins remembered.

Speaker

The voice of a work; an author may speak as himself or herself or as a fictitious persona

EXAMPLE:

John from *Cat's Cradle* (Vonnegut); Nick in *The Great Gatsby* (Fitzgerald); James in *The Color of Water* (McBride); Frederick Douglass in *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, An American Slave*

Sonnet

A fixed form consisting of fourteen lines of 5-foot iambic verse. In the English or Shakespearean sonnet, the lines are grouped in three quatrains (with six alternating rhymes) followed by a detached rhymed couplet which is usually epigrammatic. In the original Italian form (or Petrarchan), the fourteen lines are divided into an octave of two rhyme-sounds arranged *abba abba* and a sestet of two additional rhyme sounds which may be variously arranged. This latter form tends to divide the thought into two opposing or complementary phases of the same idea.

EXAMPLE: Shakespeare's "Sonnet 70"

That thou art blamed shall not be thy defect,
For slander's mark was ever yet the fair;
The ornament of beauty is suspect,
A crow that flies in heaven's sweetest air.
So thou be good, slander doth but approve
Thy worth the greater, being woo'd of time;
For canker vice the sweetest buds doth love,
And thou present'st a pure unstained prime.
Thou hast pass'd by the ambush of young days,
Either not assail'd or victor being charged;
Yet this thy praise cannot be so thy praise,
To tie up envy evermore enlarged:
If some suspect of ill mask'd not thy show,
Then thou alone kingdoms of hearts shouldst owe.

Stanza

A division of a poem made by arranging the lines into units, sometimes separated by a space, usually of a corresponding

number of lines and a recurrent pattern of meter and rhyme.

EXAMPLE: Four stanzas from Walt Whitman's "Song of Myself"

I celebrate myself, and sing myself,
And what I assume you shall assume,
For every atom belonging to me as good belongs to you.

I loafe and invite my soul,
I lean and loafe at my ease observing a spear of summer grass.

My tongue, every atom of my blood, form'd from this soil, this air,
Born here of parents born here from parents the same, and their
parents the same,
I, now thirty-seven years old in perfect health begin,
Hoping to cease not till death.
Creeds and schools in abeyance,
Retiring back a while sufficed at what they are, but never forgotten,
I harbor for good or bad, I permit to speak at every hazard,
Nature without check with original energy.

Syllogism

Form of reasoning in which two statements are made and a conclusion is drawn from them

EXAMPLE:

All men are mortal
Socrates is a man,
Socrates is mortal

Symbolism

Use of symbols or anything that is meant to be taken both literally and as representative of a higher and more complex significance

EXAMPLE:

1. Thumb-biting in *Romeo and Juliet* (meaninglessness and silliness of Montague-Capulet feud)
2. Conch-shell in *Lord of the Flies* (civilization and order)
3. Stockings in *Death of a Salesman* (betrayal and sexual infidelity)

Synecdoche

A figure of speech in which a part of something is used to represent a whole, such as using "boards" to mean a stage or "wheels" to mean a car – or "All hands on deck."

EXAMPLE:

"Take thy face hence."
(William Shakespeare, *Macbeth* V.iii)

"I should have been a pair of ragged claws
Scuttling across the floors of silent seas."
(T. S. Eliot, "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock")

Syntax	<p>The grammatical structure of a sentence; the arrangement of words in a sentence. It includes length of sentence, kinds of sentences (questions, exclamations, declarative sentences, rhetorical questions, simple, complex, or compound).</p>
Tactile Imagery	<p>Verbal description that evokes the sense of touch.</p> <p>EXAMPLE: from Robert Frost poems</p> <p><i>After Apple-Picking</i> - the fruit to Cherish in hand <i>Moon Compasses</i> - "So love will take between the hands a face." <i>The Death of the Hired Man</i> - "Mary touches the harplike morning-glory strings and plays some tenderness." <i>The Witch of Coos</i> - "the bed linens might just as well be ice and the clothes snow" <i>On Going Unnoticed</i> - "You grasp the bark by a rugged pleat/ And look up small from the forest's feet."</p>
Theme	<p>The central idea or "message" of a literary work.</p> <p>EXAMPLE:</p> <p>Civilization vs. savagery in <i>Lord of the Flies</i> Loss of innocence in <i>Catcher in the Rye</i> Decline of the American Dream in <i>The Great Gatsby</i></p>
Tone	<p>The characteristic emotion or attitude of an author toward the characters, subject, and audience (anger, sarcastic, loving, didactic, emotional, etc.)</p> <p>EXAMPLE:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The tone of <i>The Grapes of Wrath</i> and <i>Of Mice and Men</i> (Steinbeck) is mournful and sympathetic to the plight of the laborer. 2. The tone of <i>Fahrenheit 451</i> (Bradbury) is foreboding and satirical. 3. The tone of <i>Call of the Wild</i> (London) is romantic and heroic.
Tragedy	<p>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. According to Aristotle, <i>catharsis</i> (an emotional discharge that brings about a moral or spiritual renewal or welcome relief from tension and anxiety) is the marking feature and ultimate end of any tragedy. Traditionally, a tragedy is divided into five acts. The first act introduces the characters in a state of happiness, or at the height of their power, influence, or fame. The second act typically introduces a problem or dilemma, which reaches a point of crisis in the third act, but which can still be successfully averted. In the fourth act, the main characters fail to avert or avoid the impending crisis or catastrophe, and this disaster occurs. The fifth act traditionally reveals the grim consequences of that failure.</p> <p>EXAMPLE:</p>

Oedipus the King (Sophocles); *The Tragedy of Othello, the Moor of Venice* (Shakespeare); *The Crucible* (Miller); *A Streetcar Named Desire* (Williams)

Tragic flaw

Really "hamartia" ("missing the mark"), 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 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.

EXAMPLE:

Macbeth's ambition, Brutus's patriotism, Romeo and Juliet's innocence and naiveté, Hamlet's introspection, Othello's moral certitude—all characteristics which make each figure both eminent and tragic.

Triplet

Or a *tercet*, a unit or group of three lines of verse which are rhymed together or have a rhyme scheme that interlaces with an adjoining triplet/tercet.

EXAMPLE:

The winged seeds, where they lie cold and low,
Each like a corpse within its grave, until
Thine azure sister of the Spring shall blow.
— Percy Shelly, *Ode to the West Wind*

I shut my eyes and all the world drops dead;
I lift my lids and all is born again.
(I think I made you up inside my head.)
— Sylvia Plath, *Mad Girl's Love Song*

Understatement

The opposite of exaggeration. It is a technique for developing irony and/or humor where one writes or says less than intended.

EXAMPLE:

In *Monty Python's The Meaning of Life*, a suburban dinner party is invaded by Death, who wears a long black cloak and carries a scythe. He is the Grim Reaper; the party is over; the guests must all go with him. "Well," says one party guest, "that's cast rather a gloom over the evening, hasn't it?" In another scene, an Army officer has just lost his leg. When asked how he feels, he looks down at his bloody stump and responds, "Stings a bit."

Verse

A line of writing arranged in a metrical pattern, i.e., a line of poetry. Also, a piece of poetry or a particular form of poetry such as *free verse*, *blank verse*, etc., or the art or work of a poet.

EXAMPLE: from Shakespeare's *Macbeth* (Blank Verse)

She should have died hereafter;
There would have been a time for such a word.
To-morrow, and to-morrow, and to-morrow,
Creeps in this petty pace from day to day
To the last syllable of recorded time,
And all our yesterdays have lighted fools
The way to dusty death. Out, out, brief candle!
Life's but a walking shadow, a poor player
That struts and frets his hour upon the stage
And then is heard no more: it is a tale
Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury,
Signifying nothing.

Villanelle

A poem in a fixed form, consisting of five 3-line stanzas followed by a quatrain and having only two rhymes. In the stanzas following the first stanza, the first and third lines of the first stanza are repeated alternately as refrains. They are the final two lines of the concluding quatrain.

EXAMPLE: Dylan Thomas's "Do Not Go Gentle into That Good Night"

Do not go gentle into that good night,
Old age should burn and rave at close of day;
Rage, rage against the dying of the light.

Though wise men at their end know dark is right,
Because their words had forked no lightning they
Do not go gentle into that good night,

Good men, the last wave by, crying how bright
Their frail deeds might have danced in a green bay,
Rage, rage against the dying of the light.

Wild men who caught and sang the sun in flight,
And learn, too late, they grieved it on its way,
Do not go gentle into that good night,

Grave men, near death, who see with blinding sight
Blind eyes could blaze like meteors and be gay,
Rage, rage against the dying of the light.

And you, my father, there on the sad height,
Curse, bless, me now with your fierce tears, I pray.
Do not go gentle into that good night,
Rage, rage against the dying of the light.

Visual Imagery

The "mental pictures" that readers experience with a passage of literature.

EXAMPLE: "The Red Wheelbarrow" by William Carlos Williams
so much depends

upon a red wheel barrow/ glazed with rainwater/ beside the white chickens.