

## Literature Vocabulary

**Action** - any event or series of events depicted in a literary work; an event may be verbal as well as physical, so that saying something or telling a story within the story may be an event.

**Allegory** - a literary work in which characters, actions, and every settings have two connected levels of meaning. Elements of the literal level signify (or serve as symbols for a figurative level that often imparts a lesson or moral to the reader).

**Alliteration** - the repetition of usually initial consonant sounds through a sequence of words

**Allusion** - a brief, often implicit and indirect reference within a literary text to something outside the text, whether another text or any imaginary or historical person, place or thing.

**Amphitheater** - a theater consisting of a stage area surrounded by a semicircle of tiered seats.

**Analogy** - like a metaphor, a representation of one thing or idea by something else

**Anapestic** - referring to a metrical form in which each foot consists of two unstressed syllables followed by a stressed one.

**Antagonist** - a character or a nonhuman force that opposes or is in conflict with the protagonist

**Antihero** - a protagonist who is in one way or another the very opposite of a traditional hero.

Instead of being contagious and determined, for instance, an antihero might be timid, hypersensitive and indecisive to the point of paralysis.

**Apostrophe** - a figure of speech in which a speaker or narrator addresses an abstraction, an object, or a dead or absent person.

**Archetype** - a character, ritual, symbol or plot pattern that recurs in the myth and literature of many cultures. Derives from the work of psychologist Carl Jung who argued that archetypes emerged from collective unconsciousness, a reservoir of memories and impulses that all humans share but aren't consciously aware of.

**Arena stage** - a stage design in which the audience is seated all the way around the acting area; actors make their entrances and exists through the auditorium.

**Assonance** - the repetition of vowel sounds in a sequence of words with different endings.

**Aubade** - a poem to which the coming of dawn is either celebrated or denounced as a nuisance.

**Auditor** - an imaginary listener within a literary work, as opposed to the actual leader or audience outside the work.

**author** - the actual or real author of a work is the historical person who actually wrote it and the focus of biographical criticism, which interprets a work by drawing on facts about the author's life and career. The *implied author* is the vision of the author's personality and outlook implied by the work as a whole. Thus when we make a claim about the author that relies solely on evidence from the work rather than from other sources, our subject is the implied author.

**Ballad** - a verse narrative that is meant to be song. Ballads are originally a folk creation, transmitted orally from person to person and age to age and characterized by relatively simple diction, meter and rhyme scheme; by stock imagery, and by repetition; and often by a refrain.

**Ballad stanza** - a common stanza form, consisting of a quatrain that alternates four-foot and three-foot lines, lines 1 and 3 are unrhymed iambic tetrameter (four feet), and lines 2 and 4 are rhymed iambic trimeter (three feet).

**Bildungsroman** - literally "education novel", a novel that depicts the intellectual, emotional and moral development of its protagonist from childhood into adulthood; also sometimes called an apprenticeship novel. This type of novel tends to envision character as the product of environment, experience, nurture and education.

**Biography** - a work of nonfiction that recounts the life of a real person. If the person depicted in a biography is also its author, then we instead use the term *autobiography*.

**Blank verse** - the metrical verse form most like everyday human speech; blank versus consists of unrhymed lines in iambic pentameter.

**Caesura** - a short pause within a line of poetry; often but not always signaled by punctuation.

**Canon** - the range of works that a consensus of scholars, teachers and readers of a particular time and culture consider "great" or "major"

**Carpe diem** - seize the day in Latin, a common theme of literary works that emphasize the brevity of life and the need to make the most of the present.

**Central consciousness** - a character whose inner thoughts perceptions and feelings are revealed by a third-person limited narrator who does not reveal the thoughts, perceptions or feelings of other characters.

**Character** - an imaginary personage who acts, appears or is referred to in a literary work. Major or main characters are those that receive most attention, minor characters, least. Flat characters are relatively simple, have a few dominant traits and tend to be predictable.

Conversely round characters are complex and multifaceted and act in a way that readers might not expect but accept as possible.

**Characterization** - the presentation of a fictional personage. In fiction, direct characterization occurs when a narrator explicitly tells us what a character is like. Indirect characterization occurs when a character's traits are revealed implicitly, through his or her speech, behavior, thoughts appearance and so on.

**Chorus** - a group of actors in a drama who comment on and describe the action. In classical Greek theater, members of the chorus often wear masks and relied on song, dance and recitation to make their commentary.

**Classical unities** - as derived from Aristotle's *Poetics*, the three principles of structure that require a play to have one plot (unity of action) that occurs in one place (units of place) and within one day (unity of time), also called the dramatic unities.

**Climax** - the third part of plot, the point at which the action stops rising and begins falling or reversing; also called turning point or peripeteia.

**Comedy** - a broad category of literary ,especially dramatic, works intended primarily to entertain and amuse an audience. Comedies take many different forms, but they share three basic characteristics: 1) the values that are expressed and that typically cause conflict are determined by the general opinion of society. 2) characters in comedies are often defined primarily in terms of their social identities and roles and tend to be flat or stock characters, rather than highly individualized or round ones 3) comedies conventionally end happily with an act of social reintegration and celebration such as marriage.

**Complication in plot** - a action or event that introduces a new conflict or intensifies the existing one, especially during the rising action phase of plot.

**Conclusion** - also called resolution, the fifth and last phase or part of plot, the point at which the situation that was destabilized at the beginning becomes stable once more and the conflict is resolved.

**Concrete Poetry** - poetry in which the words on the page are arranged to look like an object; also called shaped verse.

**Conflict** - a struggle between opposing forces. A conflict is external when it pits a character of herself - another character or characters or something in nature or society. Conflict is internal when the opposing forces are two drives, impulses or parts of a single character.

**Connotation** - what is suggested by a word, apart from what it literally means or how it is defined in the dictionary.

**Consonance** - the repetition of certain consonant sounds in close proximity, such as mishmash.

**Convention** - in literature, a standard or traditional way of presenting or expressing something or a traditional or characteristic feature of a particular literary genre or sub-genres. Division into lines and stanzas is a convention of poetry. Conventions of the type of poem known as the epic include a plot that begins in medias res and frequent use of epithets and extended similes.

**Couplet** - two consecutive lines of verse linked by rhyme and meter; the meter of a heroic couplet is iambic pentameter.

**Crisis in plot** - the moment when the conflict comes to a head, often requiring the character to make a decision, sometimes the crisis is equated with the climax or turning point and sometimes it is treated as a distinct moment that precedes and prepares for the climax.

**Dactylic** - referring to the metrical pattern in which each foot consists of a stressed syllable followed by two unstressed ones.

**Denotation** - a word's direct and literal meaning as opposed to its connotation

**Denouement** - literally "untying" as of a knot in French, a plot-related term used in three ways. 1) as a synonym for falling action 2) as a synonym for conclusion of resolution and 3) as the label for a phase following the conclusion in which any loose ends are tied up.

**Deus ex machina** - literally "god out of the machine" (Latin) any improbable, unprepared-for plot contrivance introduced late in a literary work to resolve the conflict. The term derives from the ancient Greek theatrical practice of using a mechanical device to lower a god or gods into the stage to resolve the conflicts of the human characters.

**Dialogue** - usually words spoken by characters in a literary work, especially as opposed to words that come directly from the narrator in a work of fiction. more rarely, a literary work that consists mainly or entirely of the speech of two or more characters.

**Diction** - choice of words. Diction is often described as either informal or colloquial if it resembles everyday speech, or as a formal if it is instead lofty, impersonal and dignified. Tone is determined largely through diction.

**Discriminated occasion** - a specific, discrete moment portrayed in a fictional work, often signaled by phrases.

**Drama** - a literary genre consisting of works in which action is performed and all words are spoken before an audience by an actor or actors impersonating the characters. Drama typically lacks the narrators and narration found in fiction. Closet drama, however, is a subgenre of drama that has most of these features yet is intended to be read, either silently by a single reader or out loud in a group setting.

**Dramatic Monologue** - a type of subgenre of poetry in which a speaker addresses a silent auditor or auditors in a specific situation and setting that is revealed entirely through the speaker's words; this kind of poem's primary aim is the revelation of the speaker's personality, views and values.

**Dramatic Poem** - a poem structured so as to present a scene or series of scenes, as in a work of drama.

**Dramatic personae** - literally, "persons of the drama"; the list of characters that appears either in a play's program or at the top of the first page of the written play.

**Elegy** - since the Renaissance, usually a formal lament on the death of a particular person, but focusing mainly on the speaker's efforts to come to terms with his or her grief.

**End-stopped line** - a line of verse that contains or concludes a complete clause and usually ends with a punctuation mark.

**Enjambment** - in poetry, the technique of running over from one line to the next without stop

**Epic** - a long narrative poem that celebrates the achievements of mighty heroes and heroines, usually in founding a nation or developing a culture and uses elevated language and a grand, high style.

**Epigram** - a very short, usually witty verse with a quick turn at the end

**Epigraph** - a quotation appearing at the beginning of a literary work or of one section of such a work, not to be confused with **epigram**.

**Epilogue** - in fiction, a short section or chapter that comes after the conclusion, tying up loose ends and often describing what happens in the characters after the resolution of the conflict.

**Epiphany** - a sudden revelation of truth, often inspired by a seemingly simple or common place event. Was first popularized by the Irish fiction writer James Joyce.

**Episode** - a distinct action or series of actions within a plot.

**Epithet** - a characterizing word or phrase that precedes, follows, or substitutes for the name of a person or thing

**Epitaph** - an inscription on a tombstone or grave marker; not be be confused with **epigram**, **epigraph**, or **epithet**.

**Eponymous** - having a name used in the title of a literary work.

**Expectation** - like **foreshadowing**, a set up for something believed to occur later on in a work of literature.

**Exposition** - the first phase or part of **plot**, which sets the scene, introduces and identifies **characters**, and establishes the situations at the beginning of a story or play. Additional exposition is often scattered throughout the work.

**Fable** - an ancient type of short **fiction**, in verse or prose, illustrating a **moral** or satirizing human beings. The characters in a fable are often animals that talk and act like human beings. The fable is sometimes treated as a specific type of folktale and sometimes as a fictional subgenre in its own right.

**Falling Action** - the fourth of the five phases or parts of **plot**, in which the **conflict** or conflicts move toward resolution.

**Fantasy** - a genre of literary work featuring strange settings and characters and often involving magic or the supernatural though closely related to horror and science-fiction, fantasy is typically less concerned with the macabre or with science and technology.

**Farce** - a literary work especially drama, characterized by broad humor, wild antics and often slapstick pratfalls or other physical humor.

**Fiction** - any narrative; especially in prose, about invented or imagined characters and action. We divide fiction into three major subgenera based on length - the short story, novella and novel. Older, originally oral forms of short fiction include the fable, legend, parable, and tale. Fictional works may also be categorized not by their length but by their handling of particular elements such as plot and character.

**Figure of Speech** - any word or phrase that creates a "figure" in the mind of the reader by effecting an obvious change in the usual meaning or order of words, by comparing or identifying one thing with another.

**Flashback** - a plot-structuring device whereby a scene from the fictional past is inserted into the fictional present or is dramatized out of order.

**Flashforward** - a plot-structuring device whereby a scene from the fictional future is inserted into the fictional present or is dramatized out of order.

**Focus** - the visual component of point of view, the point from which people, events and other details in a story are viewed.

**Foil** - a character that serves as a contrast to another

**Foot** - the basic unit of poetic **meter**, consisting of any of various fixed patterns of one to three stressed and unstressed syllables. A foot may contain more than one word or just one syllable of a multisyllabic word. In **scansion**, breaks between feet are usually indicated with a vertical line or slash mark.

**Foreshadowing** - a hint or clue about what will happen at a later moment in the **plot**

**Free verse** - poetry characterized by varying line lengths, lack of traditional **meter**, and non-rhyming lines.

**Freytag's Pyramid** - a diagram of **plot** structure first created by the German novelist and critic Gustav Freytag.

**Genre** - a type or category of works sharing particular formal or textual features and conventions, especially used to refer to the largest categories for classifying literature - fiction, poetry, drama and nonfiction. A smaller division within a genre is usually known as a **subgenre**, such as **gothic fiction** or **epic poetry**.

**Gothic fiction** - a subgenre of **fiction** conventionally featuring plots that involve secrets, mystery and the supernatural (or the seemingly supernatural) and large, gloomy and usually antiquated buildings as settings.

**Haiku** - a poetic form, Japanese in origin, that consists of seventeen syllables arranged in three unrhymed lines of five, seven and five syllables, respectively.

**Hero / heroine** - a character in a literary work, especially the leading male / female **character**, who is especially virtuous, usually larger than life, sometimes almost godlike.

**Hexameter** - a line of poetry with six **feet**.

**Historical fiction** - a subgenre of **fiction**, of whatever length in which the temporal **setting**, or plot time, is significantly earlier than the time in which the work was written (typically, a period before the birth of the author). Conventionally, such works describe the atmosphere and mores of the setting in vivid detail and explore the influence of historical factors on the **characters** and **action**; though focusing mainly on invented or imaginary characters and events, historical fiction sometimes includes some characters and action based on actual historical personages and events.

**Hyperbole** - overstatement

**Iambic** - referring to a metrical form in which each **foot** consists of an unstressed syllable followed by a stressed one; this type of foot is an **iamb**. The most common poetic meter in English is **iambic pentameter** - a metrical form in which most lines consist of five iambs.

**Image / imagery** - broadly defined, any sensory detail or evocation in a work; more narrowly, the use of **figurative language** to evoke a feeling, to call to mind an idea, or to describe an object. Imagery may be described as *auditory*, *tactile*, *visual* or *olfactory* depending on which sense it primarily appeals to - hearing, touch, vision or smell. An **image** is a particular instance of imagery.

**Inciting incident** - an action that sets a **plot** in motion by creating conflict; also called **destabilizing event**.

**Initiation story** - a kind of **short story** in which a **character** - often a child or young person - first learns a significant, usually life changing truth about the universe, society, people, or himself or herself; also called a **coming-age-story**.

**In medias res** - "in the midst of things" (Latin); refers to opening a **plot** in the middle of the **action**, and then filling in past details by means of **exposition** and / or **flashback**

**Inversion** - a change in normal **syntax** such as putting a verb before its subject. Common in poetry, the technique is also famously used by Star Wars' Yoda, as in "when 900 years old you reach, look as good, you will not."

**Irony** - a situation or statement characterized by a significant difference between what is expected or understood and what actually happens or is meant. **Verbal irony** occurs when a word or expression in context means something different from, and usually the opposite of, what it appears to mean, when the intended meaning is harshly critical or satiric, **verbal irony** becomes **sarcasm**. **Situational irony** occurs when a character holds a position or has an expectation that is reversed or fulfilled in an unexpected way. When there is instead a gap between what an audience knows and what a character believes or expects, we have **dramatic irony**; when this occurs in a **tragedy**, **dramatic irony** is sometimes called **tragic irony**. Finally, the terms **cosmic irony** and **irony of fate** are sometimes used to refer to situations in which **situational irony** is the result of fate, chance, the gods, or some other superhuman force or entity.

**Legend** - a type of **tale** conventionally set in the real world and in either the present or historical past, based on actual historical people and events, and offering an exaggerated or distorted version of the truth about these people and events.

**Limerick** - a light or humorous **poem** or **subgenre** of poems consisting of mainly anapestic lines of which the first, second, and fifth are of three **feet**; the third and fourth lines are of two feet, and the rhyme scheme is abba.

**Lines** - in a poem, a discrete organization of words; the length and shape of a line can communicate meaning in a poem, and can be a formal element characterizing a poem such as the fourteen lines that make up a **sonnet**

**Literary criticism** - the mainly interpretive (versus evaluative) work written by readers of literary texts, especially professional ones. It is "criticism" not because it is negative or corrective but rather because those who write criticism ask probing, analytical "critical" questions about the works they read.

**Litotes** - a form of understatement in which one negates the contrary of what one means.

**Lyric** - originally, a poem meant to be sung to the accompaniment of a lyre; now, any relatively short poem in which the **speaker** expresses his or her thoughts and feelings in the first person rather than recounting a **narrative** or portraying a dramatic situation.

**Magic realism** - a type of **fiction** that involves the creation of a fictional world in which the kind of familiar, plausible **action** and **characters** one might find in more straightforwardly realist fiction coexist with utterly fantastic ones straight out of **myths** or dreams. This style of **realism** is associated especially with modern Latin American writers. But the term is sometimes applied to works by other contemporary writers from around the world.

**Metafiction** - a subgenre of works that playfully draw attention to their status as **fiction** in order to explore the nature of fiction and the role of authors and readers.

**Metaphor** - a figure of speech in which two unlike things are compared implicitly - that is, without the use of a signal such as the word *like* or *as*. An **extended metaphor** is a detailed and complex metaphor that stretches across long sections of a work. If such a metaphor is so extensive that it dominates or organizes an entire literary work, especially a poem, it is called a **controlling metaphor**. A **mixed metaphor** occurs when two or more usually incompatible metaphors are entangled together so as to become unclear and often unintentionally humorous.

**Meter** - the more or less regular pattern of stressed and unstressed syllables in a line of poetry. This is determined by the kind of **foot** (**iambic** or **dactylic**) and by the number of feet per line.

**Metonymy** - a figure of **speech** in which the name of one thing is used to refer to another associated thing. **Synecdoche** is a specific type of metonymy.

**Monologue** - a long speech, usually in a play, but also in other **genres**, spoken by one person and uninterrupted by the speech of anyone else; or an entire work consisting of this sort of speech. In fiction, an **interior monologue** takes place entirely within the mind of a character rather than being spoken aloud. A **soliloquy** is a particular type of monologue occurring in drama, while a **dramatic monologue** is a type of poem.

**Moral** - a rule of conduct or a maxim for living (that is, a statement about how one should live or behave) communicated in a literary work. Though **fables** often have morals, more modern literary works instead tend to have **themes**.

**Motif** - a recurrent device, formula or situation within a literary work.

**Motive** - the animating impulse for an action, the reason why something is done or attempted.

**Myth** - originally and narrowly, a **narrative** explaining how the world and humanity developed into their present form and unlike a folktale, generally considered to be true by the people who develop it. Many, though not all, myths feature supernatural beings and have a religious significance or function within their culture of origin. Two especially common types of myth are the **creation myth**, which explains how the world, human beings, a god or gods, or good and

evil came to be, and the **explanatory myth**, which explains features of the natural landscape or natural processes or events more broadly and especially in its adjectival form, any narrative that obviously seeks to work like a myth in the first and more narrow sense, especially by portraying experiences or conveying truths that it implies are universally valid regardless of culture or time.

**Narration** - broadly, the act of telling a story or recounting a **narrative**. More narrowly, the portions of a narrative attributable to the **narrator rather** than words spoken by **characters** (that is, **dialogue**).

**Narrative** - a story, whether fictional or true and its prose or verse, related by a **narrator** or narrators (rather than acted out onstage as in drama). A **frame narrative** is a narrative that recounts and thus “frames” the telling of another narrative or story

**Narrative poem** - a poem in which a **narrator** tells a story

**Narrator** - someone who recounts a **narrative** or tells a story. Though we usually instead use the term **speaker** when referring to poetry as opposed to prose fiction, **narrative poems** include at least one speaker who functions as a narrator. A narrator or narration is said to be internal when the narrator is a **character** within the work, telling the story to an equally fictional **auditor**, or listener; **internal** narrators are usually first or second-person narrators. A narrator or narration is instead said to be **external** when the narrator is not a character.

A **first-person narrator** is an internal narrator who consistently refers to himself or herself using the first-person pronouns I or we. A second-person narrator consistently uses the second-person pronoun you (a very uncommon technique). A third-person narrator uses third-person pronouns such as she, he, they, it, and so on. Third-person narrators are almost always **external narrators**. Third-person narrators are said to be **omniscient** (literally “all-knowing”) when they describe the inner thoughts and feelings of multiple characters, they are said to be **limited** when they relate the thoughts, feelings and perceptions of only one character (the central consciousness). If a work encourages us to view a narrator’s account of events with suspicion, the narrator is called **unreliable**. An **intrusive narrator** is a third-person narrator who occasionally disrupts his or her narrative to speak directly to the reader or audience in what is sometimes called **direct address**.

**Nonfiction** - a work or **genre** of prose works that describe actual, as opposed to imaginary or fictional, **characters** and events. Subgenera of nonfiction include biography, memoir and the essay.

**Novel** - a long work of fiction (approximately 40,000+ words) typically published as a stand-alone book though most novels are written in prose, those written as poetry are called **verse novels**. A novel (as opposed to a **short story**) conventionally has a complex **plot** and, often, at least one **subplot**, as well as a fully realized **setting** and a relatively large number of **characters**. One important novelistic subgenre is the **epistolary novel** - a novel composed entirely of letters written by its characters. Another is the **bildungsroman**.

**Novella** - a work of prose **fiction** that falls somewhere in between a **short story** and a **novel** in terms of length, scope and complexity. Novellas can be, and have been, published either as books in their own right or as parts of books that include other works.

**Octameter** - a line of poetry with eight **feet**

**Octave** - eight lines of verse linked by a pattern of end rhymes, especially the first eight lines of an Italian, or Petrarchan **sonnet**

**Ode** - a **lyric** poem characterized by a serious topic and formal tone but without a prescribed formal pattern in which the speaker talks about, and often to, an especially revered person or thing.

**Oeuvre** - all of the works verifiably written by one author

**Onomatopoeia** - a word capturing or approximating the sound of what it describes; ex: buzz

**Orchestra** - in classical Greek theater, a semi-circular area used mostly for dancing by the chorus.

**Ottava rima** - literally “octave (eighth) rhyme” (Italian); a verse form consisting of eight-line stanzas such as abababcc; **rhyme scheme** and **iambic meter** (usually **pentameter**).

**Overplot** - especially in Shakespearean drama, a **subplot** that resembles the main plot but stresses the political implications of the depicted action and situation.

**Overstatement** - exaggerated language; also called hyperbole

**Oxymoron** - a **figure of speech** that combines two apparently contradictory elements as in wise fool.

**Parable** - a short work of fiction that illustrates an explicit **moral** but that, unlike a **fable**, lacks fantastic or anthropomorphic characters. Especially familiar examples are the stories attributed to Jesus in the Bible .

**Parody** - any work that imitates or spoofs another work or **genre** for comic effect by exaggerating the style and changing the content of the original parody is a subgenre of **satire**.

**Pastoral literature** - a work or category of works - whether fiction, poetry, drama or nonfiction - describing and idealizing the simple life of country folk, usually shepherds who live a painless life in a world full of beauty, music and love.

**Pentameter** - a line of poetry with five **feet**

**Persona** - the voice or figure of the **author** who tells and structures the work and who may or may not share the values of the actual author

**Personification** - a figure of speech that involves treating something nonhuman, such as an abstraction, as if it were a person by endowing it with humanlike qualities

**Plot** - the arrangement of the **action**. The five main parts of phases of plot are **exposition**, rising **action**, **climax**, or turning point, **falling action** and **conclusion** or resolution.

**Plot summary** - a brief recounting of the principal action of a work of fiction, drama, or narrative poetry, usually in the same order in which the action is recounted in the original work rather than in chronological order.

**Poetry** - one of the three major **genres** of imaginative literature, which has its origins in music and oral performance and is characterized by controlled patterns of **rhythm** and **syntax** (often using **meter** and **rhyme**) compression and compactness and an allowance for ambiguity; a particularly concentrated emphasis on the sensual, especially visual and aural, qualities and effects of words and work order; an especially vivid often **figurative language**

**Point of view** - the perspective from which people, events and other details in a work of fiction are viewed; also called **focus**, though the term **point of view** usually includes both focus and **voice**.

**Prop** - in drama, an object used on the stage.

**Proscenium arch** - an arch over the front of the stage; the proscenium serves as a “frame” for the **action** onstage

**Prose** - the regular form of spoken and written language, measured in sentences rather than lines, as in poetry

**Protagonist** - the most neutral and broadly applicable term for the main **character** in a work, whether male or female, heroic or not heroic.

**Pyrrhic** - a rarely used metrical **foot** consisting of two unstressed syllables.

**Quatrain** - a four-line unit of verse, whether an entire poem, a **stanza**, or a group of four lines linked by a pattern of rhyme.

**Realism** - also known as **psychological realism**. Generally the practice in literature, especially fiction and drama, of attempting to describe nature and life as they are without idealization and with attention to detail, especially the everyday life of ordinary people. See also **verisimilitude**. Just as notions of how life and nature differ widely across cultures and time periods, however,

so do notions of what is “realistic”. Thus, there are many different kinds of realism.

**Psychological realism** refers, broadly, to any literary attempt to accurately represent the workings of the human mind and more specifically to the practice of a particular group of late 19th and early 20th century writers.

**Rhetoric** - the art and scholarly study of effective communication, whether in writing or speech. Many literary terms, especially those for figures of speech, derive from classical and Renaissance rhetoric.

**Rhyme** - repetition or correspondence of the terminal sounds of words. The most common type, **end rhyme**, occurs when the last words in two or more lines of a poem rhyme with each other.

**Internal rhyme** occurs when a word within a line of poetry rhymes with another word in the same or adjacent lines. An **eye rhyme** or **sight rhyme** involves words that don't actually rhyme, but look like they do because of their similar spelling. **Off, half, near, or slant rhyme** is rhyme that is slightly “off” or only approximate, usually because words' final consonant sounds correspond, but not the vowels that proceed them. When two syllables rhyme and the last is unstressed and unaccented they create a **feminine rhyme**; **masculine rhyme** involves only a single stressed or accented syllable.

**Rhyme scheme** - the pattern of **end rhymes** in a poem, often noted by small letters, such as abab or abba.

**Rhythm** - the modulation of weak and strong (or stressed and unstressed) elements in the flow of speech. In most poetry written before the 20th century, rhythm was often expressed in **meter**, in prose and in **free verse**, rhythm is present but in a much less predictable and regular manner

**Rising action** - the second of the five phases or parts of **plot**, in which events complicate the situation that existed at the beginning of a work, intensifying the initial **conflict** or introducing a new one.

**Romance** - originally, a long medieval narrative in verse or prose, written in one of the Romance languages (French, Spanish, Italian, etc.) and depicting the quests of knights and other chivalric heroes and the vicissitudes of courtly love; also known as chivalric romance; later and more broadly, any literary work, especially a long work of prose fiction, characterized by a nonrealistic and idealizing use of the imagination. Commonly today, works of prose fiction aimed at a mass, primarily female audience and focusing on love affairs

**Satire** - a literary work - whether fiction, poetry or drama - that holds up human failings to ridicule and censure.

**Scansion** - the process of analyzing and sometimes also marking verse to determine its **meter**, line by line

**Scapegoat** - in a work of literature, the character or characters that take the blame for others' actions; usually an innocent party or only tangentially responsible, their punishment lets others off the hook.

**Scene** - a section or subdivision of a play or narrative that presents continuous **action** in one specific **setting**.

**Sequence** - the ordering of **action** in a fictional **plot**; a closely linked series or cycle of individual literary works, especially short stories or poems, designed to be read or performed together, as in the **sonnet** sequences of William Shakespeare.

**Sestet** - six lines of verse linked by a pattern of **rhyme**, as in the last six lines of the Italian or Petrarchan **sonnet**.

**Sestina** - an elaborate verse structure written in **blank verse** that consists of six **stanzas** of six lines each followed by a three-line stanza. The final words of each line in the first stanza appear in variable order in the next five stanzas and are repeated in the middle and at the end of the three lines in the final stanza.

**Set** - the design, decoration and scenery of the stage during a play; not to be confused with **setting**

**Setting** - the time and place of the **action** in a work of fiction, poetry or drama. The **spatial setting** is the place or places in which action unfolds. The **temporal setting** is the time.

(**Temporal setting** is thus the same as plot time). It is sometimes also helpful to distinguish

between **general setting** - the general time and place in which all the action unfolds - and

**particular settings** - the times and places in which individual episodes or scenes take place.

**Short story** - a relatively short work of prose fiction (approximately 500 to 10,000 words) that according to Edgar Allan Poe, can be read in a single sitting of two hour or less and works to create a "single effect". Two types of short story are the **initiation story** and the **short short story**. (Also sometimes called **micro-fiction**, a short short story is, as its name suggests, a short story that is especially brief.)

**Simile** - a **figure of speech** involving a direct, explicit comparison of one thing to another, usually using the words *like or as* to draw the connection. An **analogy** is an extended simile.

**Situation** - the basic circumstances depicted in a literary work, especially when the story, play or poem begins or at a specific later moment in the **action**.

**Skene** - a low building in the back of the stage area in classical Greek theaters. It represented the palace or temple in front of which the **action** took place.

**Soliloquy** - a **monologue** in which the **character** in a play is alone onstage and thinking out loud.

**Sonnet** - a fixed verse form consisting of fourteen lines usually in **iambic pentameter**. An **Italian sonnet** consists of eight rhyme-linked lines (an **octave**) plus six rhyme-linked lines (a **sestet**) often with either an abbaabba cdcde or aback defied **rhyme scheme**. This type of sonnet is also called the **Petrarchan sonnet** in honor of the Italian poet Petrarch. An English or Shakespearean sonnet instead consists of three **quatrains** (four line units) and a **couplet** and often rhymes abab cdcd efef gg.

**Speaker** - the person who is the voice of a poem; anyone who speaks **dialogue** in a work of fiction, poetry or drama

**Spenserian stanza** - a **stanza** consisting of eight lines of **iambic pentameter** (five feet) followed by a ninth line of iambic hexameter (six feet). The rhyme scheme is ababbcbcc. The stanza form takes its name from Edmund Spenser.

**Spondee** - a metrical foot consisting of a pair of stressed syllables.

**Stage directions** - the words in the printed text of a play that inform the director, crew, actors and readers how to stage, perform or imagine the play. Stage directions are not spoken aloud and may appear at the beginning of a play, before any scene, or attached to a line of dialogue; they are often set in italics. The place and time of the action, the design of the set itself, and at times the characters' actions or tone of voice are given through stage directions and interpreted by the group of people who put on a performance

**Stanza** - a section of a poem, marked by extra line spacing before and after that often has a single pattern of **meter** and / or **rhyme**. Conventional stanza forms include ballad stanza, Spenserian stanza, ottava rima, and terza rima.

**Stream of consciousness** - a type of third-person **narration that** replicates the thought processes of a **character** without much or any intervention by a **narrator**. The term was originally coined by the 19th century American psychologist William James to describe the workings of the human mind and only later adopted to describe the type of narration that seeks to replicate this process. The technique is closely associated with 20th century fiction writers of psychological realism.

**Style** - a distinctive manner of expression; each author's style is expressed through his or her **diction, rhythm, imagery** and so on.

**Subplot** - a secondary **plot** in a work of fiction or drama.

**Symbol** - a person, place, thing, or event that figuratively represents or stands for something else. Often the thing or idea represented is more abstract and general and the symbol is more concrete and particular. A **traditional symbol** is one that recurs frequently in literature and is thus immediately recognizable to those who belong to a given culture. In Western literature and culture, the rose and the snake traditionally symbolize love and evil, respectively.

**Symbolic poem** - a poem in which the use of symbols is so pervasive and internally consistent that the reference to the outside world being symbolized becomes secondary.

**Synecdoche** - a type of **metonymy** in which the part is used to name or stand in for the whole, as when we refer to manual laborers as hands or say wheels to mean a car

**Syntax** - word order. The way words are put together to form phrases, clauses, and sentences.

**Tale** - a brief **narrative** with a simple **plot** and characters an ancient and originally oral form of storytelling. Unlike **fables**, tales typically don't convey or state a simple or single moral.

**Terza rima** - literally "third rhyme"; a verse form consisting of three-line stanzas in which the second line of each stanza rhymes with the first and third of the next.

**Tetrameter** - a line of poetry with four feet.

**Theme** - (1) broadly and commonly, a topic exploited in a literary work (2) more narrowly and properly; the insight about a topic communicated in a work. Most literary works have multiple themes, though some people reserve the term theme for the central or main insight and refer to others as subthemes. Usually, a theme is implicitly communicated by the work as a whole rather than explicitly stated in it, though fables are an exception.

**Thesis** - the central debatable claim articulated, supported, and developed in an essay or other work of expository prose.

**Thrust stage** - a stage design that allows the audience to sit around three sides of the major acting area

**Time** - in literature, at least four potentially quite different time frames are at issue. (1) author time, when the author originally created or published a literary text (2) narrator time, when the narrator in a work of fiction supposedly narrated the story (3) plot time, when the action depicted in the work supposedly took place and (4) reader or audience time, when an actual reader reads the work or an actual audience sees it performed.

**Tone** - the attitude a literary work takes toward its subject, especially the way this attitude is revealed through **diction**

**Tragedy** - a work, especially of drama, in which a character (traditionally a good and noble person of high rank) is brought to a disastrous end in his/or her confrontation with a superior force (fortune, the gods, human nature, universal values), but also comes to understand the meaning of his or her deeds and to accept an appropriate punishment.

**Trimeter** - a line of poetry with three feet.

**Trochaic** - referring to a metrical form in which the basic foot is a trochee - a metrical foot consisting of a stressed syllable followed by an unstressed one.

**Trope** - see **figure of speech**.

**Turning point** - see **climax**.

**Underplot** - a particular type of **subplot**, especially in Shakespeare's plays, that is a parodic or highly romantic version of the main plot.

**Understatement** - language that makes its point by self-consciously downplaying its real emphasis

**Verisimilitude** - from the Latin phrase verisimiles ("like the truth"); the internal truthfulness, lifelikeness, and consistency of the world created within any literary work when we judge that world on its own terms rather than in terms of its correspondence in the real world.

**Verse paragraph** - though sometimes used as a synonym for stanza, this term technically designates passages of verse, often beginning with an indented line, that are unified by topic rather than by **rhyme** or **meter**.

**Villain** - a character who not only opposes the **hero** or **heroine** (and is thus the **antagonist**) but also is characterized as an especially evil person or 'bad guy'

**Villanelle** - a verse form consisting of nineteen lines divided into six **stanzas** and one quatrain. The first and third lines of the first tercet rhyme with each other, and thus rhyme is repeated through each of the next four tercets and in the last two lines of the concluding quatrain.

**Voice** - the verbal aspect of **point of view**, the acknowledged or unacknowledged source of a story's words; the speaker; the "person" telling the story and that person's particular qualities of insight, attitude, and verbal style.