Literary Terms and Techniques

You will be expected to learn the following terminology. The study of terminology is a three step process.
1. Learn the definition of the device.
2. Identify the device when it appears in literature.
3. Be able to discuss the effect or purpose of the device.
4. Use concrete elements in personal writings

I. CONCRETE Elements of Literature
Concrete elements are those devices which can be pulled directly from a piece of literature. The following terms are all concrete elements.

1. **alliteration** – the repetition of initial consonant sounds (e.g., silence surged softly)
2. **allusion** – a reference to a <u>well-known</u> person, place, event, literary work, or work of art
3. **anachronism** – something out of its normal time period
4. **analogy** – a comparison that explains or describes one subject by pointing out its similarities to another subject
5. **anecdote** – a brief story about an interesting, amusing, or strange event; told to entertain or to make a point
6. **antagonist** - a character or force in conflict with a main character, or protagonist
7. **antithesis** – involves a <u>direct contrast</u> of structurally parallel word groupings, generally for the purpose of contrast (e.g., sink or swim)
8. **aphorism** – a <u>general truth</u> or observation about life, usually stated concisely and pointedly (e.g., A penny saved is a penny earned.)
9. **apostrophe** – a figure of speech in which a speaker directly addresses an absent person or a personified quality (e.g., "Oh Death, where is thy sting?")
10. **archetype** – the term is applied to an image, a descriptive detail, a plot pattern, or a character type that occurs frequently in literature, myth, religions, or folklore and is, therefore, believed to evoke profound emotion because it touches the unconscious memory and thus calls into play illogical but strong responses
11. **aside** – words spoken by a character in a play to the audience or to another character, that are not supposed to be overheard by the others on stage in a scene
12. **assonance** – the repetition of vowel sounds followed by different consonants in two or more stressed syllables (e.g., purple curtain; young love)
13. **character** – a person, animal, or a natural force presented as a person appearing in a literary work
    a. dynamic character – undergoes change
    b. static character – stays the same
    c. flat character – has only one or two personality traits; he or she is one-dimensional and can be summed up by a single phrase
    d. round character – has more dimensions to his or her personality; he or she is complex and multi-faceted, like real people.

14. **climax** – the point of greatest emotion or suspense in a plot; the high point
15. **colloquialism** – an expression used in informal conversation bu8t not accepted universally in formal speech or writing; a colloquialism lies between the upper level of dignified formal, academic, or "literary" language and the lower level of slang (e.g., yeah)
16. **conceit**-an elaborate or exaggerated comparison
17. **conflict** – a struggle between opposing forcers or characters in a literary work
    a. **external** – conflict between persons, between a person and nature, between a person and society
    b. **internal** – conflict within a person struggling for mastery within a person's mind (e.g., conscience)
18. **consonance** – the repetition in two or more words of final consonants in stressed syllables (e.g., east & west)
19. **controlling image** – an image or metaphor which runs throughout the work
20. **couplet** – two consecutive lines of poetry that rhyme
21. **denouement** – all the problems or mysteries of the plot are <u>unraveled</u>; resolution
22. **description** – a portrait of words in a person, place, or object
23. **details** – the facts given by the author or speaker as support for the attitude or tone
24. **dialect** – the form of a language spoken by people in a particular region or group; pronunciation, vocabulary, and sentence structure are affected by dialect to give a story "local color"
25. **dialogue** – a conversation between characters
26. **diction** – word choice; to discuss a writer's diction is to consider the vocabulary used, the appropriateness of the words, and the vividness of the language
27. **epiphany** – a sudden understanding or realization which prior to this was not thought of or understood
28. **epithet** – an adjective or other descriptive phrase that is regularly used to characterize a person, place, or thing (e.g., Alexander the Great; Honest Abe)
29. **euphemism** – a device where being indirect replaces directness to avoid unpleasantness (e.g., garbage man = sanitation engineer; died = passed away)
30. **falling action** – the action that follows the climax, leading to the resolution
31. **figurative language** – writing or speech not meant to be interpreted literally (simile, metaphor, personification, etc.)
32. **flashback** - a section of a literary work that interrupts the sequence of events to relate an event from an earlier time
33. **foreshadowing** – the use in a literary work of clues that suggest events that have yet to occur
34. **hyperbole** – a deliberate exaggeration or overstatement for special effect
35. **idiom** – a use of words, a grammatic construction peculiar to a given language or an expression that cannot be translated literally into a second language (e.g., "You're pulling my leg!")
36. **image** – a word of phrase that appeals to one or ore of the five senses – sight, hearing, touch, taste, or smell

37. **imagery** – the descriptive or figurative language used in literature to create word pictures for the reader
38. **inversion** – a change in the normal word order.
39. **in medias res**-the narrative starts in the middle of the story instead of from its beginning
40. **irony** – the general name given to literary techniques that involve differences between appearance and reality, expectation and result, or meaning and intention
    a. **dramatic irony** – a contradiction between what a character thinks and what the reader or audience knows to be true
    b. **situational irony** – a type or irony in which an event occurs that directly contrasts the expectations of the characters, the reader, or the audience
    c. **verbal irony** – a type of irony in which words are used to suggest the opposite of what is meant
41. **juxtaposition** – a poetic and rhetorical device in which normally unassociated ideas, words, or phrases are placed next to one another.
42. **kenning**-A figurative, usually compound expression used in place of a name or noun, especially in Old English and Old Norse poetry. (eg. *storm of swords* is a kenning for *battle.)*
43. **literal language** – uses words in their ordinary senses; the opposite of figurative language
44. **local color** – the use of specific details describing the dialect, dress, customs, and scenery associated with a particular region or section of the country
45. **metaphor** – a figure of speech in which one thing is spoken of as though it were something else (e.g., "Life is a broken-winged bird")
46. **meter** – a generally regular pattern of stressed and unstressed syllables in poetry
47. **metonomy** – a figure of speech in which the name of one object is substituted for that of another closely associated with it (e.g., The White House issued a statement today)
48. **monologue** – an extended speech by one character in a play, story, or poem
49. **motif** – a simple device that serves as a basis for an expanded narrative (e.g., A rose is a motif that runs through many love poems)
50. **motivation** – a reason that explains or partially explains a character's thoughts, feelings, actions, or behavior
51. **narrator** – a speaker or character who tells a story; the narrator may be either a character in the story or an outside observe
    a. **first person narrator** – a character in a story who is telling the story; readers see only what this character sees, hears, etc.
    b. **omniscient narrator** – an all-knowing third-person narrator; this type of narrator can reveal to readers what the characters think and feel
52. **onomatopoeia** – the use of words that imitate sounds
53. **oxymoron** – a figure of speech that combines two opposing or contradictory ideas (e.g., jumbo shrimp; big baby)
54. **paradox** - a statement that seems contradictory or absurd but that expresses the truth
55. **parallelism** – the repetition of a grammatical structure

56. **personification** – a type of figurative language in which a nonhuman subject is given human characteristics
57. **plot** – the sequence of events or actions in a literary work
58. **point of view** – the vantage point from which a story is told
    a. **first person** – the story is told by one of the characters in his or her own. words, and the reader is told only what this character knows and observed
    b. **third person-limited** – the narrator focuses on the thoughts and feelings of just one character
    c. **omniscient** – all-knowing observer who describes and comments on all the characters and actions in a story
59. **protagonist** – the central character of a drama, novel, short story, or narrative poem
60. **pun** – a play on words based on different meanings of words that sound alike
61. **quatrain** – a stanza or poem made up of four lines, usually with a definite rhythm and rhyme scheme
62. **refrain** – a word, phrase, line, or group of lines repeated regularly in a poem, usually at the end of each stanza
63. **repetition** – the use, more than once, of any element of language – a sound, a word, a phrase, a clause, or a sentence.
64. **rhetoric** - the art of using words effectively in speech or writing.
65. **rhetorical shift** - a change from one tone, attitude, etc. Look for key words like but, however, even thought, although, yet, etc.
66. **rhyme** - the repetition of sounds in two or more words or phrases that appear close to each other in a poem.
    a. **Approximate/slant rhyme**- two words are alike in some sounds, but do not rhyme exactly (e.g., now and know)
    b. **End rhyme**- occurring at the end of lines
    c. **Internal rhyme**- occurring within a line
67. **rhyme scheme** - the pattern of end rhymes.
68. **rhythm** - the arrangement of stressed and unstressed syllables into a pattern.
69. **sarcasm**- a type of irony in which a person appears to be praising something but is actually insulting it.
70. **sensory language**- writing or speech that appeals to one or more of the senses.
71. **setting**- the time and place of the action of a literary work.
72. **simile**- a figure of speech in which *like* or *as* is used to make a comparison between two basically unlike subjects.
73. **soliloquy**- an extended speech, usually in a drama, delivered by a character alone or on stage.
74. **stanza**- a group of lines in a poem, considered as a unit.
75. **subplot-** a second, less important plot within a story.
76. **surprise ending**- a conclusion that violates the expectations of the reader but in a way that is both logical and believable.
77. **symbol-** anything that stands for or represents something else. An object that serves as a symbol has its own meaning, but it also represents abstract ideas.
78. **synecdoche-** a form of metaphor in which a part of something is used to stand for the whole thing.(eg. Stars and stripes=flag)

79. **syntax**- the arrangement of words in a sentence; sentence structure.
80. **thesis**- a statement of opinion that is the writer's focus or main idea.
81. **understatement/litotes**- saying less than is actually meant generally in an ironic way; opposite of hyperbole.
82. **vernacular**- the everyday spoken of people in a particular locality, and writing that imitates or suggests such language; word choice.
83. **zeugma**-the joining of two or more parts of a sentence with a single common verb or noun.

II. ABSTRACT Elements of Literature

Abstract elements are those devices which cannot be pulled directly from a piece of literature. Concrete elements help to create these abstract devices. The following terms identify abstract devices.

84. **catharsis**- the purifying of the emotions or relieving of emotional tensions; an empathetic identification with others (originally applied by Aristotle to the effect of tragic drama on the audience)
85. **characterization**-the act of creating and developing a character's personality.
    a. **Direct characterization**- the author directly states a character's traits by telling us what the character is like: sneaky, generous, mean, etc.
    b. **Indirect characterization**- a method of characterization in which an author tells what a character looks like, does and says, and how other characters react to him or her. It is up to the reader to draw conclusions about the character based on this indirect information.
86. **connotation**- all the meanings, associations, or emotions that a word suggests.
87. **denotation**- the dictionary meaning of a word.
88. **humor**- a quality that appeals to the sense of the ludicrous or the incongruous. Its purpose is to make people laugh.
89. **language-** the entire body of words used in a text. Language is abstract in that it describes the forces or quality of the diction, images, and details the author uses. It qualifies how the work is written.
90. **mood-** the feeling created in the reader by a literary work or passage.
91. **pathos**- the quality in a work of literature that arouses a feeling of pity, tenderness, or sorrow in a reader.
92. **suspense**- a feeling of curiosity or uncertainty about the outcome of events in a literary work.
93. **style**- a writer's characteristic way of writing determined by the choice of words, the arrangement of words in sentences, and the relationship of the sentences to one another.
94. **theme-** a central message or insight into life revealed through the literary work. The theme can be stated in a sentence.
95. **tone**- the writer's or speaker's attitude toward his or her audience and/or subject. Tone can often be described by a single adjective. Often referred to as attitude.
96. **voice-** a language style adopted by an author to created the effect of a particular speaker. (the voice of illiteracy, sophistication, experience, etc.)

III. Types of Writing

97. **allegory**- a story or tale with two or more levels of meaning: one literal level and one or more symbolic levels.
98. **autobiography**- a form of non-fiction in which a person tells his or her own life story.
99. **biography**- a form of non-fiction in which a writer tells the life of another person.
100. **comedy**- a work of literature, especially a play, that has a happy ending.
101. **drama-** a story written to be performed by actors.
102. **essay-** a short, non-fiction work about a particular subject.
    a. **Descriptive essay**- an essay which seeks to convey an impression about a person, place, or object.
    b. **Expository essay**- an essay which gives information, discusses ideas, or explains a process.
    c. **Narrative essay**- an essay which tells a story.
    d. **Persuasive essay**- an essay which tries to convince readers to do something or to accept the writer's point of view.
103. **epigraph-** A motto or quotation, as at the beginning of a literary composition, setting forth a theme.
104. **exposition-** writing or speech that explains, informs, or presents information. In the plot of a story or drama, the exposition is the part of the work that introduces the characters, setting, and basic situation.
105. **fable**- a brief story that is told to present a moral, or practical lesson. In many fables the characters are animals who behave like people.
106. **fantasy-** a highly imaginative writing that contains elements not found in real life.
107. **farce-** an exaggerated comedy that relies on improbably situations, physical humor, and broad wit rather than on in depth characters and believable plots.
108. **fiction**- prose writing that tells about imaginary characters and events.
109. **folklore**- traditional songs, myths, legends, fables, fairy tales, proverbs, and riddles composed anonymously and either written down or passed by word of mouth from generation to generation.
110. **framework story**- a story that contains a story within another story.
111. **genre**- a division or type of literature
112. **jeremiad**- work or speech expressing a bitter lament or a righteous prophecy of doom.
113. **journal**- a kind of autobiographical writing, generally a day-by-day record of events in a person's life and of that person's reflections.
114. **literary journal**- a person's reflections and analysis on a literary work.
115. **melodrama**- a drama that has stereotyped characters, exaggerated emotions, and conflict that pits an all-good hero against an all-evil villain.
116. **myth**- an anonymous traditional story that is basically religious in nature, and that usually serves to explain a brief, ritual, or mysterious natural phenomenon.
117. **narration**- a kind of writing that tells a story or relates a series of events.
118. **narrative**- a story told in fiction, nonfiction, poetry or drama.

119. **nonfiction**- prose writing that represents and explains ideas or that tells about real people, places, objects, or events.
120. **novel**- a long work of fiction.
121. **novella**-A short novel
122. **parable**- a short, simple tale from which a moral lesson is drawn.
123. **parody**- the imitation of a work of literature, art, or music form amusement or instruction.
124. **pastoral-** a poem or play dealing with shepherds or rural life in a usually artificial manner and typically drawing a contrast between the innocence and serenity of the simple life and the misery and corruption of city and especially court life
125. **persuasion**- writing or speech that attempts to convince the reader to adopt a particular opinion or course of action.
126. **prose**- the ordinary form of written language. (not poetry)
127. **romance**- long medieval narrative in prose or verse that tells of the adventures and heroic exploits of chivalric heroes.
128. **satire**- a kind of writing that ridicules human weakness, vice, or folly in order to bring about social reform.
129. **science fiction**- writing that tells about imaginary events that involve science or technology.
130. **short story**- a brief work of fiction.
131. **tall tale**- a humorous story that is outlandishly exaggerated.
132. **tragedy**- a work of literature, especially a play, that results in the downfall of the main character.

IV. *Types of Poetry*

133. **ballad-** a song or poem that tells a story of tragedy, adventure, betrayal, revenge,   or jealousy.
134. **blank verse**- verse written in unrhymed, iambic pentameter.
135. **concrete poem**- a poem with a shape that suggests its subject.
136. **dramatic dialogue**- a poem which contains dialogue.
137. **dramatic monologue**- a poem in which a character speaks to one or more listeners who remain silent or whose replies are not revealed.
138. **dramatic poetry**- poetry that involves the techniques of drama.
139. **elegy**- a poem of mouring, usually over the death of an individual.
140. **epic**- a long narrative poem that relates the great deed of a larger-than-life hero who embodies the values of a particular story.
141. **epitaph**- an inscription on a gravestone or a commemorative poem written as if it were for that purpose.
142. **free verse**- unrhymed poetry not written in a regular rhythmical pattern or meter. It seeks to capture the rhythms of speech.
143. **haiku-** a three-line Japanese verse form typically containing seventeen syllables.
144. **limerick**- a humorous, rhyming five-line poem with a specific meter and rhyme scheme.

145. **lyric poem**- verse that expresses the personal observations and feelings of a single speaker.
146. **narrative poem**- a poem that tells a story.
147. **ode**- a complex and often lengthy lyric poem, written in a dignified formal style on some lofty or serious subject.
148. **sonnet-** a fourteen line lyric poem usually written in rhymed iambic pentameter.
    a. **Shakespearean /English sonnet**- a sonnet which consists of three quatrains and a couplet. The most common rhyme scheme being: abab, cdcd, efef, gg.
    b. **Petrarchain/Italian sonnet**- a sonnet which consists of an octave and sestet with the rhyme scheme being:abbaaabba cdecde.
    c. **Spenserian sonnet**- a sonnet which consists of three quatrains and a couplet, but it uses a rhyme scheme that links the quatrains: abab bcbc cdcd ee.
149. **spiritual**- a folk song, usually on a religious theme.