

Allegory:

A story in which the characters represent abstract qualities or ideas. For example, in westerns, the sheriff represents the good, and the outlaw represents evil.



Alliteration:

The repetition of first consonants
in a group of words as in “Peter
Piper Picked a Peck of Pickled
Peppers.”

Allusion:

A reference to something or someone often literary. For instance, if you were trying to instill confidence in a friend and said, “Use the force,” that would be an allusion to Stars Wars. The verb form of allusion is to allude.




Antagonist:

A major character who opposes the protagonist in a story or play.



Archetype:

A character who represents a certain type of person. For example, Daniel Boone is an archetype of the early American frontiersman.






Assonance:

The repetition of vowel sounds as in “Days wane away.”



Atmosphere:

The overall feeling of a work,
which is related to tone and
mood.





Blank verse:

Unrhymed lines of poetry usually in iambic pentameter.

Plenty of modern poetry is written in blank verse.


Characterization:

The means by which an author establishes character. An author may directly describe the appearance and personality of character or show it through action or dialogue.



Climax:

The point at which the action in a story or play reaches its emotional peak.



Conflict:

The elements that create a plot.


Traditionally, every plot is build from the most basic elements of a conflict and an eventual resolution. The conflict can be internal (within one character) or external (among or between characters, society, and/or nature).



Contrast:

To explain how two things differ.


To compare and contrast is to explain how two things are alike and how they are different.





Couplets:

A pair of rhyming lines in a poem often set off from the rest of the poem. Shakespeare's sonnets all end in couplets.




Denouement:

The resolution of the conflict in a plot after the climax. It also refers to the resolution of the action in a story or play after the principal drama is resolved—in other words, tying up the loose ends or wrapping up a story.



Dramatic Monologue:

A poem with a fictional narrator addressed to someone whose identity the audience knows, but who does not say anything.






Elegy:
A poem mourning the dead.



End rhyme:


Rhyming words that are at the ends of their respective lines—
what we typically think of as
normal rhyme.





Epic:


A long poem narrating the adventures of a heroic figure—for example, Homer's *The Odyssey*.





Fable:

A story that illustrates a moral
often using animals as the
character—for example, *The
Tortoise and the Hare*.



Figurative Language:

Language that does not mean exactly what it says. For example, you can call someone who is very angry “steaming.”

Unless steam was actually coming out of your ears, you were using figurative language.




First Person Point of View: The point of view of writing which the narrator refers to himself as “I.”



Foreshadowing:

A technique in which an author gives clues about something that will happen later in the story.






Free Verse:

Poetry with no set
meter (rhythm) or
rhyme scheme.



Genre:

A kind of style usually art or literature. Some literary genres are mysteries, westerns, and romances.




Hyperbole:

A huge exaggeration. For example, “Dan’s the funniest guy on the planet!” or “That baseball card is worth a zillion dollars!”



Iambic pentameter:

Ten-syllable lines in which every other syllable is stressed. For example: “With eyes like stars upon the brave night air.”




Imagery:

The use of description that helps the reader imagine how something looks, sounds, feels, smells, or taste. Most of the time, it refers to appearance. For example, “The young bird’s white, feathered wings flutter as he made his way across the nighttime sky.”



Internal rhyme:


A rhyme that occurs within one line such as “He’s King of the Swing.”







Irony:

Language that conveys a certain ideas by saying just he opposite.






Literal Language:
Language that means
exactly what it says.



Lyric:


A type of poetry that expresses the poet's emotions. It often tells some sort of brief story, engaging the reading in the experience.





Metaphor:


A comparison that doesn't use "like" or "as"—such as "He's a rock" or "I am an island."





Meter:


The pattern of stressed and unstressed syllables in the lines of a poem.





Monologue:


A long speech by one character in
a play or story.





Mood:

The emotional atmosphere of a given piece of writing.






Motif:

A theme or pattern that
recurs in a work.



Myth:


A legend that embodies the beliefs of people and offers some explanation for natural and social phenomena.





Onomatopoeia:


The use of words that sound like what they mean such as “buzz.”





Paradox:


A seeming contradiction.
For example, “It was the best
of times. It was the worst of
times.”





Parody:


A humorous, exaggerated imitation of another work.





Personification:

Giving inanimate object human characteristics. For example,
“The flames reached for the child hovering in the corner.”






Plot:
The action in the story.



Prose:

Writing organized into sentences and paragraphs. In other words, normal writing—not poetry.





Protagonist:


The main character of a novel,
play, or story.



Pun:

The use of a word in a way that plays on its different meanings.

For example, “Noticing the bunch of bananas, the hungry gorilla went ape.




Quatrain:
A four-line stanza.



Rhetorical Question:

A question not meant to be answered such as “Why can’t we just get along?”



Sarcasm:

Language that conveys a certain idea by saying just the opposite such as if it's raining outside and you say, "My what a beautiful day."



Satire:

A work that makes fun of
something or someone.



Sensory imagery:

Imagery that has to do with something you can see, hear, taste, smell, or feel. For example, “The stinging, salty air drenched his face.”

Simile:

A comparison that uses “like” or “as” For example, “I’m as hungry as a wolf,” or “My love is like a rose.”

Soliloquy:

A monologue in which a character expresses his or her thoughts to the audience and does not intend the other characters to hear them.



Sonnet:

A fourteen-line poem written iambic pentameter. Different kinds of sonnets have different rhyme schemes.



Stanza:

A section of poetry separated from the sections before and after it; a verse “paragraph.”


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Subplot:
A line of action
secondary to the main story.



Symbolism:

The use of one thing to represent another. For example, a dove is a symbol of peace.




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Theme:
The central idea of a work.



Tone:

The author's attitude toward his or her subject. For example, a tone could be pessimistic, optimistic, or angry.





Voice:

The narrative point of view
whether it's in the first, second,
or third person.