

**survival / supervivencia** *s.* condición de continuar existiendo

## T

**tantalizingly / tentadoramente** *adv.* de manera provocativa

**telegraph / telégrafo** *s.* aparato o sistema que convierte un mensaje codificado en impulsos eléctricos y lo envía a un receptor distante

**temporal / temporal** *adj.* que tiene que ver con el tiempo

**tenacious / tenaz** *adj.* que se mantiene firme en sus creencias; persistente; terco; decidido

**tenement / casa de vecindad** *s.* vivienda, a menudo en malas condiciones

**transgression / transgresión** *s.* infracción; pecado

**treble / tiple** *s.* voz o sonido muy agudo

**trundle / rodar** *v.* ir rodando

**truth / verdad** *s.* que corresponde a realidades o hechos

**tumultuous / tumultuoso** *adj.* muy agitado; en un alboroto

## U

**understanding / entendimiento** *s.* capacidad de comprender el significado de algo; capacidad para pensar o aprender

**unique / único** *adj.* exclusivo

**unpalatable / desagradable** *adj.* repugnante; molesto

**unrequited / no correspondido** *adj.* no reciprocado ni devuelto

**unwieldy / abultado** *adj.* incómodo; torpe

**usurped / usurpó** *v.* tomó el poder o posición sin derecho

## V

**values / valores** *s.* convicciones aceptadas por una persona

**venture / ventura** *s.* acción riesgosa

**verify / verificar** *v.* asegurarse de que algo es cierto; corroborar

**vex / fastidiar** *v.* irritar

**vial / frasco** *s.* envase pequeño que contiene medicamento u otros líquidos

**vigilant / vigilante** *adj.* alerta

**vile / vil** *adj.* malévolo; malvado

**volumes / volúmenes** *s.* conjuntos de ejemplares de periódicos que abarcan un lapso de tiempo fijo, generalmente un año; libros

**voluminously / voluminosamente** *adv.* completamente; de gran volumen

## W

**wail / gemido** *s.* lamento; grito de profundo dolor

**war / guerra** *s.* conflicto armado entre pueblos

**warp / torcer** *v.* retorcer; distorsionar

**wayward / avieso** *adj.* caprichoso

**wheezed / resolló** *v.* respiró con silbido

**wisdom / sabiduría** *s.* capacidad de emitir buenos juicios con base en el conocimiento y la experiencia

**woeful / afligido** *adj.* lleno de dolor

**woes / aflicciones** *s.* grandes tristezas

**writhing / retorcer** *v.* contorsionar; serpentear

# Literary Terms

**ACT** See *Drama*.

**ALLEGORY** An *allegory* is a story or tale with two or more levels of meaning—a literal level and one or more symbolic levels. The events, setting, and characters in an allegory are symbols for ideas and qualities.

**ALLITERATION** *Alliteration* is the repetition of initial consonant sounds. Writers use alliteration to give emphasis to words, to imitate sounds, and to create musical effects. In the following line from Edgar Allan Poe's "The Raven" (p. 710), there is alliteration of the *w* sound: Once upon a midnight dreary, while I pondered weak and weary, . . .

**ALLUSION** An *allusion* is a reference to a well-known person, place, event, literary work, or work of art. In O. Henry's "The Gift of the Magi" (p. 260), the title and details of the story refer to the biblical account of the Magi, wise men who brought gifts to the baby Jesus.

**ANALOGY** An *analogy* makes a comparison between two or more things that are similar in some ways but otherwise unlike.

**ANECDOTE** An *anecdote* is a brief story about an interesting, amusing, or strange event told to entertain or to make a point. In the excerpt from "A Lincoln Preface" (p. 500), Carl Sandburg tells anecdotes about Abraham Lincoln. See also *Narrative*.

**ANTAGONIST** An *antagonist* is a character or force in conflict with a main character, or protagonist.

**ANTICLIMAX** Like a climax, an *anticlimax* is a turning point in a story. However, an anticlimax is always a letdown. It's the point at which you learn that the story will not turn out the way you had expected. In Thayer's "Casey at the Bat" (p. 696), the anticlimax occurs when Casey strikes out instead of hitting a game-winning run, as everyone had expected.

**ARCHETYPE** An *archetype* is a type of character, detail, image, or situation that appears in literature from around the world and throughout history. Some critics believe that archetypes reveal deep truths about human experience.

**ASIDE** An *aside* is a short speech delivered by a character in a play in order to express his or her true thoughts and feelings. Traditionally, the aside is directed to the audience and is presumed to be inaudible to the other actors.

**ASSONANCE** *Assonance* is the repetition of vowel sounds followed by different consonants in two or more stressed syllables. Assonance is found in the phrase "weak and weary" in Edgar Allan Poe's "The Raven" (p. 710).

**ATMOSPHERE** See *Mood*.

**AUTOBIOGRAPHY** An *autobiography* is a form of nonfiction in which a writer tells his or her own life story. An autobiography may tell about the person's whole life or only a part of it. An example of an autobiography is the excerpt from *A White House Diary* (p. 104).

See also *Biography* and *Nonfiction*.

See also *Oral Tradition*.

**BIOGRAPHY** A *biography* is a form of nonfiction in which a writer tells the life story of another person. Biographies have been written about many famous people, historical and contemporary, but they can also be written about "ordinary" people. An example of a biography is the excerpt from *Arthur Ashe Remembered* (p. 508).

See also *Autobiography* and *Nonfiction*.

**BLANK VERSE** *Blank verse* is poetry written in unrhymed iambic pentameter lines. This verse form was widely used by William Shakespeare.

See also *Meter*.

**CHARACTER** A *character* is a person or an animal that takes part in the action of a literary work. The main character, or protagonist, is the most important character in a story. This character often changes in some important way as a result of the story's events. In Richard Connell's "The Most Dangerous Game" (p. 214), Rainsford is the main character and General Zaroff is the antagonist, or character who opposes the main character.

Characters are sometimes classified as round or flat, dynamic or static. A *round character* shows many different traits—faults as well as virtues. A *flat character* shows only one trait. A *dynamic character* develops and grows during the course of the story; a static character does not change.

See also *Characterization* and *Motivation*.

**CHARACTERIZATION** *Characterization* is the act of creating and developing a character. In *direct characterization*, the author directly states a character's traits.

For example, at the beginning of "The Necklace" (p. 332), Maupassant directly characterizes Madame Loisel: "She was one of those pretty, charming young women. . . ."

In **indirect characterization**, an author provides clues about a character by describing what a character looks like, does, and says, as well as how other characters react to him or her. It is up to the reader to draw conclusions about the character based on this indirect information.

The most effective indirect characterizations usually result from showing characters acting or speaking.

See also **Character**.

**CLIMAX** The **climax** of a story, novel, or play is the high point of interest or suspense. The events that make up the rising action lead up to the climax. The events that make up the falling action follow the climax.

See also **Conflict**, **Plot**, and **Anticlimax**.

**COMEDY** A **comedy** is a literary work, especially a play, that has a happy ending. Comedies often show ordinary characters in conflict with society. These conflicts are resolved through misunderstandings, deceptions, and concealed identities, which result in the correction of moral faults or social wrongs. Types of comedy include *romantic comedy*, which involves problems among lovers, and the *comedy of manners*, which satirically challenges the social customs of a sophisticated society. Comedy is often contrasted with tragedy, in which the protagonist meets an unfortunate end.

**COMIC RELIEF** **Comic relief** is a technique that is used to interrupt a serious part of a literary work by introducing a humorous character or situation.

**CONFLICT** A **conflict** is a struggle between opposing forces. Characters in conflict form the basis of stories, novels, and plays.

There are two kinds of conflict: external and internal. In an **external conflict**, the main character struggles against an outside force. This force may be another character, as in Richard Connell's "The Most Dangerous Game" (p. 214), in which Rainsford struggles with General Zaroff. The outside force could also be the standards or expectations of a group, such as the family prejudices that Romeo and Juliet struggle against. Their story (p. 806) shows them in conflict with society. The outside force may be nature itself, a person-against-nature conflict. The two men who are trapped by a fallen tree in Saki's "The Interlopers" (p. 270) face such a conflict.

An **internal conflict** involves a character in conflict with himself or herself. In "Checkouts" (p. 82), two young people who meet by chance in a supermarket agonize over whether they should speak to each other.

See also **Plot**.

**CONNOTATION** The **connotation** of a word is the set of ideas associated with it in addition to its explicit meaning.

See also **Denotation**.

**CONSONANCE** **Consonance** is the repetition of final consonant sounds in stressed syllables with different vowel sounds, as in *hat* and *sit*.

**CONTEMPORARY INTERPRETATION** A **contemporary interpretation** is a literary work of today that responds to and sheds new light on a well-known, earlier work of literature. Such an interpretation may refer to any aspect of the older work, including plot, characters, settings, imagery, language, and theme. Edna St. Vincent Millay's poem "An Ancient Gesture" (p. 1128), for example, provides a modern perspective on the characters Penelope and Odysseus in the *Odyssey*.

**COUPLET** A **couplet** is a pair of rhyming lines, usually of the same length and meter. In the following couplet from a poem by William Shakespeare, the speaker comforts himself with the thought of his love:

For thy sweet love remember'd such wealth brings

That then I scorn to change my state with kings.

See also **Stanza**.

**DENOTATION** The **denotation** of a word is its dictionary meaning, independent of other associations that the word may have. The denotation of the word *lake*, for example, is an inland body of water. "Vacation spot" and "place where the fishing is good" are connotations of the word *lake*.

See also **Connotation**.

**DESCRIPTION** A **description** is a portrait in words of a person, a place, or an object. Descriptive writing uses sensory details, those that appeal to the senses: sight, hearing, taste, smell, and touch. Description can be found in all types of writing. Rudolfo Anaya's essay "A Celebration of Grandfathers" (p. 444) contains descriptive passages.

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**DIALECT** **Dialect**, the form of language spoken by people in a particular region or group, may involve changes

to the pronunciation, vocabulary, and sentence structure of standard English. An example from Mark Twain's "The Invalid's Story" (p. 362) is a character's use of the term *youm* for *yours*.

**DIALOGUE** A **dialogue** is a conversation between characters that may reveal their traits and advance the action of a narrative. In fiction or nonfiction, quotation marks indicate a speaker's exact words, and a new paragraph usually indicates a change of speaker. Following is an exchange between the narrator and his frail younger brother, Doodle, in "The Scarlet Ibis" (p. 384):

"Aw, come on Doodle," I urged. "You can do it. Do you want to be different from everybody else when you start school?"

"Does it make any difference?"

Quotation marks are not used in a *script*, the printed copy of a play. Instead, the dialogue follows the name of the speaker, as in this example from Chekhov's *The Inspector General* (p. 970):

**DRIVER.** Oh, yes, he's a good one, this one.

**DICTION** **Diction** refers to an author's choice of words, especially with regard to range of vocabulary, use of slang and colloquial language, and level of formality. These lines from Ernest Lawrence Thayer's poem "Casey at the Bat" (p. 696) are an example of colloquial, informal diction: "It looked extremely rocky for the Mudville nine that day; / The score stood two to four; with but an inning left to play."

See also **Connotation** and **Denotation**.

**DIRECT CHARACTERIZATION**  
See **Characterization**.

**DRAMA** A **drama** is a story written to be performed by actors. The script of a drama is made up of **dialogue**—the words the actors say—and **stage directions**, which are comments on how and where action happens.

The drama's **setting** is the time and place in which the action occurs. It is indicated by one or more sets, including furniture and backdrops, that suggest interior or exterior scenes. **Props** are objects, such as a sword or a cup of tea, that are used onstage.

At the beginning of most plays, a brief **exposition** gives the audience some background information about the characters and the situation. Just as in a story or novel, the plot of a drama is built around characters in conflict.

Dramas are divided into large units called **acts**, which are divided into smaller units called scenes. A long play may include many sets that change with the **scenes**, or it may indicate a change of scene with lighting.

See also **Dialogue**, **Genre**, **Stage Directions**, and **Tragedy**. *Romeo and Juliet* (p. 806) is a long play in five acts.

**DRAMATIC IRONY** See **Irony**.

**DRAMATIC MONOLOGUE** A **dramatic monologue** is a poem in which a character reveals himself or herself by speaking to a silent listener.

**DRAMATIC POETRY** **Dramatic poetry** is poetry that utilizes the techniques of drama. The dialogue used in Edgar Allan Poe's "The Raven" (p. 710) makes it dramatic dialogue. A **dramatic monologue** is a poem spoken by one person, addressing a silent listener.

**END RHYME** See **Rhyme**.

**EPIC** An **epic** is a long narrative poem about the deeds of gods or heroes. Homer's *Odyssey* (p. 1044) is an example of epic poetry. It tells the story of the Greek hero Odysseus, the king of Ithaca.

An epic is elevated in style and usually follows certain patterns. The poet begins by announcing the subject and asking a Muse—one of the nine goddesses of the arts, literature, and sciences—to help. An **epic hero** is the larger-than-life central character in an epic. Through behavior and deeds, the epic hero displays qualities that are valued by the society in which the epic originated.

See also **Epic Simile** and **Narrative Poem**.

**EPIC SIMILE** An **epic simile**, also called **Homeric simile**, is an elaborate comparison of unlike subjects. In this example from the *Odyssey* (p. 1044), Homer compares the bodies of men killed by Odysseus to a fisherman's catch heaped up on the shore:

Think of a catch that fishermen haul in to a  
half-moon bay

in a fine-meshed net from the whitecaps of the sea:  
how all are poured out on the sand, in throes  
for the salt sea,

twitching their cold lives away in Helios' fiery air:  
so lay the suitors heaped on one another.

See also **Figurative Language** and **Simile**.

**EPIPHANY** An **epiphany** is a character's sudden flash of insight into a conflict or situation. At the end of Judith

Ortiz Cofer's story "American History" (p. 240), for example, the central character experiences an epiphany.

**ESSAY** An *essay* is a short nonfiction work about a particular subject. While classification is difficult, four types of essays are sometimes identified.

A *descriptive essay* seeks to convey an impression about a person, place, or object. In "A Celebration of Grandfathers" (p. 444), Rudolfo Anaya describes the cultural values that his grandfather and other "old ones" from his childhood passed down.

A *narrative essay* tells a true story. In "The Washwoman" (p. 26), Isaac Bashevis Singer tells of his childhood in Poland.

An *expository essay* gives information, discusses ideas, or explains a process. In "Single Room, Earth View" (p. 468), Sally Ride explains what it is like to be in outer space.

A *persuasive essay* tries to convince readers to do something or to accept the writer's point of view. Pete Hamill's "Libraries Face Sad Chapter" (p. 530) is a persuasive essay.

See also **Description, Exposition, Genre, Narration, Nonfiction,** and **Persuasion.**

**EXPOSITION** *Exposition* is writing or speech that explains a process or presents information. In the plot of a story or drama, the exposition is the part of the work that introduces the characters, the setting, and the basic situation.

**EXTENDED METAPHOR** In an *extended metaphor*, as in regular metaphor, a writer speaks or writes of a subject as though it were something else. An extended metaphor sustains the comparison for several lines or for an entire poem.

See also **Figurative Language** and **Metaphor.**

**EXTERNAL CONFLICT** See **Conflict.**

**FALLING ACTION** See **Plot.**

**FANTASY** A *fantasy* is highly imaginative writing that contains elements not found in real life. Examples of fantasy include stories that involve supernatural elements, stories that resemble fairy tales, and stories that deal with imaginary places and creatures.

See also **Science Fiction.**

**FICTION** *Fiction* is prose writing that tells about imaginary characters and events. The term is usually used for novels and short stories, but it also applies to dramas and

narrative poetry. Some writers rely on their imaginations alone to create their works of fiction. Others base their fiction on actual events and people, to which they add invented characters, dialogue, and plot situations.

See also **Genre, Narrative,** and **Nonfiction.**

**FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE** *Figurative language* is writing or speech not meant to be interpreted literally. It is often used to create vivid impressions by setting up comparisons between dissimilar things.

Some frequently used figures of speech are **metaphors, similes,** and **personifications.**

See also **Literal Language.**

**FLASHBACK** A *flashback* is a means by which authors present material that occurred earlier than the present tense of the narrative. Authors may include this material in a character's memories, dreams, or accounts of past events.

**FOIL** A *foil* is a character who provides a contrast to another character. In *Romeo and Juliet* (p. 806), the fiery temper of Tybalt serves as a foil to the good nature of Benvolio.

**FOOT** See **Meter.**

**FORESHADOWING** *Foreshadowing* is the use in a literary work of clues that suggest events that have yet to occur. This technique helps create suspense, keeping readers wondering about what will happen next.

See also **Suspense.**

**FREE VERSE** *Free verse* is poetry not written in a regular pattern of meter or rhyme. Like Whitman's "I Hear America Singing" (p. 750), however, it may use parallelism and various sound devices.

**GENRE** A *genre* is a category or type of literature. Literature is commonly divided into three major genres: poetry, prose, and drama. Each major genre is in turn divided into smaller genres, as follows:

1. Poetry: Lyric Poetry, Concrete Poetry, Dramatic Poetry, Narrative Poetry, and Epic Poetry
2. Prose: Fiction (Novels and Short Stories) and Nonfiction (Biography, Autobiography, Letters, Essays, and Reports)
3. Drama: Serious Drama and Tragedy, Comic Drama, Melodrama, and Farce

See also **Drama, Poetry,** and **Prose.**

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3. Drama: Serious Drama and Tragedy, Comic Drama, Melodrama, and Farce

See also *Drama, Poetry, and Prose.*

**HAIKU** The *haiku* is a three-line verse form. The first and third lines of a haiku each have five syllables. The second line has seven syllables. A haiku seeks to convey a single vivid emotion by means of images from nature.

**HOMERIC SIMILE** See *Epic Simile.*

**HYPERBOLE** A *hyperbole* is a deliberate exaggeration or overstatement. In Mark Twain's "The Notorious Jumping Frog of Calaveras County," the claim that Jim Smiley would follow a bug as far as Mexico to win a bet is a hyperbole. As this example shows, hyperboles are often used for comic effect.

**IAMB** See *Meter.*

**IDIOM** An *idiom* is an expression that is characteristic of a language, region, community, or class of people. *Idiomatic expressions* often arise from figures of speech and therefore cannot be understood literally. In "The Invalid's Story" (p. 362), for example, a character uses the idiom *throw up the sponge*, meaning "surrender."

See also *Dialect.*

**IMAGE** An *image* is a word or phrase that appeals to one or more of the five senses—sight, hearing, touch, taste, or smell. Writers use images to re-create sensory experiences in words.

See also *Description.*

**IMAGERY** *Imagery* is the descriptive or figurative language used in literature to create word pictures for the reader. These pictures, or images, are created by details of sight, sound, taste, touch, smell, or movement.

**INDIRECT CHARACTERIZATION**  
See *Characterization.*

**INTERNAL** See *Conflict.*

**INTERNAL RHYME** See *Rhyme.*

**IRONY** *Irony* is the general term for literary techniques that portray differences between appearance and reality, or expectation and result. In *verbal irony*, words are used to suggest the opposite of what is meant. In *dramatic irony*, there is a contradiction between what a character thinks and what the reader or audience knows to be true. In *irony of situation*, an event occurs that directly contradicts the expectations of the characters, the reader, or the audience.

**LEGEND** See *Oral Tradition.*

**LITERAL LANGUAGE** *Literal language* uses words in their ordinary senses. It is the opposite of *figurative*

*language.* If you tell someone standing on a diving board to jump in, you speak literally. If you tell someone on the street to jump in a lake, you are speaking figuratively.

See also *Figurative Language.*

**LYRIC POEM** A *lyric poem* is a highly musical verse that expresses the thoughts, observations, and feelings of a single speaker.

**MAIN CHARACTER** See *Character.*

**METAPHOR** A *metaphor* is a figure of speech in which one thing is spoken of as though it were something else. Unlike a simile, which compares two things using *like* or *as*, a metaphor implies a comparison between them. In "Dreams" (p. 621), Langston Hughes uses a metaphor to show what happens to a life without dreams:

... if dreams die

Life is a broken-winged bird

That cannot fly.

See also *Extended Metaphor* and *Figurative Language.*

**METER** The *meter* of a poem is its rhythmical pattern. This pattern is determined by the number and types of stresses, or beats, in each line. To describe the meter of a poem, you must scan its lines. Scanning involves marking the stressed and unstressed syllables, as shown with the following two lines from "I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud" by William Wordsworth (p. 622):

Í wán|deřed lońe|lŷ ás| ä clóud

Thät floáts | õñ hígh| o'ěr váles| äñd hílls.

As you can see, each strong stress is marked with a slanted line ( / ) and each unstressed syllable with a horseshoe symbol ( ^ ). The stressed and unstressed syllables are then divided by vertical lines ( | ) into groups called *feet*. The following types of feet are common in English poetry:

1. *Iamb*: a foot with one unstressed syllable followed by a stressed syllable, as in the word "again"
2. *Trochee*: a foot with one stressed syllable followed by an unstressed syllable, as in the word "wonder"
3. *Anapest*: a foot with two unstressed syllables followed by one strong stress, as in the phrase "on the beach"
4. *Dactyl*: a foot with one strong stress followed by two unstressed syllables, as in the word "wonderful"
5. *Spondee*: a foot with two strong stresses, as in the word "spacewalk"

Depending on the type of foot that is most common in them, lines of poetry are described as **iambic**, **trochaic**, **anapestic**, and so forth.

Lines are also described in terms of the number of feet that occur in them, as follows:

1. **Monometer**: verse written in one-foot lines  
All things  
Must pass  
Away.
2. **Dimeter**: verse written in two-foot lines  
Thomas | Jefferson  
What do | you say  
Under the | gravestone  
Hidden | away?  
—Rosemary and Stephen Vincent Benét,  
"Thomas Jefferson, 1743–1826"
3. **Trimeter**: verse written in three-foot lines  
I know | not whom | I meet  
I know | not where | I go.
4. **Tetrameter**: verse written in four-foot lines
5. **Pentameter**: verse written in five-foot lines
6. **Hexameter**: verse written in six-foot lines
7. **Heptameter**: verse written in seven-foot lines

**Blank verse**, used by Shakespeare in *Romeo and Juliet* (p. 806), is poetry written in unrhymed iambic pentameter.

**Free verse**, used by Walt Whitman in "I Hear America Singing" (p. 750), is poetry that does not follow a regular pattern of meter and rhyme.

**MONOLOGUE** A **monologue** in a play is a speech by one character that, unlike a **soliloquy**, is addressed to another character or characters. An example from Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* (p. 806) is the speech by the Prince of Verona in Act 1, Scene 1, lines 72–94.

See also **Soliloquy**.

**MONOMETER** See **Meter**.

**MOOD** **Mood**, or **atmosphere**, is the feeling created in the reader by a literary work or passage. The mood is often suggested by descriptive details. Often the mood can be described in a single word, such as lighthearted, frightening, or despairing. Notice how this passage from Edgar Allan Poe's "The Cask of Amontillado" (p. 60) contributes to an eerie, fearful mood:

"The niter!" I said; "see, it increases. It hangs like moss upon the vaults. We are below the river's bed. The

drops of moisture trickle among the bones. Come, we will go back ere it is too late."

See also **Tone**.

**MORAL** A **moral** is a lesson taught by a literary work, especially a fable—many fables, for example, have a stated moral at the end. It is customary, however, to discuss contemporary works in terms of the themes they explore, rather than a moral that they teach.

**MOTIVATION** **Motivation** is a reason that explains or partially explains why a character thinks, feels, acts, or behaves in a certain way. Motivation results from a combination of the character's personality and the situation he or she must deal with. In "Checkouts" (p. 82), the main character is motivated by conflicting feelings.

See also **Character** and **Characterization**.

**MYTH** A **myth** is a fictional tale that describes the actions of gods and heroes or explains the causes of natural phenomena. Unlike legends, myths emphasize supernatural rather than historical elements. Many cultures have collections of myths, and the most familiar in the Western world are those of the ancient Greeks and Romans. "Perseus" (p. 1225) is a retelling of a famous ancient Greek myth.

See also **Oral Tradition**.

**NARRATION** **Narration** is writing that tells a story. The act of telling a story in speech is also called narration. Novels and short stories are fictional narratives. Nonfiction works—such as news stories, biographies, and autobiographies—are also narratives. A narrative poem tells a story in verse.

See also **Anecdote**, **Essay**, **Narrative Poem**, **Nonfiction**, **Novel**, and **Short Story**.

**NARRATIVE** A **narrative** is a story told in fiction, nonfiction, poetry, or drama.

See also **Narration**.

**NARRATIVE POEM** A **narrative poem** is one that tells a story. "Casey at the Bat" (p. 696) is a humorous narrative poem about the last inning of a baseball game. Edgar Allan Poe's "The Raven" (p. 710) is a serious narrative poem about a man's grief over the loss of a loved one.

See also **Dramatic Poetry**, **Epic**, and **Narration**.

**NARRATOR** A **narrator** is a speaker or character who tells a story. The writer's choice of narrator determines the story's **point of view**, which directs the type and amount of information the writer reveals.



When a character in the story tells the story, that character is a *first-person narrator*. This narrator may be a major character, a minor character, or just a witness. Readers see only what this character sees, hear only what he or she hears, and so on. The first-person narrator may or may not be reliable. We have reason, for example, to be suspicious of the first-person narrator of Edgar Allan Poe's "The Cask of Amontillado" (p. 60).

When a voice outside the story narrates, the story has a *third-person narrator*. An omniscient, or all-knowing, third-person narrator can tell readers what any character thinks and feels. For example, in Guy de Maupassant's "The Necklace" (p. 332), we know the feelings of both Monsieur and Madame Loisel. A limited third-person narrator sees the world through one character's eyes and reveals only that character's thoughts. In James Thurber's "The Secret Life of Walter Mitty" (p. 128), the narrator reveals only Mitty's experiences and feelings.

See also *Speaker*.

**NONFICTION** *Nonfiction* is prose writing that presents and explains ideas or that tells about real people, places, ideas, or events. To be classified as nonfiction, a work must be true. "Single Room, Earth View" (p. 468) is a nonfictional account of the view of Earth from space.

See also *Autobiography*, *Biography*, and *Essay*.

**NOVEL** A *novel* is a long work of fiction. It has a plot that explores characters in conflict. A novel may also have one or more subplots, or minor stories, and several themes.

**NOVELLA** A *novella* is a work of fiction that is longer than a short story but shorter than a novel.

**OCTAVE** See *Stanza*.

**ONOMATOPOEIA** *Onomatopoeia* is the use of words that imitate sounds. *Whirr*, *thud*, *sizzle*, and *hiss* are typical examples. Writers can deliberately choose words that contribute to a desired sound effect.

**ORAL TRADITION** The *oral tradition* is the passing of songs, stories, and poems from generation to generation by word of mouth. Many folk songs, ballads, fairy tales, legends, and myths originated in the oral tradition.

See also *Myth*.

**OXYMORON** An *oxymoron* is a combination of words, or parts of words, that contradict each other. Examples are "deafening silence," "honest thief," "wise fool," and "bittersweet." This device is effective when the apparent contradiction reveals a deeper truth, as in Act 2, Scene ii,

line 184, of *Romeo and Juliet* (p. 806) when Juliet bids goodbye to Romeo: "Parting is such *sweet sorrow*."

**PARADOX** A *paradox* is a statement that seems contradictory but actually may be true. Because a paradox is surprising, it catches the reader's attention.

**PARALLELISM** See *Rhetorical Devices*.

**PENTAMETER** See *Meter*.

**PERSONIFICATION** *Personification* is a type of figurative language in which a nonhuman subject is given human characteristics. William Wordsworth personifies daffodils when he describes them as "Tossing their heads in sprightly dance" (p. 626).

See also *Figurative Language*.

**PERSUASION** *Persuasion* is writing or speech that attempts to convince the reader to adopt a particular opinion or course of action.

**PLOT** *Plot* is the sequence of events in a literary work. In most novels, dramas, short stories, and narrative poems, the plot involves both characters and a central conflict. The plot usually begins with an *exposition* that introduces the setting, the characters, and the basic situation. This is followed by the *inciting incident*, which introduces the central conflict. The conflict then increases during the *development* until it reaches a high point of interest or suspense, the *climax*. All the events leading up to the climax make up the *rising action*. The climax is followed by the *falling action*, which leads to the *denouement*, or *resolution*, in which a general insight or change is conveyed.

**POETRY** *Poetry* is one of the three major types of literature, the others being prose and drama. Most poems make use of highly concise, musical, and emotionally charged language. Many also make use of imagery, figurative language, and special devices of sound such as rhyme. Poems are often divided into lines and stanzas and often employ regular rhythmic patterns, or meters. However, some poems are written out just like prose, while others are written in free verse.

See also *Genre*.

**POINT OF VIEW** See *Narrator*.

**PROSE** *Prose* is the ordinary form of written language. Most writing that is not poetry, drama, or song is considered prose. Prose is one of the major genres of literature and occurs in two forms: fiction and nonfiction.

See also *Fiction*, *Genre*, and *Nonfiction*.

**PROTAGONIST** The protagonist is the main character in a literary work.

See also **Antagonist** and **Character**.

**PUN** A *pun* is a play on words involving a word with two or more different meanings or two words that sound alike but have different meanings. In *Romeo and Juliet* (p. 806), the dying Mercutio makes a pun involving two meanings of the word *grave*, "serious" and "burial site": "Ask for me tomorrow, and you shall find me a grave man" (Act 3, Scene i, lines 92–93).

**QUATRAIN** A *quatrain* is a stanza or poem made up of four lines, usually with a definite rhythm and rhyme scheme.

**REPETITION** *Repetition* is the use of any element of language—a sound, a word, a phrase, a clause, or a sentence—more than once.

Poets use many kinds of repetition. Alliteration, assonance, rhyme, and rhythm are repetitions of certain sounds and sound patterns. A refrain is a repeated line or group of lines. In both prose and poetry, repetition is used for musical effects and for emphasis.

See also **Alliteration**, **Assonance**, **Rhyme**, and **Rhythm**.

**RESOLUTION** See **Plot**.

**RHETORICAL DEVICES** *Rhetorical devices* are special patterns of words and ideas that create emphasis and stir emotion, especially in speeches or other oral presentations. **Parallelism**, for example, is the repetition of a grammatical structure in order to create a rhythm and make words more memorable. In his "I Have a Dream" speech (p. 542), Martin Luther King, Jr., uses parallel statements beginning, "I have a dream that . . ."

Other common rhetorical devices include *restatement*, expressing the same idea in different words, and *rhetorical questions*, questions with obvious answers.

**RHYME** *Rhyme* is the repetition of sounds at the ends of words. **End rhyme** occurs when the rhyming words come at the ends of lines, as in "The Desired Swan Song" by Samuel Taylor Coleridge:

Swans sing before they die—'twere no bad thing  
Should certain persons die before they sing.

**Internal rhyme** occurs when the rhyming words appear in the same line, as in the first line of Edgar Allan Poe's "The Raven" (p. 710):

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

*Exact rhyme* involves the repetition of words with the same vowel and consonant sounds, like *ball* and *hall*. *Slant rhyme* involves the repetition of words that sound alike but do not rhyme exactly, like *grove* and *love*.

See also **Repetition** and **Rhyme Scheme**.

**RHYME SCHEME** A *rhyme scheme* is a regular pattern of rhyming words in a poem. The rhyme scheme of a poem is indicated by using different letters of the alphabet for each new rhyme. In an *aabb* stanza, for example, line 1 rhymes with line 2 and line 3 rhymes with line 4. William Wordsworth's poem "I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud" (p. 622) uses an *ababcc* rhyme pattern:

I wandered lonely as a cloud	a
That floats on high o'er vales and hills,	b
When all at once I saw a crowd,	a
A host, of golden daffodils;	b
Beside the lake, beneath the trees,	c
Fluttering and dancing in the breeze.	c

Many poems use the same pattern of rhymes, though not the same rhymes, in each stanza.

See also **Rhyme**.

**RHYTHM** *Rhythm* is the pattern of *beats*, or *stresses*, in spoken or written language. Some poems have a very specific pattern, or meter, whereas prose and free verse use the natural rhythms of everyday speech.

See also **Meter**.

**RISING ACTION** See **Plot**.

**ROUND CHARACTER** See **Character**.

**SATIRE** A *satire* is a literary work that ridicules the foolishness and faults of individuals, an institution, society, or even humanity in general.

**SCENE** See **Drama**.

**SCIENCE FICTION** *Science fiction* is writing that tells about imaginary events involving science or technology. Many science-fiction stories are set in the future. Arthur C. Clarke's "If I Forget Thee, Oh Earth . . ." (p. 162) is set on the moon after a nuclear disaster on Earth.

See also **Fantasy**.

**SENSORY LANGUAGE** *Sensory language* is writing or speech that appeals to one or more of the senses.

See also **Image**.



**SESTET** See *Stanza*.

**SETTING** The *setting* of a literary work is the time and place of the action. Time can include not only the historical period—past, present, or future—but also a specific year, season, or time of day. Place may involve not only the geographical place—a region, country, state, or town—but also the social, economic, or cultural environment.

In some stories, setting serves merely as a backdrop for action, a context in which the characters move and speak. In others, however, setting is a crucial element.

See also *Mood*.

**SHORT STORY** A *short story* is a brief work of fiction. In most short stories, one main character faces a conflict that is resolved in the plot of the story. Great craftsmanship must go into the writing of a good story, for it has to accomplish its purpose in relatively few words.

See also *Fiction* and *Genre*.

**SIMILE** A *simile* is a figure of speech in which the words *like* or *as* are used to compare two apparently dissimilar items. The comparison, however, surprises the reader into a fresh perception by finding an unexpected likeness. In "Dream Deferred" (p. 620), Langston Hughes uses the simile "Does it dry up/like a raisin in the sun?" to discuss a dream deferred.

**SOLILOQUY** A *soliloquy* is a long speech expressing the thoughts of a character alone on stage. In William Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* (p. 806), Romeo gives a soliloquy after the servant has fled and Paris has died (Act V, Scene iii, lines 74–120).

See also *Monologue*.

**SONNET** A *sonnet* is a fourteen-line lyric poem, usually written in rhymed iambic pentameter. The *English*, or *Shakespearean*, sonnet consists of three quatrains (four-line stanzas) and a couplet (two lines), usually rhyming *abab cdcd efef gg*. The couplet usually comments on the ideas contained in the preceding twelve lines. The sonnet is usually not printed with the stanzas divided, but a reader can see distinct ideas in each. See the Sonnet 30 by William Shakespeare on page 754.

The *Italian*, or *Petrarchan*, sonnet consists of an octave (eight-line stanza) and a sestet (six-line stanza). Often, the octave rhymes *abbaabba* and the sestet rhymes *cdecde*. The octave states a theme or asks a question. The sestet comments on or answers the question.

See also *Lyric Poem*, *Meter*, and *Stanza*.

**SOUND DEVICES** A *sound device* is a technique used by a poet to emphasize the sound relationships among words in order to create musical and emotional effects and emphasize a poem's meaning. These devices include *alliteration*, *consonance*, *assonance*, *onomatopoeia*, and *rhyme*.

**SPEAKER** The *speaker* is the imaginary voice assumed by the writer of a poem. In many poems, the speaker is not identified by name. When reading a poem, remember that the speaker within the poem may be a person, an animal, a thing, or an abstraction. The speaker in the following stanza by Emily Dickinson is a person who has died:

Because I could not stop for Death—  
He kindly stopped for me—  
The Carriage held but just Ourselves—  
And Immortality.

**STAGE DIRECTIONS** *Stage directions* are notes included in a drama to describe how the work is to be performed or staged. These instructions are printed in italics and are not spoken aloud. They are used to describe sets, lighting, sound effects, and the appearance, personalities, and movements of characters.

See also *Drama*.

**STANZA** A *stanza* is a repeated grouping of two or more lines in a poem that often share a pattern of rhythm and rhyme. Stanzas are sometimes named according to the number of lines they have—for example, a *couplet*, two lines; a *quatrain*, four lines; a *sestet*, six lines; and an *octave*, eight lines.

**STATIC CHARACTER** See *Character*.

**STYLE** *Style* refers to an author's unique way of writing. Elements determining style include diction; tone; characteristic use of figurative language, dialect, or rhythmic devices; and syntax, or typical grammatical structures and patterns.

See also *Diction* and *Tone*.

**SURPRISE ENDING** A *surprise ending* is a conclusion that violates the expectations of the reader but in a way that is both logical and believable.

O. Henry's "The Gift of the Magi" (p. 260) and Guy de Maupassant's "The Necklace" (p. 332) have surprise endings. Both authors were masters of this form.

**SUSPENSE** *Suspense* is a feeling of uncertainty about the outcome of events in a literary work. Writers create suspense by raising questions in the minds of their readers.

**SYMBOL** A *symbol* is anything that stands for something else. In addition to having its own meaning and reality, a symbol also represents abstract ideas. For example, a flag is a piece of cloth, but it also represents the idea of a country. Writers sometimes use conventional symbols like flags. Frequently, however, they create symbols of their own through emphasis or repetition. In James Hurst's "The Scarlet Ibis" (p. 384), for example, the ibis symbolizes the character named Doodle. Both are beautiful and other-worldly.

**TALL TALE** A *tall tale* is a type of folk tale that contains some or all of these features: humor, hyperbole, far-fetched situations, highly imaginative language, and a hero who performs outrageous feats. Tall tales originated during the development of the American frontier and are a particularly American form of folk tale. "Pecos Bill: The Cyclone" (p. 1218) is an example of a tall tale.

**THEME** A *theme* is a central message or insight into life revealed through a literary work.

The theme of a literary work may be stated directly or implied. When the theme of a work is implied, readers think about what the work suggests about people or life.

**Archetypal themes** are those that occur in folklore and literature across the world and throughout history. Ill-fated love, the theme of *Romeo and Juliet* (p. 806), is an example of such a theme.

**TOPE** The *tone* of a literary work is the writer's attitude toward his or her audience and subject. The tone can often be described by a single adjective, such as *formal* or *informal*, *serious* or *playful*, *bitter* or *ironic*. When O. Henry discusses the young couple in "The Gift of the Magi" (p. 260), he uses a sympathetic tone.

See also **Mood**.

**TRAGEDY** A *tragedy* is a work of literature, especially a play, that results in a catastrophe, a disaster or great misfortune, for the main character, or *tragic hero*. In ancient Greek drama, the main character was always a significant person—a king or a hero—and the cause of the tragedy was a *tragic flaw*, or weakness, in his or her character. In modern drama, the main character can be an ordinary

person, and the cause of the tragedy can be some evil in society itself. Tragedy not only arouses fear and pity in the audience but also, in some cases, conveys a sense of the grandeur and nobility of the human spirit.

Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* (p. 806) is a tragedy. Romeo and Juliet both suffer from the tragic flaw of impulsiveness. This flaw ultimately leads to their deaths.

See also **Drama**.

**UNDERSTATEMENT** An *understatement* is a figure of speech in which the stated meaning is purposely less than (or "under") what is really meant. It is the opposite of *hyperbole*, which is a deliberate exaggeration.

**UNIVERSAL THEME** A *universal theme* is a message about life that can be understood by most cultures. Many folk tales and examples of classic literature address universal themes such as the importance of courage, the effects of honesty, or the danger of greed.

**VERBAL IRONY** See **Irony**.

**VILLANELLE** A *villanelle* is a nineteen-line lyric poem written in five three-line stanzas and ending in a four-line stanza. It uses two rhymes and repeats two refrain lines that appear initially in the first and third lines of the first stanza. These lines then appear alternately as the third line of subsequent three-line stanzas and, finally, as the last two lines of the poem.

**VISUAL ESSAY** A *visual essay* is an exploration of a topic that conveys its ideas through visual elements as well as language. Like a standard essay, a visual essay presents an author's views of a single topic. Unlike other essays, however, much of the meaning in a visual essay is conveyed through illustrations or photographs.

**VOICE** *Voice* is a writer's distinctive "sound" or way of "speaking" on the page. It is related to such elements as word choice, sentence structure, and tone. It is similar to an individual's speech style and can be described in the same way—fast, slow, blunt, meandering, breathless, and so on.

Voice resembles **style**, an author's typical way of writing, but style usually refers to a quality that can be found throughout an author's body of work, while an author's voice may sometimes vary from work to work.

See also **Style**.