

AP Literature List of Literary Terms

Poetry Terms

Types of Poetry

List 1

Narrative Poetry - Poetry that tells a story (has a narrative)

Epic: a long narrative poem, which in dignified and elevated style, tells of the mighty deeds of a great hero. *The Odyssey, The Illiad*

Ballad: simple, narrative verse which tells a story to be sung or recited; the folk ballad is anonymously handed down, while the literary ballad has a single author. "La Belle Dame sans Merci" "Richard Cory" "Sir Patrick Spens"

***Pastoral Poem:** a poem dealing with shepherds and simple rural life "The Calendar of the Shepherd" Edmund Spenser

***Idyll:** a pastoral poem that presents an incident of natural simplicity in a rustic setting; it is descriptive and presents a "little picture" of country life.

Dramatic Monologue: poetry that reveals a "soul in action": through conversation of one character in a dramatic situation. "My Last Duchess" "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock"

Lyric Poetry: poetry which expresses the personal feelings or thoughts of its author; it is subjective and emotional, imaginative, and melodious.

Lyric: (a specific subdivision of the general category) A short, simple, subjective poem that directly and forcefully expresses a single emotion, idea, or musing. Emily Dickinson, Langston Hughes, **Song:** a lyric intended to be sung "Eleanor Rigby"

Ode: a lyric poem which treats a serious subject thoughtfully and emotionally and which is marked by a dignified style and a complex metrical pattern; it is usually a tribute to a person or thing. "Ode to a Nightingale" "Ode on a Grecian Urn"

Sonnet: a fourteen-line lyric poem written in iambic pentameter with an intricate rhyme scheme

English or Shakespearean Sonnet: consists of three quatrains rhymed *abab cdcd efef* and a concluding couplet rhymed *gg*; the three quatrains develop a single thought, and the couplet usually comments on them. "Shall I Compare Thee?"

Italian or Petrarchan Sonnet: has eight lines (the octave) for the development of a single thought, and six lines (the sestet) for a comment on, a solution to, or an application of the thought; rhyme scheme is *abbaabba* in the octave, and *cdecde* in the sestet. (any variation of the *cd* or *cde* is acceptable in the sestet. "On His Blindness" "Death, Be Not Proud" "How Do I Love Thee?" "London, 1802" "Douglass")

***Spenserian Sonnet:** consists of nine iambic lines rhymed *abab bcbc cdcd ee*, all pentameter except last which is hexameter (6) or alexandrine and is the summary.

List 2

Elegy: a poem that laments the dead (elegaic stanza) "To an Athlete Dying Young"

Villanelle: 19-line French verse form; the three lines in each of the first five stanzas rhyme *aba*; the final quatrain rhymes *abaa*. "Do Not Go Gentle into That Good Night"

***Complaint:** a lyric poem frequent in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance in which the poet laments the unresponsiveness of his mistress, bemoans his unhappy lot and seeks to remedy it, or regrets the sorry state of the world a poem expressing great grief

Figures of Speech: SEE FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE SECTION

Devices of Sound

Rhythm: the reoccurring rise and fall of sounds in a line of poetry

Meter: the pattern of rhythm in a line of poetry

Foot: a portion of a line of poetry, usually consisting of one accented and either one or two unaccented syllables

poetry can be labeled by the number of feet each line contains:

Monometer – one foot

Dimeter – two feet

Trimeter – three feet

Tetrameter – four feet

Pentameter – five feet

Hexameter – six feet

Heptameter – seven feet

Octameter – eight feet

List 3

Types of Feet:

Iamb (adj- **iambic**) unaccented / accented, or unstressed / stressed; symbols are $\sim \acute$
(*Em **bark** re **late** “To **arms**. To **arms**”*)

Trochee (adj. – **trochaic**) [**Tro** key] accented/ unaccented $\acute \sim$ (***Frank** ly **quest** ion*)

Anapest (adj. – **anapestic**) [an uh **PEST**] Unaccented / unaccented / accented $\sim \sim \acute$
(*Oh he **floats** through the **air** with the **great** est of **ease***)

Dactyl (adj. – **dactylic**) [**Dac** till lick] accented/unaccented/unaccented $\acute \sim \sim$
(***laugh** a ble*)

Spondee (adj. – spondaic) two accented syllables $\acute \acute$ (***Blood-red** **life-like***)

Pyrrhic – two unaccented syllables $\sim \sim$ “*The sail/**of the**/depart/ing ship.*”

End-stopped line: a line in poetry in which a grammatical pause—from punctuation—is the same as the end of the line.

Enjambment or Run-on Line: no pause or stop at the end of the line (often indicated by a lack of punctuation)

caesura (also cesura) - a “sense” pause in a line; a pause caused by the natural rhythm of speech, as opposed to punctuation dictating the pause.

List 4

Rhyme: the similarity between the sounds of words or syllables; for there to be perfect rhyme:

(a) The vowel sounds must be similar and accented. (b)

The sounds following the vowel must be similar.

(c) The sounds preceding the vowel must be different.

End Rhyme: the correspondence between the sounds of words at the ends of lines

*“The woods are lovely, dark, and deep,
But I have promises to keep,”*

Internal Rhyme: rhyme of words in the same line or between a word in the line and one with the next.

“We were the first that ever burst...”

“The trees were black where the bark was wet...”

I see them yet, in the spring of the year...”

Exact Rhyme: use of identical rhyming sound *love / dove*

Half Rhyme / Slant Rhyme / Imperfect Rhyme: when words contain similar sounds, but do not rhyme perfectly; most half-rhyme is the result of assonance and consonance. *summer/humble*

Rhyme Scheme: the pattern of rhymes in a stanza. It is usually marked by the use of letters of the alphabet, beginning with a and using the same letter to denote all lines which rhyme.

*"They glide like phantoms, into the wide hall, A
Like phantoms, to the iron porch, they glide; B
.....sprawl, A
.....side; B*

****Masculine Rhyme:** the rhyming of a single syllable *run – run ; today – in May*

****Feminine Rhyme:** one that is multiple with the first rhyming syllable accented *showers – flowers
impulsively – convulsively*

Assonance: the agreement of vowel sounds without repetition of consonants

"My words like silent rain drops fell..."

Alliteration: the rhyme of initial consonant sounds *"The furrow followed free." Samson saw*

Consonance: the agreement of ending consonant sounds when the vowel sounds differ
gross – crass/live – dove

List 5

Cacophony / Dissonance: a mixture of harsh, unpleasant, or discordant sounds. Often highlights negative meaning. *"The nasal whine of power whips a new universe ... / Where spouting pillars spoor the evening sky"*

Euphony: Pleasing sounds; the opposite of cacophony

Refrain: a group of words or lines that recurs regularly at the end of successive stanzas.

Repetition: the repeating of a word or phrase for emphasis; the same phrase, however, is not repeated regularly throughout the poem as in the refrain

*"Alone, alone, all, all alone, Alone
on a wide, wide sea."*

Onomatopoeia: the imitation of sounds by words either directly or suggestively

Directly: buzz, moo

Suggestively: "silken sad uncertain rustling of each purple curtain" (Here the alliteration produces the sound of the curtain.)

Units of Verse

Verse: a single line of poetry

Stanza: a unit of poetry consisting of a group of related verses generally with a definite metrical pattern and rhyme scheme.

Canto: a division of a long poem, comparable to chapters in a book (*The Inferno*)

Book: a major division of a long poem, usually an epic; books can be divided into cantos and cantos into stanzas. (The 3 books of *The Divine Comedy*)

List 6

Blank Verse: unrhymed iambic pentameter (Shakespeare's plays)

***Alexandrine:** a line of iambic hexameter

Free Verse (Vers Libre): poetry with irregular meter and usually without rhyme, it has discernable rhythm, but not the regular rhythm of traditional poetry

Couplet: two lines of equal measure that rhyme (often at the end of Shakespeare's sonnets)

Tercet: a stanza of three lines

Quatrain: a stanza of four lines; the most common in English

***Ballad Stanza:** a quatrain in which the first and third lines are iambic tetrameter and may rhyme: the second and fourth lines are iambic trimeter and must rhyme.

***Quintain (Quintet):** a five-line stanza

Sestet: a six-line stanza or the last six lines of an Italian sonnet

Octave (Octet): a stanza of eight lines, probably the second most common in English. It is also the name given to the first eight lines of an Italian sonnet.

***Heptastich**; seven line stanza

List 7

***Rhyme Royal**: seven-line iambic pentameter stanza rhyming ababbcc: Chaucer used this; derived from use by Scottish King James I (also Wyatt; Shakespeare)

Terza rima: three-line stanza with interlocking rhymes that connect stanza to stanza (aba bcb cdc ded) Dante's *Inferno* is written in terza rima.

***Ottava rima**: eight iambic pentameter lines that rhyme abababcc; Lord Byron in "Don Juan" and Yeats

Other Terms

***Metaphysical Poetry**: Usually refers to the work of seventeenth-century poets who used similar methods and revolted against the romantic conventionalism of Elizabethan love poetry. They tended toward psychological analysis of the emotions of love and religion. They had a penchant for the unusual and shocking, used metaphysical conceits. They intended to express honestly, yet unconventionally, the poet's sense of the complexities and contradictions of life. (John Donne, George Herbert) The diction is simple as compared with that of the Elizabethan or Neo-Classical Periods, and echoes the words and cadences of common speech. The imagery is drawn from the commonplace or the remote. The form is frequently that of an argument with the poet's lover, with God, or with himself.

Diction: ~~the word choices made by the writer~~ word choice

Levels of diction

High, elevated, formal, scholarly—usually contains language that creates an elevated tone. It is free of slang, idioms, colloquialisms, and contradictions. It often contains polysyllabic words, sophisticated syntax, and elegant word choice. (Nathaniel Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter*)

Standard English—The ordinary speech of educated native speakers. Most literate speech and writing is general English. Its diction is more educated than colloquial English, but not as elevated as formal English.

Colloquial—is the language of everyday use. It is relaxed and conversational. The casual or informal but correct language of ordinary speakers, it often includes common and simple words, idioms, slang, jargon, and contractions.

Low—The lowest level of formality in language, vulgate is the diction of the common people with no pretensions at refinement or elevation. The vulgate is not necessarily vulgar in the sense of containing foul language; it refers simply to unschooled, everyday language. It uses nonstandard expressions, often regional, ways of using language appropriate to informal or conversational speech and writing. Zora Neal Hurston's *Their Eyes Were Watching God*

List 8

Aspects of low diction

Dialect—is a nonstandard subgroup of a language with its own vocabulary and grammatical features.

Writers often use regional dialects or dialects that reveal a person's economic or social class. Mark Twain's *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*.

Slang—refers to a group of recently coined words, often out of usage within months or years. (Groovy, sweet, homies, dudes)

Vulgar—coarse, common; vernacular; lacking in cultivation or taste; offensive (words that may get your mouth washed out with soap!)

Aspects of Diction

Abstract Diction—words that express ideas or concepts: *love, time, truth*. Abstract diction, leaves out some characteristics found in each individual, and instead observes a quality common to many. The word *beauty*, for instance, denotes what may be observed in numerous persons, places, and things.

Archaic—The use of old-fashioned language. (Thee, thou, thine, ye olde)

Bombast—Pretentious, exaggeratedly learned language. Trying to be eloquent by using the largest, most uncommon words.

Cliché—An over-used, worn-out, hackneyed (often figurative) expression that used to be fresh but is no more. “Blushing bride” and “clinging vine” are clichés` used to describe people.

Concrete diction—refers to words that we can immediately perceive with our senses: *dog, actor, chemical*, or particular individuals who belong to those general classes: *Bonzo the fox terrier, Clint Eastwood, hydrogen sulfate*.

Connotation—The implications of a word or phrase, as opposed to its exact meaning (denotation.). Over and above what they mean or actually denote (dictionary definition). For example, plump has a different connotation than fat.

Denotation—The strict, literal, dictionary definition of a word, devoid of any emotion, attitude, or color.

List 9

Didactic—From the Greek, didactic literally means “teaching.” Didactic works have the primary aim of teaching, or instructing, especially the teaching of moral or ethical principles.

Double entendre—A statement that is deliberately ambiguous, one of whose possible meanings is risqué` or suggestive of some impropriety. It deals with a single word that has more than one meaning.

Epithet: a word or phrase used in place of a person’s name or in association with it. (*Alexander the Great, Material Girl, Ms. Know-it-all*)

Euphemism— an indirect, less offensive way of saying something that is considered unpleasant (a person is slender rather than skinny; plump instead of fat)

Jargon—consists of words and expressions characteristic of a particular trade, profession, or pursuit. Some examples of nautical jargon from *The Secret Sharer* by Joseph Conrad are “cuddy,” “taffrail,” “missen,” and “binnacle.”

Literal/Figurative meanings—Literal is based on the actual words in their ordinary meaning. Figurative gives a more symbolic meaning or representing one concept in terms of another that may be thought of as analogous. (*Literal= daily newspaper; Figurative= screaming headlines*)

Malapropism— a confused use of words in which the appropriate word is replaced by one with a similar sound but inappropriate meaning. (He said the reporters disassembled (broke apart), but he meant dissembled (lied).

Narrative Techniques, Narrative Devices, Resources of language (Prose)

Atmosphere/ Mood: the emotional feelings created (by many ways, but mostly setting) (gloomy, tense, hostile)

Character: A person, or anything presented; a spirit, object, animal, or natural force, in a literary work.

List 10

Aspects of Characters

Antagonist: a character or force in a work of literature that, by opposing the protagonist, produces tension or conflict. One who fights or struggles with another; foe, rival

Archetype—An abstract or ideal conception of a type; a perfectly typical example; and original model or form. For characters, the typical archetypes include: *Hero, Villain, Damsel-in distress*

Dynamic Character (developing): a character who during the course of a story undergoes an important and permanent change in some distinguishing moral qualities or personal traits or outlook.

Flat Character: A character whose distinguishing moral qualities or personal traits are summed up in a few traits.

Foil: A minor character whose situation or actions parallel those of a major character, and thus by contrast sets off or illuminates the major character.

Protagonist: The main character in a story, play, or novel.

Round Character: A character whose distinguishing moral qualities or personal traits are complex.
Static Character: A character who is the same sort of person at the end of a story as at the beginning.
No change.
Stock Character: A stereotyped character whose nature is familiar to us from prototypes in previous literature.

List 11

Methods of Characterization: writers reveal the traits of the characters directly or indirectly.

Direct Characterization: the narrator states directly what a character is like. (*He was a serious student who longed for fun.*)

Indirect Characterization: the character is revealed in subtle ways

Appearance: The description indicates much about a person's interests, wealth, or condition.

Direct Statements by the character: manner of speaking, what the character says, and dialect, reveal much about a character.

Private thoughts of the character: desires, fears, worries and other concerns can be revealed through interior monologue, stream of consciousness, soliloquies, or other indications of inner thought processes

Character's actions: the character's choices of behavior reveal much about him or her.

Effects the character has on other characters: the words and actions of the character affect other characters. Their response indicates certain attitudes toward the character.

Plot: The structure of a story; the sequence in which the author arranges events in a story. The structure of a five-act play often includes the exposition, rising action, the climax, the falling action, and the resolution. The plot may have a protagonist who is opposed by the antagonist, creating what is called, conflict. A plot may include flashback or it may include a subplot, which is a mirror image of the main plot.

Setting: is the time and place in which events in a short story, novel, play, or narrative poem take place.

Theme: The central ~~message~~ meaning of a literary work. The main idea or meaning of a work. It is not the same as subject. The theme is the idea ~~the author wishes to~~ conveyed about that subject. A literary work can have more than one theme, and most themes are not directly stated but are implied. AP tests may refer to it as "the meaning of the work."

List 12

Tone: the attitude a speaker, narrator, or writer takes toward a subject, a character, or the reader. (sympathetic, critical, ironic, humorous, tragic, hopeful, bitter, objective, unemotional)

Exposition: that part of the structure that sets the scene, introduces and identifies characters, and establishes the situation at the beginning of a story, novel, or play. Additional exposition is often scattered throughout the story.

Rising Action: Those events in a play or novel – fueled by conflict – that lead to a turning point or climax in the action.

Flashback: is a scene that interrupts the action of a work to show a previous event.

Flash Forward: a shift in the narration that moves to a future time that has not yet occurred in the straight narration (*Heart of Darkness* —discussing Kurtz before meeting him)

Foreshadowing: ~~is the use of~~ hints or clues in a narrative ~~to~~ that suggest future action.

Conflict: The tension created in the story by the struggle or outcome of the struggle—one of the narrative devices to address when analyzing the tone of the passage. Four common conflicts: Man vs. man, Man vs. nature, Man vs. himself, Man vs. supernatural

External conflict: a character struggles against an outside force (nature, other men)

Internal conflict: a struggle between opposing needs, desires, or emotions within a single character. (conscience, decisions)

Dialogue: The directly quoted words of people speaking to one another. Writers use dialogue to advance the plot and develop characters.

List 13

Climax: often the same as the turning point, the point of greatest intensity, interest, or suspense in a narrative or drama that determines how the action will come out. The point at which the action stops rising and begins falling or reversing. This is the crucial part of the drama, the part that determines the outcome of the conflict.

Epiphany: A sudden insight or understanding. It is thus an intuitive grasp of reality achieved in a quick flash of recognition in which something, usually simple and commonplace is seen in a new light,

Falling Action: The falling action is the series of events, which take place after the climax.

Resolution, Conclusion, Denouement: the ending that follows the climax and leads to the resolution. The final unraveling of a plot's complications. The part of a story or drama which occurs after the climax and which establishes a new norm, a new state of affairs--the way things are going to be from then on. Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* climaxes with the death of the two lovers. Their deaths resolve the feud between the two families. In the play's resolution, Lords Capulet and Montague swear to end their feud and build golden monuments to each other's dead child.

Frame Story: A literary device in which a story is enclosed in another story, a tale within a tale. **E.g.** *Invisible Man*, *Ethan Frome*, *Heart of Darkness*

Speaker: the person (or animal or thing) who narrates the story, novel, or **poem**.

Point of View: is an integral part of literary analysis. In both prose and poetry, an individual tells the story and this person provides the reader with one perspective about the events. The author chooses the point of view provides a for its precise effect on the meaning of the story.

Types of Point of View

First person: the **participant point of view** is also called the *first person point of view* because of the first person pronouns (I, me, my, we, us our) are used to tell the story. The narrator may be a *major character* in the story (the story is told by and is chiefly about the narrator). Or, the narrator may be a *minor character* (the narrator tells a story that focuses on someone else, but the narrator is still a character in the story).

Third Person: also called the **non-participant** because the third person pronouns (he, him, she, her, they, them) are used to tell the story. The narrator knows everything about a particular character. There are three types:

Omniscient narrator. The author can enter the minds of all the characters. The omniscient point of view allows great freedom in that the narrator knows all there is to know about the characters, externally and internally. The narrator can tell the past, present, and future.

Limited third person narrator. The author limits his omniscience to the minds of a few of the characters or to the mind of a single character

Objective narrator (also called the "Camera" view) The author does not enter a single mind, but instead records what can be seen and heard. This type of narrator is like a camera or a fly on the wall that can see all the actions and comment on them, but does not know the inner thoughts or feelings of the characters.

Unreliable narrator: In a story told by an unreliable narrator, the point of view is that of a person who, we perceive, is deceptive, self-deceptive, deluded, or deranged. A reliable narrator can be depended upon to be objective, free from bias, and dependable.

Interior Monologue: The flow of the contents of a character's mind; a narrative technique that records a character's internal thoughts, memories, and associations. (*"How will I learn all these words?" she asked herself.*)

Stream of consciousness (a type of interior monologue): A style of writing that portrays the inner (and often chaotic) workings of a character's mind through interior monologue. Often, random thoughts and images appear without specific, logical organization. (*Heart of Darkness*, *Invisible Man*)

List 14

- In medias res:** “In the midst of things.” It is applied to the literary technique of opening a story in the middle of the action and then supplying information about the beginning of the action through flashbacks and other devices for exposition. The story then returns to the middle of the action and progresses forward to the future. (*The Odyssey; Oedipus Rex*)
- Deus ex machina:** A Greek invention, literally “the god from the machine” who appears at the last moment and resolves the loose ends of a play. Today, the term refers to anyone, usually of some stature, who untangles, resolves, or reveals the key to the plot of a work.
- Anachronism:** A person, scene, event, or other element that fails to correspond with the appropriate time or era. (*In Julius Caesar, “the clock hath stricken three,” but there were no clocks in Caesar’s day.*)
- Suspension of Disbelief:** The willingness to withhold questions about truth, accuracy, or probability in a work. Suspending doubt makes possible the temporary acceptance of an author’s imaginative world. (*Gregor Samsa wakes up as an insect*)
- Magical Realism:** Used in painting or prose fiction, the frame or surface of the work may be conventionally realistic, but contrasting elements—such as the supernatural, myth, dream, fantasy—invade the realism and change the whole basis of the art. (*“A Very Old Man with Enormous Wings.”*)
- Surrealism:** founder, Andre Breton, French poet. A movement in art and literature that started in Europe during the 1920’s. Surrealists wanted to replace conventional realism with the full expression of the unconscious mind, which they considered to be more real than the “real” world of appearances.
- Distortion:** exaggerating events or characters for special effect.
- Allegory**—A prolonged metaphor; a narrative in which characters, objects, and events have underlying political, religious, moral, or social meanings. (*Animal Farm, Lord of the Flies*)
- Picaresque novel:** a novel consisting of a lengthy string of loosely connected events. It usually features the adventures of a rogue, or scamp, living by his wits among the middle class. (**Mark Twain’s *Huckleberry Finn***)
- Bildungsroman:** a novel that deals with the development of a young person, usually from adolescence to maturity; it is frequently autobiographical. Also called an Apprenticeship Novel (*Great Expectations, Catcher in the Rye, Huckleberry Finn, Invisible Man*)
- Epistolary Novel:** a novel in which the narrative is carried forward by letters written by one or more of the characters. It gives a sense of immediacy because the letters are usually written in the midst of the action and allows the author to present multiple points of view on the same event. It also helps create verisimilitude or realistic details.

List 15

- Figurative Language or Figures of Speech:** a way of saying one thing and meaning something else.
- Allegory**— SEE NARRATIVE TECHNIQUES SECTION
- Allusion**—A reference in a work of literature to something outside the work, especially to a well-known historical or literary event, person, biblical reference, artwork, or music. (*He met his Waterloo*)
- Ambiguity**—A technique by which a writer deliberately suggests two or more different, and sometimes conflicting, meanings in a work. (What happened at the end of “The Most Dangerous Game”?)
- Apostrophe**—An address to the dead as if living; to the inanimate as if animate; to the absent as if present; to the unborn as if alive. Ex. “O Julius Caesar, though art might yet; thy spirit walks abroad.”
- Cliché/Dead metaphor**—a phrase that has been overused so that its original impact has been lost. Ex. Old as the hills; It’s raining cats and dogs
- Conceit**—unusual or surprising comparison between two very different things (special kind of metaphor or complicated analogy) (Ex. John Donne’s compass)
- Extended Metaphor (controlling image)**—a metaphor developed using several words or phrases on the same subject as a comparison. (E.x., “There is a tide in the affairs of men/ Taken at the flood”)

Hyperbole—is a deliberate, extravagant, and often outrageous exaggeration. (*The shot heard round the world*)

Imagery—The images or sensory details of a work. (visual, auditory, tactile, kinesthetic, and gustatory images) (“The amber-yellow leaves rustled in the breeze”)

Visual—descriptions of images that can be seen. (*The golden-hued sunset*)

Auditory—images that can be heard (*The howling cat hissed at the dog*)

Tactile—descriptions of the texture or touch of something (“*The air was like moist, black velvet.*”)

Kinesthetic—descriptions of motion or movement. (The leaves fluttered and waved in the breeze.)

Olfactory—images that describe smells (*The fragrant, sweet aroma of the flowers filled the air*)

Gustatory—(sweet, sour, bitter, salty) descriptions of tastes (*The hot chili salsa burned his tongue with spicy peppers*)

Metaphor—is a comparison of two unlike things **not** using “like” or “as”:

Ex. “Time is money.” Often introduced by “is.” Her ruby lips. (lips the color of ruby red)

List 16

Litote—a type of understatement in which something affirmative is expressed by negating its opposite. (*Your meaning is not misunderstood.*)

Metonymy—the use of the name of one thing for that of another associated with or suggested by it. (Ex. “*the White house*” stands for the government or “the Crown” stands for the monarchy)

Motif—The repetition or variations of an image or idea in a work that is used to develop the theme or characters (*Light and dark; summer and winter; day and night; appearance vs. reality; or objects that reappear—birds, colors*).

Montage—a quick succession of images or impressions used to express an idea, usually in film

Oxymoron—is a form of paradox that combines a pair of opposite terms into a single unusual expression. Two opposing ideas are fused together. (E.x., “*sweet sorrow*” or “*bittersweet*” “*cold fire*” “*happy dagger*”)

Paradox—a statement that appears contradictory at first, but actually presents a truth. Ex. Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar* makes use of a paradox: “*Cowards die many times before their deaths*” (2.2.32)

Personification—giving human characteristics to inanimate objects or abstract ideas: (Ex., “*The wind cried in the dark.*”)

Simile—is a comparison of two different things or ideas through the use of the words “like,” “as,” or “resembles.” Ex., “*The warrior fought like a lion.*”

Symbol—is any object, place, or action that maintains its own meaning while at the same time standing for something greater than itself. (*The U.S. flag stands for democracy. Colors often have symbolic meanings: green=youth, novice; red=passion, blood. Seasons show the changes in life: spring=childhood; summer=youth; autumn=adulthood; winter=old age*)

Synaesthesia—The description of one kind of sensation in terms of another—that is, the description of sounds in terms of colors (“blue note”) or colors in terms of sound (“loud shirt”)

Synecdoche—(similar to metonymy) is a form of metaphor. In synecdoche, a part of something stands for the whole Ex. “*I plan on buying a new set of wheels*” (the *wheels* stand for the part of the car, which is the whole) Also, synecdoche involves the container representing the thing being contained: Ex., “*The pot is boiling*”. One last form of synecdoche, the material from which an object is made stands for the object itself: Ex., “*The quarterback tossed the pigskin.*” A part stands for the whole body. “*All hands on deck.*”

Understatement—the opposite of hyperbole. It is a kind of irony that deliberately represents something as being much less than it really is. (Ex., “*I could probably manage to survive on a salary of two million dollars per year.*”)

List 17

Dramatic Techniques

Monologue: This is a term used in a number of senses, with the basic meaning of a single person speaking alone with or without an audience. Most prayers, much lyric verse and all lament are monologues, but, apart from these, five main kinds can be distinguished.

- (a.) **Monodrama** is a theatrical entertainment in which there is only one character (think Lily Tomlin's "bag Lady" or Whoopi Goldberg's "crippled lady")
- (b.) **Soliloquy** (think *Othello's* self-revelations in *Othello*. In drama, a moment when a character is (usually) alone and speaks his or her thoughts aloud. Unlike an *aside*, a soliloquy is not meant to imply that the actor acknowledges the audience's presence. In Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, Act 3, Scene I "To be or not to be, that is the question" is a famous soliloquy.
- (c.) **Aside:** A device in which a character in a drama makes a short speech that is heard by the audience but not by other characters in the play. (think Iago's explanation to the audience (in *Othello*) of what he is going to do next. Sometimes one character has an aside to another showing that the other characters don't hear some secret information.
- (d.) **Dramatic monologue** is a poetry in which there is one imaginary speaker addressing an imaginary audience (think Browning's "My Last Duchess")

Satiric Techniques: Satire is a manner of writing that mixes a critical attitude with wit and humor in an effort to improve mankind and human institutions. Ridicule, irony, exaggeration, and several other techniques are almost always present. The satirist's goal is to point out the hypocrisy of his target in the hope that either the target or the audience will return to a genuine following of the moral code. Thus, satire is inescapably moral even when not explicit

Ridicule: the act of making someone or something the object of scornful laughter by joking, mocking

Hyperbole: SEE FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE SECTION

Understatement: SEE FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE SECTION

Sarcasm: intentional derision, generally directed at another person and intended to hurt. (The term comes from a Greek word meaning "to tear flesh like dogs") Cutting remarks. The main vehicle is verbal irony-jeeringly stating the opposite of what is meant. (*I suppose your dog ate your homework again.* "As I fell down the stairs headfirst, I heard her say, 'Look at that coordination.'")

Humor: A term used to denote one of the two major types of writing (humor and wit) whose purpose is to evoke laughter. A comical mode that is sympathetic, tolerant, and warmly aware of the depths of human nature.

Wit: primarily intellectual, the perception of similarities in seemingly dissimilar things—the "swift play and flash of mind"—and is expressed in skillful phraseology, plays on words, surprising contrasts, paradoxes, epigrams etc.

Irony- A situation or statement characterized by a significant difference between what is expected or understood and what actually happens or is meant.

List 18

Types of Irony

Cosmic or irony of fate: Some Fate with a grim sense of humor seems cruelly to trick a human being. Cosmic irony clearly exists in poems in which fate or the Fates are personified and seen as hostile, as in "Oedipus" and Thomas Hardy's "The Convergence of the Twain" and Robinson's "Richard Cory". Evidently it is a twist of fate for the most envied man in town to kill himself.

Dramatic: The audience understands something that the character or characters do not realize. It occurs when a character or speaker says or does something that has different meanings from what he or she thinks it means, though the audience and other characters understand the full implications of the speech or action. (Ex., *Oedipus curses the murderer of Laius, not realizing that he is himself the murderer and so is cursing himself. Romeo thinks Juliet is dead.*)

Situational: occurs when a situation turns out differently from what one would normally expect—though often the twist is oddly appropriate (Ex., *a deep-sea diver drowning in a bathtub is ironic*)

Socratic: Adapting a form of ironic false modesty in which a speaker claims ignorance regarding a question or philosophical problem. The speaker then turns to another "authority" and raises the question humbly, asking for the expert's answer. When the "authority," presents an answer, the "modest" original speaker continues to ask pointed questions, eventually revealing the limitations or inadequacies of the supposed expert—all the while protesting his or her own inferior knowledge. The irony comes from the speaker's continuing presentation of himself as stupid even as he demolishes inferior ideas others present to him. This is the method Socrates supposedly took regarding philosophical inquiry, and it is named Socratic irony in his honor. (Porfiry Petrovich in *Crime and Punishment*)

Verbal: occurs when a speaker or narrator says one thing while meaning the opposite. (Ex., *It is easy to stop smoking. I've done it many times.*)

Absurdity, distortion, and incongruity: In contemporary literature and criticism, a term applied to the sense that human beings, cut off from their roots, live in meaningless isolation in an alien universe. Although the literature of the

absurd employs many of the devices of EXPRESSIONISM and SURREALISM, its philosophical base is a form of EXISTENTIALISM that views human beings as moving from the nothingness from which they came

to the nothingness in which they will end through an existence marked by anguish and absurdity, but they must make their own choices and accept responsibility for those decisions.

Burlesque: A form of comedy characterized by ridiculous exaggeration and distortion. A serious subject may be treated frivolously or a frivolous subject seriously. *Burlesque* is a travesty of a literary form unlike *parody*, which is a travesty of a particular work.

Parody: A composition imitating another, usually serious, piece. It is designed to ridicule a work or its style or author. The parody is in literature what the caricature and cartoon are in art.

Caricature: Writing that exaggerates certain individual qualities of a person and produces *BURLESQUE*. It is more frequently associated with drawing rather than writing. Like satire, it lends itself to the ridicule of political, religious, and social foibles. (Mr. Collins in *Pride & Prejudice*; Rhinehart in *Invisible Man*)

Coarse mockery: ridicule that contains vulgar or bawdy references and sexual innuendo. (The conversation between the nurse and Mercutio in *Romeo and Juliet*)

Invective: Harsh, abusive language directed against a person or cause. Vituperative writing. (Ex. The sermons of "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God.")

List 19

Sardonic statements: bitterly scornful; cynical; expecting the worst; stronger anger than plain sarcasm

Verisimilitude or Realistic detail: use of specific concrete details to describe persons, places, and objects. (the description of Miss Havisham's wedding cake in *Great Expectations*)

Tragedy (According to Aristotle)

Hamartia (tragic flaw) The error, frailty, mistaken judgment or misstep through which the fortunes of the hero of a TRAGEDY are reversed. Aristotle asserts that this hero should be a person "who is not eminently good or just, yet whose misfortune is brought about by some error or frailty." *Hamartia* may be the result of bad judgment, bad character, ignorance, inherited weakness, accident, or any of many other possible causes. It must, however, express itself through a definite action or failure to act.

Hubris: Excessive pride or insolence that results in the misfortune of the protagonist or a tragedy. *Hubris* leads the protagonist to break a moral law, attempt vainly to transcend normal limitations, or ignore a divine warning with calamitous results.

Catharsis (purgation): (hnbk.Lit. p.82 the relief felt after witnessing a literary tragedy. A cleansing of emotions to see the tragedy come to a conclusion.

Recognition (anagnorisis): discovery; the revelation of some fact not known before or some person's true identity (Oedipus discovers that he, himself is the one who killed his father)

Reversal (Peripety) The change in fortune for a protagonist. The reversal of fortune for a protagonist-- possibly either a fall, as in tragedy, or a success, as in comedy. An action that turns out to have the opposite effect from the one its doer had intended. (*When Oedipus is told that his father has died of old age; the reversal occurs when Oedipus discovers that he is an adopted son and does not know who his real father was, so the prophecy may still come true.*)

Chorus: In ancient Greek drama, the groups of dancers and singers who participated in dramatic performances. Originally, they made up the bulk of the play, but later became interspersed between dialogue and monologues. They later evolved into prologues and epilogues.

Comedy: A lighter form of drama that aims primarily to amuse. It has a more sustained plot, subtle dialogue, more lifelike characters, and less boisterous behavior than farces or burlesque. It uses wit or humor; the comic effect arises from the recognition of some incongruity of speech, action, or character. The incongruity may be verbal (puns), or bodily (falling, distorted body parts)

List 20

Rhetorical Strategies, Devices, and Techniques

Rhetorical techniques: The devices used in effective or persuasive language. The number of rhetorical techniques, like that of resources of language, is long and runs the gamut from apostrophe to zeugma. The more common examples include devices like contrast, repetitions, paradox, understatement, sarcasm, and rhetorical questions.

Reiteration: repetition of an idea using different words, often for emphasis or other effect

Repetition: The deliberate use of any element of language more than once-- sound, word, phrase, sentence, grammatical pattern, or rhythmical pattern.

Types of Repetition

Anaphora—The same words begin successive sentences for emphasis and rhythm. (*"That never words were music to thine ear/ That never object pleasing to thy eye..."*)

Parison—Repeating the entire sentence or clause almost exactly. (*"In such a night" is repeated eight times in the first twenty lines of The Merchant of Venice.*)

Ploce—Repeating words in a line or clause (*For she that scorned me, now scorned of me*)

Epizeuxis—Repeating words in immediate succession. (*The horror. The horror.*)

Anatanaclasis—Punning on a repeated word to obtain different meanings. (*Put out the light, and then put out the light*)

Anadiplosis—The repetition of a key word, especially the last one, at the beginning of the next sentence or clause. (*"He gave his life; life was all he could give."*)

Chiasmus—A pattern in which the second part is balanced against the first but with the parts reversed, as in (*"Flowers are lovely, love is flowerlike," or "Fair is foul, and foul is fair."*)

Asyndeton—The practice of leaving out the usual conjunctions between coordinate sentence elements. (*Smile, shake hands, part.*)

Polysyndeton—The use of more conjunctions than is normal. (*...and swims, or sinks, or wades, or creeps, or flees*)

List 21

Ellipsis: The omission of a word or several words necessary for a complete construction that is still understandable. "If rainy, bring an umbrella" is clear even though the words "it is" and "you" have been left out.

Parallelism: Refers to a grammatical or structural similarity between sentences or parts of a sentence. It involves an arrangement of words, phrases, sentences, and paragraphs so that elements of equal importance are equally developed and similarly phrased.

Paradox: *SEE FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE SECTION*

Understatement: *SEE FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE SECTION*

Sarcasm: *SEE SATIRE SECTION*

Irony: *SEE SATIRE SECTION*

Ambiguity: A technique by which a writer deliberately suggests two or more different, and sometimes conflicting, meanings in a word, phrase, or even an entire work.

***Duality:** A doctrine that recognizes the possibility of the coexistence of antithetical or complementary principles: Spiritual and Physical, Good and Evil, Mind and Matter. The concept that the world is ruled by opposing forces or that man has two basic natures, the physical and spiritual.

Antithesis: A rhetorical opposition or contrast of ideas by means of a grammatical arrangement of words, clauses, or sentences. (*"They promised freedom but provided slavery." Or "Ask not what your country can do for you, but what you can do for your country."*)

Juxtaposition: A poetic and rhetorical device in which normally unassociated ideas, words, or phrases are placed next to one another, creating an effect of surprise and wit. (*"The apparition of these faces in the crowd;/Petals on a wet, black bough."*)

Antecedent: That which goes before, especially the word, phrase, or clause to which a pronoun refers. (In the sentence "The witches cast their spells," the antecedent of the pronoun "their" is the noun "witches.")

Structure: The arrangement of materials within a work; the relationship of the parts of a work to the whole; the logical divisions of a work. The most common principles of structure are series (A,B,C,D,E), contrast (A vs. B, C vs. D, E vs. F), and repetition (AA,BB). The most common units of structure are—play: scene, act; novel: chapter; poem: line, stanza.

Style: The mode of expression in language; the characteristic manner of expression of an author. Many elements contribute to style, and if a question calls for a discussion of style or of "stylistic techniques," you can discuss diction, syntax, figurative language, imagery, selection of detail, sound effects, and tone, using the ones that are appropriate. "Devices of style," "narrative techniques," "rhetorical techniques," "stylistic techniques," and "resources of language" are all phrases that call for a consideration of more than one technique but do not specify what techniques you must discuss.

List 22

Natural order of sentences: involves constructing a sentence so the subject comes before the predicate. (*Ex. Oranges grow in California.*)

Inverted order of sentences (sentence inversions): involves constructing a sentence so the predicate comes before the subject. (*Ex., In California grow oranges.*)

Parallel structure (parallelism): refers to a grammatical or structural similarity between sentences or parts of a sentence. It involves an arrangement of words, phrases, sentences, and paragraphs so that elements of equal importance are equally developed and similarly phrased. (*Ex. He was walking, running, and jumping for joy.*)

***Literary Movements

Old English (Anglo-Saxon) Period (428-1100) *Beowulf*

Anglo-Norman Period (1100-1350) *Magna Charta*, Dante's *Divine Comedy*

Middle English Period (1350-1500) Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*

Renaissance Classicism—(1500-1600) A movement or tendency in art, music, and literature during the Renaissance to retain the characteristics found in works originating in classical Greece and Rome. Classicism concerns itself with **form, discipline, self-control, decorum, and tradition**. Pastoral poems, sonnets. It suggests the unlimited human potential. (Donne, Bacon, Marlow, Shakespeare)

Neoclassicism—or Restoration Age (1660-1700), Augustan Age (1700-1750), Age of Johnson (1750-1798) is that period from about 1660 to the late 18th century that saw humankind as limited, dualistic, and imperfect. Order, concentration, logic, retrained emotion, moral instruction. Comedy of Manners, satire, odes, parody, essays were popular. Neoclassical poets chose their classical models from the Greek and Roman tradition, (Milton, Pope, Dryden, Austen, Swift, Defoe)

Romanticism--was a literary and artistic movement of the nineteenth century, one that arose in reaction against eighteenth-century Neoclassicism and that placed a premium on **fancy, imagination, emotion, nature, individuality, and exotica**. Gothic novels are a sub-genre. (Bronte, Poe, Blake, Wordsworth, Coleridge, Byron, Shelley, Keats,

Transcendentalism--Transcendentalism was an American literary and philosophical movement of the 19th century. The Transcendentalists, who were based in New England, believed that **intuition**

and the individual conscience “transcend” experience and thus are better guides to truth than are the senses and logical reason. Transcendentalists respected the individual spirit and the natural world and believed that divinity was present everywhere, in nature and in each person. This last notion of an omnipresent divinity, or Over-Soul, shows the influence on Transcendentalism of the Hindu religion and of the Swedish mystic Emanuel Swedenborg. (Emerson, Thoreau)

List 23

Realism—is the presentation in art of the details of actual life. Realism was also a literary movement that began during the 19th century and **stressed the actual** as opposed to the imagined or the fanciful. The Realists tried to write truthfully and objectively about ordinary characters in ordinary situations. (Tolstoy, Dostoyevsky, Miller, O’Neill)

Naturalism—was a literary movement among novelists at the end of the nineteenth century and during the early decades of the twentieth century. The Naturalists tended to view people as hapless victims of immutable natural laws. (Thomas Hardy, Stephen Crane, Jack London)

Existentialism: “pertaining to existence”; or, in logic, “predicting existence.” Philosophically, it now applies to a vision of the condition and existence of man, his place and function in the world, and his relationship, or lack of one, with God.

Christian Existentialism: It is generally agreed that existentialism derives from the thinking of Søren Kierkegaard (1813-1855). Kierkegaard was for the most part re-stating and elaborating upon the belief that through God and in God man may find freedom from tension and discontent and therefore find piece of mind and spiritual serenity. (Dostoyevsky’s *Crime and Punishment*).

Atheistic Existentialism: After Kierkegaard, existential thought was greatly expanded at the beginning of the 20th century by Heidegger and Jaspers (German philosophers), whose ideas in turn influenced a large number of European philosophers. An important feature of atheistic existentialism is the argument that existence precedes essence (the reverse of most traditional forms of philosophy) for it is held that man fashions his own existence and only exists by so doing, and, in that process, and by the choice of what he does or does not do, gives essence to that existence. Jean-Paul Sartre is the epitome of modern existentialism and his version, expressed through his novels, plays and philosophical writings, is the one that has caught on and been the most widely influential. For example, in *No Exit*, man is born into a kind of void, a mud. He has the liberty to remain in this mud in a semi-conscious state in which he is scarcely aware of himself. However, he may come out of his subjective, passive situation, become increasingly aware of himself and conceivably, experience angst (metaphysical and moral anxiety). If so, he would then have a sense of the absurdity of his predicament and suffer despair. The energy deriving from this awareness would enable him to “drag himself out of the mud,” and begin to exist. By exercising his power of choice, he can give meaning to existence and the universe. Thus, in brief, the human being is obliged to make himself what he is and has to be what he is (Samuel Beckett and Albert Camus)

Modernism—Modernism attempted to capture the essence of modern life in the 20th century in both form and the content of their work. The uncertainty, bewilderment, and apparent meaninglessness of modern life are common themes in literature. These themes are generally implied, rather than directly stated, to reflect a sense of uncertainty and to enable readers to draw their own conclusions. Stories and novels are structured to reflect the fragmentation and uncertainty of human experience. The typical modern story or novel seems to begin arbitrarily and to end without resolution, leaving the reader with possibilities and ambiguities, not solutions. Subgroups include: Symbolism, impressionism, post-impressionism, futurism, constructivism, imagism, vorticism, expressionism, dada and surrealism) (Ellison’s *Invisible Man* ; Joyce’s *Ulysses*; Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness*; Faulkner’s *As I Lay Dying*)

Post-modernism—refers to the collection of literary movements that have developed in the decades following WWII. Many post-modernists have attempted to capture the essence of contemporary life in the form and content of their work. Others, however, have focused on creating works that stand apart from the literature of the past. To accomplish these purposes, writers have

experimented with a variety of different approaches and used a wide range of literary forms and techniques. Many writers have continued to develop the fragmentary approach of the Modernists, omitting expositions, resolutions, and transitions, and composing stories in the form of broken or distorted sequence of scenes, rather than in the form of a continuous narrative. Possessing the belief that reality is to some extent shaped by our imaginations, some writers have turned away from writing realistic fiction and begun writing fantasy or “magical realism”—fiction that blends realism and fantasy. Other writers have radically departed from traditional fictional forms and techniques, composing works from dialogue alone, creating works that blend fiction and nonfiction, and experimenting with the physical appearance of a work. Some Postmodernists have confronted the problems they perceive in modern society through the use of satire and black humor. (Vonnegut’s *Hundred Years of Solitude* 5) ; Nabokov’s *Pale Fire*; magical realism=Marquez’s *One*