Literary Devices Glossary

Adapted from:
Baldick, Chris. *Oxford Concise Dictionary of Literary Terms*. 2nd ed. New York: Oxford University Press. 2001
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In order to help you understand and apply–instead of just familiarize yourself with–college-level devices for analyzing style[1] and strategies of argument in language, I have divided them into 4 categories: modes, figurative language, rhetorical devices and poetic devices. Use the brief **category definitions** (below each title) as a framework for recognizing the basic functions of devices. Then, for each definition, compare/contrast with closely related terms (hyperlinks), note the *italics* indicating differentiating/exclusive characteristics of each term and test yourself with the **bold** models or examples.

Terms in red are especially important to know for analyzing style[1] of creative literature (AP Lit, ENG 111);
Terms in purple are especially pertinent to analysis of strategies for expository genres and argument (AP Lang, ENG 131);
Pink indicates terms critical to **both** kinds of tasks (ALL classes).

Green denotes important vocabulary related to elements of literature and components of argument–addressed elsewhere in my classes–for each term.

Modes

***pre-established literary forms* to which text can conform; modes may acquire specialized characteristics within different schools, periods and/or genres**

Allegory. An extended metaphor in which *ALL* objects and persons are *equated* with meanings that lie outside the text itself–say, **a political cartoon of a monster** (representing greed) **devouring** (destroying/wasting) **light bulbs** (representing ideas) **meaning: monopolies on intellectual property are preventing innovation**. True allegory is an interaction of **abstract** concepts, (those existing outside of any particular context, like "love"), *masquerading as concrete action and characters* to highlight the universality of a situation (consider the many forms of the allegory **Female Beauty taming the Male Beast**). Often allegories depict a universal symbol or personified abstraction , like **Death, a black-cloaked "grim reaper" with a scythe and hourglass**. Archetypes are sometimes interpreted as allegorical representations of universals (ambition, grief, destiny, wisdom, etc), but this limits their complexity to being only those concepts! Rather than calling something an allegory, consider whether you instead mean that an "allegorical reading" of parts show that there are **subtextual** (literally "under the words") ideas in play rather than the text *itself* being allegory (the same goes for metaphorical, symbolic and other figurative readings of *parts* of text). Consider ***The Old Man and the Sea* or *Lord of the Flies***. Is either *allegory*? Both certainly have **characters, conflicts and actions that lend themselves to allegorical reading**. How about ***The Great Gatsby's* connection to the concept of "The American Dream**?"

Appeals to reason, authority/ethics or emotion, (called *logos*, *ethos* and *pathos*, respectively). Ethical appeals are claims that try to align the reader's view with a set of standards (**9 out of 10 doctors recommend…**); pathetic claims provoke him/her to "experience" a particular emotional reaction (**You deserve a break today**). Logical appeals invite the reader to weigh offered evidence and/or reasoning to reach the intended conclusion (**You can't win if you don't play**). Many arguments contain a combination of appeals, since these are broad categories, not precise strategies. (*Everything's An Argument* covers these in detail.)

Apostrophe. The *direct address* to an *unresponsive* person or personified thing, present or absent (including dead/ unconscious or in the audience), by a narrator, author or speaker, *in monologue–NEVER perceived of as a two-sided conversation*. In drama, apostrophe *toward the audience* is known as "breaking the 4th wall." A similar narrative convention of talking directly to the reader (**Gentle Reader, you will notice here…**) is often used by pre-20th century authors, especially by intrusive narrators. Apostrophe's most common purpose is to give vent to or display intense emotion on the part of the speaker, which can no longer be held back. Thus an apostrophe often takes the form of a digression and transfers some of the emotion to the object of the apostrophe (as in pathetic fallacy):
O value of wisdom that fadeth not away with time, virtue ever flourishing, that cleanseth its possessor from all venom! O heavenly gift of the divine bounty, descending from the Father of lights, that thou mayest exalt the rational soul to the very heavens! Thou art the celestial nourishment of the intellect. . . .–de Bury

Archetype. *Specific, well-documented* profiles/patterns of action, character, themes or images which underlie stories *across cultures and time periods* and are thought to rise to the level of *universal models of human experience*. Most often connected to iconic figures, details and events from myth, folktale and religion–and now in psychology--(mentor, mischief, a great flood, fall-from-grace, rebirth, etc), an example is **the *femme fatale*, that female character who is found throughout**

Western literature as a woman compelled to love but responsible for the downfall of a significant male character, embodied in diverse characters like Delilah, Scheherazade, Cleopatra, Guinevere, Juliet, etc. Contrast with abstraction (which idealizes a specific, rather than reusing a specific ideal that already exists) and motif (prevalent in a style or time period, but not universal) and see the continuum it forms with stereotype (an idealized but reductive representation of a real-life group) and *universal* symbol (archetypal when it has an "original" it follows). Consider the hero archetype and its relationship to the traditional Western plot pattern, as well as a modern-day incarnation of that archetype: the antihero. For a clear delineation of the major archetypes try: http://www.scribd.com/doc/18171537/Archetypes-to-help-with-literary-analysis.

Bildungsroman. *Coming-of-age* story with dynamic protagonist developing from innocence to maturity or ignorance to wisdom, usually by breaking away from his/her origins or home, developed from the archetypal heroic epic (where a hero pursues his destiny by making a journey and undergoing trials) and underlying the basic Western plot structure. Also known in literary terms as a "romance," although in contemporary popular literature, "romance" has come to be identified with a female reaching maturity by finding and marrying her true love. An underlying assumption of this mode is that one's *genuine* self must be developed or uncovered through effort, not given or comprehended without a struggle—this is why it is often used as a religious allegory. ***The Great Gatsby* and *Catcher In The Rye* can both be argued to be examples**.

Bombast. Extravagant, grandiloquent diction *disproportionate to its subject matter*. When intended ironically, this is the opposite of meiosis; otherwise this is overblown rhetorical performance that characterizes some styles[2] and genres. Be careful to justify the use of this term, rather than apply it pejoratively. Inspirational speeches often fall into this trap. **You are the greatest, strongest, hardest-working team EVER to walk the earth! Now, go out and win!!**

Caricature. A satirical, usually humorous depiction which exaggerates *physical* characteristics or features of a subject, as is often found in **political cartoons (like Obama with oversized ears)**. A counterpart of lampoon. In verbal form, it falls under the category of ***ad hominem*** ("about the person," rather than the issue) argument and is considered fallacious. It is the opposite of abstraction because it reduces a person's or persona's traits to merely the physical.

Cliché. *Overused or default* idiom, phrase or descriptor which is repetitively applied in a particular context (as in someone guilty wanting a "**clean slate**" or coworkers being "**on the same page**"), losing the force of its meaning and becoming banal. A cliché often indicates an insecure or uncreative speaker, narrator or author or a lack of inspiration or knowledge of the subject. Some jargon, especially in the business world where trends are prevalent, rises to the level of cliché (e.g., "**outside-the-box" "partner with"** and **"team player**").

Colloquial. *Unofficial* spoken language, slang or vernacular (or dialect, if the usage is regional). For example, the use of **sub** for a sandwich (which is a **hoagie** or a **hero** in some parts of the US). Colloquial is considered low diction and is often idiomatic. It is a common feature in works that showcase **local color** and can be used reductively as part of stereotyping.

Comic Relief. A digression *from tension-building progression* of events in *an emotionally-involved, not otherwise comedic story* designed to allow the audience a break in intensity before resuming the main action. Especially in American horror films, this often involves black humor by the protagonists, such as two teens fighting to prevent an apocalypse who, in a quiet moment, remark **"Hey—if we don't succeed, just think: no homework this fall!"**

Diction. All language has diction: the *register* of an author's or character's explicit *word choice, syntax and rhetorical structure* relative to other uses of language *within the same* context (time period, genre, situation). Diction pegs a work on a scale for *complexity* of vocabulary (level of language—normal to highly specialized) and phrasing (difficulty of structure—simple to intricate). Call diction **formal, middle, informal or poetic.** But, keep in mind that it is also analyzed for how abstract/concrete and salient it is (see bombast and meiosis). **The first sentence above is formal, the second is middle, the third is informal.** Diction can include the use of colloquial, jargon, conceit, etc.

Digression. An aside, gloss or other *supplementary passage within a cohesive work* which departs from the main action or argument *temporarily*. Footnotes/endnotes/appendices perform the same task, but do so *outside* of the text proper. Frame stories in narrative open with a brief scenario wherein the fully developed, main, *other* story is a digression. Contrast with non sequiturs, which *lack* any connection to the main text or context, and turns which *complement* the main text. To segue back to a topic when one has gotten "off track," it is conventional to say "**But, I digress."**

Doggerel. *Verse* that is noneuphonious, awkward with rhythm and rhyme (thus, "sounding like a dog") and shallow in meaning or significance. When created intentionally by an author, it can be parody. Otherwise, it is painfully bad poetry. As with bombast, it is a pejorative term and thus must be justified. **Greeting cards messages are often examples.**

Dystopia. Literature that imagines society as a *dehumanizing or regressive* force, particularly by using an extreme form of a plausibly real-world setting as a severely limiting or debilitating environment. In argument, hypothetical examples (the worst case scenario and, especially, slippery slope exemplification methods) can operate as dystopic vignettes. Contrast with utopia. ***Brave New World* is an example.**

Euphemism. The *substitution* of a mild or neutral word or phrase for a harsh or blunt one, as in the use of "pass away" instead of "die." The basic psychology of euphemistic language is the desire to distance the speaker and/or audience from something hurtful or embarrassing. Many idioms referring to death, sex, crime, and excremental functions are euphemisms with connotations and denotations that are highly divergent. Consider how illogical the literal (that is, the actual meaning of the text) phrase "**going to the bathroom"** is**.** Euphemistic language indicates concern for the audience and discomfort with the subject when it is not merely a placeholder cliché.

Exposition. *Didactic explanation or analysis* of a situation, problem or issue *central to a work as a passage within the work*. In narrative it introduces facts or details necessary for understanding a missing piece of the story, including what we think of as "backstory." Classic examples are **the villain's detailed, step-by-step confession** after being caught or a **detective's explanation of forensics** in a mystery. In expository prose it can be the parts of the text that are not evidence or appeals, like the **explication and commentary in the genres** of anatomy (where a subject is "dissected" so as to be fully understood) and apology [apologia] (where a set of events/actions/decisions is described and defended/justified, often step by step).

Fallacy. *Illogical* assertion whose warrants are not supportable with evidence. (See a traditional treatment at http://papyr.com/hypertextbooks/engl_101/logic.htm#ad_hoc). Contrast with syllogism, exposition. Appeals of all types can be illogical or too presumptive for their audience and thus fallacious. A common solecism is to confuse fallacy with falsehood. Many fallacies you would judge as true statements (**if you work hard, you can accomplish anything**). A false statement isn't fallacious, although it will fail to be validated when subjected to a logical appeal. **"The world is flat" is false, not illogical.**

Farce. Literature which is characterized by broad humor based on confusions, wild antics, slapstick and especially *kinesthetic* or *physical* comedy. To call something a farce as an insult is pejorative and, in literary analysis, a solecism unless you are talking about it being out of control in a funny or lowering way (as with **unruly behavior in a courtroom**). Contrast with the more specific but overlapping forms of humor: lampoon, satire and parody which are often misused as synonyms.

Frame Story. A narrative convention that sets up a story within a story, doubling all its elements. Typically the opening story (the frame) takes the form of a brief discussion which then digresses as one character shares an adventure or experience at length, the character becoming the second story's narrator for the duration of the digression (with the frame falling away). **Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, James' *Turn of the Screw* and many "retrospectives" within a story utilize this convention**.

Humor (AKA Comedy). According to Aristotle, comedy—covering what we refer to generally as humor today—is a *reversal of roles* intended to call attention to assumptions about the status quo. ***The Emperor's New Clothes*** is a comedy in this sense, since it places its characters (the Emperor, the child) in positions opposite to what would be normally expected of them (rather than because it's **funny**). Psychologists theorize that we often laugh at things that are "inappropriate" *literally,* because we observe someone else in the role of victim/perpetrator but also imagine it reversed (with ourselves in their place) and, since for us, it is distant or implausible, we thus experience intense relief (that's funny!)—what we find humorous here is considered a "benign violation" of a social code. **Comedy of Errors** is a subgenre where in a normal but tense situation, everything gets "out of whack" in unpredictable ways (especially prevalent in Elizabethan literature). Be careful to differentiate mere reversal in comedy and tragedy from the more intense and complex concept of irony. **Jokes** aren't necessarily comedy, unless they unexpectedly reverse expectations, like: **A rabbi, a priest and a mail carrier walk into a bar. The bartender looks up and says, "what is this…some kind of joke?"**

Hyperbole. *Overstatement* characterized by exaggerated and/or categorical (**always, never, all, nothing**) language. It may be part of a simile or other comparison (**I wouldn't trade this moment for all the money in the world!),** and it can be used to mock or criticize. Hyperbole for literary analysts *is limited to actual words* (that do not fit a more narrowly-defined device like, say, invective—contrast these for the example below)—nonverbal exaggeration is always described by the narrower form it takes (abstraction, caricature, satire, parody, etc); similarly it is more proper to say an author belabors, overstates or elaborates to excess in an argument (perhaps to the point of fallacy) rather than that the argument is hyperbolic. As a technique in wording or nonverbally, it is opposite of meiosis and overlaps with bombast and invective.
It is a maxim among these lawyers that whatever hath been done before may legally be done again: and therefore they take special care to record all the decisions formerly made against common justice and the general reason of mankind. These, under the name of precedents, they produce as authorities, to justify the most iniquitous opinions; and the judges never fail of decreeing accordingly.—Swift

Innuendo. A *strongly implied*, parallel meaning to a word or phrase that changes the intent of the communication, usually to suggesting something unsavory such as sexual double entendre, blackmail, malicious gossip, etc. Often it utilizes idioms, euphemism and connotation to conceal its true meaning in the subtext (and thus protect the speaker from being accused of actually saying what he/she implied). **The Godfather in the Mafia makes the prosecutor "an offer he can't refuse" (by, perhaps, suggesting an immediate vacation with his family, who are currently being held in a van outside).**

Invective. Wording that abuses, denounces, or vituperates against a person, cause, idea, or system by employing *heavy-handed* use of negative, *emotive, insulting* language. This is a hallmark of ad hominem argument or extremity of feeling in character. Contrast with the more general concept of ridicule. **I cannot but conclude the bulk of your natives to be the most pernicious race of little odious vermin that nature ever suffered to crawl upon the surface of the earth.—Swift**

Idiom. *Specific, recurrent and widely-understood phrase/construction* in a language that *indicates* rather than *literally* articulating a concrete idea. Euphemisms and epithets as well as clichés can become idioms; some idioms are regional and thus overlap with colloquialism, some are discipline-specific and thus overlap with jargon—thus their use might provide local color. An idiom is NEVER self-explanatory, and it both assumes and requires from the audience cultural literacy or at least fluency in language to interpret (the French equivalent of the English idiom **"love at first sight" is *coup de foudre***—literally, a lightning strike). Reading works from traditions and/or time periods alien to us, it is easy to be stumped by an idiom or to mistake it for an original figure of speech **("and Bob's your uncle!");** the only way to avoid this is to be well-read! The **etymology** of an idiom (the history of its introduction into use, spread and alteration) is a rich resource for understanding any culture, time period and language—I recommend the use of etymological dictionaries as a matter of course for this purpose. **You can take what I say all the way to the bank; she's the spitting image of her mother; he caught a dying quail to end the inning.**

Irony. Expression through words or events introducing a reality *radically* different from—usually *diametrically opposite to*—literal meaning, actual appearance or reasonable expectation. What all types of irony have in common is the interaction of the explicit with its **context** (literally "what is with the words;" that is, what is surrounding/ before/ after as well as the reasonable purpose and audience for the text), wherein the explicit is converted *unpredictably* into its opposite or near-opposite, *changing the overall meaning of the expression or episode*. A useful explanation of irony and its effect as a perspective or tone of a work comes from *The Art of Watching Films* by Boggs and Petrie, who say:

> Because irony pictures every situation as possessing two equal sides, or truths, that cancel each other out or at least work against each other, the overall effect of ironic expression is to show the ridiculous complexity and uncertainty of human experience. Life is seen as a continuous series of paradoxes and contradictions, characterized by ambiguities and discrepancies, and no truth is ever absolute. (82)

It is a solecism to use the term "ironic" for something merely "unexpected" or "surprising" or even extremely coincidental or juxtaposed (**it's *not* ironic that an English teacher misuses the term *ironic*, for example**). Similarly, the informal American English use of *ironic* for someone who sees things negatively would more precisely be "sardonic" or perhaps, if a witty critique is involved, "satirical." College level use of these terms requires precision.

Verbal irony is very common in American literature. It is communication where meaning or tone is *diametrically opposed* to what the content logically SAYS. It is left to the audience to recognize the implications of the context for the "real" meaning of what's being communicated, which often requires familiarity with the speaker, topic and/or audience. Verbal irony is called stable when strongly signaled/indicated and unstable or ambiguous when irony is left purposely uncertain. (Consider **Vietnam War POW John McCain explaining that he missed attending Woodstock with his hippie peers, because he was tied up at the time**.) Verbal irony is labeled sarcasm if it takes the form of praise, travesty or meiosis if it takes one of the forms of understatement. Rhetorical questions assumed to elicit a negative answer are an example: **Could there be anything more important in choosing a college than its proximity to the beach?**

Situational irony is overwhelming MISUSED as a term. It is generated when there is *surprise recognition* by the audience of an event or idea in *extreme* contrast with reasonable expectation or actual appearance, communicated *through the vehicle of another audience, victim, or character who unintentionally elicited the changed outcome.* That is, situational irony is a scenario suddenly rotated 180° (or perverted into its nemesis) by its participants. It is NOT ironic that something or someone changes, even abruptly, in unpredictable ways. A **professional pickpocket getting his own pocket picked just as he is picking someone else's pocket (and thus not on his guard** rises to the level of irony because the pickpocket made *himself* into the "straight man" or dupe who got "taken." When we "witness" the events from his point of view or perspective, a new, opposite reality is introduced to us, too. Witnessing the same scenario through the perspective of the second pickpocket removes all irony: he/she never expected anything different, so reality was not altered. Contrast this complex concept of a *scenario being converted to its opposite from within* with basic binary comedy reversals like a former pickpocket turned police detective or the tragedy of a cop forced by circumstance to embrace a life of crime. Irony's surprise often produces a concomitant comic effect on the audience—laughing at the inferior *who is unaware of* the reversal of roles that is the logical consequence of his/her actions—or tragic, if the reversal of fortunes *that follows* arouses pity and fear. When ironic situations seem contrived by fate or supreme beings as "just desserts" (**what goes around, comes around**), it is called cosmic irony.

Dramatic irony is very different from other forms of irony. It occurs ONLY where an audience has knowledge of context *which is denied to the character or speaker at a critical point*, gives *an unintentionally opposing*—often ominous or foreshadowing—meaning to a character's words or actions. The classic case of this would be when **King Oedipus, who has unknowingly killed his father, says that he will show no mercy to his father's killer when he finds him.** Some

analysts conflate this term with **tragic irony** (where an uninformed character takes action that is reasonable but based on partial or inaccurate information, leading to the opposite of what he/she intends, **unknowingly bringing about his/her own downfall**)—this does not require, necessarily that the audience is aware of "the truth."

Jargon. *Specialized* or technical language *of an established trade or discipline,* such as computer terms "**interface" and "crash."** Contrast with colloquial. Jargon is not necessarily high diction, however, unless the field is highly respected, erudite or artistic (think of drug jargon, for example); jargon can employ metaphors to describe its subject and can be idiomatic *within the context*, such as in sports ("**running out the clock**"). Jargon can evolve into more widely used idiom or even cliché over time ("**let's run this up the flagpole and see who salutes**").

Lampoon. A *crude*, coarse, often bitter satire impugning the *appearance, personality or character* of a person, usually crossing over into ridicule. Contrast with, parody, caricature, invective. Often lampoon is associated with "having an agenda," character assassination or partisanship (consider school rivalries which spawn slogans like "**Giants Squash the Ducks!")**

Malapropism. *Unintentional* and *extemporaneous* misuse of words or syntax in speech, usually the substitution of a correct term by a similar sounding or related word, resulting in a revealing, humorous or ironic expression that, usually, satirizes the speaker's understanding of the context. Freud based his famous "Freudian slip [of the tongue]" on such unintentional expression in *Hamlet;* the term itself comes from a fictional character's name. Contrast with solecism, sarcasm, pun. **They misunderestimate the problem. — G. W. Bush**

Meiosis. A conscious and thus ironic *understatement for emphasizing effect* (**Faulkner, the Nobel Laureate, listed his career on tax forms as "farmer.") Litotes** is a subset that *affirms something by negating its opposite explicitly (with un-, no, non-, etc)*, sometimes with a sly double negative ("**It's not unheard of…"; no mean feat). Apophasis** is a subset of litotes where a speaker *disingenuously downplays something* by explicitly bringing it to the audience's attention ("**I didn't come here to talk about my opponent's indictment for bribery; I want to talk about the issues.")** Meiotic statements implicitly compare/contrast like similes but *always* negatively. (Contrast with hyperbole and bombast; see how this overlaps travesty and verbal irony?). **Last week I saw a woman flay'd and you would hardly believe how much it altered her person for the worse.—Swift**

Motif. A *pre-existing*, *prevalent* set of components *imported* into multiple works to serve as a *signal* for the theme through association in the audience's mind (motifs are central to linking texts to certain styles, genres or time periods). A **leitmotif** is a recurring signal, identified usually as the "signature" of a specific character, which *exists only within a single work*. Contrast with archetype which *recreates* universals in an original concrete form instead of simply repeating them. In expository texts, motifs may be associated with **subgenres** and are synonymous with the *conventions* of **the diary for travelogues, didactic letter form for recording "words of wisdom," undercover disguise for investigative reporting**, etc. ***Carpe diem* is a motif used extensively in poetry; the famous Jaws music is a leitmotif for the shark.**

Oxymoron. A paradox *reduced to two words*, usually in an adjective-noun ("**eloquent silence**") or adverb-adjective ("**inertly strong**") relationship, used for effect, to emphasize contrasts, incongruities, hypocrisy, or simply the complex nature of reality. Oxymoron as a subset of paradox can be used by authors to indicate when things have gone contrary to expectation, belief, desire or assertion. It usually produces a contrast just less than irony which can also show how something has been misunderstood or mislabeled and needs reconsideration (this is the play on words involved in pseudo-oxymora like "army intelligence" and "government work" (you'll find many of these, some clearly political commentary at http://www.atlantamortgagegroup.com/ oxymoronlist.htm) Contrast with epithet, which involves no paradox, just a synthesis of adjective and noun. **Growing up in a small town has been derided by some as a living death.**

Parable. Short, simple story or example that illustrates *an explicit moral lesson* through the use of a situational analogy for its audience, often rising to the level of abstraction (a few have even become archetypes, like the Good Samaritan's unselfish are of a stranger). The Bible contains numerous parables, the most famous of which is probably **the Prodigal Son; Steinbeck's *The Pearl* is a modern parable**. Contrast with allegory.

Paradox. A statement which *seems contradictory or illogical but is ACTUALLY true*. Used often in satire and other humor to implicitly carry a critical subtextual message about the subject, pointing out discordance with the expected. Contrast with fallacy which may seem true but is illogical or self-contradictory. **Protestors vowed today to continue their fight for peace.**

Parody. A satiric *imitation* of someone or something with the intent to criticize the author, his/her ideas, or work, AKA "spoof." The parodist exploits the peculiarities of an author's style—his propensity to use too many parentheses, certain favorite words, or repeated devices of plot or argument. Often the mimicry is placed out of context with the original intention, creating the reversal of roles inherent in all humor. Imitations of Bush's malapropisms by Jib-Jab are an example. Contrast with farce, lampoon, sarcasm, satire.

Play on words. An *explicit* arrangement of words which operates—in terms of denotation, connotation, tone, or other means of interpretation by the audience—*on at least two different planes simultaneously* revealing unexpected overlaps between, usually, common situations and particular ones, *almost always for comic effect*. Many "one liner" jokes utilize plays on words. Puns are a specialized category of this; innuendo is play on words that can be for a non-comic, usually insulting effect.
A Buddhist orders a $2 veggie burger, saying, "Make me one with everything." When he receives his food, he gives the cashier $5 and waits. The cashier places the $5 in the register and says, "Change comes from within."

Poetry. One of the two forms of verbal communication, poetry is characterized by having *some rhythmical and/or rhyming structure and arranged in a typographical format that breaks wording up into lines and stanzas* rather than paragraphs or continuous sentences with prose, the other verbal form. Poems are usually titled, involve imaginative treatment of a subject with specialized and/or figurative language, and is *meant to be performed out loud*. Generally, poetry is narrative or descriptive in mode and makes emotional appeals to its audience. **Song lyrics, verse, epitaphs on tombstones and greeting card text** are all examples of forms of poetry. When extensive imaginative language is present but not a poetic form of typography, you may be reading poetic diction within prose. See poetic devices for more conventions of poetry. When you quote poetry you indicate its line breaks with a backslash /, and you keep all the punctuation, capitalization and other specifics as they appear in the original, like this: "**I think that I shall never see/ A thing as lovely as a tree"** is the opening of one of the most well-known poems in English.

Prose. The second form of verbal communication, prose is wording that *has no extensive metrical structure or specialized typographical arrangement.* It does not have irregular line breaks even if it has some rhyme or rhythm. Generally, prose is expository or narrative in mode and like poetry makes claims about its subject, in the form of appeals. **Narrative and nonnarrative texts using paragraphs, the representation of oral speech/dialogue and even single words and sentences**, if not formatted with line breaks, are considered prose. Confusingly, the study of poetry is traditionally called…wait for it…prosody.

Pun. A humorous play on words whose *resultant sounds—but not meanings—*are *explicitly meant to resemble other words*. A pun is intended to call attention to the unexpected connections between ideas (especially assumptions), usually for a surprise insight. Puns are commonly associated with unsophisticated humor like lampoon and thus could affect the overall diction and/or tone of a text by its inclusion (a pun wouldn't be appropriate in a court decision, for example).
You can lead a horticulture but you can't make her think -Dorothy Parker

Ridicule. Insulting words intended to belittle a person or idea and *arouse contemptuous laughter* by condemning or criticizing by making something *respectable seem laughable* and thus "ridiculous." (Harry Potter reference, anyone?) It goes beyond other forms of humor to strike at the heart of what the ridiculed object stands for, rather than merely its faults or idiosyncrasies. It is one of the most powerful methods of criticism, partly because it cannot be satisfactorily answered (Who can refute a sneer? Denying it is giving it the status of a possibility—see apophasis for the converse). Ridicule is, not surprisingly, a common weapon of the especially agitated satirist. (Contrast with sarcasm.) The opposite of ridicule is **homage** (pronounced as in the French without the "h")—a public acknowledgement of the worthiness of a person or thing that invites others to share that view—"**The Star-Spangled Banner**" is an homage.
The Guvernator: Arnold Schwartzenegger.

Sarcasm. A narrow form of verbal irony reliant on context, expressing sneering or personal disapproval *in the guise of praise*. ("**Nice hat, lady!")** Students often use this solecistically for someone's negative tone or perspective, as they do the term "ironic." Contrast with ridicule and invective; mock-bombast and hyperbole could overlap.
Billionaires for Bush—bumper sticker

Satire. A general category of humor which presents a subject *with a critical attitude* using wit in an effort to improve mankind and human institutions *by making fun of vice or weakness*. *Exaggeration* or abstraction is almost always present. The satirist may insert serious statements of value or desired behavior, but most often he/she bases the satire on an implicit moral code as subtext, understood by his/her audience. The satirist's goal is to point out the *hypocrisy of his/her target*. So, satire is an implicit appeal to character or ethics and inescapably moral even when no explicit values are promoted in the work because it only works within the framework of a widely spread value system. **Stand-up comedians often portray themselves as honestly saying what the rest of us WON'T admit we think**. Contrast with more specific forms of humor: farce, lampoon, parody.
The week following September 11, 2001, *The Onion's* mock front cover was a map of the US within sniper sights and the 80-pt text: "*Holy Shit*!" [Baker's note: it was the first time since the news of the first plane hitting the WTC that I laughed.]

Solecism. *Studied misuse* of a word or concept indicating lack of understanding or sophistication. Some of these have passed into regular, even accepted usage (like **peruse** for "glance over," **nauseous** for "nauseating" or "**could have cared less**" for not caring much). Precise, correct usage is usually higher diction, so context can cause problems in understanding. Contrast with malapropism. **What, you're a *pedagogue*? You should be arrested!**

Soliloquy. A **monologue** in which the character is speaking out loud to him or herself *alone and unobserved/unheard by other characters* (can overlap with apostrophe and perhaps aporia). An **internal monologue** is the unspoken thoughts of a character presented by the narrator only to the audience. **Dialogue** occurs out loud between 2 or more characters. **The "To Be or Not To Be" soliloquy of Hamlet is the most famous example.**

Stereotype or Type. Characterization that adheres to the assumption that some aspect of a person is *predictably accompanied by certain traits, actions or values widely assigned to a general group of people*, thus reducing the person to a specimen of the group with no individual persona (and representing the views of a specific audience). **Examples are stock character types that "represent" their race, occupation, age, religion, ethnicity, class, gender, etc**. A type of abstraction; compare with cliché and contrast with archetype, [here's an awkward attempt at a mnemonic:] *archetypes* are an ideal descending an arch from on high to be embodied in a new form on earth, *stereotypes* are an imperfect recording of a person being broadcast in stereo over and over again. Types can be positive or negative portrayals; they are always reductive and thus insulting even if they are not malicious.

Stream of consciousness. The narration of a scene or work as a seemingly unmediated flow of perceptions, memories and interior monologue of a speaker or character, usually unstructured tangibly as to chronology or plot. This narration represents the opposite of the **intrusive narrator** who not only presents the story to the reader but inserts commentary on the action, characters and theme. Notable 20th century fiction–Modern and Post-Modern–uses this mode (**Faulkner's *The Sound and The Fury*, Joyce's *Ulysses***), but it also a technique journalism and other prose genres use to capture the firsthand experience of an event or subject.

Tragedy. According to Aristotle, a compelling *reversal of fortunes* that elucidates the human condition and inspires audience empathy with the characters' plights, especially the omnipotence of fate vs. human desire (a pathetic appeal). Do not fall victim to the solecism that something **sad** is tragic. All living things die, thus death is never a reversal of fortune. The common application of the word tragic to the accidental death of an innocent, especially a young innocent, is closer to correct because it assumes that the fate of the victim was on a more predictable–happy, long-lasting–trajectory. Carefully differentiate from irony even of the cosmic kind; contrast with humor/comedy, its opposite. ***Oedipus Rex* is the quintessential tragedy.**

Travesty. A work or action that treats a serious subject *frivolously*–ridiculing the dignified. Often travesty's tone is mock serious and the diction heavy handed. **Black humor** is a type of travesty that is used to comic effect especially by Americans (**Dirty Harry's tag line to someone holding a gun to his head: "Go ahead, make my day."**). Contrast with parody, satire and farce. Travesty involves irony in that it communicates the opposite of its explicit or literal sense (Dirty Harry means "you don't want to do that") "A travesty of justice" is a solecism for dissatisfaction with the outcome of a trial (the user is implying mistreatment of the aggrieved party, rather than that the trial was not seriously undertaken). **A disturbing real-life example of travesty was a young student who opened fire on her classmates asked the question, "why did you do it?" She said, "I don't like Mondays." This was the basis for the Boomtown Rats' song "I don't like Mondays," which itself could be seen as travesty for presenting the event as a pop tune.**

Utopia. Literature which imagines a society in which *ideal or enhanced human experience is made real*, especially by use of a unfamiliar setting (often this is highly philosophical as prose or in the genre of fantasy or science fiction). The counterpart of dystopia. **"The Jetsons" is utopian, as is Thoreau's *Walden.***

Figurative Language

tropes that bring external meaning(s) to literal text; their use may be a hallmark of certain schools, periods and/or genres

Abstraction. *Idealizing* the presentation of ideas, concepts or qualities as a *replacement* for physical or concrete *attributes* of an object/person (as in stereotype), the opposite of Realistic description and full development of character. Can also occur if the symbolic or metaphorical function of an object overpowers its literal role in the text. **"Big Brother" is an abstraction Orwell created to capture the omnipresence, omniscience and intangibility of a totalitarian regime.**

Analogy. Comparing two things, which are *alike in several respects*, for the purpose of explaining or clarifying something unfamiliar or difficult by showing how it is similar to something familiar (an image). While simile and analogy often overlap, the simile is generally a more artistic likening, done briefly for effect and emphasis, while analogy serves the more *practical* purpose of explaining a thought process or a line of reasoning or the *abstract* in terms of the concrete, and may therefore be more *extended*. Sometimes analogy is used to establish the warrants of a pattern of reasoning by using a familiar or less abstract argument which the reader can understand easily and probably agree with. Other analogies simply offer an explanation for clarification rather than a substitute argument. Contrast with metaphor.
He that voluntarily continues ignorance is guilty of all the crimes which ignorance produces, as to him that should extinguish the tapers of a lighthouse might justly be imputed the calamities of shipwrecks.–Samuel Johnson

Conceit. An *elaborate or multidimensional*, usually intellectually *ingenious poetic* comparison to an image such as analogy or metaphor in which, say a beloved is compared in numerous or complex ways to a ship, planet, etc. The comparison may be brief or extended. (Conceit is an old word for concept.)
Let man's soul be a sphere, and then, in this, / The Intelligence that moves, devotion is.—Donne

Epithet. An adjectival phrase used to comprehensively define a subject (noun) by synthesizing it with a key characteristic that sets it apart from its component parts, as in "**sneering contempt**" and "**untroubled sleep**." Extrapolation of an epithet into a logical metaphorical meaning can be particularly creative, for example, "**brownout**." Some epithets pass into regular usage as idioms, like "**downtime.**"

Image. The name for the *external* object, emotion or idea, usually concrete or tangible, connected with an object/idea appearing *figuratively* within a work. That is, an image is what is meant to "pop into the reader's head" (or ears, nose, tongue, etc) *based on* the words of a text, rather than what the words in the text say themselves. Found *explicitly* in figures like similes, analogies, metaphors and conceits (e.g., **he was sly as a fox**, where the words "sly" and "fox" incites the reader's imagination of fox behavior and thus concretizes the traits of "he" as predatory and intelligent in the reader's understanding, even though it doesn't SAY "he was predatory and intelligent."). Also used for the *implied* external model (vehicle) and/or its attributes for figures like abstraction, archetypes and allegory (blindfolded justice with scales as image for impartiality) and for the specific external correspondent for devices like jargon, denotation, connotation and allusion (the image of 9-1-1 as "emergency" behind "9/11" as the term for a specific historical event). See imagery below for a discussion of sensory images.

> In contrast to Symbolism and symbols, stand-alone images are *explicit* associations embedded in a work between objects or ideas that make an impression but whose connection is left ambiguous by the author. An image on its own is singular or at least *specific* in its connection to the object or idea and should be contrasted with the more complex symbol, which assigns a cluster of meanings to an object or idea and operates *throughout* the larger story (or Symbolism, which changes the meaning of a story through figurative reference). **In "A Rose for Emily" the second floor of Emily's house, where she looks out from and later conceals her personal life, could be interpreted as an image of her "higher" plane, status or class, but being so narrow, it would not rise to the level of a symbol within the story**.

Imagery. *Sensory* image that takes the form of an evocation of physical feeling in a work that explicitly relates to any of the *five senses.* Imagery is inferred by the reader, which distinguishes it from mere explicit description (i.e., "his shoe was green" isn't visual imagery—it *describes* color, **"the mossy couch pillow" is both visual and tactile imagery**—it *evokes* images of both color [gray/green] and texture [plush, soft] without actually SAYING either of these things). To reduce imagery to visual details that "paint a picture in the reader's head" is to miss the complexity and depth of imagery and, often, to confuse it with the author's attempt at Realism. Imagery is designed to elicit *physical* empathy from the reader whereas most figurative language focuses on *conceptual* manipulation (including the broader concept of image; see above). Confusingly, this term is often used by literary analysts more loosely to refer to *a set of related images within one work* (**the imagery of darkness in Conrad**), even when the images may not be sensory in nature (**imagery of military/navy in *Oedipus Rex***). To avoid confusion, make clear what usage you intend in writing college level analysis and be sure to consider each possibility when reading it.
And in some perfumes is there more delight/ Than in the breath that from my mistress reeks.—Shakespeare

Metaphor. A comparison which imaginatively *identifies one thing as another dissimilar thing*, and transfers or ascribes to the first, literal thing (the tenor or idea) some of the qualities of a second, imaginative one (the vehicle or **image**) to reveal hidden depth/breadth. Unlike a simile or analogy, metaphor asserts that one thing *is* another thing, not just that one is *like* another. Metaphor not only explains by making the *abstract* or unknown concrete and familiar, but it also enlivens by engaging the reader's imagination in *unfamiliar connections*. Implicit metaphors in speech are often located in verbs and modifiers rather than the noun (and thus missed by most students!)—consider "**her talent blossomed**" or "**a green recruit**."
Thus a mind that is free from passion is a very citadel; man has no stronger fortress in which to seek shelter and defy every assault. Failure to perceive this is ignorance; but to perceive it, and still not to seek its refuge, is misfortune indeed.—Marcus Aurelius

Metonymy. A form of metaphor, very similar to synecdoche (and, in fact, some rhetoricians do not distinguish between the two), in which a *closely associated object* is *substituted* for the object or idea in mind, *highlighting the contiguity* of the two.
The orders came directly from the White House; I fought the Law, and the Law won.

Onomatopoeia. The use of words in which *pronunciation suggests meaning*, especially for actions. Contrast with pun. Onomatopoeia can produce a lively sentence, adding sound effects to enhance visual, tactile or other imagery. Since it is *explicit*, onomatopoetic language doesn't usually qualify as aural imagery.

Personification. Representing an *animal or inanimate* object as having *human attributes*—traits of form, character, behavior, etc. As the name implies, a thing or idea is treated as a conscious person. A specialized type of personification is the **pathetic fallacy** where emotions are attributed to non-human entities (including the dead). Humanizing a cold

abstraction or even some natural phenomenon gives us a way to understand it, a comparative device to arrange the world in our own terms, so that we can further comprehend it. Contrast with a general metaphor, which replaces the object rather than only adding attributes, and paradox which while impossible (as humanified objects are) is also *true*. Be careful not to call simple animation (an abstraction of a non-living thing that gives it animate qualities, like "the slither of the river against its banks") with personification, which must *assign something non-human, human-only traits*. Compare with apostrophe.
Men say they love Virtue, but they leave her waiting in the rain.—Juvenal

Simile. A *direct, expressed comparison* between two things essentially *unlike* each other, but resembling each other in at least one way. Contrast with analogy which clarifies, similes make a tenor more complex. In formal prose the simile is a device both of art and explanation, comparing the unfamiliar thing (to be explained) to some familiar thing (an image, object, event, process, etc.) known to the reader. There is no simile in the comparison "My car is like your car," because the two objects are not essentially unlike each other. "**My car is like my baby**" however rises to the level of simile.
And money is like muck, not good except it be spread.—Bacon

Symbol. An object (name, idea, thing)--concrete or abstract—that is literally in a text and yet *implicitly functions as the representation of something more elaborate* [a figure]—specifically bringing into the text a group of exterior, complex, related ideas that, when understood, give new depth to the overall meaning of the text. There are two general types: **universal** (sometimes archetypal) symbols that embody "established" figurative meanings when used in Western literature (**light to symbolize knowledge, birth as beginning, down/up as negative/positive**); and **invested** symbols that are given symbolic meaning only in a specific literary work (**the gray hair in "Rose for Emily" can be argued to symbolize her passage from girlhood to "old maid," the increase in her maturity/wisdom, the decay of her life/ hope/ dreams as it is perceptible by the narrators—the outward SIGN of Emily's inner conflict**). Be careful to discriminate between symbols, which *use something discrete to stand in for a cluster of meanings*, and narrower figures like abstraction, image and metaphor.

> Symbols can be *names, actions and things* that appear in the story, but they are almost never characters outside of allegory (or else the character is reduced in meaning, not enhanced, since it is no longer a full persona). When students claim a character is a symbol of an idea (greed, love, America), they are usually misusing the term for a character whose actions, traits or situation serves a metaphor or stereotype for some component of that idea (the sacrifices of pursuing the American dream, the consequences of materialism, etc) yet is still literally a character as well (truly symbolic characters would perform no literal function in the story—like Death). Do not confuse symbols with mere images—these are utilized in specific instances to evoke meaning and usually enhance an element, but do not alter its or the work's meaning overall and do not represent a cluster of meanings.
>
> Similar to Realism and realistic, Symbolism versus symbol denotes a particular school of thought in literature. Symbolists and their theory of Symbolism in literature should be studied as a particular style[2]. See the lecture on the element literary devices for a discussion of Symbolism used at this level within or outside the Symbolists' works.

Synecdoche. A sub-form of metaphor in which the *part stands for the whole*, the whole for a part, the genus for the species, the species for the genus, the material for the thing made, or in short, any portion, section, or main quality for the whole thing itself (or vice-versa). Overlaps with metonymy. **Don't bite the hand that feeds you; the press got a hold of the story; he hauled ass.**

Trope. General term for using word(s) in such a way that it alters or extends literal meaning. It can also be used as a blanket name for most literary devices (including modes, rhetorical devices and poetic devices), which comes in handy if you've forgotten a specific term. Consider these blanket terms also: **figure of speech, device, technique, strategy.**

Rhetorical Devices

techniques that *manipulate the audience's attention* to specific parts of text; their use may be a hallmark of certain schools, periods and/or genres

Allusion. An explicit or implicit textual reference to a *famous* historical or literary figure, location or event *left unexplained by the author* (because he/she assumes the reader will recognize it). Generally, allusions are to things very well known to the intended audience. (The best sources for allusions are literature, history, Greek/Roman myth and the Bible.) Understanding the reference serves to explain, clarify or enhance the interpretation of whatever subject is under discussion, *making a direct association* without sidetracking the reader. It is a common solecism to use "allude/allusion" as broad synonyms for "refer to/reference" rather than the narrower definition above—avoid it.
Plan ahead: it wasn't raining when Noah built the ark. --Richard Cushing

Ambiguity. *Indefinite wording or structure* intended to invite, but not validate, *multiple interpretations* or multiple meanings (unintended ambiguity is just bad writing). Often this is accomplished through manipulation of connotation and denotation as well as mode. Ambiguous passages critical to interpreting the meaning of a work are designated **cruces** (singular:

crux). To resolve any ambiguity, one must consider the context of the full work and logically pare down the possibilities. **The final scene of "Rose for Emily" and the story's title** are examples of ambiguity in fiction**; "America's Promise"** is an example of an essay title that uses ambiguity to engage the reader in anticipating its content**.**

Anadiplosis. A rhetorical trope formed by repeating the *last* word of one phrase, clause, or sentence at or very *near the beginning* of the next. It can be generated in series for the sake of beauty or to give a sense of natural, logical progression (logically like a flow chart). Most commonly, though, anadiplotic structure is used for a reinforcing effect or focusing of attention. Contrast with anaphora.
Pleasure might cause her *read*, *reading* might make her *know*,/ *Knowledge* might *pity* win, and *pity* grace obtain.–Sidney

Anaphora. The *repetition* of the same word or words at the *beginning* of successive phrases, clauses, or sentences, commonly in conjunction with parallelism. Anaphora acts like a bulleted list. In contrast with anadiplosis, its logical structure is like a schematic, the "exploded" view of a topic's parts or options, laying out its layers or complexities.
***To think on* death is misery,/ *To think on* life it is a vanity,/ *To think on* the world verily it is,/ *To think* that here man hath no perfect bliss.–Peacham**

Aporia. Explicitly expressed *deliberation or consideration of how to solve a problem or whether to take action*; self-questioning. Can overlap with soliloquy and internal monologue. When it takes the form of rhetorical questions, it is disingenuous on the part of the speaker because the answer is predetermined. Sometimes used as a means for exposition or to build suspense/delay action. Contrast with syllogism. **What is one supposed to do when faced with such a situation? What options do I have? What next…?**

Asyndeton. *Flowing* syntax in which *conjunctions are omitted but implied*, usually producing fast-paced, rapid prose giving the illusion of simultaneity or inevitability. (Its converse is polysyndeton; a related but more sophisticated device is parataxis.) **I came, I saw, I conquered.–Julius Caesar**

Chiasmus**.** A crossing parallel structure, where the second part of a construction of meaning and/or grammar is *balanced or paralleled by a reversal of the first part*, to show contrast. Chiasmus is structured logically like an X.
But O, what damned minutes tells he o'er/ Who dotes, yet doubts; suspects, yet strongly loves.–Shakespeare
Do not give what is holy to dogs, and do not throw your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet and turn and tear you to pieces--Matthew 7:6.

Two notable sub-forms of chiasmus are:

Antithesis**.** Establishing a clear, contrasting relationship between two *diametrically opposed* ideas by joining them together or juxtaposing them, often in parallel structure. Antithesis can convey some sense of complexity in a person or idea by admitting opposite or nearly opposite truths (contrast with paradox and oxymoron). Antithesis, because of its close juxtaposition and intentional contrast of two terms or ideas, is also very useful for making relatively fine distinctions or for clarifying differences which might be otherwise overlooked by a careless thinker or casual reader. **To err is human; to forgive, divine.–Pope**

Antimetabole**.** Establishing a clear, contrasting relationship between two *opposing* ideas by joining them in parallel construction where the second component is *an exact or near-exact reversal of the order of the first.* **Pleasure's a sin, and sometimes sin's a pleasure–Byron or "It's not the men in my life; it's the life in my men"–Mae West**

Climax. *The logically-developed pinnacle of a series* of events or progression of ideas intentionally built up to. This can correspond to a **crescendo** in music and is closely aligned with the idea of "the most exciting part" of a sequentially-structured story but does NOT equate with the specialists' term for climax in the plot structure of narrative. The opposite of climax is **anti-climax** (and, if it occurs in extreme or cliché form, **bathos)**, where a series or progression is allowed to fizzle out, regress or even completely collapse at the end rather than reaching a height. An unexpected turn of events or ideas in a work–however exciting–would not qualify as climactic because it does not culminate from the foundation of what preceded it (thus it is a non sequitur); in humor, such a reversal may be used as anti-climax. **Scenes in horror movies where a character investigates a suspicious sound while the music rises until–at last!–the source of the noise is revealed** would be climactic if the villain/monster is the source (alas, poor character!), anti-climatic if, as is often the case, the source is a pet or other innocent party. The latter anti-climax can be comic relief.

Connotation**.** The *implied, indirect or associative* meaning of a word or phrase, *apart from what it explicitly means* especially *the emotional, ideological or moral associations intended to be evoked in the audience* (contrast with denotation and with image). Connotations can cross over into time-, discipline- or culture-specific idioms or jargon (**for example: gay, doctor, discipline)** and thus can confuse a reader unfamiliar with the period, area of study or culture**.** Analysis of vocabulary in context is required to discern connotation rather than denotation. Example**: the use of "young adult" or "teen" as a category vs "juvenile" or "adolescent" in marketing literature arises from studies of their connotations for the customer.**

Denotation. The *accepted, direct, specific* or explicit meaning of a word (contrast with connotation). This is a limiting device that runs counter to what other figurative devices do (by forcing a *literal* interpretation), but surprisingly it is a critical aspect of images used in figurative language. Without denotation to concretize the familiar, comparisons and contrasts to the unfamiliar would not work. **Take, for example, the word "palimpsest."** Its unique denotation has been artistically applied to numerous situations through metaphor, abstraction, etc.

Epistrophe. The *repetition* of the same word or words *at the end* of successive phrases, clauses or sentences. Epistrophe is the counterpart to anaphora; as such it creates a convergent "end" for multiple points, options or complexities (a reverse bulleted list, it gives the impression of having "run the gamut" (another idiom) of a topic as in **"the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth"**). Contrast with anadiplosis.
Where affections bear rule, there reason is *subdued*, honesty is *subdued*, good will is *subdued*, and all things else that withstand evil, for ever are *subdued*.—Edmund O. Wilson

Juxtaposition. One *dissimilar* thing *being placed adjacent to another* for effect, especially jarring to context. Contrast with antithesis. Juxtaposition's effect is to call attention to connections between ideas or subjects by forcing the reader to reconsider their established dissimilarities. Can be part of zeugma. **Fish and visitors smell in three days—Ben Franklin.**

Loose Sentence. A grammatically complete sentence which usually states its main idea early, connecting the subject and predicate without delay; a typical sentence in English, usually subject-verb-object or, when a question, verb-subject-object. (Contrast with periodic sentence). **God Bless America—Irving Berlin**

Non sequitur. An event, comment or idea logically unconnected to the context of the passage or action in which it appears. It comes out of leftfield, to use an idiom. Contrast with digression, which is at least tangentially connected to its context. This device is notorious for its use by public figures attempting to sidestep a direct question.
Q: Senator, how will your plan be paid for? A: America is a great country with great people and great ideas; I have no worries.

Parallel Structure or Parallelism. The repetition of a single stylistic pattern—usually the order—of *parts of speech, length of phrasing or structure of segments in a sequence* in order to add balance, rhythm and/or clarity. **The previous sentence is an example**. Specific degrees or structures of parallelism include chiasmus and its subgenres and

> **Isocolon.** Parallel structure in which the parallel elements are *equal in length of sounds or syllables.* Isocolon is like the symbolic "scales of justice," its balance reinforcing emphasis on the equality of the two "sides."
> **An envious heart makes a treacherous ear—Zora Neale Hurston**

Parataxis. The *juxtaposition* of clauses or sentences *without connecting words sufficient to clarify their relationship*. This results in ambiguity and may communicate the need for expedience, a dismissive tone or outright manipulation of the audience, depending on the context. Consider the possible interpretations of the subtext behind the example **I'll go; you stay here**. The opposite of parataxis is **hypotaxis,** where associations and relationships of subjects, objects, modifiers and actions are *clarified through subordinate syntax*, **like this clause.** Contrast with asyndeton, polysyndeton. Paratactic structure has a similar effect as zeugma, although it is usually grammatically correct.

Periodic Sentence. A sentence which is *not grammatically or logically complete as a thought until the end of its wording.* Used for tension-building effect (see climax) or temporary ambiguity. Usually not in the typical English sentence form of subject-verb-object. Contrast with loose sentence.
Can you see, by the dawn's early light, what proudly we hailed at the twilight's last gleaming?—Francis Scott Key

Polysyndeton. The insertion of *additional, unnecessary conjunctions or connecting words* to create an extended phrase, usually creating broader, slower-paced prose (although a simulated "hyper child's" **and, and, and** might have the opposite effect). Polysyndentonic syntax gives the illusion of complexity or duration to the described topic. Its counterpart is asyndeton; less sophisticated than hypotaxis. **I looked here and there and everywhere but nowhere was she to be found.**

Realism/Naturalism. *When capitalized*: Realism is the style of describing nature and/or "real" human life *in detail without idealizing/abstracting or refashioning it* for entertainment or convenience of the audience—the default mode for objective narration; Naturalism is a school of literature which believed in recreating the real lives of the "lower" classes faithfully (instead of avoiding or prettying-up uncomfortable facts or realities). Either term is used to denote something similar to documentary style or *true-to-life depictions of, especially, poverty, suffering or other "dirty laundry" of a society*. "Realistic" or "Natural" used to describe literature is not the same as "realistic" or "natural" as we use it in everyday language. Using "realistic/natural" (uncapitalized) is risky use of a synonym for verisimilar. Be precise with these terms to avoid confusing your college level reader! See WSU's treatment of this: http://www.wsu.edu/~campbelld/amlit/realism.htm. **Reality shows that supposedly "objectively" film—rather than edit, set up or script their subjects—employ Realism**, as does **any story that "tells it like it is."**

Syllogism. Aristotelian logical progression of thought; any *intentional deductive analysis* (if A then B, thus not C) that is found in an appeal. This may make up part of exposition and contrasts with fallacy. It is often referred to as arguing rhetorically (rather than with evidence–my "not-C"). Syllogism can be the opposite of aporia, in which the dilemma isn't being "solved" as much as expressed at length. **Forensics tv shows –CSI, for example–often employ syllogistic exposition as a convention of the genre (how else would we nonexperts get it?)**.

Turn. A *strategic, abrupt shift* in the argument, mood or development of character or plot in a work, which is *complementary* to what precedes it and usually alters the meaning or significance of what's come before *retrospectively* (as opposed to non sequiturs and digressions which do NOT complement their context). Conventionally, **sonnets turn from problem to solution or observation to conclusion at a specified point in their form, for example**. Dynamic characters can experience a turn which permanently changes their original personae (or develop more gradually and incrementally, without any turns). Some arguments lull the reader into comfort or familiarity with a scenario before turning to reassessment or analysis of its hidden characteristics, the real argument. The turn can be the crux of a story or text, *if it requires interpretation*; since it changes the established direction of the story, it wouldn't be the climax of the plot structure, however.

Verisimilitude. Intended resemblance to "real life" of characters, setting or details in a story or example to make them "believable" to its audience. To say that a work has a high degree of verisimilitude means that what it presents is plausible for the real world, although this does not necessarily mean that it is historically *accurate* (verisimilar characters, setting, etc could exist in a story of humans living alongside dinosaurs, for example). Contrast with Realism/Naturalism, which is objective about its subjects, often "believable" but tied directly to method of presentation rather than the audience's perception of reality. ***Little House on the Prairie*** **is an example of a book that is valued for its verisimilitude; many bad sci-fi movies are panned for abandoning it in order to seem more "futuristic."**

Zeugma. An intentioned, syntactical structures involving a *not-strictly-grammatical linkage* (or yoking together) *of two or more components of a sentence by one other component, usually two verbs with one noun or a single adjective for two nouns*. Visualize this as a sentence that, logically, is shaped like a tuning fork. The main benefit of the linking is that it creates relationships between ideas and actions that stand out, forcing a cause/effect or part/whole connection–but because it is dissonant grammatically, it calls attention to the connection made, perhaps inviting disagreement.
Vacationing is what they call it when you get away but then you have to come back.

Poetic Devices

specialized techniques that support the vocal performance or inflection of text for meaning, found most often in poetry but also in prose

Alliteration. The sequential recurrence of *initial consonant sounds* in *closely proximate* syllables or words (contrast with assonance and consonance.) Two-word alliteration is an oft-applied technique to call attention to a particular phrase and fix it in the audience's mind (perhaps because it lends itself to being easily recalled)–think of **tax time, pinpoint**, **drunk driving**–but alliteration can also support tone as well as add euphony/cacophony. In fact, certain consonants are thought to have character traits in particular languages–"s" in English carries the connotations of the hissing of a snake (with the attendant serpent image, including evil) and its use has its own term: **sibilance**. Don't rely on spelling to catch alliteration in English; there are different letters that make the same consonant sound (c/s, c/k and even u/y and o/w), single consonants that make different ones (c, g, q, w, x) and combinations of consonants and vowels that create new, different consonant sounds (sh, ch, th, wh, ng, ti, ough).
I *sh*all delight to hear the o*c*ean roar, or *s*ee the *s*tars twinkle, in the company of men to whom *N*ature does *n*ot spread her *v*olumes or utter her *v*oice in *v*ain. --Samuel Johnson

Assonance. The use of *similar vowel sounds* repeated in the *stressed* syllables of successive or proximate words *containing different consonants* (contrast with alliteration, consonance and rhyme). Sounds especially similar to internal rhyme. As in alliteration, assonant two-word phrases are often coined for emphasis (**meter reader**, **shuttle bus**). Vowels, like consonants, carry connotations in particular languages. Consider the lack of respect/authority words with an "oo" sound engender (goof, fool, stupid, nuisance, etc). Like consonants, the same vowel letter can represent different sounds (sometimes even converting to consonant sounds!) in different words and combinations–be sure the sound and not just the visual fits the definition before you label text.
So tw*i*ce f*i*ve m*i*le of fert*i*le gr*ou*nd/ With w*a*lls and t*ow*ers were girdled r*ou*nd–Coleridge

Blank verse. *Unrhymed, mostly otherwise regular iambic pentameter*, used extensively in Elizabethan drama for its ability to combine verbal artistry with (some) verisimilitude to the real world. **Shakespeare's plays** employ blank verse with high, even poetic diction, but still, to their audience, mimic actual speech (blank verse and poetic diction are NOT, however, how Elizabethans talked). Don't mix this up with free verse!

Caesura. *A strategic pause* to support the meaning of a phrase or word (includes the pause at the end of a sentence or clause as well as the hesitation caused by emotion during an intense passage or extra oral "space" attached to a particular word, like "oh."). The pause may or may not be typographically indicated, but it is always intended to engage the reader by manipulating pacing and rhythm. It is marked with **II** when **doing scansion** (laying out a written dissection of poetic language).
Alas II how changed! II What sudden horrors rise!/ II A naked lover II bound and bleeding lies!—Pope

Consonance. The *repetition* of a sequence of *single or combined consonant sounds* (initial or not) but with *a change in the intervening vowel sounds* within a word or in a sequence of words. Contrast with assonance and alliteration; note that slant rhyme can be considered a variant of it. Consonant phrases can be as effective as alliterative and assonant ones as **mnemonics**, and they have the advantage of being able to effectively group together longer words with more intricate rhythm (because unstressed and non-initial syllables are in play). Consider: **she certainly has serious issues, return to sender**, **rock and roll** (yes, the last one has different vowel sounds—the second "o" is a **diphthong**!).In this example, only SOME consonance is marked (can you "hear" the others?):
***Or* if th*e*r*e* w*e*r*e* a *sy*mpathy in choi*ce*/ W*a*r, death, or *si*ckne*ss* did lay *si*ege *t*o i*t*.—Shakespeare**

***Enjambement*.** The running over of a complete sentence or thought *into a next line or typographically separated section* of a text meant to be performed/read with no pause; *in poetry only*; any run-on line (the opposite of enjambed is **end-stopped**)—in college, **pronounced as in the French [un zhamb ma], not [in JAMB ment]**. This can be done with either loose or periodic structure. Done well, it contributes to the poem's meaning by calling attention to certain words visually (the opposite of the usual poetic device) as well as allowing meter and/or rhyme scheme to remain intact. Because readers are used to pausing at the end of lines, it requires skill to perform accurately, without inserting unintended and/or illogical caesurae.
Let me not to the marriage of true minds/ Admit impediments. Love is not love/ Which alters when it alteration finds/ Or bends with the remover to remove. . . .—Shakespeare

Euphony. The relative **ease of *enunciation*** or **smoothness of sounds** for a given combination of words. In English, long vowels, liquid consonants (l,r), semi-vowels (w,y) and repeated accent, syllable length or other patterns of vocalization are thought to contribute to making a phrase *euphonious*. The opposite concept is **cacophony** where, in English, hard consonants, diphthongs and disjointed accent patterns combine to make choppy, difficult-to-perform phrasing. Alliteration, consonance, assonance and repetition can work either for or against euphony, as seen in the phrases at the beginning of this definition and this:
And squared and stuck there squares of soft white chalk—Robert Browning

Foot. The basic unit of meter consisting of a grouping of two or three syllables which follow an established pattern. In English meter, there are only two possible options for any syllable: upbeat (stressed) or downbeat (unstressed)—other languages add or substitute dimensions to syllables like pitch, duration, etc. When you scan English poetry, you mark the syllables over words with one of two symbols: **U** (*unstressed*); **** (*stressed* syllable). Types of feet include:

Iamb: U \ "**unTIL**"
Trochee: \ U "**CAR wash**"
Anapest: U U \ "**personNEL**"
Dactyl: \ U U "**CANada**"
Spondee: \ \ "**NO WAY NO HOW**"
Pyrrhic: U U "**blah blah blah**"

These categories each (with the exception of pyrrhic which stays the same—and is an allusion, BTW) become adjectives by adding "ic" or "aic" (iambic, trochaic, anapestic, dactylic, spondaic).

Form. The term used for *pre-established modes of poetry*, similar to genre for other literature. These are defined by mandatory conventions of motif, meter, rhyme scheme, subject matter, diction, etc. Examples to know are:
Elizabethan/Shakespearean sonnet, Italian/Petrarchan sonnet, elegy, lyric, aubade, villanelle, epic, epigram, sestina, ode—check out your Lit Book glossary for these.

Free verse. Verse that has *no regular rhyme, line length or meter* and does not follow the conventions of prose regularly *either*. Free verse often relies on cadences—similar pacing, syllable length or rhythms and even interior rhyme (rather than end rhyme)—in place of uniform metrical feet. It can be stylized, formal or even colloquial diction. It is currently the most widely used form of poetry in English. Contrast with blank verse. **What is called "spoken word" is often in the form of free verse.**
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Iambic Pentameter. The most common, traditional meter for pre-20th century British poetry (especially sonnets). Iambic= a two syllable foot of one unstressed and one stressed syllable, as in the word "begin." Pentameter= five feet. Thus, iambic pentameter has ten syllables per line: five feet of two syllable iambs each. Scanned, this is marked like…
U ` U ` U ` U ` U ` U ` U ` U `
Whose woods these are I think I know./ His house is in the village though;/ --Frost

Meter. The rhythmic pattern that emerges when words are arranged in such a way that their *stressed and unstressed syllables fall into a more or less regular sequence;* established by the regular or almost regular recurrence of similar accent patterns (called feet). It is important to consider the purpose for maintaining or not maintaining regular meter. An irregular line of meter it is called catalectic (when it's missing a syllable) or hypercatalectic (when it's got an extra)--feminine endings often add an unstressed syllable to the end of regular meter for a line. Lines can be scanned and assigned a category according to the pattern of number of feet:

Monometer: 1 foot
Dimeter: 2 feet
Trimeter: 3 feet
Tetrameter: 4 feet
Pentameter: 5 feet
Hexameter: 6 feet
Heptameter: 7 feet
Octameter: 8 feet
Nonameter: 9 feet

Pacing. In general, this describes the relative *numbers of syllables, words, ideas or events between breaks or transitions*,. We conceive this as the "speed" of the text. Especially for short text also called **cadence**. This can refer to the ratio of word count to number of events or ideas presented–in other words, how quickly or slowly the plot or argument unfolds. Often pacing accelerates or decelerates in order to emphasize significant points. Consider the effect of **"slow motion" and "quick cuts" respectively in movies as visual equivalents to verbal pacing.** Exposition can sometimes interrupt pacing; digressions always do.

Refrain. A repeated stanza or line(s) in a poem or song. (Weird, huh, given the word's denotation?)

Rhyme. The *identical pronunciation* of sub-syllable, full syllable or multi-syllable sounds in two or more words, usually, in English, their final consonant-vowel combination–**t*ime* and m*ime* and parad*igm***–although **internal rhyme** can occur anywhere in a word, line or phrase. **Near rhyme** is *similar but not identical* sounds–**t*ime* and m*ine* and res*igned***. (Compare with assonance, which would more likely be used to describe vowel–not consonant–similarity *within one line* while near rhyme would be more likely to be used to describe it *at the end of different* lines.) An obscure variant of rhyme and consonance–**slant rhyme**–in 17th century poetry meant that only the *final consonant (not whole or sub syllable)* sounds of two or more words were the same–**stop*ped*, we*pt***–but in 18th century began to be used to indicate that *either the vowel or* the consonant sound of the *stressed* syllables (final or not) in two words were identical, as in ***eye*lashes, *li*ghtning** (vowel E and consonant L) and **re*w*ard, *w*itness** (consonant W). Today it is sometimes used to indicate *any* imperfect rhyming or near rhyme, but I would reserve its use for the more precise cases if analyzing poetry at the college level.

Rhyme should be given attention not only in poetry but in prose as emphasis on, and/or a connection between, otherwise unrelated words. What *else* can rhyme indicate? Think about the fact that end-rhyme is categorized as one of two categories by English literature specialists, **masculine and feminine**, the former denoting a *single, stressed* sound and the latter a *double sound, trochaic* rhyme. Guess which one is considered to be "normal?" What does this imply about how English speakers use and respond to words at a basic level and how that might be used to strengthen an author's argument subconsciously? (You'll see this again under rhythm.)

Generally, we don't say that repeated, identical words rhyme (like the Beach Boys' adding "now" to the end of every line of "Fun, Fun, Fun"), but the same word appearing more than once in a series of rhymed lines would not be discounted as part of the **rhyme scheme,** the name for the pattern rhyming lines follow. When you complete a scansion of rhyme you denote rhyme scheme by the use of lower case letters sequenced in alphabetical order to represent all instances of a single identical rhyme (**aabbccaa would represent an 8 line stanza where the first couplet and the last have the same end rhyme, while the intervening couplets each have different end rhymes.) Near rhyme** is designated with an apostrophe afterward–**aa'**–(representing a couplet with near-rhyme) and pronounced "a-prime" with the possibility of a double apostrophe "double-prime," for a second, different near rhyme, and so on. Some forms of poetry have specified rhyme schemes, meter and/or stanza types (as in ending, rhymed couplets for most sonnet forms).

A caveat in analyzing rhyme: pronunciation varies by historical period and cultural background of the writer. Before you assume that there is a break in rhyme pattern, especially if it is based on the vowel sound of two corresponding end-sounds in an otherwise consistent rhyme scheme, remember that a myriad of United Kingdom and other "English" accents and period pronunciations may apply. Consider first if there is evidence that the word might reasonably be intended to sound identical, before applying your own pronunciation to your analysis.
If this be error and upon me pr*oved*I never writ nor no man ever l*oved*--Shakespeare

Want to *hear* how different Shakespeare sounded from how we read it? Click this!
http://www.npr.org/blogs/monkeysee/2012/03/24/149160526/shakespeares-accent-how-did-the-bard-really-sound

Rhythm. The *modulation of stressed and unstressed* syllables (or, in prose only, emphasized words or inflected passages) in the flow of speech or writing. Ending the rhythm of an English line/phrase with a *stressed syllable* is called **masculine**; *unstressed* syllables—*usually supplemental* to the regular meter—that end a line/phrase are called **feminine** endings or rhythm. Like rhyme, consider the implications of these associations to gender for something as basic as naming something as well as how fundamental they are for the ultimate success of phrasing that uses alliteration, assonance, consonance, pacing or parallelism, as well as word combinations like epithets and euphemism. When skillfully manipulated in poetry or prose, rhythm creates a community of words or disrupts one. The analysis of rhythm requires breaking words into syllables, then listening for emergent pattern(s) of sound when they are grouped according to the meter and/or syntax. This process is called "scanning" or scansion. This takes a trained ear to do well and is especially difficult when the time period or dialect of the text differs greatly from the reader's own.

Speaker. The *imagined* persona saying the words of a poem to the reader (not the actual performer reciting or reading poetry), similar to the narrator in fiction and narrative prose (and like the narrator, NEVER to be confused with the actual poet).

Stanza. A section of a poem *demarcated by extra line spacing*. Stanzas are classified by their number of lines. The following designations can categorize stanzas but are also used to describe line structure within stanzas (especially when they correspond to a specific rhyme scheme—a couplet might occur within a 6-line stanza, for example). Even one line, set apart from others in the poem, is a stanza.

- Couplet—2 lines
- Tercet—3 lines
- Quatrain—4 lines
- Cinquain—5 lines
- Sestet—6 lines
- Heptatich—7 lines
- Octave—8 lines

Substitution. The use of a different foot in place of that required by the meter in a line of verse *for effect/emphasis* or to preserve the euphony or verisimilitude of the language—contrast with catalectic or hypercatalectic meter. In prose, substitution is the term used when an author intentionally breaks up parallel structure or syntax for effect.
Let me [pyrrhic] **NOT to THE marRIAGE of TRUE minds/ AdMIT imPEDiMENTS. Love IS not LOVE** [all iambic]/ **-- Shakespeare**

Syncope. The *omission* of a sound or syllable from a word to form a contraction or elision *that alters the pronunciation, usually so that meter is preserved*. Most often these are marked with the punctuation mark apostrophe where the missing sounds originally resided. Common syncopic words are: **'tis, o'er, e'en, th' li'l, 'til.** Expect difficulty in pronouncing them correctly without practice. Syncopic constructions can also be used to represent Realism/Naturalism for colloquial pronunciation, as in **Twain's** ***The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn***.