

LITERARY TERMS AND RHETORICAL TECHNIQUES

1. **PLOT**: the pattern or sequence of events that make up a story
2. **SETTING**: the time, place, and general environment in which the story takes place
3. **PROTAGONIST**: the main character in the story (usually seen as the "hero" or "heroine")
 - *The **antagonist** represents the rival or **foil** of the protagonist (the "villain")
4. **CHARACTERIZATION**: a technique the author uses to acquaint the reader with a character in the story ("getting to know" a character)
 - *Methods of characterization:
 1. Describing physical appearance
 2. Showing interactions with other characters
 3. Revealing inner thoughts and feelings
 4. Showing actions
 - *Types of characters
 1. Round Characters: show various personality traits
 2. Flat Characters: show only one personality trait
 3. Static Characters: act the same way throughout the story
 4. Dynamic Characters: change in some way during the story
5. **ARCHETYPE**: A character, action, or situation that occurs frequently in literature because it models a pattern of human life.
 - *Character examples: damsel in distress, mentor, temptress, country boy
 - *Setting examples: desert, ocean, wilderness, castle
 - *Plot examples: quest, rags-to-riches, search for love
6. **CONFLICT**: a struggle between opposing forces; a clash of actions, ideas, desires, or values
 - *Types of conflict:
 1. External Conflict: a struggle with something outside of a human (Example: human vs. human, nature, society, fate)
 2. Internal Conflict: a struggle that takes place within a human perhaps dealing with some element of the personality (human vs. self)
7. **DIALOGUE**: conversation between characters that is indicated with quotation marks
 - ***Dialect** refers to the pronunciation, vocabulary, and sentence structure spoken by people from a particular region or group
 - *Example: "What's fer supper, pa?"
8. **POINT OF VIEW**: the author's choice of a narrator for the story that determines how much information the reader can be given
 - *This also includes the author's/speaker's unique perspective and background
 - *Types of point of view:
 1. First Person: the narrator is a character in the story who can only reveal his own thoughts and feelings (speaks with "I")
 - ***Stream of consciousness** narration tells the story through an unbroken flow of thought and awareness
 2. Third Person: the narrator is NOT a character in the story and only reports what he sees and hears
 3. Third Person Omniscient: the narrator is NOT in the story and is all-knowing, including what all of the characters are thinking and feeling

9. **DICTION**: the author's choice of words (formal and informal)

*Diction is often a strong indication of the author's tone or attitude

1. Denotation: the literal or dictionary definition of a word

2. Connotation: the attitudes, beliefs, or feelings that a word triggers

*A **concrete detail** is *descriptive* and very *specific* in order to *show* instead of tell.

*Telling (generalization): The little girl was rude.

*Showing (concrete detail): The little girl turned her nose up and slammed the door.

10. **THEME**: a message to the world or an idea about life that the author suggests through the literary work, usually more complex than a simple subject like *love*, *friendship*, *war*, or *survival*

11. **SYMBOL**: a person, place, event, or object that is used in a literary work to represent some kind of other meaning

*Example: rose = love, storm = trouble

***Allegory** is a story with two levels: 1) the basic plot; and 2) symbolic level where characters or events represent some kind of quality or idea (often teaches a moral)

*Example: In "Dr. Heidegger's Experiment" Mr. Medbourne is a character who represents greed.

12. **IRONY**: a contrast between reality and what seems to be real

*Types of irony:

1. Situation Irony: when the outcome of a situation is the opposite of what someone might expect

2. Verbal Irony: when a person says one thing but means something else

3. Dramatic Irony: the reader knows something that the character does not

13. **METAPHOR**: a comparison of two things that are not alike

*Metaphors are usually used as descriptions that will be memorable to the reader

*Example: The oak tree was a mighty guard watching over our house.

14. **SIMILE**: a comparison of two things that are not alike using "like" or "as"

*Example: The oak tree was like a mighty guard watching over our house.

The oak tree was as mighty as a guard watching over our house.

***Homeric simile** is a comparison of heroic or epic events to simple, everyday events that an audience would recognize instantly – Example: When Athena prevents an arrow from striking Menelaus, Homer writes, "She brushed it away from his skin as lightly as when a mother brushes a fly away from her child who is lying in sweet sleep."

15. **PERSONIFICATION**: giving human characteristics to non-human things

*Example: The wind came up and tickled my nose.

16. **tone**: suggests the author's attitude toward his/her subject, which may shift within a single piece

*What is the perfect adjective to describe how the author feels?

*Tone is usually revealed through the author's choice of words, details, images, characters, and sentence structure

***Mood** is the atmosphere or prevailing emotion of a literary work that describes how the *reader* feels

17. **IMAGERY**: the use of descriptive language that appeals to multiple senses, usually forming vivid pictures in the reader's mind

*A **motif** is a recurring pattern of imagery, symbolism, or theme throughout a literary work

*Example: stars, light vs. dark, colors, fate, disillusionment

18. **FLASHBACK**: an interruption in the action of the story to show something that happened at an earlier time, providing necessary information to better understand the plot
19. **FORESHADOWING**: clues about events that will happen later in the story
***Suspense** is a feeling of curiosity or uncertainty about the outcome of events
20. **ONOMATOPEIA**: a word that sounds like its meaning
*Example: pop, swish
21. **HYPERBOLE**: deliberately using exaggeration or overstatement to make a point, usually in satire
*Example: The drive to the grocery store with Grandma took two weeks.
*Writers may also make a point by using **understatement** (often comically)
*Example: I could probably survive on two million dollars.
22. **ALLUSION**: a reference to a very well-known person, place, event, or literary work
* Common allusions include references to the Bible, Shakespeare, and Greek mythology
23. **RHYME**: corresponding sounds within a poem
*What is the rhyme scheme? Does the poem contain end rhyme, internal rhyme, slant rhyme, or free verse?
24. **METER**: (prosody) a particular rhythm of a poem with accents on specific syllables
***Inversion** is a technique of changing the usual order of words for emphasis or to fit a rhyme scheme
*Example: In silent night when rest I took.
***Epithet** is a brief descriptive phrase used to characterize a person or thing usually added to make the meter work out right
*Examples: “Are you not moved by this, Lord of Olympus?”
“Could I forget that kingly man, Odysseus?”
25. **EPIC POEM**: a long adventure poem with a hero
26. **ELEGY**: a lyric poem about death that often mourns the passing of a particular person
27. **SONNET**: a fourteen-line poem with iambic pentameter that focuses on a single theme
* Two of the most common sonnets are Shakespearean and Petrarchan
28. **SOLILOQUY**: a dramatic form of discourse in which a character talks to himself to reveal inner thoughts and feelings to the reader or audience. What is the difference between this and a **monologue** or **aside**?
29. **ALLITERATION**: a poetic technique repeating the same consonant sound at the beginning of words
*Example: The blue bay was bright with beach bunnies.
30. **ASSONANCE**: a poetic technique using repetition of the same vowel sound in between various consonant sounds
*Example: at a given distance from history
31. **CONSONANCE**: a poetic technique using repetition of the same consonant sound in the middle or at the end of words
*Example: end the pouring pain of a thorn

32. **STYLE**: an author's particular or unique mode of expression
* Style includes such devices as diction, figurative language, imagery, details, tone, and syntax
33. **SYNTAX**: the structure or arrangement of words in a sentence
* Syntax may include sentence length, sentence type, and other grammatical considerations
* **Polysyndeton** is deliberate use of many conjunctions for special emphasis, such as highlighting quantity of detail or creating a flowing sentence pattern, which slows the pace of the sentence
* Example: He ran and jumped and laughed and screamed for joy.
* **Asyndeton** is deliberate omission of conjunctions to speed the sentence pace
* Example: I came, I saw, I conquered.
* **Rhetorical fragment** is a deliberate sentence fragment for emphasis
* Example: Something to consider. Business as usual. Exactly. Of course.
34. **PARADOX**: a statement that seems self-contradictory but is actually true
* Examples: The most real things in life are the ones we cannot see.
Small parties are so intimate; there isn't any privacy.
A guy this clean has got to be dirty.
35. **OXYMORON**: a phrase that combines two contradictory terms
* Example: exact estimate, found missing, definite maybe, act naturally
36. **RHETORICAL QUESTION**: a question that requires no answer and is used to draw attention to a point without making a direct statement.
* Example: Has the time come for war?
37. **SATIRE**: a work that targets human weaknesses or social conventions and makes fun of them for reform or ridicule
* Hyperbole or irony is often used to make the point
38. **PARODY**: a close imitation of a particular style or work for comic effect
39. **PUN**: a play on words for comic effect based on different meanings of words that sound alike
* Example: As Mercutio dies, he utters, "Ask me tomorrow, and you shall find me a grave man."
40. **PARALLELISM**: structural similarity of words, sentences, or paragraphs based on similar grammar or language
* Example: "It was the best of times; it was the worst of times; it was the age of wisdom; it was the age of foolishness."
41. **JUXTAPOSITION**: a poetic and rhetorical device in which normally unassociated ideas, words, or phrases are placed next to one another
* Example: The wild pig lies on its side, an overturned high-heel shoe.
I played in the rain, my own amusement park.
* **Antithesis** is direct juxtaposition of structurally parallel words for contrast
* Example: Sink or swim. I am strong, and you are weak.
42. **REPETITION**: using the same word or phrase continuously to create emphasis
1. Anaphora: repeating a word or phrase at the beginning of successive phrases
 2. Anadiplosis: repeating a word that ends one phrase and appears at the beginning of the next one
 3. Epanalepsis: repeating the same word at the beginning and end of the same phrase
 4. Epistrophe: repeating the same word at the end of successive phrases