**Allegory** - Written work that uses symbolic figures, objects, and actions to convey truths or generalizations about human conduct or experience. Characters may be given names such as Hope, Pride, and Charity; they have few if any personal qualities beyond their abstract meanings. *Example*: “By the Waters of Babylon” by Stephen Vincent Bénet

**Alliteration** - Repeated consonant sounds occurring at the beginning of words (*at least three words*). Alliteration is used to create melody, establish mood, call attention toimportant words, and point out similarities and contrasts. *Example:* The sailor slipped and sailed through the sky.

**Allusion** - A brief reference to a person, event, place (real or fictitious) work of art. It could also be a casual reference to a famous historical event or literary figure (*classical allusion*). *Example:* My brother is the King Kong of his classmates.

**Ambiguity -** Allows for two or more simultaneous interpretations of a word, phrase, action, or situation, all of which can be supported by the context of a work. *Example:* Julius Caesar is an ambiguous character in Shakespeare’s tragedy Julius Caesar.

**Analogy -** compares two things, which are alike in several respects, for the purpose of explaining or clarifying some unfamiliar or difficult idea or object by showing how the idea or object is similar to some familiar one.*Example:* You may abuse a tragedy, though you cannot write one. You may scold a carpenter who has made you a bad table, though you cannot make a table. It is not your trade to make tables. ~Samuel Johnson

**Anti-climax -** Something which would appear to be difficult to solve in a plot is solved through something trivial. For example, destroying a heavily guarded facility would require advanced technology, teamwork and weaponry for a climax, but in an anti-climax it may just consist of pushing a red button which says “Emergency Self-Destruct.” *Example:* The ending of John Steinbeck’s Of Mice and Men

**Antithesis --** establishes a clear, contrasting relationship between twoideas by joining them together or juxtaposing them, oftenin parallel structure**.** *Example*: To err is human; to forgive, divine. ~Alexander Pope

**Aside** - Words spoken by an actor directly to the audience, which are not "heard" by the other characters on stage during a play.

**Assonance** - Repeated vowel sounds in a line of poetry *Example:* The June moon loomed over the horizon.

**Catharsis -** Describes the release of the emotions of pity and/or fear by the audience at the end of a tragedy. *Example:* “He hath his goodness now.” (said by Elizabeth Proctor in The Crucible)

**Characters -**

*Protagonist:* The hero, and normally main character

*Antagonist:* The villain

*Antihero:* A protagonist who has the opposite of most of the traditional attributes of a hero. He/she may be pathetic, deluded, etc.

*Dynamic character:* The character undergoes some sort of change because of the action of the plot.

*Flat character:* Sometimes called a **stock character**, since he/she is normally stereotypical in some way (dumb blonde, mean stepfather, etc.) They are types of people, rather than individuals, so they are not complex.

*Foil pairs:* A character in a work whose behavior and values contrast with those of another character in order to highlight their different personalities. Some examples are Brutus and Cassius in Julius Caesar and Bob Ewell and Atticus Finch in To Kill a Mockingbird.

*Round character:* A complex character that normally goes through some sort of internal conflict. This character is fully developed, and therefore hard to summarize.

*Static character:* The character does not change throughout the literary work, and the reader’s knowledge of that character does not grow.

*Tragic Hero:* A character in a tragedy who makes errors in judgment (tragic flaw), usually in his or her actions, that inevitably leads to his or her own demise. *Example:* Julius Caesar, Othello, John Proctor, etc.

**Characterization -** The inner thoughts and feelings of a character, as portrayed by the author. This includes actions, dialogue and reactions.

**Claim --** the position of an issue, the purpose behind an argument.It answers the question "So what is your point?" (seewarrant). *Example:* "You should send a birthday card to Mimi, because she sent you one on your birthday."

**Cliché -** An idea or expression that has become less effective due to overuse. *Example:* The grass is always greener on the other side.

**Conflict -** The struggle between two forces, one generally being the protagonist of the story. The antagonist can be the self, another person, animal, nature, technology/machine, society, or the supernatural. There are *four* forms of conflict: (man vs. man, man vs. self, man vs. nature, man vs. society)

**Connotation** - Suggestions that go beyond the literal meaning of the word, which derive from how the word has been commonly used and the associations people make with it. (*Opposite of* ***denotation***) *Example:* The word *eagle* implies ideas of liberty and freedom that have little to do with the word’s literal meaning.

**Consonance -** the repetition of a pattern of consonants within words in which the separating vowels differ. *Example:* worth, breath, and earth

**Denotation** - The *dictionary* meaning of a word. (*Opposite of* ***connotation***)

**Dialect -** A variety of language spoken by people of a definable group, such as a geographic region, economic group or social class. *Example:* The use of “Goodie” title for women in The Crucible.

**Dialogue -** A mutual conversation between two or more individuals. Quotation marks are used to display dialogue.

**Diction -** A writer’s choice of words, phrases, sentence structures, and figurative language, which combine to help create meaning. For example, formal diction consists of a dignified, impersonal, and elevated use of language, while informal diction is represents the plain language of everyday use.

**Epiphany -** When a character suddenly experiences a deep realization. *Example:* In The Crucible, John Proctor rips up the false confession.

**Ethos** -- an appeal to the character of the individual and to values

*Example:* When a trusted doctor gives you advice, you may not understand all ofthe medical reasoning behind the advice, but you nonetheless followthe directions because you believe that the doctor knows what s/he istalking about

**Euphemism** - The substitution of a mild word or phrase for a harsh or blunt one. *Example:* “pass away” instead of “die.”

**Figurative Language -** Any language that goes beyond the literal meaning of words in order to furnish new effects or fresh insights into an idea or a subject. These words add *imagery* to poetry and lyrics.

**Flashback** - Events that happened before the time of the current events.

**Foreshadow -** Clues or hints given to the reader about events that will happen later on in the story.

**Genre -** A loose set of criteria for a category of literary composition. Genres can be determined by literary technique, tone, content, or even (as in the case of fiction) length. The most general genres in literature are epic, tragedy, comedy, novel, short story, and creative nonfiction. Fiction can be put into subgenres such as fantasy, adventure, mystery, etc.

**Hyperbole** - An extremely exaggerated statement used to emphasize a point. It is the opposite of an understatement. *Example:* I could sleep for a year.

**Idiom -** A phrase or expression that means something different from what the words actually say. *Example:* Using the phrase “over his head” instead of “he doesn’t understand”

**Imagery** - Words and phrases used specifically to help the reader to imagine each of the senses: smell, touch, sight, hearing, and taste. *Example of visual imagery:* The cherry branches discharged colors of gold and maroon.

**Irony** - A mode of expression, through words or events, conveying something opposite of what is expected. For example, it is ironic that a firehouse burns down, or for a police station to be burglarized.

*Verbal irony:* A figure of speech that occurs when a person says one thing but means the opposite. Sarcasm is a strong form of verbal irony.

*Dramatic irony:* The audience of a play knows something that the main character does not.

*Situational irony:* An action done by a character is the opposite of what was expected due to forces beyond human control.

**Literary Criticism –**

*Biographical:* An approach to literature which suggests that knowledge of the author’s life experiences can aid in understanding the work.

*Cultural:* An approach to literature that focuses on the social, political, and economic context of the work.

*Feminist:* An approach to literature that criticizes what may be regarded as a male-dominated critical perspective.

*Historical:* An approach to literature that uses history as a means of understanding the work more clearly (both the facts of an author’s personal life and the history of the setting).

**Logos --** is appeal based on logic or reason.

*Example*: There are two types of logical argument, inductive and deductive. In an inductive argument, the reader holds up a specific example, and then claims that what is true for it is also true for a general category. For instance, "I have just tasted this lemon. It is sour. Therefore, all lemons are probably sour." Deductive reasoning works in the opposite manner; it begins with a general or universal rule accepted by most people ("all lemons are sour") and then applies that claim to a specific example. ("That is a lemon. Therefore, it too must be sour.")

**Mood -** The feeling created in the reader by a literary work or passage.

**Onomatopoeia** - The use of words that mimic sounds. They appeal to our sense of hearing and they help bring a description to life. *Example:* Crash! Whap!

**Oxymoron -** Putting two contradictory words together. *Example:* sweet sorrow, loving hatred

**Paradox -** A statement (assertion) that initially appears to be contradictory but then, on closer inspection, turns out to make sense. *Examples:* “They have ears, but hear not.” (Shakespeare). Stone walls do not a prison make, nor iron bars a cage.

**Parallelism** -- recurrent syntactical similarity. Several parts of a sentenceor several sentences are expressed similarly to show thatthe ideas in the parts or sentences are equal in importance.Parallelism also adds balance and rhythm and, most importantly, clarity to the sentence.*Example*: Ferocious dragons breathing fire and wicked sorcerers casting their spells do their harm by night in the forest of Darkness.

**Parody –** A *humorous* imitation of another, usually serious, work.

**Pathos --** an appeal based on emotion

*Example*: Consider an ad that uses a photo of a small child, so malnourished that his bones are clearly visible under his skin. He sits huddled in the open air, weak, in a fetal position. A vulture sits, waiting, in the background. The images and text in this ad are designed to have the maximum emotional effect for one thing: to motivate the reader to act — to make an act of charity.

**Personification** - Giving human qualities to something nonhuman *Example:* The tree branches ran through the wind.

**Types of Poetry**

**1. Ballad -** A song, transmitted orally from generation to generation, that tells a story and that eventually is written down.

**2. Elegy -** A mournful lyric poem, most often written in tribute for someone who has died.

**3. Free Verse -** Unrhymed poetry with lines of varying lengths, and containing no specific metrical pattern.

**4. Haiku -** A Japanese poem which consists of three lines: five syllables in the first and third lines, and seven syllables in the second line.

**5. Limerick -** Light verse consisting of a stanza of five lines, rhyming aabba, which is usually bawdy or humorous in nature. Lines 1, 2, and 5 of Limericks have seven to ten syllables and rhyme with one another. Lines 3 and 4 of Limericks have five to seven syllables and also rhyme with each other.

**6. Lyric -** A short poem with one speaker (not necessarily the poet) who expresses personal thoughts and feelings (elegies, odes and sonnets are lyric poems).

**7. Narrative Poem -** A poem that includes a collection of events that tells a story, which may or may not be true.

**8. Ode -** A lyric poem that is a moderate length and has a serious subject, such as truth, art, freedom, justice, or the meaning of life.

**9. Sonnet -** A lyric poem of fourteen lines whose rhyme scheme is fixed. \*There are **two types** of sonnets.

The rhyme scheme in the **Petrarchian sonnet** is abbaabba cdecde.

The rhyme scheme of the English, or **Shakespearean sonnet**, is abab cdcd efef gg.

**Point of View –** This refers to who tells a story, and how it is told.

*1st person:* The narrator, usually the protagonist, tells the story from his/her perspective using I, me, we, etc.

*2nd person:* A story told using “you,” which places the reader immediately and personally into the story

*3rd person:* The narrator uses third person pronouns (he/she/they etc.) and is Godlike: all knowing (**omniscient**). This type of narrator is not limited by time or space. A limited narrator cannot sense all that an omniscient one can, just like a character.

**Pun -** A play on words that relies on a word’s having more than one meaning or sounding like another word. *Example:* “Ask for me tomorrow and you shall find me a grave man.” (Shakespeare)

**Rhetorical** **question** -- a question that is not answered by the writer, because its answer is obvious or obviously desired, and usually just a yes or no. It is used for effect, emphasis, or provocation, or for drawing a conclusionary statement from the facts at hand. *Example*: But how can we expect to enjoy the scenery when the scenery consists entirely of garish billboards?

**Satire -** A literary mode based on criticism of people and society through ridicule. The satirist aims to reduce the practices attacked by laughing scornfully at them--and being witty enough to allow the reader to laugh, also.  Ridicule, irony, exaggeration, and several other techniques are almost always present. The satirist's goal is to point out the hypocrisy of his target. Many of the techniques of satire are devices of comparison, to show the similarity or contrast between two things. A list of incongruous items, an oxymoron, metaphors, and so forth are examples.

**Soliloquy** - A speech in a play that is meant to be heard by the audience but not by other characters on the stage. If there are no other characters present, the soliloquy represents the character thinking aloud. *(Also see monologue.)*

**Subplot -** A secondary plot that contributes to the interests and complication of the main plot. *Example:* The Boo Radley storyline in To Kill a Mockingbird

**Symbolism** - Objects, characters, situations, colors, or actions that evokes a range of additional meaning beyond, and usually more abstract, than its literal significance. *Example:* Our United States flag symbolizes our country’s freedom.

**Theme** - The dominant idea or message in a literary work.

**Tone** - *The writer’s attitude* toward the subject of the poem.

**Tragedy -** A play dealing with a serious theme—that of a great person destined through flaw of character or conflict with some overpowering force to suffer downfall or destruction. *Example*: William Shakespeare’s Romeo and Juliet

**Warrant --** laws principles, or premises that apply to the case; authorization or justification, something that assures, proves or guarantees. To give proof: bear witness to; to vouch for (see claim). *Example:* "Muffin is running a temperature. I'll bet she has an infection."warrant: sign reasoning; a fever is a reliable sign of an infection.