| **Terms** | **Definitions** |
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| Abstract (style) | (in writing) this is typically complex, discusses intangible qualities like good and evil, and seldom uses examples to support its points. |
| Academic | As an adjective describing style- means dry and theoretical writing. |
| Accent | In poetry, accent refers to the stressed portion (i.e. syllables) of a word, this can sometimes be a matter of opinion. |
| Aesthetic(s) | can be used as an adjective meaning applying to the senses. As a noun an aesthetic is a coherent sense of (stylistic) taste. |
| Allegory | A story in which each aspect has a symbolic meaning outside the tale itself. |
| Alliteration | The repetition of the initial consonant sounds of a word. |
| Allusion | A reference to another work or famous figure is an allusion. A classical allusion is a reference to Greek or Roman mythology, they can also be topical or popular. |
| Anachronism | that which is misplaced in time: an anomaly within a narrative's chronology. |
| Analogy | A comparison, usually involving 2 or more symbolic parts and are employed to clarify an action or a relationship. |
| Anecdote | a short narrative of an amusing, interesting, or biographical incident. |
| Antecedent | The word, phrase, or clause that a pronoun refers to or replaces. |
| Anthropomorphism | Inanimate objects, animals, or natural phenomena being given human characteristics- different from personification in that for something non-human to be personified it would need to take on a human shape. |
| Anticlimax | That which occurs when an action in a story produces far smaller results that had been expected- frequently in a comic fashion. |
| Antihero | A protagonist who is markedly unheroic: morally weak, cowardly, dishonest, or any number of other unsavory qualities. |
| Aphorism | A short and usually witty saying. |
| Apostrophe | An address to someone not present, or to a personified/anthropomorphized object of idea. |
| Archaism | The use of deliberately old-fashioned language often used to create a feeling of antiquity. |
| Aside | A speech (usually a short comment) made by an author to the audience, as though momentarily stepping outside of the action onstage (see soliloquy) |
| Aspect | A trait or characteristic of something. |
| Assonance | The repeated use of vowel sounds, as in, "Old King Cole was a Merry Old Soul" |
| Atmosphere | The emotional tone or background that surrounds a scene. |
| Ballad | A long, narrative poem, usually in very regular meter and rhyme. Typically having a Naïve Folksy Quality that distinguished it from epic poetry. |
| Bathos, Pathos | When the Writing of a scene evokes feelings of dignified piety and sympathy, pathos is at work. When writing strains for grandeur it can't support and tries to give small events immense emotional significance, it utilizes bathos. |
| Black Humor | The use of disturbing or taboo themes in comedy. |
| Bombast | This is pretentious, exaggeratedly learned language. When one tries to be eloquent by using he largest most uncommon words, they are being bombastic. |
| Burlesque | A broad parody, one that takes a style or a form, and exaggerates it into ridiculousness. For the purposes of the AP exam, burlesque and parody can be considered synonymous. |
| Cacophony | the use of deliberately harsh and or awkward sounds in poetry. |
| Cadence | The beat or rhythm of poetry in a general sense. |
| Canto | The name for a section division in a long work of poetry. i.e. A Canto divides a long poem into parts the way chapters divide a novel. |
| Catharsis | refers to the "cleansing" of emotion an audience member experiences: having lived vicariously through the characters on stage. |
| Chorus | In drama, a chorus is a group of citizens who stand outside the main action on stage and commentate. |
| Classic | Can mean typical (:common, regular), or can refer to an accepted masterpiece. While Classical usually refers specifically to the arts of ancient Greece and Rome. |
| Coinage (neologism) | A new word, usually one invented on the spot: a very casual, or "inside" idiom- the technical term for coinage is neologism. |
| Colloquialism | A word or phrase used in everyday English which is not a part of the formal English lexicon, i.e. idiom, vernacular. |
| Complex, Dense | Two terms carrying the similar meaning of suggesting that there is more than one possibility in the meaning of words (image, idea, opposition) |
| Conceit, Controlling Image | A startling or unusual metaphor, or one developed and expanded upon over several lines. When the image dominates and controls the entire work, it's called a controlling image. |
| Connotation, Denotation | A word's denotation is its literal meaning, whereas the connotation is everything else the word suggests or implies. |
| Consonance | The repetition of consonant sounds within words (rather than at their beginnings- which is alliteration) |
| Couplet | A pair of lines that end in rhyme. |
| Decorum | Speech or some other writing styled to suit a particular social station and/or in accordance with the occasion. |
| Diction, Syntax | Diction is the author's choice of words (using wept, vs. cried is a matter of diction.), syntax refers to the ordering and structuring of the words (whether to say, "The pizza was smothered in toppings; I ate it greedily." Or, "I greedily ate the pizza smothered in toppings." Is a matter of syntax). |
| Dirge | A song for the dead; often slow, heavy and melancholy. |
| Dissonance | The grating of incompatible sounds. |
| Doggerel | Crude, simplistic verse, often in singsong rhyme: see limericks. |
| Dramatic Irony | When the audience knows something the characters in a drama do not. |
| Dramatic monologue | When a single speaker in literature says something to a silent audience. |
| Elegy | A type of poem that meditates on death or mortality in a serious, thoughtful manner, often using the recent death of a person as a starting point. |
| Enjambment | The continuation of a syntactic unit from one line or couplet of a poem to the next with no pause. |
| Epic | In a broad sense, an epic is a very long narrative poem on a serious theme written in a dignified style; esp. dealing with glorious or profound subject matter. |
| Epitaph | Lines that commemorate the dead at their burial place. AN epitaph is usually a line or a handful of lines, often serious or religious, but sometimes witty and even irreverent. |
| Euphemism | A word or phrase that takes the place of a harsh, unpleasant or impolite reality, such as the use of "passed away" for died and "let go" for fired. |
| Euphony | The harmonious blending of sounds. |
| Explicit | To say or write something directly and clearly (rarely seen in AP literature, as the point of most passages is to be implicit). |
| Farce | Now used to refer to extremely broad humor. In more archaic usage, farce was a more neutral term- meaning a funny play; a comedy. (aside: archaic use of "comedy" referred to a play, and did not specify genre) |
| Feminine Rhyme | lines rhymed by their final two symbols, i.e. running ang gunning have feminine rhyme. |
| Foil | A secondary or perhaps even lesser character who serves to highlight some characteristic of a main character, usually by contrast. |
| Foot | The basic rhythm unit of a line of poetry, formed by the combination of 2 or 3 syllables, either stressed or unstressed. |
| Foreshadowing | an event or statement in a narrative that suggests, in miniature, a larger event that comes later. |
| Free Verse | Poetry written without a regular rhyme scheme or metrical pattern. |
| Genre | A subcategory of literature. |
| Gothic, Gothic Novel | the sensibility derived from gothic novels. The form first showed up in the middle of the 18th century and had a heyday of popularity for about 60 years. (Think, gloom, castles, melancholy, sinister setting elements, etc.) |
| Hubris | The excessive pride or ambition that leads to a main character's downfall. |
| Hyperbole | Exaggeration or deliberate overstatement. |
| Implicit | to write or say something that often implies something, but never says it directly or clearly. |
| In Medias Res | Latin: &quot;In the middle of things&quot; -one of the conventions of epic poetry is that it must always being in medias res. |
| Interior Monologue | A term from novels and poetry, not dramatic literature. It refers to the mental dialogue that occurs within a character's head. |
| Inversion | Switching the customary order of elements in a sentence or phrase. -A type of syntax manipulation usually referred to as poetic license. |
| Irony | A varied, powerful, and very often intricate literary device. One definition is that it is a statement meaning the opposite of what it appears to mean. Yet unlike sarcasm, irony has an undertow of meaning, sliding against the literal meaning of the words. |
| Lament | A poem of sadness of grief over the death of a loved one, or over some other intense loss. |
| Lampoon | A satire |
| Loose and Periodic Sentences | a loose sentence is one that is complete before its end. (i.e. Jack loved Barbara despite her irritating snorting laugh, her complaining and her terrible taste in shoes.), whereas a periodic sentence is not grammatically complete until it's reached its final phrase (i.e. Despite Barbara' irritation at Jack's peculiar habit of picking between his toes while watching MTV and his terrible haircut, she loved him). |
| Lyric | A type of poetry that explores the poet's personal interpretations and feelings about the world. When the word lyric is used to refer to describe a ton it refers to a sweet emotional melodiousness. |
| Masculine Rhyme | A rhyme ending on the final stressed syllable (a.k.a. regular old fashioned rhyme) |
| Melodrama | A cheesy form of theatre in which the hero is very good, the villain, very bad, and the heroin very pure. |
| Metaphor and Simile | A metaphor is a comparison or an analogy that states one thing is another (his eyes were burning coals) and a simile is essentially a metaphor that is softened (almost always) with the use of like or as. |
| Metonym | A word that is used to stand for something else that it has attributes of or is associated with. For example, a herd of 50 cows could be called 50 head of cattle. |
| Nemesis | The protagonist's archenemy or supreme and persistent difficulty. |
| Objectivity and Subjectivity | An objective view is one that is impersonal or is outside the normal view of events. While a subjective viewpoint is one that is highly personal/is that of a single observer and is typically colored with that observer's emotional responses. |
| Onomatopoeia | Words that sound like what they mean: Boom, click, splat, etc. |
| Opposition | A pair of elements that contrast sharply- not necessarily a conflict, but rather a pairing of images, whereby each becomes more striking and informative because it's paired in contrast to the other one. |
| Oxymoron | A short phrase composed of opposites (usually in 2 consecutive words). Bright Black, calm frenzy, smart neo-con, etc. |
| Parable | Like a fable or an allegory, a story that instructs. |
| Paradox | A situation or statement that seems to contradict itself, but on closer inspection does not. |
| Parallelism | repeated syntactical similarities used for effect. |
| Paraphrase | To restate phrases and sentences in your own words; to rephrase: it's not analysis or interpretation- just a way of demonstration that you comprehend what you've read. |
| Parenthetical Phrase | A phrase set off by commas that interrupts the flow of a sentence commentary or added detail. |
| Parody | The work that results when one specific work is exaggerated to ridiculousness0 |
| Pastoral | A poem set in tranquil nature, or even more specifically one about shepherds. |
| Persona | The narrator in a non-first person novel. In third-person writing, even though the author isn't a character, you get some idea of the author's personality- through their use of Persona. |
| Personification | Giving an inanimate objects human qualities or form. |
| Plaint | A poem or speech expressing sorrow. |
| Point of View | the perspective from which the action of a novel, play or narrative poem is presented. |
| The omniscient narrator | A third person narrator who, like god, sees into each character's mind and understands all the acts going on. |
| The limited omniscient narrator | a third person narrator who serves the same function as an omniscient narrator, but only report on the thoughts, feelings, etc. of one, usually central, character. |
| The objective narrator | sees the situation as though through a camera's lens: a third-person narrator who reports only that which is physically visible. |
| First-person narrator | A narrator who is a character in the story and tells the tale from his/her point of view, |
| The Stream of consciousness technique | like first-person narration, but the author places the reader inside the protagonist's head and makes them privy to all the character's thoughts as they scroll through the protag.'s consciousness. |
| Prelude | an introductory poem to a longer work of verse. |
| Protagonist | the main character of a novel or play |
| Pun | the usually humorous use of a word to suggest more than one meaning |
| Refrain | A line or set of lines repeated several times over the course of a poem. |
| Requiem | A song of prayer for the dead |
| Rhapsody | an intensely passionate verse or section of verse, usually of love or praise. |
| Rhetorical Question | A question that suggests an answer: in theory causes the reader/listener to feel that they've come up with the answer themselves. |
| Satire | Exposes common character flaws to the cold light of humor. It, in general, attempts to improve things by pointing out character's/people's mistakes. |
| Soliloquy | A speech spoken by a character alone on stage. Meant to convey the notion of listening to the character's thoughts. |
| Stanza | A group of lines in Verse, roughly analogous in function to the paragraph in prose. |
| Stock characters | Standard or clichéd character types. |
| Suggest | To imply, infer, indicate, etc. A basic tool of literature- critical to the formation of implicit details. |
| Suspension of disbelief | The demand made of a theatre audience to accept the limitations of staging and to supply the details of a particular situation with imagination. |
| Symbolism | A device in literature where an object represents an idea. |
| Theme | The main idea of the overall work; the central idea. |
| Tragic Flaw | In a tragedy, it's the weakness of character in an otherwise good or great character that leads to his/her downfall. |
| Travesty | A grotesque parody |
| Utopia | Meaning, elsewhere: an idealized imaginary place in which people are able to live in happiness, prosperity, and peace. |
| Zeugma | The use of a word to modify two or more word, but used for different meanings. Ex. -He closed the door and his heart on his lost love. |