

AP English Language Term List

Assonance

The repetition of an identical or similar vowel sound in two or more words. "Lake" and "stake" are rhyming words; "lake" and "fade" are assonant. "Base" and "face" rhyme; "base" and "fade" are assonant.

"Hear the mellow wedding bells." - "The Bells", Edgar Allan Poe

"Honesty is the best policy."

"The squeaky wheel gets the grease."

Allegory

A narrative with two or more levels of meaning—one literal level and one or more symbolic levels. The characters and settings stand for abstract ideas or moral qualities such as justice, truth, good, or evil. It relies heavily on symbolism to teach a lesson or illustrate an idea.

The Tortoise and the Hare from Aesop's Fables: From this story, we learn that the strong and steady win the race.

The story of Icarus: Icarus fashions wings for himself out of wax, but when he flies too close to the sun his wings melt. This story is a message about the dangers of reaching beyond our powers.

Alliteration

The repetition of the same consonant or vowel sound at the beginning of several closely placed words. The sound can also be included within the words as well as at the beginning. The repetition can reinforce meaning, unify ideas, supply a musical sound, and/or echo the sense of the passage.

"Peter Piper picked a peck of pickled peppers."

"She sells seashells by the seashore."

"Betty Botter bought some butter, but she said, this butter's bitter; if I put it in my batter, it will make my batter bitter, but a bit of better butter will make my bitter batter better."

"Gnus never know pneumonia" is also an example of alliteration, since despite the spellings, all four words begin with the "n" sound.

Allusion

A brief reference to a historical or literary figure, event, or object.

"Like Eve in the Garden of Eden, George was not good at resisting temptation."

"Plan ahead: it wasn't raining when Noah built the ark" - Richard Cushing

15 minutes of fame: In 1968, artist Andy Warhol made the comment, "In the future, everyone will be world-famous for fifteen minutes." The phrase "fifteen minutes of fame" is frequently used now, especially with the advent of reality television and social media. The saying "fifteen minutes of fame" is an allusion to Warhol's original statement.

Catch-22: Joseph Heller's 1961 novel *Catch-22* centers around a group of soldiers during World War II who try to keep their sanity on an Italian island. Heller describes the following problematic situation with no solution: if a soldier is deemed crazy, he can be discharged from the army. However, if he applies to be discharged this proves he is not crazy. The phrase "Catch-22" has entered the English language as a situation that has no good solution, and is an allusion to Heller's novel.

Achilles' Heel: Achilles was a figure in Greek mythology who was a hero of the Trojan War and was featured in Homer's *Iliad*. He was said to be invulnerable except for at his heel. Thus, when Paris shot Achilles in his heel the wound proved mortal. The term "Achilles' heel" now refers to a strong person's one point of weakness.

Ambiguity

Occurs when a word, phrase, situation, or event can be interpreted in more than one way; all interpretations must be supportable from the text. Ambiguity can be unintentional through insufficient focus on the part of the writer; in good writing, ambiguity is frequently intentional (adds a layer of complexity to a story/ presents with a variety of possible interpretations).

You should bring wine or beer and dessert. (*Could mean that you must bring just wine, wine and dessert, or beer and dessert*).

Harry isn't coming to the party. Tell Joe that we'll see him next week. (*The "him" could refer either to Harry or to Joe*).

Anachronism

Use of historically inaccurate details in a text; for example, depicting a 19th-century

character using a computer. Some authors employ anachronisms for humorous effect, and some genres, such as science fiction or fantasy, make extensive use of anachronism.

Analogy

Comparison of two things that are alike in some way. Metaphors and similes are both types of analogy. An analogy explains something complex by comparing it to something more simple.

That's as useful as rearranging deck chairs on the Titanic: It looks like you're doing something helpful but really it will make no difference in the end.

Anaphora

The repetition of a word or several words at the beginning of several consecutive phrases or clauses.

To raise a happy, healthy, and hopeful child, **it takes** a family; **it takes** teachers; **it takes** clergy; **it takes** business people; **it takes** community leaders; **it takes** those who protect our health and safety. **It takes** all of us. —Hillary Clinton, 1996 DNC

Antithesis

The contrasting of opposite ideas in a phrase or clause, usually in parallel structure.

"Float like a butterfly, sting like a bee" (the peaceful floating butterfly versus the aggressive stinging bee).

"We must learn to live together as brothers or perish together as fools."
— Martin Luther King, Jr.

"And so, my fellow Americans: ask not what your country can do for you — ask what you can do for your country. My fellow citizens of the world: ask not what America will do for you, but what together we can do for the freedom of man." —John F. Kennedy Jr.

"We will extend a hand if you are willing to unclench your fist." —Barack Obama

Apostrophe

A figure of speech in which a person, thing, or abstract quality is addressed as if present; for example, the invocation to the muses usually found in epic poetry. It is an address to someone or something that cannot answer. The effect is to give vent to or display intense emotion, which can no longer be held back.

"Is this a dagger which I see before me, the handle toward my hand."

– Shakespeare, Macbeth

"Twinkle twinkle little star/ How I wonder what you are/ Up above a world so high." - In the nursery rhyme, a child addresses a star (an imaginary idea).

"Ugh, cell phone, why won't you load my messages?"

Appeals

Three different methods of appealing to an audience to convince them—ethos, logos, and pathos.

Ethos is an appeal to ethics, motivating an audience toward belief by way of the speaker's trustworthiness and credibility (*Trust me, I'm a doctor*).

Pathos is an appeal to emotion (**If you don't quit smoking today, everyone you know and love will die because of your habit**).

Logos is an appeal to logic (**Research has linked smoking with a higher prevalence of certain types of cancer, including lung cancer and leukemia**).

Archetype

A reoccurring symbol or motif throughout literature that represents universal patterns of human nature. It can also refer to the original model on which all other things of the same kind are based. An example of an archetypal theme in literature is that of initiation, the passage from innocence to experience. Archetypal characters that recur in literature include the rebel, wise grandparent, generous thief, and prostitute with a heart of gold.

Hero: Martin Luther King Jr., Mahatma Gandhi

Rebel: Che Guevara

Healer: Mother Teresa

Adventurer: Christopher Columbus, Marco Polo

Innocent: Anne Frank

Genius: Albert Einstein, Leonardo da Vinci

Outlaw: Jesse James

Aside

A dramatic convention by which an actor directly addresses the audience but is not supposed to be heard by the other actors or the stage. An aside is used to let the audience know what a character is about to do or what he or she is thinking.

Asyndeton

The practice of omitting conjunctions such as “and” or “as” from a series of related clauses. Used to accelerate a passage and emphasize the significance of the relation between these clauses. Writers also use it to create length in a list, as if there is no end in sight.

"He was brave, fearless, afraid of nothing."

"...we shall pay any price, bear any burden, meet any hardship, support any friend, oppose any foe to assure the survival and the success of liberty."
—John F. Kennedy

Blank verse

A type of poetry written in a **regular meter** that **does not contain rhyme**. Blank verse is most commonly found in the form of iambic pentameter. Many famous English writers have used blank verse in their works, such as William Shakespeare, John Milton, and William Wordsworth.

*To be, or not to be- that is the question:
Whether 'tis nobler in the mind to suffer
The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune
Or to take arms against a sea of troubles,
And by opposing end them. To die- to sleep-
No more; and by a sleep to say we end
The heartache, and the thousand natural shocks
That flesh is heir to. 'Tis a consummation
Devoutly to be wish'd. To die- to sleep.
To sleep- perchance to dream: ay, there's the rub!*

Cacophony

A mixture of **harsh** and **discordant noises** in a line or passage. These unharmonious and dissonant sounds include the explosive consonants k, t, g, d, p, and b, and the hissing sounds ch, sh, and s.

He grunted and in a gruff voice said, "Give me that trash and I'll throw it out!" This sentence makes use of cacophony in a few ways: “grunted,” “gruff,” and

“give” have harsh g sounds and “that,” “trash,” and “throw it out” all have hard t sounds.

Caesura

A complete stop in a line of poetry. A caesura can be anywhere in a metrical line—it is called an initial caesura if it occurs at or near the beginning of the line, a medial caesura if it is found in the middle of the line, and a terminal caesura if it occurs near the end of the line.

It is easy to find examples of caesura in famous speeches and songs caesurae happen naturally in regular speech patterns. We often take breaths or change direction in the middle of sentences, which gives rise to caesura examples.

“We hold these truths to be self-evident || that all men are created equal.”—Declaration of Independence, United States of America 1776

My country 'tis of thee || sweet land of liberty || of thee I sing.
Land where my fathers died || land of the Pilgrim's pride,
From every mountainside || let freedom ring!
—“My Country, 'Tis of Thee” by Samuel Francis Smith

Catharsis

The **release of emotions** such as pity, sadness, and fear through witnessing art. Catharsis involves the change of extreme emotion to lead to internal restoration and renewal. Catharsis was first linked to drama, especially to tragedy, by the Greek philosopher Aristotle. The theory was that, through viewing tragedy, people learned to display emotions at a proper amount and lessen excessive outbursts of emotion in daily life.

JULIET: Yea, noise? then I'll be brief. O happy dagger! [Snatching ROMEO'S dagger. This is thy sheath; [Stabs herself.] there rest, and let me die.

Character/ flat, round

Flat characters are two-dimensional in that they are relatively **uncomplicated**, they reveal one or two character traits and **do not change** throughout the course of a work. In *To Kill a Mockingbird*, Miss Maudie is considered a flat character.

Round characters are well-developed and complex figures in a story. They are more realistic, and **demonstrate more depth** in their personalities. They can make surprising or puzzling decisions that surprise the reader. In *To Kill a Mockingbird*, Scout is considered a round character.

Characterization

The method an author uses to reveal or describe characters and their various personalities.

Indirect characterization: what a character thinks, says, feels, does; what others say about the character; the character's physical description

Direct characterization: what the author says directly about a character

Claim

In literature, a claim is a statement that asserts something to be true. A claim can either be factual or a judgment. Claims can work on their own or in conjunction with other claims to form a larger argument.

Claims in Advertising:

"The Best Part of Wakin' Up is Folgers in Your Cup"

"4 out of 5 dentists recommend Trident"

"Melts in your mouth, not in your hand"

"An apple a day keeps the doctor away"

"Nothing outlasts the Energizer. It keeps going and going and going."

Colloquial

The usage of informal or everyday language in literature. Colloquialisms are generally geographic in nature, in that a colloquial expression often belongs to a regional or local dialect.

Comedy

In general, a story that ends happily. The hero of a comedy is usually an ordinary character who overcomes a series of obstacles that block what he or she wants. In the play *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, young lovers must face figures from the older generation that do not want them to marry. At the end, they do marry and everyone celebrates the renewal of life and love. In structure and characterization, a comedy is the opposite of tragedy.

Conceit

A kind of **metaphor** that compares two very unlike things in a surprising and clever way. They have a surprising or shocking effect on the readers because they make farfetched comparisons, unlike the conventional comparisons made in similes and metaphors.

"Love is like an oil change."

"The broken heart is a damaged china pot."

Conflict

The problem or struggle in a story that triggers the action. Conflict is necessary to propel a narrative forward; the absence of conflict amounts to the absence of story. There are three main types of conflict identified in literature: man versus man, man versus nature, and man versus self.

Connotation

The implied meaning of a word and/or the emotional associations with it, rather than its dictionary definition.

"House" versus "Home": Both words refer to the structure in which a person lives, yet "home" connotes more warmth and comfort, whereas "house" sounds colder and more distant.

"Cheap" versus "Affordable": While both words mean that something does not cost a lot, "cheap" can also connote something that is not well-made or of low value, while "affordable" can refer to a quality item or service that happens to be well-priced.

Consonance

The repetition of consonant sounds within a line of verse or a sentence of prose. Consonance is similar to alliteration except that consonance does not limit the repeated sound to the initial letter of a word.

- All's well that ends well.
- The early bird gets the worm.
- Curiosity killed the cat.
- A blessing in disguise.

Diction

The author's choice and use of words in a text. This is roughly analogous to word choice. We alter our diction all the time depending on the situation we are in.

- *"Could you be so kind as to pass me the milk?" vs. "Give me that!"*
- *"I regret to inform you that that is not the case." vs. "You're wrong!"*
- *"It is a pleasure to see you again!" vs. "Hey, what's up?"*
- *"I'm a bit upset," vs. "I'm so pissed off."*

- *"I would be delighted!" vs. "Sure, why not?"*
- *"I'll do it right away, sir," vs. "Yeah, just a sec."*

Denotation

the dictionary meaning of a word, as opposed to its connotation. The formal or official meaning of a word, separate from any other associations or acquired meanings.

Dialect

A dialect is the language used by the people of a specific area, class, district, or any other group of people. The term dialect involves the spelling, sounds, grammar and pronunciation used by a particular group of people and it distinguishes them from other people around them. Dialect is a very powerful and common way of characterization, which elaborates the geographic and social background of any character.

Walter: *"Reckon I have. Almost died first year I come to school and et them pecans — folks say he pizened 'em and put 'em over on the school side of the fence."*

Translation: I suppose I have. The first year I came to school and ate those pecans, I almost died. Some people accuse him [Mr. Radley] of poisoning them and keeping them over on the school side of the fence.

Dues ex machine

An implausible concept or a divine character is introduced into a storyline, for the purpose of resolving its conflict and procuring a pleasing solution. The use of Deus ex Machina is not recommended as it is seen to be the mark of a poor plot that the writer needs to resort to random, insupportable and unbelievable twists and turns to reach the end of the story.

When there isn't a well thought out plot, or when there are lots of loose threads because the author "painted herself into a corner," a way out must be written as a story needs a conclusion. Therefore, the writer (or machine, as we are speaking metaphorically) produces a plot twist that disguises itself as some sort of spiritual or natural event that happens in the story. To be a true "Deus ex Machina," the event has no relationship to anything in the story, it suddenly appears and things are made to conclude based on this event. The unconnected plot twist is, metaphorically, the god inserted into the story. Hence, the god from the machine.

Dystopia

A genre in literature that depicts a frightening society or community. The society can be frightening for many reasons, and generally has one or more of the following problems: a corrupt and/or totalitarian government, dehumanization due to technological advances, environmental disasters, eradication of the family, cultish religions, limited

resources, and unchecked violence. The word dystopia is a combination of the Greek prefix δυσ- (dys-), meaning “bad” and τόπος (topos), meaning “place.”

Taking the kids from our districts, forcing them to kill one another while we watch - this is the Capitol's way of reminding us how totally we are at their mercy. How little chance we would stand of surviving another rebellion. Whatever words they use, the real message is clear. "Look how we take your children and sacrifice them and there's nothing you can do. If you lift a finger, we will destroy every last one of you. Just as we did in District Thirteen." (The Hunger Games by Suzanne Collins)

Elegy

A mournful poem, usually written in remembrance of a lost one for a funeral or as a lament. An elegy tells the tragic story of an individual, or an individual's loss, rather than the collective story of a people, which can be found in epic poetry.

*O Captain! my Captain! our fearful trip is done,
The ship has weather'd every rack, the prize we sought is won,
The port is near, the bells I hear, the people all exulting,
While follow eyes the steady keel, the vessel grim and daring;
But O heart! heart! heart!
O the bleeding drops of red,
Where on the deck my Captain lies,
Fallen cold and dead.*

("O Captain! My Captain!" by Walt Whitman, 1891)

The famous poem "O Captain! My Captain" is an elegy that Walt Whitman wrote for Abraham Lincoln. Whitman brilliantly combines a sense of loss, praise, and solace all in this first stanza of the poem. The solace and praise comes from the fact that every prize has been one and the people are "all exulting," yet the hard truth of the matter is that Lincoln has "fallen cold and dead."

Epigram

a short, often satirical poem dealing concisely with a single subject and usually ending with a witty or ingenious turn of thought

Epilogue

a short speech, poem, dirge, elegy or an event that comes at the end of a play, a novel or any other literary piece to close it

Epithet

A nickname or descriptive term that's added to someone's name that becomes part of common usage. For example, in the name **Alexander the Great**, "*the Great*" is an epithet.

*From forth the fatal loins of these two foes
A pair of **star-cross'd lovers** take their life;
Whose misadventured piteous overthrows
Do with their death bury their parents' strife.
(*Romeo and Juliet* -William Shakespeare)*

Extended metaphor

A comparison between two unlike things that continues throughout a series of sentences in a paragraph, or lines in a poem.

*JAKES: All the world's a stage,
And all the men and women merely players.
They have their exits and their entrances,
And one man in his time plays many parts,
His acts being seven ages.
(*As You Like It* -William Shakespeare)*

In this example of extended metaphor, Shakespeare compares the world to a stage and people to actors. He goes on to develop this metaphor by exploring the seven different stages of life.

Euphony

The quality of being **pleasant to listen to**. Euphony generally comes about through a harmonious combination of sounds and words.

*"**Shall** I **compare** thee to a **summer's** day?
Thou art more lovely and more temperate.
Rough winds do shake the darling buds of May,
And summer's lease hath all too short a date.
Sometime too hot the eye of heaven shines,
And often is his gold complexion **dimmed**;
And every fair from fair sometime declines,
By chance, or nature's changing course, **untrimmed...**"*

(*"Sonnet 18"* -William Shakespeare)

This love sonnet by William Shakespeare is among his most famous, and for good reason. He uses many words which are euphonious in and of themselves, such as the rhyming word “dimmed” and “untrimmed.” The first line has many euphonious words, such as “shall,” “compare,” and “summer,” perhaps why the line has become so famous on its own.

Fable

A short simple story that teaches a lesson or moral. The characters are most frequently animals, but people and inanimate objects are sometimes the central figures. For example, in the *Tortoise and the Hare* we learn that, “**Slow and steady wins the race.**”

Farce

Literature based on a highly **humorous** and highly **unlikely** and **ridiculous** plot that usually involves **exaggerated** events. Farces usually do not have much character development, but instead rely on absurdity, physical humor, and a skillful exploitation of a situation.

Flashback

Returning to an earlier time (in a piece of literature) for the purpose of making something in the present clearer.

Foil

A character who is the opposite of the main character. The contrast helps to highlight the characteristics of the main character.

Formal diction

One of the primary things that diction does is establish whether a work is formal or informal. Choosing more elevated words will establish a formality to the piece of literature, while choosing slang will make it informal. For example, consider the difference between “I am much obliged to you, sir” and “Thanks a bunch, buddy!” The first expression of gratitude sounds much more formal than the latter.

Foreshadowing

Hints and clues of what is to come later in a story or play

Frame story

A story set within a story, narrative, or movie, told by the main or the supporting character. A character starts telling a story to other characters, or he sits down to write a story, telling the details to the audience.

Free verse

Poetry that has **no regular meter** or **rhyme** scheme but is still rhythmical.

Hubris

An **excessive display of pride** or self-confidence in a character. In Greek mythology and drama, hubris was an affront to the gods, as no mortal should believe himself to be more powerful than the gods, nor defy them. Therefore, Greek gods often punished characters who displayed hubris.

Hyperbole

Intentional and obvious **exaggeration** to reinforce or heighten effect. As a rule, hyperbole is self-conscious, without the intention of being accepted literally.

"The strongest man in the world."

"I'm so hungry I could eat a cow."

Iambic pentameter

The most common meter in English verse. It consists of a line ten syllables long that is accented on every second beat.

In a line of poetry, an iamb is a foot or beat consisting of an unstressed syllable followed by a stressed syllable, or a short syllable followed by a long syllable. A **pentameter** is a line of verse consisting of five metrical feet. When put together, **iambic pentameter** may be defined as a line of verse consisting of five metrical feet where each foot consists of an unstressed syllable and a stressed syllable.

"Shall I compare thee to a summer's day?"

Imagery

A description of an experience, object, or person using sensory details. It draws on the five senses, namely the details of **taste**, **touch**, **sight**, **smell**, and **sound** and helps the reader develop a more fully realized understanding of the imaginary world that the author has created.

In Medias Res

Latin for "into the middle of things." It usually describes a narrative that begins, not at the beginning of a story, but somewhere in the middle — at some crucial point in the action.

Informal diction

The relaxed, conversational language that we use every day. Informal diction is used to address a familiar audience such as family or friends. Personal letters, emails, or documents that have a conversational tone are all written using informal diction.

Internal rhyme

Rhyme that occurs within a line, rather than at the end.

"Once upon a midnight **dreary**, while I pondered, weak and **weary**"

"I'm six-foot-one and I'm tons of fun and I dress to a T
You see, I got more clothes than Muhammad Ali and I dress so viciously
I got body guards, I got two big cars, I definitely ain't the whack
I got a Lincoln Continental and a sun-roofed Cadillac
So after school, I take a dip in the pool, which is really on the wall
I got a color TV, so I can see the Knicks play basketball..."
"Rapper's Delight" by Sugarhill Gang

Inversion

The reversal of the syntactically correct order of subjects, verbs, and objects in a sentence. For example, it's syntactically correct to say, "Yesterday I saw a ship." An inversion of this sentence could be "Yesterday saw I a ship," or "Yesterday a ship I saw."

The character Yoda in Star Wars often speaks in inversions, such as in the following quotes:

"Powerful you have become; the dark side I sense in you."

"Patience you must have, my young padawan."

"Death is a natural part of life. Rejoice for those around you who transform into the Force. Mourn them do not. Miss them do not."

Irony/cosmic, dramatic, situational, verbal

When reality is different from what it appears to be or what is anticipated.

Cosmic Irony: the idea that fate, destiny, or a god controls and toys with human hopes and expectations; also, the belief that the universe is so large and man is so small that the universe is indifferent to the plight of man; also called irony of fate.

Dramatic Irony: When the reader or viewer of a text or performance knows something that the characters themselves do not.

Situational Irony: When an event occurs, which is opposite from or opposed to what was expected.

Verbal Irony: Much like sarcasm, when what is said differs from what is actually meant, but usually not as harsh or abrasive.

Malapropism

The use of an incorrect word in place of a word with a similar sound, resulting in a nonsensical, sometimes humorous utterance. An example is the statement by baseball player Yogi Berra, "Texas has a lot of **electrical** votes", rather than "**electoral** votes".

Matriarchal society

A family, society, community, or state in which the mother is head of the family, and in which descent is reckoned in the female line, the children belonging to the mother's clan

Metaphor

A comparison between two things in which the similarity between the two is implied and not directly stated (no like or as):

"The road was a ribbon of moonlight."

"My brother was **boiling mad**." (This implies he was too angry.)

"The assignment was a **breeze**." (This implies that the assignment was not difficult.)

"It is going to be **clear skies** from now on." (This implies that clear skies are not a threat and life is going to be without hardships)

Metonymy

Replaces the name of a thing with the name of something else with which it is closely associated: "The **Pentagon** released a statement today about national **security**." A building cannot release a statement; the Pentagon is a building closely associated with the leaders of the armed forces and stands in their place to represent them.

Metonymy is often confused with "synecdoche." Synecdoche refers to a thing by the name of one of its parts (calling a car "**my wheels**" is a synecdoche, as a part of a car – the "wheels" – stands for the whole car). In a metonymy, the word we use to describe another thing is closely linked to that particular thing, but is not a part of it:

"Let me give you a hand." (*Hand* means help.)

"Friends, Romans, countrymen, lend me your ears." (Listen to me attentively.)

Motif

Recurring images, words, objects, phrases, or actions that tend to unify a work of literature. Motifs are not themes. The easiest way to differentiate is to remember a motif is something tangible (i.e. the green lantern or Shakespeare's catchphrase) while a theme is abstract (i.e. feelings of love or a character's underlying loneliness).

Narrative structure

The most common elements of the narrative structure are setting, plot, and theme. The parts of narrative plot include exposition (the beginning), rising action, climax, falling action, and resolution.

The setting and characters are introduced during the exposition, and we usually learn some background information to help us have a good understanding of the setting and characters. During the rising action, some form of problem or crisis becomes apparent. The climax is usually the turning point and includes the highest level of tension. During the falling action, we begin to see the characters solving their problems or crises. Finally, there is the resolution, in which there is some form of closure.

Nemesis

The principal enemy of the protagonist in a work of literature. A nemesis can also be called an arch-villain, archenemy, or arch-foe: **Batman and Joker**

Ode

A lyric poem on a serious subject that develops its theme with dignified language intended to be sung.

Onomatopoeia

Words that sound the same as the things they mean.

Example: "Buzz", "Snap", "Hiss", "Sizzle"

Oxymoron

A combination of contradictory terms; a combination of opposites

"jumbo shrimp"

"the living dead"

"cold fire"

"wise fool"

Pantomime

Use of body movements and facial expressions by actors to convey a message without speaking.

Parable

a short, descriptive story designed to suggest a principle, illustrate a moral, or answer a question; allegorical stories

Paradox

Contradictory statement that is actually true. (Similar to oxymoron, however, an oxymoron is a combination of two words that contradict each other.)

"Your enemy's friend is your enemy."

"I can resist anything but temptation."

"I know one thing; that I know nothing."

"This is the beginning of the end."

"Deep down, you're really shallow."

Paralysis

any condition of helpless inactivity or of inability to act; partial or complete loss, or temporary interruption, of a function or of sensation in some part or all of the body

Parallelism

the use of components in a sentence that are grammatically the same, or similar in construction

"I have a dream that my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character. I have a dream today..."

"What you see is what you get." (The 'what you' plus a short verb is repeated.)

"When the going gets tough, the tough get going." (The 'going gets tough' phrase is repeated so that it sounds similar, and yet by flipping around the order of the words, the meaning changes.)

Nothing ventured, nothing gained. (The 'nothing' plus a verb is repeated.)

Parody

a composition imitating another, usually serious, piece of work. It is designed to ridicule in humorous fashion an original piece of work or its author. The parody is in literature what the caricature and the cartoon are in art.

Pastoral setting

Pastoral literature has to do with pastures! And in some pastures, there are sheep tended by shepherds. Elevates the life of the shepherd or shepherdess (innocent, pure, free), versus the evils of the city. Presents an idealistic, Utopian view of rural life.

Pathetic fallacy

A specific kind of personification that attributes **HUMAN EMOTIONS** to nonhuman things. It is often used to make the environment reflect the inner experience of a narrator or other characters.

"angry waves" ←emotion

"smiling sun" ←emotion

"mournful birdsong" ←emotion

Personification can involve the attribution of **any human quality** to a nonhuman thing. Examples: "The waves winked in the sunlight" or "The wind played hide-and-go-seek among the trees," (neither of these suggest any particular emotion).

Pathos

The quality in art and literature that stimulates pity, tenderness, or sorrow in the reader or viewer

Patriarchal society

A system of society or government in which men hold the power and women are largely excluded from it.

Periodic structure

Periodic sentences complete the important idea at the end, while loose sentences put the important idea first. Neither is a better sentence. Good writers use both.

Periodic: "When conquering love did first my heart assail, / Unto mine aid I summoned every sense."

Loose: "Fair is my love, and cruel as she's fair."

Personification

Giving human characteristics to nonhuman things

"Justice is blind and, at times, deaf."

"Money is the only friend that I can count on."

"The party died as soon as she left."

Poetic justice

A conclusion where the bad characters are punished for their evilness and good guys triumph and are rewarded.

Prologue

the preface or introduction to a literary work; a speech often in verse addressed to the audience by an actor at the beginning of a play

Protagonist

the main character of the story; the character who is changed or who grows or learns as a result of the conflict

Puns

Humorous play on words (by using a word that suggests two or more meanings, or words that sound alike)

An elephant's opinion carries a lot of weight.



Point of View

The perspective from which a narrative is told.

FIRST PERSON—The narrator speaks in the first person and the reader can only know or experiences things that this character knows, thinks, feels, and experiences.

THIRD PERSON LIMITED—The narrator speaks in the third person, but the focus is on only one character, and the reader can only know or experience things that this character knows, thinks, feels, and experiences.

THIRD PERSON OMNISCIENT—The narrator speaks in the third person and can know and explain anything that happens in the story and what the characters in it know, think, feel, and experience.

THIRD PERSON OBJECTIVE- The narrator speaks in the third person and can know and explain anything that happens in the story externally but does not or cannot comment on what a character is thinking or feeling; no internal information about characters is available.

Realism

literature that attempts to represent life as it really is

Rhetoric

From the Greek for "orator," this term describes the principles governing the art of writing effectively, eloquently, and persuasively.

Rite of passage

Any important act or event that serves to mark a passage from one stage of life to another (puberty, adolescence to adulthood, marriage, having children, death).

Sarcasm

A form of verbal irony that mocks, ridicules, or expresses contempt. You're saying the opposite of what you mean and doing it in a particularly hostile tone. Sarcasm comes from the Greek words "sark" meaning "flesh," and "asmos" meaning "to tear or rip." So it literally means "ripping flesh" – a pretty bloody image for a type of speech that we use all the time!

"Oh yes, you've been sooooo helpful. Thanks sooooo much for all your heeeelp."

Imagine someone saying this to a customer service agent, drawing out the syllables and maybe rolling their eyes. You'd know pretty quickly that they meant the opposite of what they were saying.

Satire

Writing that seeks to promote positive change by use of humor, irony, exaggeration, or ridicule (exposes and criticize people's defects). Its purpose is not just to entertain, but also to inform or make people think.

Setting

The place and time that a story "happens"

Shift

A change in the speaker's or writer's style or tone and often a shift in focus. It is frequently introduced with "but" or "so."

*"I'm glad you got to go to the concert but I wish you would have taken me."
"The weather outside was very nice, however Tony was feeling very depressed."
"She was being extra nice however most days she is hard to get along with."*

Simile

A comparison between two things in which the similarity between the two is directly stated, usually using the words "as" or "like".

Chevrolet: "Built Like A Rock"

Doritos: "Tastes Like Awesome Feels"

State Farm: "Like A Good Neighbor"

Almond Joy / Mounds: "Sometimes you feel like a nut, sometimes you don't."

Honda: "The Honda's ride is as smooth as a gazelle in the Sahara. It's comfort is like a hug from Nana."

Symbol

Something that is itself but also represents or stands for something else. A flag is a piece of cloth that can be seen, felt, and experienced through the senses, but it also represents a country or community.

Soliloquy

A speech in which a character who is alone speaks his or her thoughts aloud. A monologue also has a single speaker, but the monologist speaks to others who do not interrupt. Hamlet's "To be, or not to be" is a soliloquy.

Sonnet

A fourteen-line iambic pentameter poem. The conventional Italian, or Petrarchan, sonnet is rhymed abba, abba, cde, cde; the English, or Shakespearean, sonnet is rhymed abab, cdcd, efef, gg.

Style

The way an author uses language to convey his ideas; An author's style includes his diction, syntax, imagery, figurative language, selection of detail, and tone.

Synecdoche

Substituting a part of the whole for the whole itself or using the whole to represent a part

"He's got a nice set of wheels." The speaker is referring to a car as a whole and not the wheels themselves.

If “the world” is not treating you well, that would not be the entire world but just a part of it that you've encountered.

“Ask for her hand”—refers to asking a woman to marry

“Plastic”—can refer to credit cards

Syntax

The structure of a sentence. The way an author arranges words and phrases to create sentences. Syntax is similar to diction, but you can differentiate them by thinking of syntax as the groups of words, while diction refers to the individual words. In the multiple-choice section of the AP language exam, expect to be asked some questions about how an author manipulates syntax. In the essay section, you will need to analyze how syntax produces effects.

Theme

Central idea of a literary piece. It runs throughout and is the primary argument.

Examples:

Coming of age

Death

Overcoming the Odds

Love conquers all

The individual vs. Society

Good vs. Evil



Tone

The author's attitude towards his/her subject as expressed to the reader. The author creates tone through the use of diction, syntax, imagery, and the information given through exposition.

Examples: absurd, aggressive, bitter, critical, defensive, encouraging, forceful, grim, humorous, indignant...

Tragedy

A type of drama that presents a series of unfortunate events by which one or more of the literary characters in the story undergo several misfortunes, which finally culminate into a disaster of 'epic proportions.'

Tragic flaw/hamartia

A personal error in a protagonist's personality, which brings about his tragic downfall in a tragedy.

Verisimilitude

The setting, circumstances, characters, actions, and outcomes in a story are designed to seem true, lifelike, real, plausible, and probable