

Absolute

A term applied to anything totally independent of influences, limitations, controls, or modifiers.

“that all men are created equal . . .”

“That whenever any Form of Government becomes destructive of these ends . .

Allegory – a story, play, poem picture, etc. in which the meaning or message is represented symbolically (*Animal Farm*)

Alliteration--Beginning or initial sounds repeated; Example: “O, she doth teach the torches to burn bright!”—Romeo

Allusion--Reference to persons, places, or things from history or literature that is unacknowledged in text but author expects a reader to recognize. Ex.: Joe Dimaggio in Old Man and the Sea.

Analogy -- a comparison between two things to show how they are alike. Something unfamiliar is explained by comparing it to something that is familiar. Ex: “Bee is to hive as bird is to nest.”

Anaphora--Repetition of same word or group of words at beginning of successive clauses; Example: “Our instruments to melancholy bells,/ Our wedding cheer to a sad burial feast; Our solemn hymns to sullen dirges change;”—Capulet

Anecdote—Short narrative detailing particulars of an interesting episode of event. Should lay claim to an element of truth.

Antagonist--Character who is in conflict or opposition to the principal character

Antithesis--Structurally parallel words, phrases, or clauses for purposes of contrast; Example: “sink or swim”

Apostrophe--Speaking directly to something inhuman or an absent character as if it could understand; Example: “O, rose, thou art sick!”

Archetype--Certain images, symbols, or ideas that reside in the subconscious of all people and are so common or significant that they have universal meaning; Example: Mother, an old man, the grim reaper

Aristotle’s Rules for Tragedy-[unity of action, recognition of reversal in fortune; hamartia, hubris, catharsis, suffering]

Aside—An actor directly addresses the audience but is not supposed to be heard by other actors on the stage. [“Ferris Buellar’s Day Off”]

Assonance--Repetition of vowel sounds; Example: “creep three feet”

Blank verse—unrhymed verse written in iambic pentameter

Chiasmus – inversion in the second of two parallel phrases of the order followed in the first (crosswise arrangement) ex. *To stop too fearful and too faint to go*

Conceit--Extended metaphor

Conditional—dependent, not absolute; containing a condition or stipulation. Ex: from “Ithaca” by Constantine Cavafy: You will never meet such as these on your path,/If your thoughts remain lofty,/If a fine emotion touches your body and your spirit.

Conflict--Struggle between opposing forces

Connotation--Beyond the literal meaning; using words that carry emotional associations, judgment, or opinions

Consonance--Repetition of consonant sounds; Example: “And each slow dusk a drawing down of blinds”

Denotation--Dictionary meaning; explicit, literal meaning

Dialect--Regional variety of language; Example: “you guys”, or “ya’ll”

Dialogue--Conversation between two or more characters

Diction--Word choice

Dramatic Foil--Minor character whose role is to highlight the main character by presenting a contrast with him or her; Example: Benvolio in “Romeo and Juliet”

Dramatic irony--Occurs when reader or audience knows something important that the character does not

Dynamic character--Character who grows and changes in the course of the action; Example: Guy Montag in Fahrenheit 451

Ellipsis--Deliberate omission of a word or words which are readily implied by the context; Example: “God join’d my heart and Romeo’s, thou our hands”—Juliet

Epic Simile—extended simile. Used by Homer in “The Odyssey”. “...his dear wife, clear and faithful, in his arms, longed for as the sunwarmed earth is longed for by a swimmer spent in tough water where his ship went down under Poseidon’s blows, gale winds and tons of sea.”

Epiphany--Sudden moment of revelation about the deep meaning inherent in common things. Ex. from Fahrenheit 451: *Faber wanted to die.*

Epistrophe – Repetition of word or group of words at end of successive clauses.
Example: Come night...come, thou day in night...Come, gentle night; come, loving black-browed night.

Ethos--Appealing to ethics in an argument

Euphemism--Words or phrase consciously chosen for its pleasant connotations. Often used for sex or death, whose frank discussion is somewhat taboo; Example: “in the family way”

Fallacy – false or mistaken idea

Flashback--Variation on chronological order that presents an event or situation that occurred before the time in which the story’s action takes place

Foreshadowing--Early information later revealed to be important; warning of future event

Heroic couplet – iambic pentameter lines rhymed in pairs. Shakespeare used to end a scene or upon the exit of a character.

Homily – a sermon

Hyperbole--An extreme exaggeration; Example: “It was a shot heard ‘round the world.”

Iambic pentameter—10 syllable line of verse in which every second syllable is stressed

Imagery--Language that appeals to the senses

Logos--Using logic to support an argument

Litotes—understatement which affirms the opposite of what is said. The speaker emphasizes the magnitude of a statement by denying its opposite. To say “she was unmindful” when one means that “she gave careful attention”. Express the idea of “good” by saying “it’s bad”. “The food’s not so bad.” Common device in ironic expression.

Meiosis – intentional downplaying of a situation’s significance, often for ironic or humorous effect. Not stating enough; an idea in words less strong than anticipated. Ex. Twain upon reading his own obituary: “The reports of my death are greatly exaggerated.”

Metaphor--Direct comparison of two unlike things; Example: “Juliet is the sun.”

Metonymy—substitution of one word for another that is closely associated with it. Ex.: “The White House said today . . . [White House stands for the authorities who are symbolized by the White House].

Monologue—A long speech delivered by one person in a conversation. Listeners do not speak.

Motivation--Reasons behind a character’s behavior that makes us accept or believe that character

Onomatopoeia--Words whose sound resembles what it describes; Example: hiss, buzz, pop

Oxymoron--Pairing of words opposed in meaning; Example: “crashing silence” [Self-contradictory combination of words]

Parallelism – Arrangement of words, phrases, sentences, and paragraphs so that elements of equal importance are equally developed and similarly phrased

Paradox--Statement or situation that seems to be contradictory but that reveals a truth; Example: “I am the greatest, able to do least, Yet most suspected”—Friar Lawrence

Pathos--Arguments which appeal to emotions

Personification--Giving animals or objects or ideas human qualities; Example: “the river wept”

Point of View--The perspective from which a narrative is told

Polysyndeton--Deliberate use of many conjunctions for special emphasis; Example: “When you are old and gray and full of sleep/And nodding by the fire, take down this book”—Yeats

Protagonist--Principal character

Pun--A word used with two meanings at the same time; Example: “Ask for me tomorrow and you shall find me a *grave* man.”—Mercutio

Repetition—repeating word, phrases, sentences, etc. for effect.

Setting--Time and place in which events take place

Simile--Using *like* or *as* to compare two unlike things

Synaesthesia – The production of a mental sense impression relating to one sense by the stimulation of another sense. One type of stimulation evokes the sensation of another. Synaesthesia is an often-used **poetic device**.

Ex.: Likewise, Nick Carraway, the narrator of F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby*, recounts "yellow cocktail music" playing at one of Gatsby's parties.

Soliloquy—A speech delivered while the character is alone; calculated to inform the audience of what is passing in the character's mind [thinking inwardly, without listeners]

Sonnet—Fourteen lines of verse written in iambic pentameter

Situational irony--What actually happens is opposite of what is expected or appropriate

Static character--Character who remains unchanged throughout the course of the action; Example: Okonkwo in Things Fall Apart

Suspense--Making the reader or audience uncertain or tense about the outcome of event

Syllepsis—figure of speech in which a word is applied to two other words in different senses. Ex.: "I got a train and a bad cold."

Symbol--Person, place, thing, or event that stands both for itself and for something beyond itself; Example: "Deny thy father, and refuse thy name"—Juliet

Synecdoche--Using a part to represent or stand for the whole; Example: "His [Montag's] hand had done it all, his hand, with a brain of its own .. ."—Fahrenheit 451

Theme--Central or dominant idea of a piece of literature; the idea the author wishes to convey about the subject

Tone shift--Moving from one attitude to another; changing the "mood" of a work of literature

Tone--Attitude of the speaker or author of a work toward the subject itself or the audience; determined from the word choice and structure of the work

Tragedy – combination of fate, circumstances, and characters' actions that results in death of central characters

Verbal irony--Speaker says one thing but means the opposite