Carl William Brown

Short dictionary of literary terms

SHORT DICTIONARY

OF

LITERARY TERMS

EDITED BY

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Literature is the immortality of speech.
August Wilhelm Von Schlegel

The purpose of literature is to turn blood into ink.
T. S. Eliot

Professors of literature, who for the most part are genteel but mediocre men, can make but a poor defense of their profession, and the professors of science, who are frequently men of great intelligence but of limited interests and education…
Yvor Winters

The limits of my language are the limits of my world.
Ludwig Wittgenstein

Since "Profonda Magia E' Sempre Trar Il Contrario Dopo Aver Trovato Il Punto De' L'unione" as Giordano Bruno said, I don't agree with Eliot when he affirms that the purpose of literature is to turn blood into ink, but I would rather say that the real, magick sense and goal of literature is the opposite, that is to turn ink into blood!
Carl William Brown

Most definitions of literature have been criterial definitions, definitions based on a list of criteria which all literary works must meet. However, more current theories of meaning take the view that definitions are based on prototypes: there is broad agreement about good examples that meet all of the prototypical characteristics, and other examples are related to the prototypes by family resemblance. For literary works, prototypical characteristics include careful use of language, being written in a literary genre (poetry, prose fiction, or drama), being read aesthetically, and containing many weak implicatures.
Jim Meyer

Only the very weak-minded refuse to be influenced by literature and poetry.
Cassandra Clare

Acrostic: a verse or arrangement of words in which certain letters in each line, such as the first or last, when taken in order spell out a word, motto, etc. Etymology: Gr akrostichos < akros (see acro-) + stichos, line of verse.

Act: (From Latin "Thing done") A division in the Action of a Play, often further divided into Scenes. Frequently these divisions correspond with changes in the development of the play. On the stage the divisions of the action may be evidenced by exits and entrances of actors, changes of scenery, lighting effects or by closing the stage with a curtain. Elizabethan dramatists copied the five-act structure from Seneca and other rom,an playrights, and this became the standard form for all plays till Ibsen and Cekhov experimented with four-act plays in the late nineteenth century. Nowadays playwrights are more free to organize their works and the three-acts plays are most common.

Adonis: in classical mythology, a young man of remarkable beauty; a handsome

young man loved by Aphrodite: he is killed by a wild boar.

Alexandrine: prosody: an iambic line having normally six feet; a line of poetry containing regularly six iambic feet (12 syllables) with a caesura after the third. iambic hexameter. Etymology: Fr alexandrin: so called from being used in OF poems on Alexander (the Great)

Alienation Effect: also called a-effect or distancing effect, German Verfremdungseffekt or V-effekt; idea central to the dramatic theory of the German dramatist-director Bertolt Brecht. It involves the use of techniques designed to distance the audience from emotional involvement in the play through jolting reminders of the artificiality of the theatrical performance.

Allegory: is a narrative in which an abstract and, sometimes, complex moral message is made more concrete and simple by the means of characters and incidents that represent abstract qualities and problems. A story in which people, things, and happenings have a hidden or symbolic

meaning: allegories are used for teaching or explaining ideas, moral principles, etc. A narrative using symbolic names or characters that carries underlying meaning other than the one most apparent. The stories are usually long and complex, and are meant to explain or teach a moral idea or lesson to the reader. The ideas are presented in a concrete and imaginative manner, and incidents usually represent political, spiritual, or romantic situations. The characters are types (Mr. Stingy Cheapo) or they are moral characteristics (Kindness, Jealousy). One character can represent a whole bunch of people. For example, in Dante Alighieri's Divine Comedy, Dante symbolizes mankind and is guided by the poet Virgil through Hell, Purgatory, and Paradise. During this journey, he learns about the punishments of sin, and the process of salvation. There are also allegories in the story Young Goodman Brown by Nathaniel Hawthorne in which the character Faith is used to represent good fighting evil. Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress and Spenser's "The Faerie Queen" are famous allegories in English. Allegories can also be found in parables and fables. In fables, inanimate

objects or animals take on human characteristics in order to point out their weaknesses and desired traits. There is usually a short, simple, commonly cliched lesson (that your parents love to quote for you) which is stated at the end. A famous example is Aesop's fables about the hare and the tortoise (slow and steady wins the race) and the one about the grapevine. A parable is a concise story using everyday situations making a point through comparisons. In the Bible, Jesus uses parables to simplify ideas for his disciples. For example, he compares the kingdom of God to the mustard seed. He says it is the smallest seed planted in the ground, yet when it grows, it becomes the largest garden plant providing shade and comfort. [Pearl Chang, '99]

Alliteration: the use, within a line or phrase, of words beginning with the same consonant oraccented vowel sound,e.g. "safe and sound"; "spick and span". This technique is used to give emphasis or create a pleasant, singing effect. Originated in the early 17th century from medieval Latin alliterato; used for poetic effect; the repetition of the initial sounds in two or

more neighboring words or syllables. It can also be referred to as head rhyme or initial rhyme. (Example: "Aunt Jennifer's Tigers" -Adrienne Rich pg. 471 "Aunt Jennifer's fingers fluttering through her wool" "We'll go on prancing, proud and unafraid" and "Hymn To God the Father" -John Donne pg. 505 "Shall shine as he shines now . . ." [Jessica Sharron, '99]

Allusion: an indirect or implied reference to another work of literature, historical event, famous quotation, etc. The desired effect is to enhance the meaning of the author's work by the reference. This can only be achieved by the level of the reader's knowledge of the work being alluded to.
For example: in the novel Animal Farm, there is a revolution which takes place when the animals overthrow their human owners. The leader of the animals is a monarchic pig name Napoleon. The story alludes to the Bolshevik Revolution during World War I, allowing for the reader to better see the level of power a single ruler can reach. [Kristin Pesceone, '99]
Ambiguity: In literary criticism ambiguity refers to the exploitation for artistic

purposes of language which has usually two but possibly multiple meanings. Ambiguity gives a state of doubt and indistinction to words or expressions that make them capable of being interpreted and understood in more than one way. It should be noted that ambiguity is not necessarily negative in literature and literary criticism.
Examples: In Charlotte Bronte's Jane Eyre, during the discussion between Jane and Mr. Rochester that eventually ends in him asking her to marry him, it is ambiguous as to whether Mr. Rochester is referring to Blanche Ingram, or some other woman whom he holds such deep affection for.
In this very same novel, there is another example of ambiguity in much a similar situation. When St. John asks Jane to be his wife and come with him on his mission, it is ambiguous as to whether he truly loves her or whether he wants her along for some other reason. [Joel Carlson, '99]

Amoretti: "little cupids".

Amplification: (rhetoric), a figure of speech that adds importance to increase its rhetorical effect.

Analogy: a comparison or similarity between two things that are alike in some way. Anti-Climax: a sudden drop in tension, often amusing. It was used as adevice for satire and ridicule by many of the Augustan poets.

Analogue: An analogue is a piece of writing that is similar in some aspect to another. When one work is like another because it is intentionally derived from it, it is not called an analogue. The second work is just called a source. The plays Antigone by Sophocles and Hamlet, Prince of Denmark by William Shakespeare are analogues because they are both tragedies written in verse in which the hero sets out to make peace for the death of a loved one, but ultimately dies himself. "The Story of an Hour" by Kate Chopin and "Astronomer's Wife" by Kay Boyle can also be thought of as analogues because both are short stories which deal with a woman's liberation from her husband, although the results of the stories are quite different. [Erin Hyun, '99]

Anapest: In poetry, a foot composed of two short, unstressed syllables followed by a long, stressed one. An example of

anapestic meter is Lord Byron's "The Destruction of Sennacherib."
The Assyrian came down like the wolf on the fold,
And his cohorts were gleaming in ipurple and gold;
And the sheen of their spears was like stars on the sea,
When the blue wave rolls nightly on deep Galilee. [Nora Quiros, '99]

Anaphora: In rhetoric, an anaphora (Greek: "carrying back") is a rhetorical device that consists of repeating a sequence of words at the beginnings of neighboring clauses, thereby lending them emphasis. In contrast, an epistrophe (or epiphora) is repeating words at the clauses' ends. See also other figures of speech involving repetition. One author well-known for his use of anaphora is Charles Dickens. Some of his best-known works constantly portray their themes through use of this literary tool.

Anecdote: A very brief story or tale told by a character in a piece of literature. The story usually consists of an interesting biographical incident. This is seen in The

Canterbury Tales. It is also seen in the beginning of Kurt Vonnegut's Slaughterhouse-Five when the author is speasking of how he came to write the succeeding story. [Micah Bedrosian, '99]
Antagonist:

Aphorism: [French aphorisme, from Old French, from Late Latin aphorismus, from Greek aphorismos, from aphorizein, to delimit, define : apo-, apo- + horizein, to delimit, define; see horizon.] A terse saying embodying a general truth, as “Time flies.” — aphorist, n. — aphorismic, aphorismical, aphoristic, adj. A tersely phrased statement of a truth or opinion; an adage. See Synonyms at saying. A brief statement of a principle. See also apophthegm, apothegm, axiom, maxim - a saying that is widely accepted on its own merits. Usually an aphorism is a concise statement containing a subjective truth or observation cleverly and pithily written. Aphorisms can be both prosaic or poetic, sometimes they have repeated words or phrases, and sometimes they have two parts that are of the same grammatical structure. The word aphorism (literally "distinction" or "definition", from the Greek: aphorismós ap-horizein "from-to

bound") denotes an original thought, spoken or written in a laconic and easily memorable form. The name was first used in the Aphorisms of Hippocrates. The term came to be applied later to other sententious statements of physical science and later still to statements of all kinds of philosophical, moral or literary principles.

The Aphorisms of Hippocrates were the one of the earliest collections, although the earlier Book of Proverbs is similar. Hippocrates includes such notable and often invoked phrases as:"Life is short, [the] art long, opportunity fleeting, experience misleading, judgment difficult. The physician must not only be prepared to do what is right himself, but also to make the patient, the attendants, and externals cooperate."

The aphoristic genre developed together with literacy, and after the invention of printing, aphorisms were collected and published in book form. The first noted published collection of aphorisms is Adagia by Erasmus of Rotterdam. Other important early aphorists were François de La Rochefoucauld, Blaise Pascal and Carl William Brown.

Apostrophe: When the narrator suddenly breaks his story to directly address someone or a personified abstraction which may or may not be present. Milton provides an example in his Paradise Lost:
"Hail, holy light, offspring of Heaven first born." [Nathan Westhoff, '99]

Aside: An aside is a short speech made by a character in a play--it is is heard only by the audience; the rest of the characters cannot hear it. In many instances an aside is a way for a playwright to voice his or her character's thoughts and feelings.
In Shakespeare's Othello, the villianous Iago, spying on Cassio and Desdemona, speaks this aside:
"He takes her by the palm. Ay, well said, whisper! With as little a web as this I will ensnare as great a fly as Cassio. Ay, smile upon her, do! I will gyve thee in thine own courtship...."
In Shakespeare's Hamlet, the king, weighed down by conscience, speaks this aside:
"How smart a lash that speech doth give my conscience!
The harlot's cheek is, beautied with plast'ring art,

Is not more ugly to the thing that helps it
Than is my deed to my most painted word:
O heavy burthen!" [Leah Porter, '99]

Assonance: a vowel sound repeated in literary work. This echoing effect is used to enhance the tone and feeling the author is trying to convene in the work.
In Walt Whitmn's "When I Heard the Learn'd Astronomer," the last four lines has assonance from the words "tired," "sick," "rising," "gliding," "myself," "night," "time to time," and "silence."
In the "Stopping by Woods," the lines
"The only other sound's the sweep
Of easy wind and downy flake."
The e sound is echoed in "sweep," "easy," and "downy" and the ow sound in "sound and downy." [Alisso Ko, '99]

Autobiography: A biography about a person written by that person. It is usually written and narrated in the first erson and recounts the life, or significant details from the life, of the author.
Two famous examples of autobiographies are Bad as I Want to Be by Dennis Rodman, and The Autobiography of Malcolm X by Malcolm X. Borh of these

novels recount the authors' lives in first-person narrative. [Phillip Tadlock, '99]

Ballad: (Latin word "ballare " meaning "to dance") an anonymous poem in short stanzas often sung to a traditional tune, and telling a popular story. It is in common language and has often lines which are repeated at the end ofeach verse. Banquo: the reputed ancestor of the Stuarts, who was well known during the first years ofJames I's reign.

Beast fable: a short story, either in verse or prose, which teaches a lesson (or a moral and in which animals are endowed with the mentality and speech ofhuman beings.
Becket Thomas: martyr and Archbishop of Canterbury. In 1170 he was murdered in the Cathedral of Canterbury by four knights inspired by some rash words ofKing Henry II, after some years ofdissension with the King.

Bildungsroman: (German educational novel) a type of novel that deals with the psychological and emotional development of a youth protagonist, tracing his orher life

from childhood to maturity through adolescence.

Biography: The story of a person's life written by someone other than the subject of the work. A biographical work is supposed to be somewhat factual. However, since the biographer may be prejudiced in favor of or against the subject of the biography, critics, and the sometimes the subject of the biography himself, may come forward to challenge the accuracy of the material. [Mike Isenberg, '99]

Blank Verse: poetry written in meter, usually iamgic pentameter, but without a rhyme shceme. It is commonly used in narraive and dramatic poetry. For example, from Shakespeare's The Merchant of Venice:
The quality of mercy is not strain'd,
It droppeth as the gentle rain from heaven
Upon the place beneath; it is twice blessed:
It blesseth him that gies and him that takes. [Kristin Pesceone, '99]

Cacaphony/Euphony: A dissonant, unpleasant comgination of sounds/a

harmonious, pleasant combination of sounds.

Cacophony: I remember the neckcurls, limp and damp as tendrils ["Elegy for Jane" by Theodore Roethke]
A toad the power mower caught,
Chewed and clipped of a leg, with a hobbling hop has got ["The Death of a Toad" by Richard Wilbur]
Euphony: The word plum is delicious pout and push, luxury of self-love, and savoring murmur full in the mouth and falling
like fruit. ["The Word Plum" by Lelen Chasin][Elena Allen, '99]

Caesura: in modern prosody : a usually rhetorical break in the flow of sound in the middle of a line of verse. Greek and Latin prosody : a break in the flow of sound in a verse caused by the ending of a word within a foot. a pause marking a rhythmic point of division in a melody.

Canto: is a section of a long narrative poem.

Carpe Diem: A descriptiove term for literature that urges readers to live for the

moment. It come from the Latin phrase that means "seize the day". This theme was widely used in 16th and 17th century poetry. It is best ememplified by a familiar stanza from Robert Herricks "To the Virgins to make Much of Time".
Gather ye rose-buds while ye may, Old Time is still a-flying:And this same flower that smiles today, To-morrow will be dying. [Eric Frey, '99]

Catastrophe: A catastrophe is any sudden disaster that has occured. It is the scene in a tragic drama that includes the protagonist's death or moral destruction. One such tragedy is Oedipus the King by Sophocles. In Shakespeare's tragedies such as Othello, Macbeth, and Romeo and Juliet, the catastrophe is always included in Act 5.[Ezter Takacs, '99]

Character: In the literary realm the term Character refers to any individual, object, animal, or force created by the author as a basis for his/her particular piece of work. Character is not only the person it is also the behavior and distinctive quality which places the character into a group. An author's task when composing characters

for his/her story, play, etc., is to establish an initial personality, i.e. persona to the character. Once characteristics are formed, the reader/audience adheres to them and cast judgement. For example in the classic piece of work Huck Finn, Twain portrays Huck with certain distinctive qualities which are either liked or disliked by the reader. Thus creating protagonists and antagonists, which are the basis for any literary piece of work. Without conflict or contradicting characters the interest of the work will be lost. [Samantha Shelton, '99] So the character is the author's creation, through the medium of words, of a personality who takes on actions, thoughts, expressions, and attitudes unique and appropriate to that personality, and consistent with it. Character might be thought of as a reasonable facsimile of a human being, with all the qualities and changes (whims, or any set of unusual or unexpected events that have an effect on a person) of a human being. Different types of characters: first-person narrator: is one of the characters and is inside the story. Third-person narrator: the narrator is outside the story, for instance, has nothing to do with the events presented in it. It ca be:

Objective: he\she mainly observes people and events and reports what he\she sees and hears (E. Hemingway's novels are an example of objective narrator); Omniscient (all-knowledge): When the speaker describes not only the action and dialogue of the work, but also seems to know and report everything that goes on in the characters' innermost feelings and thoughts. Flat character. a simple character with little depth, built around a single quality, who always behaves in the same way without changing or developing throughout the narrative. In the theatre a stock character represents one personality trait (for example; the jealous husband, the villain etc.) Round character. a character who has a real psychological identity, develops his\her own personality during the narrative and changes his\her ways of thinking. Contrasting character: When the novelist tends to represent at least two characters, sometimes a few, who possess different or even contrasting features. In this way the novel is enriched with situation in which the two characters react in a totally
different way and, ofcourse, with totally different results.

Characterization: characterization is the representation of the traits, motives, and psychology of a character in a narrative. Characterization may occur through direct description, in which the character's qualities are described by a narrator, another character, or by the character him or herself. It may also occur indirectly, in which the character's qualities are revealed by his or her actions, thoughts, or dialogue. Some additional key details about characterization: Early studies of literature, such as those by the ancient Greek philosopher Aristotle, saw plot as more important than character. It wasn't until the 15th century that characters, and therefore characterization, became more crucial parts of narratives. Characterization became particularly important in the 19th century, with the rise of realist novels that sought to accurately portray people.

Classicism: A movement to preserve and improve upon the attributes found in Greek and Roman works. The movement encompasses the many areas of art: music, visual arts, and literature. Often classicism

involves the philosophies of Greek philosophers, so the movement involves much of ancient form.

There were three basic revivals of classicism. The first was during the Renaissance, wherein architecture and philosophy became Greco-Roman inspired. The second revival took place during the 18th and 19th centuries, when Pompeii was (re)discovered. This period is generally called "neoclassicism," and the Greco-Roman strain was mostly prevalent in literature (Goethe), music (Haydn, Mozart), and art (the Museum des Beaux-Arts in France). The third revival was the early 20th-century, where a renewed interest in abstracted classical art is found in Pablo Picasso, and modernized Greek literature is evident in the works of Ezra Pound and T.S. Eliot.

An example of classicism in the literature studied this year comes from Gulliver's Travels, Book III. On the sorcerer-populated island of Glubbdubdrib, Gulliver calls up Aristotle and Homer, who sneer at modern philosophy. The Travels were published in 1726, around the time of the neoclassicism revival, and this passage reflects the then-presumably prevalent

attitude that ancient philosophy is moral and decent and a good thing to study. [Christa Young, '99]

Climax: In a work of literature, the most decisive and critical scene or event is the climax. The climax is the major turning point of the work; it is the culmination of the rising action, conflicts, and complications of the story.
In "Oedipus Rex," the climax occurs when Oedipus discovers the truth of the prophecies and oracles. This was the major turning point in the play which caused Oedipus to change from a glorified and honored king to a shamed and destroyed outcast. [Nicki Roberts, '99]
Comedy: A comedy is literary work which is amusing and ends happily. This work can be a play or a novel, even a movie. Modern comedies are usually funny, while Shakespearean comedies just end well. Shakespearean comedies accomplish their comedic effect by using misunderstandings or mistaken identities. Modern comedies throw their characters into peculiar situations, and must then deal with those situations. Witty and clever lines are

dispensed to make the piece entertaining for readers or viewers.
A good example of a Shakespearean comedy could be Twelfth Night. It cleverly shows it's comedic air by disguising the Viola as a boy, a case of mistaken identity. [Jarrod Armour, '99]

Conceit: An elaborate poetic image or a far-fetched comparison of very dissimilar things. A witty or ingenious turn of phrase. An artistic device or effect.

Conclusion: The final outcome of main characters in a drama or novel that is based on logical events from the story. To tie the loose ends of the plot lines of the major characters together. The ending of The Scarlet Letter by Nathaniel Hawthorne is a good example:
"....and, as Heter Prynne had no selfish ends, nor lived in any measure for her own profit and enjoyment, people brought all their sorrows, perplexities, and besought her counsel, as one who had herself gone through mighty trouble." [Nathan Westhoff, '99]

Concrete Poetry: A poem that visibly resembles the object which it describes. This is accomplished by arranging the words or lines of the poem so that they form the desired shape or pattern. Examples are "Easter Wings" by George Herbert and "Women" by May Swenson. [Doug Yuen, '99]

Conflict: Conflict occurs when the main character is opposed by some other character or force in a work of literature. The conflict can also be an internal struggle of the character versus his conscience.
Examples can be found in every work read this year. For instance Gulliver was in conflict with the Lilliputions and the giants of Brobdignagg, and Jane came into conflict with Miss Read and Mr. Brocklehurst. [Mark Kobal, '99]

Connotation: connotation: an association that comes along with a particular word. Connotations relate not to a word's actual meaning, or denotation, but rather to the ideas or qualities that are implied by that word. A good example is the word "gold." The denotation of gold is a malleable, ductile, yellow element. The connotations,

however, are the ideas associated with gold, such as greed, luxury, or avarice. Another example occurs in the Book of Genesis. Jacob says: "Dan will be a serpent by the roadside, a viper along the path, that bites the horse's heels so that its rider tumbles backward" (Gen 49:17). In this passage, Dan is not literally going to become a snake. However, describing Dan as a "snake" and "viper" forces the reader to associate him with the negative qualities that are commonly associated with reptiles, such as slyness, danger, and evil. Dan becomes like a snake, sly and dangerous to the riders. Writers use connotation to make their writing more vivid and interesting to read. See A Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Theory. Jennifer Lance, Student, University of North Carolina at Pembroke

Denotation: the exact meaning of a word, without the feelings or suggestions that the word may imply. It is the opposite of "connotation" in that it is the "dictionary" meaning of a word, without attached feelings or associations. Some examples of denotations are:

1. heart: an organ that circulates blood throughout the body. Here the word "heart" denotes the actual organ, while in another context, the word "heart" may connote feelings of love or heartache.
2. sweater: a knitted garment for the upper body. The word "sweater" may denote pullover sweaters or cardigans, while "sweater" may also connote feelings of warmness or security.
Denotation allows the reader to know the exact meaning of a word so that he or she will better understand the work of literature. See Literature: An Introduction to Fiction, Poetry, and Drama, A Glossary of Literary Terms, A Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Theory, Webster's Dictionary. Shana Locklear, Student, University of North Carolina at Pembroke

Consonance: This is one of those great literary terms to use when you are doing an AP write and you are trying to think of a sophisticated way to say that the words in the piece sound nice and harmonious with each other. It will come up most commonly with poetry or prose-like pieces of writing when words have a close correspondence of sounds. More specifically, it means the

repetition of consonants (letters of the alphabet) or a consonant pattern, especially at the end of words. (Kind of like alliteration, but instead of the repeating sound in the beginning, the repetition is at the end.) Usually, it sounds good and the word is also commonly used to describe music as in agreement, or accord. So you want some examples?
"I listened, motionless and still,
And as I mounted up the hill,
The music in my heart I bore,
Long after it was heard no more."
In these four lines from the "Solitary Reaper" by William Wordsworth, there is consonance at the end of line 1 and 2 (hill.. still), and then line 3 and 4 (bore... more). :) :) [Pearl Chang, '99]

Couplet: two consecutive lines of verse, especially when rhyming. The "heroic couplet" consists of two rhymed lines in iambic pentameter.

Dactyl: A dactyl (Gr. δάκτυλος dáktulos, “finger”) is a type of meter in poetry. A metrical FOOT. In quantitative verse, such as Greek or Latin, a dactyl is a long syllable followed by two short syllables, as

determined by syllable weight. In accentual verse, such as English, it is a stressed syllable followed by two unstressed syllables -- the opposite is the anapaest (two unstressed followed by a stressed syllable). Dactylic metres are not very common in English Verse.

Dada: (Fr. "hobby-horse") Adeliberately meaningless title for an anarchical literary and artistic movement begun in 1916 at the Cabaret Voltaire in Zurich by the Romanian poet Tristan Tzara with the french sculptor Hans Harp and the pacifist H. Ball. The purpose of Dada was a nihilistic revolt against all bourgeois ideas of order and rationality. By the early 1920s it was overtaken by surrealism which connected many dadaist techniques to psychological theory.

Dialogue: A conversational passage between characters in a narrative or play. Written discussion between two or more people.
Example [from Catch-22, p. 20]:
"The put poison in everybody's food," Clevinger explained.
"And what difference does that make?"

"And it wasn't even poison," Clevinger cried heatedly, growing emphatic as he grew more confused.
Example [from Hamlet]:
Gertrude: Hamlet, thou hast they father much offended.
Hamlet: Mother, you have my father much offended. [Kristen Fraisse, '99]

Diction: The way words are selected in a particular literary work, usually poetry. The appropriate selection of words in a poem is poetic diction. The choice of words, phrases, sentence structure, and even figurative language, which give regards to clarity and accuracy.
Example:
"Thy Naid airs have brought me home To the glory that was Greece, And the grandeur that was Rome." "To Helen" by Edgar Allan Poe.
Naiad refers to nymphs who lived in and gave life to rivers, lakes, springs, and fountains in Classical Greek Mythology. This is an unusual form of diction which gives a specific meaning to the sentence. It is necessary that the reader knows the meaning of Naiad. [Sean Morin, '99]

Didactic Literature: Derived from the Greek word "to teach." Works that are written for the purpose of instructing or pressing some moral purpose. This has developed into the modern pedagogical novel. Examples include Nicholas Nickleby (UNDERLINED), which argues against such social abuses as youth exploitation, and "A Psalm of Life" by Henry Longfellow. I have included a segment of that poem below.
Let us, then, be up and doing,
With a heart for any fate;
Still achieving, still pursuing,
Learn to labor and to wait. [Jamie Ellis-Simpson, '99]

Dramatic Monologue: Dramatic monologue means self-conversation, speech, or talks which include an interlocutor presented dramatically. It means a person, who is speaking to himself or someone else speaks to reveal specific intentions of his actions. However, in literature, it is a poetic form or a poem that presents the speech or conversation of a person in a dramatic manner. A dramatic monologue has these common features in them. A single person delivering a speech on one aspect of his life. The audience may

or may not be present. Speaker reveals his temperament and character only through his speech. There are three major types of dramatic monologues such as: Romantic monologue, Philosophical and psychological monologue, Conversational monologue.

Elegy: A lyric poem lamenting death which first appeared in 1501. One famous example is Thomas Gray's "Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard" (1751) Another example is the final third of "Beowulf."
In ancient times an elegy was a poem written in distinct couplets. Poets such as Callimachus and Catullus used the elegiac form. But now it is content and tone that makes a poem elegiac. Key Words to remember about an elegy: Death and Sadness. [Elizabeth Trace, '99]
Epic: A long story usually told in poetry. Epics contain elements of myth, legend, folk tale, and history. Epics have very serious themes, and present portraits of the cultures which produced them. A larger than life hero embodies the values of the particular society and undertakes a quest to achieve something of great value for the people and himself. Some classic examples

are Beowulf, Paradise Lost, the Iliad and the Odyssey. [Grant Aldrich, '99]

Epigraph: In literature, an epigraph is a phrase, quotation, or poem that is set at the beginning of a document, monograph or section thereof. The epigraph may serve as a preface to the work; as a summary; as a counter-example; or as a link from the work to a wider literary canon, with the purpose of either inviting comparison or enlisting a conventional context. Examples. As the epigraph to The Sum of All Fears, Tom Clancy quotes Winston Churchill in the context of thermonuclear war: "Why, you may take the most gallant sailor, the most intrepid airman or the most audacious soldier, put them at a table together – what do you get? The sum of their fears." The long quotation from Dante's Inferno that prefaces T. S. Eliot's "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock" is part of a speech by one of the damned in Dante's Hell. The epigraph to E. L. Doctorow's Ragtime quotes Scott Joplin's instructions to those who play his music, "Do not play this piece fast. It is never right to play ragtime fast." The epigraph to Fyodor Dostoyevsky's The Brothers Karamazov is John 12:24: "Verily,

verily, I say unto you, except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit." The epigraph to Eliot's Gerontion is a quotation from Shakespeare's Measure for Measure. Eliot's "The Hollow Men" uses the line "Mistah Kurtz, he dead" from Joseph Conrad's Heart of Darkness as one of its two epigraphs.

Epithet: In literature, a word or phrase preceding or following a name which serves to describe the character of that name. Poetry is essentially a combination of the familiar and the surprising, and the most successful surprises are achieved by the use of carefuly descriptive words or epithets. An epithet is a word which makes the reader see the object described in a clearer or sharper light. Normally, an epithet refers to an outstanding quality, but may also be used with a negative connotation.
Examples: In Charlotte Bronte's Jane Eyre, as Jane first meets Mr. Brocklehurst, she feres to him as the "stony stranger."

In the same novel is a reference to Mr. Rochester by Mrs. Fairfax, as she says, "Old Mr. Rochester . . ." [Joel Carlson, '99]

Euphemism: A euphemism is a word used in a literary work that takes the place of another word because it is offensive, or would be used in bad taste. For example, freshman year we read The Diary of Anne Frank and learned that W.C. is a euphemism for the word "bathroom." In Jean-Paul Sartre's play, No Exit the dead people use words like "here" and "this place" to avoid saying the word Hell. They also avoid using the word Dead and refer to themselves as "absentees."[Sarah Gorback, '99]

Exposition: Exposition is a literary term that refers to the part of a story that sets the stage for the drama to follow: it introduces the theme, setting, characters, and circumstances at the story's beginnings. To understand what exposition is, look at how the writer sets the scene for the story and the characters within it. Read through the first few paragraphs or pages where the author gives a description of the setting and the mood before the action

takes place. In the story of "Cinderella," the exposition goes something like this: "Once upon a time, in a land far away, a young girl was born to very loving parents. The happy parents named the child Ella. Sadly, Ella's mother died when the child was very young. Over the years, Ella's father became convinced that the young and beautiful Ella needed a mother figure in her life. One day, Ella's father introduced a new woman into her life, and Ella's father explained that this strange woman was to become her stepmother. To Ella, the woman seemed cold and uncaring."

Fable: In literature, a fable is a short fictional story that has a moral or teaches a lesson. Fables use humanized animals, objects, or parts of nature as main characters, and are therefore considered to be a sub-genre of fantasy. The word fable comes from the Latin fabula meaning discourse or story. The oldest and most well-known collection of fables in Western literature is undoubtedly Aesop's Fables. Aesop was believed to have been a slave in Greece around the year 550 BC, and his fables are known worldwide. In fact, many of the morals and lessons of his fables are

common phrases we use everyday, like "slow but steady wins the race," "look before you leap," and "every man for himself." Below is his fable "The Wolf and the Lamb": WOLF, meeting with a Lamb astray from the fold, resolved not to lay violent hands on him, but to find some plea to justify to the Lamb the Wolf's right to eat him. He thus addressed him: "Sirrah, last year you grossly insulted me." "Indeed," bleated the Lamb in a mournful tone of voice, "I was not then born." Then said the Wolf, "You feed in my pasture." "No, good sir," replied the Lamb, "I have not yet tasted grass." Again said the Wolf, "You drink of my well." "No," exclaimed the Lamb, "I never yet drank water, for as yet my mother's milk is both food and drink to me." Upon which the Wolf seized him and ate him up, saying, "Well! I won't remain supperless, even though you refute every one of my imputations." The tyrant will always find a pretext for his tyranny. This classic fable and its lesson, "the tyrant will always find a pretext for his tyranny," has been represented in slightly different versions within the folklore of many different cultures. "The Wolf and the Lamb" follows the typical Aesopic style of fable,

beginning with a short story and ending with a one sentence moral or lesson.

Falling Action: The falling action of a story is the section of the plot following the climax, in which the tension stemming from the story's central conflict decreases and the story moves toward its conclusion. For instance, the traditional "good vs. evil" story (like many superhero movies) doesn't end as soon as the force of evil has been thwarted. Rather, there tends to be a portion of the story in which the hero must restore regular order to the world, clean up the mess they made, or make a return journey home. This is all part of the "falling action." Some additional key details about falling action: Falling action is just one part of the structure of a story's overall plot. The falling action follows the climax, or the moment of peak tension in the story. Falling action is often confused for dénouement, the final part of the story. They're similar, but not the same. We'll explain the key differences in this entry. The opposite of falling action is rising action, which occurs before the climax and in which the story's main conflict unfolds and tension builds.

Farce: a form of drama/play that narrows in on an extremely unlikely plot with exuberant/exaggerated characters; an extreme situation, so extreme that it is to the point of becoming absurd.
Examples: 1) conversation between Milo and Yossarian about bedsheet incident (p. 68)": "Why didn't you just hit him over the head and take the bedsheet away from him?" Yossarian asked.
Pressing his lips together with dignity, Milo shook his head. "That would have been most unjust," he scolded firmly. "Force is wrong, and two wrongs never make a right. It was much better my way. When I held the dates out to him and reached for the bedsheet, he probably thought I was offering to trade."
"What were you doing?"
"Actually, I was offering to trade, but since he doesn't understand English, I can always deny it."
"Suppose he gets angry and wants the dates?"
"Why, we'll just hit him over the head and take them away from him," Milo answered without hesitation.

* Although this is not a farce in the sense of drama, it is definitely a farcical situation. Milo insists it's not okay to hit the guy in order to get the bedsheet, but is okay to tempt him wrongly and then unlawfully take it from him. And, if the man is then to challenge the "transaction" he may hit him to get the bedsheet.
2) situation where Yossarian claims he sees everything twice to get out of flying, and then claims he sees everything once (pp. 186-187): "I see everything twice!" the soldier who saw everything twice shouted when they rolled Yossarian in.
"I see everything twice!" Yossarian shouted back at him just as loudly, with a secret wink. . . .
. . . Yossarian nodded weakly too, eying his talented roommate with great humility and admiration. he knew he was in the presence of a master. His talented roommated was obviously a person to be studied and emulated. During the night, his talented roommated died, and Yossarian decided that he had followed him far enough.
"I see everything once!" he cried quickly.

A new group of specialists came pounding up to his bedside with their instruments to find out if it was true.
"How many fingers do you see?" asked the leader, holding up one.
"One."
The doctor held up two fingers. "How many fingers do you see now?"
"One."
The doctor held up ten fingers. "And how many now?"
"One."
The doctor turned to the other doctors with amazement. "He does see everything once!" he exclaimed. "We made him all better."
* How absurd is that? The doctors actually believed they had cured Yossarian from seeing things twice because now he "saw things once," which was not much of an improvement from before anyway. The doctors are incompetent and are able to make this normal situation quite farcical and ridiculous. [Vivian Ku, '99]]

Figurative Language: Figurative language uses figures of speech to be more effective, persuasive, and impactful. Figures of speech such as metaphors, similes, and

allusions go beyond the literal meanings of the words to give readers new insights. On the other hand, alliterations, imageries, or onomatopoeias are figurative devices that appeal to the senses of the readers. Figurative language can appear in multiple forms with the use of different literary and rhetorical devices. According to Merriam Webster's Encyclopedia, the definition of figurative language has five different forms: Understatement or Emphasis. Relationship or Resemblance. Figures of Sound. Errors and Verbal Games.

Figure of Speech: a stylistic device that compares one thing with another to convey a meaning or exagerate a description. Similes, metaphors, and hyperbole are all considered figures of speech. An example from Catch-22 would be: Lieutenant Scheisskopf turned while as a sheet… [James Chung, '99]

Flashback: When the current action is broken by reference to something which occurred earlier in the work or prior to its beginning. An example of a flashback occurs in Oedipus Rex when both Iocaste and Oedipus recall past events that

happened before the play began. Most of the story "A Rose for Emilyh" is a flashback since the narrator is thinking about Emily before her death, an evfent which occurs at the beginning of the story. [Kim Papenhausen, '99]

Foil: A character in a play that offsets the main character or other characters by comparison or thwarts a plan. For example, Stanley Kowalski thwarts Blanche DuBois' plan in A Streetcar Named Desire. [Becky Sando, '99]

Foot: A way of measuring meter in poetry using a series of stressed and unstressed syllables. A pattern of stressed and unstressed syllables that is repeated establishes a poetic foot. Here is an example from Robert Frost's "Stopping By Woods on a Snowy Evening."
u / u / u / u /
The woods are lovely, dark and deep
u / u / u / u /
but I have promises to keep.
u / u / u / u /
And miles to go before I sleep.
The above lines follow a pattern known as iambic tetrameter.[Jill Chiurazzi, '99]

Foreshadowing: When the writer drops hints or clues in the plot that give the reader an idea of what is going to happen later in the story.
Example:
In Oedipus Rex by Sophocles, when the oracle tells Oedipus that he is the plague on the city and Oedipus does not believe him. Then the oracle says that even though Oedipus has eyes he cannot see and is blind to the truth, foreshadowing the final scene in the play where Oedipus tears out his eyes on stage. [Kristi Grewal, '99]

Free Verse: Poetry that is based on the irregular rhythmic cadence or the recurrence, with variations, of phrases, images, and syntactical patterns rather than the conventional use of meter. Rhyme may or may not be present in free verse, but when it is, it is used with great freedom. In conventional verse the unit is the foot, or the line; in free verse the units are larger, sometimes being paragraphs or strophes.
The poetry of the Bible, particularly in the King James Version, which attempts to approximate the Hebrew cadences, rests on cadence and parallelism. The Psalms and

The Song of Solomon are noted examples of free verse. Milton sometimes substituted rhythmically constructed verse paragraphs for metrically regular lines, notably in the choruses of Samson Agonistes, as this example shows:
But patience is more oft the exercise
Of Saints, the trial of thir fortitude,
Making them each his own Deliver,
And Victor over all
That tyranny or fortune can inflict.
Walt Whitman's Leaves of Grass was a major experiment in cadenced rather than metrical versification. The following lines are typical:
All truths wait in all things
They neither hasten their own delivery nor resist it,
They do not need the obstetric forceps of the surgeon. [Sean Morin, '99]

Genre: A class or category of literature having a particular form, content or technique, i.e. epic peotry, comedy, an fiction. For example, Shakespeare's Othello falls in the genre of dramatic tragedy. Sophocles Antigone is an example of epic drama. Joyce's The Dead could be labeled as realistic fiction. [Wes Austen, '99]

Haiku: A poetic form popular in Japan. It appeared during the sixteenth century. This form of poetry is made up of 17 syllables in a 5-7-5 sequence. Usually the first line is five syllables, the second is seven syllables, and the third is five syllables.
Example:
Scent of plum blossoms
on the misty mountain path
a big rising sun. [Melanie Petrash, '99]

Hyperbole: Hyperbole, adj. hyperbolic, is the use of exaggeration as a rhetorical device or figure of speech. In rhetoric, it is also sometimes known as auxesis (literally 'growth'). In poetry and oratory, it emphasizes, evokes strong feelings, and creates strong impressions. As a figure of speech, it is usually not meant to be taken literally.

Iamb: An iamb is a unit of meter with two syllables, where the first syllable is unstressed and the second syllable is stressed. Words such as “attain,” “portray,” and “describe” are all examples of the iambic pattern of unstressed and stressed syllables. The iamb is one of the most fundamental metrical feet in English

language and poetry. Many poets writing in strict meter choose to write with many successive iambs to create a consistent rhythm of unstressed and stressed beats. We will see some of these types of consistent meter below in more depth.

Imagery: A vivid description, in speech or writing, that produces mental images. The image produced can be an emotion, a sensation, or a visual picture.
Examples:
"A bed supported on massive pillars of mahogany, hung with curtains of deep red damsask . . ." [Jane Eyre, p. 11]
"And the startled little waves that leap in fiery ringlets from their sleep." "Meeting at Night," by Robert Browning. [Kristen Fraisse, '99]

Inference: The act of concluding from evidence; deduction. In literature it describes the act of figuring something out by using what you already know. If you know "a" and "b" you can deduce "c."
In Catch-22 Yossarian inferred that he could get out of the war by declaring himself crazy. Yet if you are sane enough to know you're crazy, then, in reality, you

aren't crazy. Yossarian thought he knew all thte details, and inferred a way to escape the war. [Jarrod Armour, '99]

Irony: There are three forms of irony in the literary world. Verbal Irony is an expression or statement where the meaning of the words used is the opposite of their sense. Irony of Situation is where an action done by a character is the opposite of what was meant to be expected. In Dramatic Irony the audience of a play knows something that the main character does not. The most common of the three is Irony of Situation.
An example of irony can be seen in Sophicles' play Oedipus Rex. Oedipus, in trying to find the man who killed King Laios in order to life the curse, accuses the blind man of being a fraud because he cannot give Oedipus the answer he is seeking, when in fact Oedipus is the one blind because he cannot ascertain that he is the murderer of the king. [Frederick Kim, '99]

Local Color: The presentation of the features and characteristics of a certain locality, so that the reader can picture the setting being described.

Example from literature:
Besides the obvious description of any setting from any novel....
In Gulliver's Travels Swift used local color as he described each new land that Gulliver traveled to so that the reader would have a different feel for each new place, and so that each new land would have a more dictinct identity. [Heather Coe, '99]

Lyric Poem: A lyric poem is short, highly musical verse that conveys powerful feelings. The poet may use rhyme, meter, or other literary devices to create a song-like quality. Unlike narrative poetry, which chronicles events, lyric poetry doesn't have to tell a story. A lyric poem is a private expression of emotion by a single speaker. For example, American poet Emily Dickinson described inner feelings when she wrote her lyric poem that begins, "I felt a Funeral, in my Brain, / And Mourners to and fro." A lyric poem is a private expression of emotion by an individual speaker. Lyric poetry is highly musical and can feature poetic devices like rhyme and meter. Some scholars categorize lyric poetry in three subtypes: Lyric of Vision, Lyric of Thought, and Lyric of Emotion.

However, this classification is not widely agreed upon.

Metaphor: A literary device by which one term is compared to another without the use of a combining word such as like or as.
Two Actual Usages
1. "But soft, what light through yonder window breaks. It is the east and Juliet is the sun." [Romeo and Juliet]
2. "Oh, beware my lords,of jealousy. It is the green-eyed monster, which doth mock the meat it feeds on. [Othello] [Joel Mankey, '99]

Meter: A regular pattern of stressed and unstressed syllables in a line of poetry. The number of feet in a line forms a way of describing a meter. The standard meters are as follows:
Monometer--a metrical line with one foot
Dimeter--a metrical line with two feet
Trimeter--a metrical line with three feet
Tetrameter--a metrical line with four feet
Pentameter--a metrical line with five feet
Hexameter--a metrical line with six feet
Heptameter--a metrical line with seven feet
Octameter--a metrical line with eight feet

One example is in Theodore Roethke's poem, "The Waking." The following lines are pentameter:
I wake to sleep, and take my waking slow,
I feel my fate in what I cannot fear.
"She Walks in Beauty" by Lord Byron is written in tetrameter:
She walks in beauty like the night
Of cloudless climes and starry skies. [Lacey Cope, '99]

Metonymy: A figure of speech in which one word or phrase is substituted for a related word or phrase
examples:
“count heads (or noses)” rather than “count people”
“Washington” rather than “the United States Government”
“warm heart” rather than “warm affections”
“the bottle” rather than “a strong drink”
“lands belonging to the crown” rather than “...to the king” [Emily Grider, '99]

Modernism

A broadly defined multinational cultural movement (or series of movements) that took hold in the late 19th century and

reached its most radical peak on the eve of World War I. It grew out of the philosophical, scientific, political, and ideological shifts that followed the Industrial Revolution, up to World War I and its aftermath. For artists and writers, the Modernist project was a re-evaluation of the assumptions and aesthetic values of their predecessors. It evolved from the Romantic rejection of Enlightenment positivism and faith in reason. Modernist writers broke with Romantic pieties and clichés (such as the notion of the Sublime) and became self-consciously skeptical of language and its claims on coherence. In the early 20th century, novelists such as Henry James, Virginia Woolf, and Joseph Conrad experimented with shifts in time and narrative points of view. While living in Paris before the war, Gertrude Stein explored the possibilities of creating literary works that broke with conventional syntactical and referential practices. Ezra Poundvowed to "make it new" and "break the pentameter," while T.S. Eliot wrote The Waste Land in the shadow of World War I. Shortly after The Waste Land was published in 1922, it became the archetypical Modernist text, rife with allusions, linguistic

fragments, and mixed registers and languages. Other poets most often associated with Modernism include H.D., W.H. Auden, Hart Crane, William Butler Yeats, and Wallace Stevens. Modernism also generated many smaller movements; see also Acmeism, Dada, Free verse, Futurism, Imagism, Objectivism, Postmodernism, and Surrealism. Browse more Modern poets.

Mood: The emotinal ambience established by a literary work. This effect is fabricataed through descriptions of feelings or objects which establish in kind feelings of fear, patriotism, sanctity, hope, et. al., in the mind and emotional perception of the reader. The writer's mood (or emotional state and feeling) may be said to have flowed from his/her hand, to the reader's eyes and from thence to the reader's mind. Mood is a transfer of emotional-substance 'coloring,' depicted in likeness to teh hues woven within a writer's mind, that he/she may color attune hues in the mind of the reader.
Examples:
The poem "Dream Nocturne" by Juan Ramon Jimenez establishes a mood of

sacrosanctity. Eternal life contrasted with mortality, the sea controlled by the heavens whilst the mortal shell of our Earthly life remains cold on the shore controlled by none but itself. The calm sea, the traveling soul, the voyage towards eternal life--all of these elements help to establish a mood of reverence and religious tranquility.

"The Dead" by James Joyce creates a mood of romantic nostalgia. This mood is established specifically within the last two pages before the mention of Michael Furey. Gabriel's description of his desire towards his wife, interwoven with reminiscences of their past together--aglow with fresh flame from stoked embers of stale love--construct an emotional atmosphere within the mind of the reader that overwhelmingly feels like the sentimental sensation of love's pinnacle recalled. One experiences the mood, or feeling, of love-sick nostalgia flowing over their synaptic gaps while one is caught up in the sentimentality of the protagonist. The reader experiences the emotini of lvoe, desire, and unmitigated, irrational bliss through the established mood. [Wes Austen, '99]

Myth: A story used to describe the origins of basic elements and assumptions of cultures. These myths were written to show a proper way of knowing reality. These stories take place in a time before our world came into being. All myths are different in the subjects that they deal with, but they all have the presence of gods and goddesses. These gods and goddesses control the events that take place in the story. Humans are usually present in myths. The gods can help the huans or they can punish them if they desire to.
An example of a myth is the epic poem, the Odyssey. This story deals with a man involved in the Trojan War. Finally it is time for him to see his wife and son. He starts on his journey but on the way he runs into many adventures and challenges. He cannot get home because Poseidon, the god of the sea, will not let him. [Melanie Petrash, '99]

Narrative: narration is the act of telling a sequence of events, often in chronological order. Alternatively, the term refers to any story, whether in prose or verse, involving events, characters, and what the characters say and do. A narrative is likewise the story

or account itself. Some narrations are reportorial and historical, such as biographies, autobiographies, news stories, and historical accounts. In narrative fiction common to literature, the narrative is usually creative and imaginative rather than strictly factual, as evidenced in fairy tales, legends, novels, novelettes, short stories, and so on. However, the fact that a fictional narrative is an imaginary construct does not necessarily mean it isn't concerned with imparting some sort of truth to the reader, as evidenced in exempla, fables, anecdotes, and other sorts of narrative. The narrative can begin ab ovo (from the start and work its way to the conclusion), or it can begin in medias res (in the middle of the action, then recount earlier events by the character's dialogue, memories, or flashbacks).

Narrator: The "voice" that speaks or tells a story. Some stories are written in a first-person point of view, in which the narrator's voice is that of the point-of-view character. For instance, in The Adventures of Huck Finn, the narrator's voice is the voice of the main character, Huck Finn. It is clear that the historical author, Mark Twain,

is creating a fictional voice to be the narrator and tell the story--complete with incorrect grammar, colloquialisms, and youthful perspective. In other stories, such as those told in the third-person point of view, scholars use the term narrator to describe the authorial voice set forth, the voice "telling the story to us." For instance, Charles Dickens' Oliver Twist presents a narrative in which the storyteller stands outside the action described. He is not a character who interacts with other characters in terms of plot. However, this fictionalized storyteller occasionally intrudes upon the story to offer commentary to the reader, make suggestions, or render a judgment about what takes place in the tale. It is tempting to equate the words and sentiments of such a narrator with the opinions of the historical author himself. However, it is often more useful to separate this authorial voice from the voice of the historical author.

Narrative Poem: A oem that relates the events or ideas of the poem in story form. The most famous types of narrative poems are the epic poems, such as the Iliad and the Odyssey by Homer, the Aeneid by

Virgil, the Divine Comedy by Dante and Paradise Lost by Milton. Ballads are the most popular form of the narrative poem and include such works as "Barbara Allan." [1st][Kristi Grewal, '99]

Novel: a fictional prose narrative that is usually long and complex and deals especially with human experience through a usually connected sequence of events. The characters are invented by the author and are placed in imaginary settings. A biographical novel uses historically real characters in real geographical locations doing historically verifiable things. [Kabir Affonso, '99]

Ode: A lyric poem written to praise and exalt a person, characteristic, quality, or object. It is written in a formal and exalting style. It varies in length and complexity. Examples of odes would be "To Helen" by Edgard Allan Poe, "Ode to the West Wind" by Percy Bysshe Shelley, and "Ode to a Nightingale" by John Keats. [Kim Friel, '99]

Onomatopoeia: When the sound of a word imitates the sound it represents. The purpose of these words is to amke a

passage more effective for the reader or listener.
Examples:
"Mildred rose and began to move about the room: Bang!, Smash! Wallop, bing, bong, boom." [Fahrenheit 451 by Ray Bradbury, p. 55]
"Bing, gung, s0lat--the splat being the drawer flying out." ["A. & P." by John Updike][Jill Chiurazzi, '99]

Oxymoron: An oxymoron (plurals: oxymorons and oxymora) is a figure of speech that juxtaposes concepts with opposite meanings within a word or in a phrase that is a self-contradiction. As a rhetorical device, an oxymoron illustrates a point to communicate and reveal a paradox. A general meaning of "contradiction in terms" is recorded by the 1902 edition of the Oxford English Dictionary. The term oxymoron is first recorded as Latinized Greek oxym?rum, in Maurus Servius Honoratus (c. AD 400); it is derived from the Greek word oksús "sharp, keen, pointed" and "dull, stupid, foolish"; as it were, "sharp-dull", "keenly stupid", or "pointedly foolish". The word oxymoron is autological, i.e. it is itself an example of an

oxymoron. The Greek compound word, which would correspond to the Latin formation, does not seem to appear in any known Ancient Greek works prior to the formation of the Latin term.

Parable: A short story written to make an analogy with something unknown to the reader; it is usually used to teach a moral lesson or spiritual truth. Many parables can be found in the Bible, such as "The Prodigal Son." Another example of a parable can be found in the tale of the Grand Inquisitor from The Brothers Karamazov. [Kim Pappenhausen, '99]

Paradox: It is a situation in which a statement at first glance seems to contradict itself, but really does not. An example comes from a Dean Koontz book I read earlier this year in which a character says "When I was kidnapped, I was let go." At first glance it seems the character is contradicting himself, but he really means that by being kidnapped, he was set free from his strict environment. [Mike Isenberg,'99]

Parallel Structure: Parallel Structure Expressing two or more linked ideas,

actions, or sentences in the same grammatical structure. The ideas are usually set off by commas. The parallel words in a sentence must match grammatically with their counterparts.
Examples: 1) William Shakespeare Hamlet
"…with his statues, his recognizances, his fines, his double vouchers,his recoveries: is this the fine of his fines…" (Pg. 1158)
2) Joseph Heller Catch-22
"…encased from head to toe in plaster and gauze with both strange, rigidlegs, elevated from the hips and both strange arms strung up perpendicularly, all four bulky limbs in casts, all four strange, useless limbs hoisted up in the air by taut wire cables and fantastically long lead weights suspended darkly above him." (Pg. 164)
3) Harper Lee To Kill a Mockingbird
"The tire bumped on gravel, skeetered across the road, crashed into a barrier and popped me like a cork onto pavement." (Pg. 37)
The first example deals with the parallel structure of the pronoun "his" and the nouns followed after each one. (pronoun + noun, pronoun + noun, pronoun + noun structure) The last two deal with verb parallelism. The verbs are all in past tense

and are linked in the sentence. [Peter Hsu, '99]

Parody: A piece of work that imitates the style of another work. It can be amusing, mocking, or an exaggeration of the work. A parody is very similar to a satire in that both mock an issue. However, a satire is written to arouse contempt, while a parody is written merely to amuse the reader. There are many examples of parodies in our English textbook from pages 569-574. These are parodies of poems. One worthy of noting is the parody of "Shall I Compare Thee to a Summer's Day." Every line in the parody takes the original line from the poem and says it in a startling or a blunt manner. One such example in the parody is the line, "People break their necks or just drop dead." On a lighter note, on a day to day basis, one may also encounter many of Weird Al Yankovic's parodies of popular songs. [Paymon Rahgozar, '99]

Pastoral: A type of literary work having to do with shepherds and rustic nature settings.
Pastoral settings of purity and simplicity are usually contrasted with the corruption and

artificiality of cities and courts. Pastoral poetry is very prevalent, but attributes of this kind are also found in drama and fiction. Jane Eyre is an example of pastoral leaning in works read this year, i.e. Jane enjoys the simple beauty of the countryside surrounding Moor House, and its inhabitants (Diana and Mary) are portrayed as kind and pure. [Christa Young, '99]

Pathetic Fallacy: Pathetic fallacy is when an emotion or feeling is attached to something inanimate, particularly things in nature.
Example:
1) In the poem "The Starry Night" by Anne Sexton (in reference to Van Gogh's The Starry Night) she writes "The night boils with eleven stars. . ." This is pathetic fallacy because no night could "boil eleven stars," it is a feeling or action associated or attached to the subject night.
2) In "The Sick Rose" by William Blake, he uses the phrase "howlingstorm" in describing the rose. This, too, is pathetic fallacy because Black maintains that a storm may howl, which in fact is not, and could not be, the case. [Vivian Ku, '99]

Personification: Giving a nonhuman object or concept a human characteristic or attribute that is not normally seen or literally associated that concept or object and used mainly for the purpose of animation or representation of that object or concept.
Example from text:
1) --Anne Sexton's "The Starry Night"--
The wind in Van Gogh's painting "Vincent" is described as: "The old unseen serpent swallows up the stars. ...That rushing beast of the night, sucked up by that great dragon." (Pg.584)
2) William Wordsworth in "I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud" describes that stars were:
"Tossing their heads in sprightly dance." (Pg. 490)
3) Robert Browning's Poem: "Meeting at Night"
" ...the startled little waves that leap."(Pg. 500) [Peter Hsu, '99]

Plot: The order of events and incidents that occur in the storyline of a novel. Plot usually goes from exposition to rising tension to climax to resolution.

Some examples of plot can be found in the novels Gulliver's Travels and Jane Eyre. The plot of the first describes the journey's of a seaman all ove the world and his encounters with new societies that satirize mankind. The second tells the story of a strong girl growing into a passionate woman.[Phil Tadlock, '99]
Point of View: the perspective the author uses to tell a story. He can use the first person perspective which is telling a story through to eyes of a character using the pronouns I or me. The author can also use the third person point of view which is telling the story as an onlooker. If the author uses the third person method and enters the mind of more then one character the style is referred to as omniscience.
John Steinbeck writes many of his novels using the third person perspective. Swift used the first person perspective in the book Gulliver's Travels. [Mark Kobal, '99]
Protagonist: The main character in a literary work, i.e. a poem, play or novel. Examples would be Oedipus in Oedipus Rex by Sophocles, Guy Montag in Fahrenheit 451 by Ray Bradbury and Jane Eyre in the novel by the same name by Charlotte Bronte. Protagonists are generally opposed

by forces. When the opposingn force is another character, that charaacter is referred to as the antagonist. [James Chung, '99]

Pun: Wordplay that uses homonyms (two different words that are spelled identically) to deliver two or more meanings at the same time. Harryette Mullen riffs on the multiple meanings of "slip" in [Of a girl, in white]. "Ah, nothing more obscure than Browning/Save blacking," writes Ambrose Bierce in "With a Book," making a pun on the name of poet Robert Browning and the color brown.

Quatrain: A four-line stanza, often with various rhyme schemes, including: ABAC or ABCB (known as unbounded or ballad quatrain), as in Samuel Taylor Coleridge's "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner" or "Sadie and Maud" by Gwendolyn Brooks. AABB (a double couplet); see A.E. Housman's "To an Athlete Dying Young." ABAB (known as interlaced, alternate, or heroic), as in Thomas Gray's "Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard" ABBA (known as envelope or enclosed), as in Alfred, Lord Tennyson's "In Memoriam" or John Ciardi's "Most Like an

Arch This Marriage." AABA, the stanza of Robert Frost's "Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening."

Resolution: Resolution is the conclusion of a story's plot and is a part of a complete conclusion to a story. The resolution occurs at the end of a story following the climax and falling action. In some stories, climax and resolution occur simultaneously but in that case are simply co-occurring points in the plot. In Romeo and Juliet by William Shakespeare, the resolution is seen when both Romeo and Juliet have died and the heads of the dueling families, Lord Capulet and Lord Montague, express their sorrow over having caused the deaths of the children. They decide to end the feud between families to prevent any further tragedies. The resolution of a story is the final element and is therefore required to end a story in a satisfying manner. Following the climax and the falling action, the resolution ties together all elements of a story in a way that creates a feeling a completion to readers. A story is not complete in terms of plot structure if it does not have a resolution. In action-packed stories, resolution gives audiences a chance

to breathe a sigh of relief and to relax. The intensity is over, and a more comfortable point has been reached where tensions are low and conflict is resolved. Additionally, resolution ties together elements of theme and can allow the overall storyline to resonate with readers and audiences one final time. Important aspects to the story are emphasized and theme is reinforced with one last message to readers.

Rhyme: A piece of verse or poetry in which there is a repetition of corresponding sounds, usually at the end of lines. Robert Frost emloys a rhyme scheme in "The Road Not Taken."
16 I shall be telling this with a sigh A
17 Somewhere ages and ages hence B
18 Two roads diverged in a wood, and I A
19 I took kthe one less traveled , A
20 And that has made all the difference B
Internal rhyme occurs when words rhyme anywhere other than the end of the line. Eye rhyme occurs when words look similar, but do not necesarily sound the same ["trough" and "rough"]. Half rhyme occurs when the final consonants rhyme, but not the vowel sounds ["way" and "Willy"].[Doug Yuen, '99]

Rhyme Scheme: The pattern established by the arrangement of rhymed words at the ends of the lines in a stanza or poem. It is usually described by using letters of the alphabet to denote the recurrence of rhyuming lines.
Example: Piano by D.H. Lawrence
Somewhere beneath that piano's superb sleek black A
Must hide my mother's piano, little brown, with the back A
That stood close the wall, and the front's silk both torn, B
And the keys with little hollows, that my mother's fingers had worn. B
The rhyme scheme for this stanza is AABB [Jessica Sharron, '99]

Rhythm: An audible pattern in verse established by the intervals between stressed syllables. "Rhythm creates a pattern of yearning and expectation, of recurrence and difference," observes Edward Hirsch in his essay on rhythm, "Out of the Cradle Endlessly Rocking."

Rising Action: Rising action is the section of a story that leads toward its climax.

Because of the increased tension as a book's central conflict (or conflicts) become clear, the rising action is often what keeps you turning the pages. Not every book or movie plot works exactly the same way, but most of them start with some basic exposition that introduces the characters and setting, followed by rising action that pulls the reader or viewer toward the story's most emotional and interesting moment - its climax. The rising action does a lot of the story's work, as it includes the most vital parts of the plot, making thrillers thrilling and page-turners engrossing.

Romance: In the strictest academic terms, a romance is a narrative genre in literature that involves a mysterious, adventurous, or spiritual story line where the focus is on a quest that involves bravery and strong values, not always a love interest. However, modern definitions of romance also include stories that have a relationship issue as the main focus. In the academic sense, an example of a romance is a story in which the main character is a hero who must conquer various challenges as part of a quest. Each challenge could be its own story and can be taken out of the overall

story without harming the plot. Example. A knight who wishes to prove himself by recovering a stolen heirloom from an enemy may find himself attempting to make his way through a dangerous wood filled with thieves. Once he has accomplished this challenge, he may find himself climbing a tall mountain on which a group of people are in trouble. He would save the group somehow, and then move on. Then the final stage: the enemy's kingdom. There may be a fair maiden whom he meets and somehow helps or rescues, or perhaps she helps him. But the fair maiden is not the focus of the story – his quest is the focus. Each story can be taken out, yet each builds the hero's strength to face his final quest. These stories tend to be serious rather than humorous and touch on strong values.

Saga: Historically, it is a medieval Scandinavian story of battles, customs, and legends, written between 1120 and 1400, and is often narrated in prose. It traditionally deals with families that first settled Iceland and their descendants, and can include histories of important families of nobility. Today it is better defined as any

long story of adventure or heroic deeds, telling the tales of a hero or following a family through several generations. A contemporary example of a saga would be Mario Puzo's The Godfather series. [Todd Sterhan, '99]

Satire: The use of mockery, irony, or wit to attack or ridicule something, such as a habait, idea or custom which is considered to be foolish or wrong. An example of satire is the novel Gulliver's Travels. Here Jonathan Swift ridicules the absurd manners and traditions of the British Empire. [Sarah Mitchell, '99]

Scansion: The analysis of the metrical patterns of a poem by organizing its lines into feet of stressed and unstressed syllables and showing the major pauses, if any. Scansion also involves the classification of a poem’s stanza, structure, and rhyme scheme.

Setting: The time and place in which a work of literature occurs.
Examples: One of the settings in Gulliver's Travels was the island of Lilliput. One of the

settings in Jane Eyre was the Lowood Institution. [Nicki Roberts, '99]
Short Story: A fictional narrative shorter than a novel. It aims at creating mood and effect rather than plot. Typical features of a short sotry are: its plot is based on probability, its characters are human and have normal human problems, its time and place are established in realistic settings, and its elements work toward unifying the story. An example is "The Yellow Wallpaper" by Charlotte Perkinss Gilman and "Battle Royal" by Ralph Ellison, a short story created out of an excerpt from the longer novel Invisible Man [Samantha Shelton, '99]
Simile: a figure of speech which makes a comparison between two unlike things using words "like" or "as". An example would be the line "Like the circle of a throat/ The night on every side was turning red," from Louis Simpson's poem "The Battle." Simpson is using the circle that would appear if one were to choke someone's throat, to make a comparison with the night. [Paymon Rahgozar]
Soliloquy: When a character in a play or novel is alone and talking to himself outloud. Example: From "Hamlet":

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 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 heart-ache and the thousand natural shocks
That flesh is heir to, 'tis a consummation
Devoutly to be wish'd. ..'
From: Hamlet, Prince of Denmark by William Shakespeare[Nora Quiros, '99]
Sonnet: The sonnet is usually made up of fourteen lines, and expresses an emotion. There are two types of sonnets: the English sonnet, often used by William Shakespeare, and the Italian sonnet, or the Petrarchan. An Italian sonnet is composed of an eight-line octave and a six-line sestet, and the English sonnet is composed of three four line quatrains and a concluding two-line couplet. The thought or feelings of the poem is evident through their structure. For example in the English sonnet a subject will develope in the first twelve lines and conclude in the last two. An Italian sonnet may state a problem at the biginning and

present a solution in the lest six lines. Here is an example of an English, or Shakespearean sonnet on pg. 503 of the lit book:

That time of year thou may'st in me behold
That time of year thou may'st in me behold
When yellow leaves, or none, or few, do hang
Upon those boughs which shake against the cold,
Bare ruined choirs where late the sweet birds sang.
In me thou see'st the twilight of such day
As after sunset fadeth in the west,
Which by - and - by black night doth take away,
Death's second shelf that seals up all in rest.
In me thou see'st the glowing of such fire
That on the ashes of his youth doth lie,
As the deathbed whereon it must expire,
Consumed with that which it was nourished by.
This thou perceiv'st, which makes thy love more strong,
To love that well which thou must leave ere long.
-William Shakespeare, [Sarah Gorback, '99]

Spondee: A metrical foot consisting of two long or stressed syllables, used to draw the reader's attention to some noteworthy phenomenon within the literary work, either to illuminate or to intensify. [Kabir Affonso, '99]

Stanza: An Italina word derived from Latin which denotes a group of lines in a poem considered as a unit. Many poems are divided into stanzas which are commonly separated by spaces. They often symbolize a different idea or thought, possibly a different subject in a poem, much like a paragraph in prose represents. Each one, again like a paragraph in prose, states and develops a main idea. This division in a poem consisting of a series of lines arrangeed together often have a recurring patern of meter and rhyme. Stanza is the Italian word for "stopping place," which makes sense considering a poem or a song stops between stanzas, each of which has a further thought about the poem's subject. Stanzas, also another literary term for verses, comes in:
couplets: two line stanzas
tercets: three line stanzas

quatrains: four line stanzas
cinquains: five line stanzas
sestets: six line stanzas
heptastichs: seven line stanzas
octaves: eight line stanzas
Stanzas are seen in almost all forms of poetry, such as William Wordsworth's poem "I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud," which has four stanzas, each oneof them being sestets, or six line stanzas. The stanzas hae a "ababcc" rhyme scheme. [Marc Gentzler, '99]
Stereotype: A stereotype is a conventional and oversimplified opinion or image of a person or group of people. An author often stereotypes a character so that the person is readily identified with a distinct group of individuals. This literary device is most often used in a negative, and sometimes derogatory, fashion. A few examples are a person of Asian deascent being likened to martial arts, a Harvard student being thought of as a "bookworm", or an Alaskan that is envisioned as living in an igloo. In "A & P" by John Updike, Sammy is stereotyped as an irresponsible teen who would rather chase girls than keep a steady job. Ralph Ellison also stereotypes the Negro teens in "Battle Royal." They are identified as being

poor and uneducated as they tumble for mere pocket-change while continuously shocking themselves on an electrified rug. [Todd Sterhan, '99]

Style: A writer's typical way of writing. Style includes word choice [diction], tone, degree of formality, figurative language, rhythm, grammatical structure, sentence length, organization and every other feature of a writer's use of language. Simple prose, aphoristic, and reflective are some examples of style. Styles can be plain, orante, metaphorical, spare or descriptive. Style lis determined by such factors as sentence length and complexity, syntadx, use of figurative language, imagery, and diction, and possibly even th euse of sound effects. Style is also known as a way in which a writer uses language.
Style can be found in every piece of literature. One example would be the poem "Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening" by Robert Frost. He uses plenty of imagery when heh talks kabout sleep and about the snow falling, and uses such sound effects as the bells on the horse and the wind, and emphasizes the tranquillity when the wind stops and the snow flakes fall. Frost uses

syntax when repeating the last two lines of the poem, and pays close attention to diction when describing the evening and the forest as dar, metaphorically meaning gloomy and dismal. [Marc Gentzler, '99]

Subtext: What something really means, not just what it appears to mean. Irony is the primary example, with diction and meaning different, often opposite.
Example [from Catch-22]: The meaning of the term derives from the fact that anyone desiring to get out of combat duty because of craziness really isn't crazy. The subtext is the only way outof combat duty is death. [Anthony Gurvitz-Shaw, '99]

Suspense: The growing of excitement felt by an audience or individual while awaiting the climax of a movie, book, play, etc. due mainly to its concern for the welfare of a character they sympathize with or the anticipation of a violent act.
An example of suspense can be found in the short story "A Good Man is Hard to Find" in the AP literature textbook. When the family is systematically killed off one by one, the reader cannot help but have a sense of sympathy for the poor unfortunate

souls of the unlucky family members thus adding to the suspense of the story. [Frederick Kim, '99]

Symbolism: A device in literature where an object represents an idea. In the poem "The Sick Rose" by William Blake, the rose symbolizes perfection. The worm is a symbol of death. The storm is a symbol of chaos. Night represents darkness and evil, and the bed symbolizes the vulnerability of innosence and sleep.
The Sick Rose
O Rose, thou art sick!
The invisible worm
That flies in the night
In the howling storm,
Has found out thy bed
Of crimson joy,
And his dark secret love
Does thy life destroy. [Eric Frey, '99]

Synecdoche: Synecdoche is a rhetorical trope and a kind of metonymy, a figure of speech using a term to denote one thing to refer to a related thing. Synecdoche (and thus metonymy) is distinct from metaphor, although in the past, it was considered to be a sub-species of metaphor, intending

metaphor as a type of conceptual substitution (as Quintilian does in Institutio oratoria Book VIII). In Lanham's Handlist of Rhetorical Terms, the three terms possess somewhat restrictive definitions in tune with their etymologies from Greek: Metaphor: changing a word from its literal meaning to one not properly applicable but analogous to it; assertion of identity, rather than likeness as with simile. Metonymy: substitution of cause for effect, proper name for one of its qualities. Therefore a synecdoche is a type of metonymy: it is a figure of speech in which a term for a part of something is used to refer to the whole (pars pro toto), or vice versa (totum pro parte). The term is derived from the Greek. Examples of common English synecdoches include suits for businessmen, wheels for automobile, and boots for soldiers. Another example is the use of government buildings to refer to their resident agencies or bodies, such as “The Pentagon” for the United States Department of Defense. An example from British English is using "Downing Street" as a metonym for "the Office of the Prime Minister".

Synesthesia: Synesthesia (American English) or synaesthesia (British English) is a perceptual phenomenon in which stimulation of one sensory or cognitive pathway leads to involuntary experiences in a second sensory or cognitive pathway. People who report a lifelong history of such experiences are known as synesthetes. Awareness of synesthetic perceptions varies from person to person. In one common form of synesthesia, known as grapheme–color synesthesia or color-graphemic synesthesia, letters or numbers are perceived as inherently colored. In spatial-sequence, or number form synesthesia, numbers, months of the year, or days of the week elicit precise locations in space (e.g., 1980 may be "farther away" than 1990), or may appear as a three-dimensional map (clockwise or counterclockwise). Synesthetic associations can occur in any combination and any number of senses or cognitive pathways.

Theatre of the Absurd: A drama based ujpon some absurd idea or situation. It is often derived from the themes of Existentialism. These plays typically express man's feelings of isolation and

frustration, among others, and are often allegorical. Though not a play, the best example we have read of the absurd is the nouvelle The Metamorphosis by Franz Kafka. Another example is Jean Paul Sartre's short play No Exit, which begins with three souls dropped into a hell that has been economizing on labor. Eugene Ionesco's The Lesson is also an example from this theatre. [Jamie Ellis-Simpson, '99]

Theme: All complete works of literature have themes that explore abstract concepts relating to the human experience. Themes are generally meaningful to certain groups of people in a certain time, cross boundaries, and can be understood universally. Major themes are the ideas in works of literature that carry the most significance. They are repeated throughout the text and are important to various character interactions and plot developments. Minor themes are the ideas that appear briefly and give significance to part of a story only to give way to another minor theme at another point in the story. Example: The Catcher in the Rye by J. D. Salinger explores a major theme of innocence. Pride and Prejudice by Jane

Austen explores minor themes such as class, friendship, and family.

Tone: The tone of a work is the attitude of the author toward the subject he is writing about. It is the style or manner of a piece of work, an inflection of the mood of the piece. For example, the tone of Joseph Heller's Catch-22 is one of sarcasm and humor, as well as indifference. Joseph Heller seems neither to approve or disapprove of his characters' actions; he simply records the foolishness and mindlessness of what they say and do. [Leah Porter, '99]

Tragedy: Tragedy, as defined by Aristotle in the Poetics is "the imitation of an action that is serious and also, as having magnitude, complete in itself." Aristotle set down the guidelines for tragedy which consists of:
1. the tragic hero who should be of high worth or standing, but not perfect.
2. a tragic flaw, weakness, or transgression (hubris) in the hero which leads to the hero's downfall.
3. the recognition scene where the hero realizes what he has done.

4. the effect of the inevitable disaster (catastrophe) on the spectators is the cleansing (catharsis.) The cleansing process is due to the emotions ofpity for the tragic hero and terror through what they have seen.
In the "The Tragedy of Othello," Othello was the tragic hero of high standing. A general of the army his tragic flaw was he allowed rumors spawn his jealousy into a violent rage. He recognizes his blinded rage when the truth unfolds before him and he takes his own life. The audience should feel a cleansing process from the terrible and tragic ending with the death of Desdemon and Othello. [Alisso Ko, '99]

Trochee: A trochee is a two-syllable metrical pattern in poetry in which a stressed syllable is followed by an unstressed syllable. The word "poet" is a trochee, with the stressed syllable of "po" followed by the unstressed syllable, “et”: Po-et. Metrical patterns in poetry are called feet. A trochee, then, is a type of foot. The other feet are: iambs, anapests, dactyls, and spondees. The opposite of a trochee is an iamb, which is the most common metrical foot and consists of an unstressed

syllable followed by a stressed syllable (as in the word "De-fine"). Strict trochaic meter, that is, meter written using only trochees, is a rare metrical form in English because the stress pattern of the trochee is the inverse of that of speech, making it difficult to write with. The stress pattern of the word "trochee", stressed unstressed, is itself that of a trochee.

Understatement: Understatement is a form of speech in which a lesser expression is used than what would be expected. This is not to be confused with euphemism, where a polite phrase is used in place of a harsher or more offensive expression. Understatement is a staple of humor in English-speaking cultures, especially in British humor. As a matter of fact through an understatement a particular quality of a person, object, emotion, or situation is downplayed or presented as being less than what is true to the situation. An understatement is often used to downplay the value, size, or importance of something. Ironically, by using understatement as a mode of description, the writer or speaker increases the significance of the quality being

understated. For example, if someone says, "It seems to be raining a little," in the middle of a hurricane, that would be an understatement; the speaker thereby draws attention to the rain by downplaying the amount falling. The opposite of an understatement is hyperbole. The Greek origin of the word hyperbole means, "excess or to throw above", and the literary definition of hyperbole means, "an exaggeration or an extreme overstatement of a fact so that it is an impossibility." For example, if someone said, ''I could eat this delicious cake forever,'' they are using hyperbole to declare how much they are enjoying the cake by saying they could eat the cake for eternity. Other literary devices use diminishing language as part of their rhetorical effect. Euphemism, for example, is a literary device characterized by using less offensive language in the description of a potentially embarrassing or harsh situation. For example, to say that someone "passed away" is a euphemism for someone dying. Or, one might say that someone was "let go" from their job instead of saying they were fired. Therefore, a euphemism is a very specific use of diminishing language, whereas

understatement is a much broader literary device.

Zeugma: (Greek "yoking" or "bonding"): Artfully using a single verb to refer to two different objects grammatically, or artfully using an adjective to refer to two separate nouns, even though the adjective would logically only be appropriate for one of the two. For instance, in Shakespeare's Henry V, Fluellen cries, "Kill the boys and the luggage." (The verb kill normally wouldn't be applied to luggage.) If the resulting grammatical construction changes the verb's initial meaning, the zeugma is sometimes called syllepsis. Examples of these syllepses abound--particulary in seventeenth-century literature:
"If we don't hang together, we shall hang separately!" (Ben Franklin).
"The queen of England sometimes takes advice in that chamber, and sometimes tea."
". . . losing her heart or her necklace at the ball." (Alexander Pope).
"She exhausted both her audience and her repertoire." (anonymous)
"She looked at the object with suspicion and a magnifying glass." (Charles Dickens)

What the dead had no speech for, when living, They can tell you, being dead: the communication Of the dead is tongued with fire beyond the language of the living. T.S. Eliot

What we call the beginning is often the end. And to make an end is to make a beginning. The end is where we start from. T. S. Eliot

The palest ink is better than the most retentive memory.
Chinese proverb