

# English 10 Literary Terms: Diana

This packet contains the English 10 literary terms. It includes:

- ✓ General Literature Terms: page 1+
- ✓ Literature Terms Specific to Drama and Poetry: page 1-3
- ✓ Essay Essentials: page 6

## General Literary Terms (Literary Terms Specific to Poetry Follow...)

**NOTE:** this is by no means an exhaustive list of literary terminology (these are just the ones we will cover in English 10 and students are expected to know for our final)

- **ACTIVE SETTING:** a setting that impacts the story (as opposed to a **PASSIVE SETTING**, a story that could occur just about anywhere).
- **ALLUSION:** reference to a historical/literary person, event, or place, used to heighten the significance of a poetic image or a prose passage.
- **ANAGNORISIS:** the moment in which a person/character's true identity/personality is revealed.
- **ANTAGONIST:** a person who fights, struggles, or contends against another; an adversary; an opponent; a person who opposes a main character in a play, story, or novel.
- **ANTITHESIS:** a strong contrast between two ideas; the direct opposite.
- **BILDUNGSROMAN:** fiction that describes the youthful development of a central character (a "coming of age" story that involves a character's initiation / education).
- **CHARACTERS:** the folks we meet in literature (remember that these characters may be quite different, **internally** vs. **externally**—and you may want to specify this distinction in your writing).
  - **ROUND VS. FLAT:** round characters are fully developed; flat characters are not.
  - **DYNAMIC VS. STATIC:** a "dynamic character" in a literary work goes through changes or learns things as the story progresses; a "static character" stays the same throughout the work.
- **CONFLICT:** A conflict is a struggle between opposing forces. There are two main kinds of conflict in stories: **INTERNAL** (within a character's mind) and **EXTERNAL** (between a character and an outside force).
- **DIALOGUE:** talking between two characters, or conversation.
- **DRAMA:** a composition written in poetry or prose in which a story is told by means of dialogue and action.

## DRAMATIC TERMS (these terms, in general, are specific to dramatic works):

- ✓ **ASIDE:** when a character speaks directly to the audience with other characters on the stage (which is different from a soliloquy, when a character speaks his inner thoughts while alone on the stage).
- ✓ **BLANK VERSE:** unrhymed iambic pentameter (**IAMBIC:** an unaccented syllable followed by an accented syllable; **PENTAMETER:** verse with five feet—of two syllables each—in a line); blank verse was the standard verse for **Elizabethan theater**. (**IAMBIC PENTAMETER:** a line of five metrical feet (ten syllables) in which an unstressed syllable is followed by a stressed syllable.) For example, "**To be, or not to be, that is the question**"
- ✓ **CATHARSIS:** a purging of emotions; the purification or "draining off" of repressed/dangerous

feelings.

- ✓ **DRAMATIC FOIL:** a character who exposes opposing traits in another character (for example, Prince Hamlet, who delays his response to his father's murder, is a foil for Laertes, who has an immediate response to the murder of his father, Polonius).
- ✓ **EXEUNT:** plural for "exit."
- ✓ **HAMARTIA:** the frailty / error of a tragic hero that brings about his peripety, his reversal of fortune, his fall.
- ✓ **HUBRIS:** excessive pride or self-confidence, a type of hamartia
- ✓ **PERIPEDY:** the sudden reversal of fortune of a tragic hero; when the tragic hero moves from happiness to misery (from fortune to misfortune)
- ✓ **SOLILOQUY:** when a character, alone on the stage, speaks directly to the audience
- ✓ **TRAGIC HERO:** a person of stature who is neither villainous nor exceptionally virtuous who moves from happiness to misery (this sudden reversal of fortune is called peripety).
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- **EPIPHANY:** A moment of sudden intuitive understanding; a flash of insight; a scene, experience, etc. that occasions such a moment.
- **EXPOSITION:** the word "exposition" can be used to describe a detailed explanation; a speech or writing explaining an idea. It can also be used to refer to the beginning of a short story, novel, or play where we are "exposed" to the characters and the theme/setting of the work itself.
- **FORESHADOWING:** to indicate beforehand, to be a warning of things to come.
- **GENRE:** type/style of something (generally referred to a type/style of literature)
- **INVERSION:** a reversal of the usual or natural order of things; when things are turned upside down.

- **IRONY:** a term used to describe a contrast between what is expected, or what appears to be, and what really is. There are three main types of irony:
  - **VERBAL IRONY:** in verbal irony, the actual meaning of a statement is different from (often the opposite of) what the statement literally says. (Verbal irony is the simplest and the most common type of irony.)
  - **SITUATIONAL IRONY:** situational irony refers to an occurrence that is contrary to what is expected.
  - **DRAMATIC IRONY:** in dramatic irony, the audience or reader knows events or facts not known to a character. To get really picky, there are two types of dramatic irony: in the first, the irony depends more on the structure of the drama than the words of the characters, for example, when Oedipus seeks throughout the play for the murderer of Laius, the former king of Thebes, when he is actually the guilty one. The second type occurs when a character speaks lines understood in a double sense by the audience.
- **MOOD:** the atmosphere or tone a work of literature conveys; a poet uses specific words, phrases, and images to convey mood.
- **NARRATIVE:** a story, whether fiction or non-fiction.
- **NARRATIVE PACE:** the rate at which a story moves.
- **NARRATIVE STRUCTURE:** the structural framework that underlies the order and manner in which a narrative is presented.
- **PARADOX:** a figure of speech indicating a seeming contradiction that may nonetheless be true; a person, situation, or action exhibiting inexplicable or contradictory aspects.
- **PARAPROSDOKIAN:** a surprise ending.
- **PLOT:** the main story of a play, novel, or poem
- **PROTAGONIST:** the main character of a play, story, or novel.
- **SETTING:** the “setting” of a piece of literature is the time and place in which the work takes place.
  - **ACTIVE SETTING:** a setting that plays an integral part in the story
  - **PASSIVE SETTING:** a setting that is not integral to the story
- **THEME:** the central/main idea of a story or poem.
- **TONE:** the attitude the writer/speaker takes toward the subject; like the mood of the work, the writer uses specific words, phrases, and images to convey the tone of a literary work.

<p><b>SPECIFIC LITERARY TERMS USED TO DISCUSS POETRY:</b></p>
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- **ALLITERATION** the repetition of the same sound of several words in a line of poetry, the term is generally used in reference to consonant sounds.
- **ALLUSION:** reference to a historical/literary person, event, or place, used to heighten the significance of a poetic image or a prose passage.
- **ANTITHESIS:** a strong contrast between two ideas; the direct opposite.
- **ASSONANCE:** the repetition of vowel sounds.
- **CAESURA:** a break, pause, or interruption in a line of poetry.
- **CONNOTATION** the suggestion of a meaning beyond the literal definition of a word, a word's associative implications. For example, the word “blue” doesn't just indicate a color; it can indicate a mood.
- **CONSONANCE:** while the word “consonance” can mean “a pleasing combination of sounds,” in poetry the word indicates a repetition of consonant sounds

- **DENOTATION:** the literal definition of a word, its dictionary definition.
- **ENJAMBMENT:** when one line of poetry flows onto the next, with no punctuation to slow the reading
- **EXPLICATION:** explanation, a critical interpretation.
- **FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE:** language that is not literal but represents one thing in terms of another.
- **GENRE:** type/style of something (generally referred to a type/style of literature)
- **HYPERBOLE:** a figure of speech in which something is exaggerated
- **IMAGE:** a comparison, description, or figure of speech that helps the mind to form forceful pictures.
- **IMAGERY:** the use of vivid descriptions or figures of speech to create a mental image.
- **LITERAL MEANING VS. FIGURATIVE MEANING:** “literal” means “true to fact.” The literal meaning is the meaning of the words on the page, taking the words in their usual meanings; the figurative meaning looks beyond the literal, to the images/symbols/figures of speech represented to arrive at the connotative meanings of words.
- **MEIOSIS:** understatement, the opposite of **HYPERBOLE**.
- **METER:** the rhythmical pattern of a poem—the way in which accented / unaccented syllables are arranged. Meter described as consisting of units called **FEET**. A **METRICAL FOOT** consists of one accented syllable and one or more unaccented syllables. The most common kinds of FEET:
  - **IAMB:** an unaccented syllable followed by an accented syllable (“before”)
  - **ANAPEST:** two unaccented syllables followed by an accented syllable (“Twas the night”)
  - **TROCHEE:** one accented syllable followed by one unaccented syllable (“drumming”)
  - **DACTYL:** one accented syllable followed by two unaccented syllables (“tenderly”)
- **METAPHOR:** a direct comparison between two different items (for example, “*My love is a red, red rose.*”) To confuse you further, there are three main types of metaphor:
- **DEAD METAPHOR:** a metaphor so common it is no longer seen as a metaphor (for example, “the arm of a chair”).
- **EXTENDED METAPHOR:** a comparison equating two different items throughout an entire work.
- **MIXED METAPHOR:** when the two elements of the metaphor are startlingly dissimilar (“the long arm of the law has two strikes against it”).
- **METONYMY:** The use of one word for another (“The theater roared with laughter.”)
- **MOOD:** the atmosphere or tone a work of literature conveys; a poet uses specific words, phrases, and images to convey mood.
- **ONOMATOPOEIA:** the use of words to imitate actual sounds (“buzz”).
- **OXYMORON:** a figure of speech combining two unlike terms (“jumbo shrimp”).
- **PERIOD:** a sentence in a poem
- **PERSONIFICATION:** a figure of speech in which an object, animal, or idea is given human characteristics.
- **PLOT:** the main story of a play, novel, or poem
- **POETRY:** a genre of literature illustrating the beauty or nobility of language or thought, poetry often (but not always) has a regularly repeated accent/rhyme.
- **REFRAIN:** while “refrain” may be a verb (meaning “to hold back”), in poetry the word refers to a phrase or verse repeated at intervals throughout a song or poem.
- **REPETITION:** the use, again, of any element: a sound, a word, a phrase, a clause, or a sentence.
- **RHYME:** the repeated ending sounds in words—usually the final words in their lines.
- **RHYTHM:** the pattern of stressed and unstressed syllables in language.

- **SENSE IMAGERY:** imagery which uses the five senses; these five types are:
  - **VISUAL:** imagery using the sense of sight
  - **AUDITORY:** imagery using the sense of hearing
  - **OLFACTORY:** imagery using the sense of smell
  - **GUSTATORY:** imagery using the sense of taste
  - **TACTILE:** imagery using the sense of touch
- **SIMILE:** a comparison of two different items through the use of the words *like* or *as*.
- **SPEAKER:** the speaker in a literary work may actually be the voice of the writer, or the speaker may be the voice of a character invented by the writer
- **STANZA:** a division in a poem, like a paragraph, marking off specific lines. Some stanza types are:
  - **COUPLET:** a set of two lines in a poem, one right after the other, which usually has a set rhythm.
  - **TERCET:** a group of three lines in a poem, usually with a set rhythm.
  - **QUATRAIN:** a group of four lines in a poem, usually with a set rhythm.
  - **CINQUAIN:** a group of five lines in a poem, usually with a set rhythm.
  - **SESTET:** a group of six lines in a poem, usually with a set rhythm.
- **STREAM OF CONSCIOUSNESS:** narrative style representing the unbroken flow of thought and awareness in the waking mind.
- **SYMBOL:** an object, idea, or action that represents something other than itself (for example, a dove may be used to symbolize peace).
- **SYNAESTHESIA:** an intermingling of the senses (a description that involves more than one sense)
- **SYNECDOCHE:** a figure of speech in which a more inclusive term is used for a less inclusive term, or vice versa (using the word “crown” to indicate “the king”; using “the main office” to mean “the school principal”).
- **THEME:** the central/main idea of a story or poem.
- **TONE:** the attitude the writer/speaker takes toward the subject; like the mood of the work, the writer uses specific words, phrases, and images to convey the tone of a literary work.

**Some of the more famous types of poetry are:**

- **BALLAD:** a narrative poem intended to be sung.
- **CONCRETE POETRY:** poetry in which the words form pictures.
- **DRAMATIC POETRY:** poetry in which one or more characters speak.
- **FREE VERSE:** free verse poetry has no regular rhythm or line length, and it rarely has rhyme; this form of poetry tries to imitate the rhythms of natural speech.
- **HAIKU:** a lyric form of poetry from Japan, consisting of seventeen syllables, arranged in unrhymed lines of five, seven, and five syllables.
- **LYRIC POETRY:** poetry that expresses a speaker's personal thoughts and feelings. In ancient Greece, such poems were sung to the music of a harp-like instrument called a lyre.
- **NARRATIVE:** a narrative poem tells a story.
- **ODE:** a lengthy lyric poem on a serious subject.
- **PARODY:** the imitation of one poem by another.
- **SONNET:** a fourteen-line poem written in iambic pentameter (ten syllables, with each unaccented syllable followed by an accented syllable), with a particular rhyme scheme.

## Essay Essentials—please check your essays for these issues:

### Titles:

- Have you created your own title, rather than using the title of the literary selection being analyzed? (Not all student essays have titles and this is an easy way to start off by emphasizing your thesis!)
- Have you punctuated titles correctly? (Remember that longer titles—novels, plays, etc.-- are underlined and shorter titles—essays, poetry, etc.—are in quotes.)

### Yo Intro:

- Does your opening paragraph specifically address the task and state the title of the passage?

### Body Paragraphs:

- Does each body paragraph contain a topic sentence that clearly addresses the task through the use of literary devices?

### Yo Conclusion:

- A strong conclusion paragraph restates your thesis (through the use of different wording, of course; don't merely repeat your intro in the same language) and summarizes your main points, tying your ideas together.

### General / Overall:

- Most importantly, have you stayed on topic (does every sentence address the task)? Have you provided sufficient supporting information from the literary passage?

- Do you use literary devices—and have you used an adjective in before each literary device?

For example, do not just say that a passage “uses diction.” “Diction” means “word choice,” so without an adjective before the word “diction” you have just stated that the passage uses words (and your reader will be thinking, “*Duh!*”). Specify what type of diction. Is the diction formal? Informative? Erudite? Colloquial?

Repetitive? (So don't just say “diction.” Or “imagery.” Or “tone.” Each literary device needs an adjective for support.)

- Have you quoted the literary passage? Have you embedded the supporting quotations into your text rather than using them as statements?
- Have you limited plot summary to supporting elements only?
- Have you avoided broad generalizations?
- Is your analysis written in the historical present tense?
- Have you eliminated all statements that offer praise or criticism of the literature or the author?
- In analyzing poetry, have you referred to the speaker rather than the author?
- Language: Be sure you use academic language. This means you have:
  - Eliminated all contractions and informal language/slang
  - Selected formal language and used specific details from the text to support your points. Remember that the best essays are unique—they sound like an individual voice, an intelligent individual voice. If your essay sounds dry and mechanical, even if you are making solid points and even if you remain focused on the task, your essay will not attain a high score.
  - Varied syntax throughout. Syntax simply means “sentence structure.” Don't have the same structure for each sentence, or even each paragraph. (For example, don't begin three sentences in a row with the phrase “In the passage...” Again, even if you are making a good point, this is boring!)
  - Refrained from saying “I think that,” “I feel that,” or “I believe that.” (“Kill the I” throughout.)
  - Proofread your essay—is it grammatically correct throughout?
  - Last—but surely not least—is your handwriting legible?

**There are one hundred other things to add, but let's keep this to one page.** Bottom line? Read through your essays and examine the errors you are making (*know yourself as a student—we each have things to learn!*).

If you have questions, please ask! I am here to help! 😊