

## AP English Literature | Literary Terms | Sabolcik

Listed and defined below are literary terms that you will (most likely) need to know in order to discuss and write about works of literature. You are already familiar with many of these.

- 1. acatalectic** - A "normal" line of poetry with the expected number of syllables in each line, as opposed to a **catalectic** line (which is missing an expected syllable) or a **hypercatalectic** line (which has one or more extra syllables than would normally be expected, perhaps due to anacrusis).
- 2. allegory** - The word derives from the Greek *allegoria* ("speaking otherwise"). The term loosely describes any writing in verse or prose that has a double meaning. This narrative acts as an extended metaphor in which persons, abstract ideas, or events represent not only themselves on the literal level, but they also stand for something else on the symbolic level. An allegorical reading usually involves moral or spiritual concepts that may be more significant than the actual, literal events described in a narrative. Typically, an allegory involves the interaction of multiple symbols, which together create a moral, spiritual, or even political meaning. The act of interpreting a story as if each object in it had an allegorical meaning is called *allegoresis*.
- 3. alliteration** - the repetition of identical or similar consonant sounds, normally at the beginnings of words. "Gnus never know pneumonia" is an example of alliteration since, despite the spellings, all four words begin with the "n" sound.
- 4. allusion** - a reference in a work of literature to something outside the work, especially to a well-known historical or literary event, person, or work. When T.S. Eliot writes, "To have squeezed the universe into a ball" in "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock," he is alluding to the lines "Let us roll our strength and all/ Our sweetness up into one ball" in Marvell's "To His Coy Mistress."
- 5. alter ego** - A literary character or narrator who is a thinly disguised representation of the author, poet, or playwright creating a work. Some scholars suggest that J. Alfred Prufrock is an alter ego for T. S. Eliot in "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock,"
- 6. anachronism** - placing an event, person, item, or verbal expression in the wrong time period. ex: from *Julius Caesar* – Brutus: Count the clock! (no clocks in Roman times – out of place time-wise)
- 7. anadiplosis** - (Greek "doubling"): Repeating the last word of a clause at the beginning of the next clause. As Nietzsche said, "Talent is an adornment; an adornment is also a concealment."
- 8. anagnorisis** - is a moment in a play or other work when a character makes a critical discovery. Anagnorisis originally meant recognition in its Greek context, not only of a person but also of what that person stood for. Anagnorisis was the hero's sudden awareness of a real situation, the realization of things as they stood, and finally, the hero's insight into a relationship with an often antagonistic character in Aristotelian tragedy.
- 9. anaphora** - the repetition at the beginning of clauses. ex: "We shall not flag or fail. We shall go on to the end. We shall fight in France."
- 10. anastrophe** - inverted order of words or events as a rhetorical scheme. ex: Yoda: Begun, the Clone War has!
- 11. antihero** - A protagonist who is a non-hero or the antithesis of a traditional hero. While the traditional hero may be dashing, strong, brave, resourceful, or handsome, the antihero may be incompetent, unlucky, clumsy, dumb, ugly, or clownish. Examples here might include the senile protagonist of Cervantes' *Don Quixote* or the girlish knight Sir Thopas from Chaucer's "Sir Thopas." In the case of the Byronic and Miltonic antihero, the antihero is a romanticized but wicked character who defies authority, and becomes paradoxically ennobled by his peculiar rejection of virtue.
- 12. anthimeria** - artfully using a different part of speech to act as another in violation of the normal rules of grammar. This switch might involve treating a verb like a noun, or a noun like a verb, or an adjective like a verb, and so on. In Nancy Sinatra's song "These Boots Are Made for Walkin'" has a speaker who tells the implied audience, "You keep lying when you ought to be truthing. . . . You keep saming when you ought to be changing."
- 13. anthropomorphism** - In anthropomorphism, the object or animal is actually doing something human. With personification, the object or animal just seems like it's doing something human. Describes the human forms of greek gods/ goddesses with human characteristics. he fog grew legs, grabbed a partner, and waltzed through the hills to the tune of 'Piano Man.'
- 14. antihero** - Central character who lacks all the qualities traditionally associated with heroes. May lack courage, grace, intelligence, or moral scruples.
- 15. antithesis** - a figure of speech characterized by strongly contrasting words, clauses, sentences, or ideas, as in "Man proposes; God disposes." Antithesis is a balancing of one term against another for emphasis or stylistic effectiveness. The second line of the following couplet by Alexander Pope is an example of antithesis:  
The hungry judges soon the sentence sign,  
And wretches hang that jury-men may dine.
- 16. aphorism** - an original thought, spoken or written in a laconic (concise) and memorable form.[1] The oft-cited first sentence of this work is: Life is short, art long, opportunity fleeting, experience deceptive, judgment difficult.
- 17. aporia** - (Greek: "impassable path") The deliberate act of talking about how one is unable to talk about something. For instance, "I can't tell you how often writers use *aporia*."
- 18. apostrophe** - a figure of speech in which someone (usually, but not always absent), some abstract quality, or a nonexistent personage is directly addressed as though present. Following are two examples of apostrophe:  
Papa Above! / Regard a Mouse. -Emily Dickinson  
Milton! Thou shouldst be living in this hour; / England hath need of thee . . . -Wordsworth
- 19. apotropaic** - Designed to ward off evil influence or malevolent spirits by frightening these forces away. In many cultures, elaborate artwork depicting monsters would be created to have an apotropaic affect. For instance, the fierce "celestial dogs" (Fu dogs) carved outside the entrance to Tibetan temples would keep evil spirits from entering the holy ground, and Amerindian shamans would wear frightening, grotesque "medicine masks" when they visited sick members of their tribe to terrify the evil spirits making them sick. It has been suggested that the presence of gargoyles and grotesques on medieval cathedrals is a remnant of older pagan practices, in

which monstrous apotropaic figures would be carved on the front of ships and over the entrances to buildings to ward off evil influences.

**20. archetype** - a collectively inherited unconscious idea, pattern of thought, image, etc., universally present in individual psyches. Archetypes can refer to a constantly recurring symbol or motif in literature, painting or mythology. This usage of the term draws from both comparative anthropology and Jungian archetypal theory. ex: Odysseus as the archetype of the "wandering hero"

**21. assonance**- the repetition of identical or similar vowel sounds. "A land laid waste with all its young men slain" repeats the same "a" sound in "laid," "waste," and "slain."

**22. aubade** - a morning love song (as opposed to a serenade, which is in the evening), or a song or poem about lovers separating at dawn. It has also been defined as "a song or instrumental composition concerning, accompanying, or evoking daybreak"

**23. authorial voice** - The voices or speakers used by authors when they seemingly speak for themselves in a book. (In poetry, this might be called a poetic speaker). The use of this term makes it clear in critical discussion that the narration or presentation of a story is not necessarily to be identified with the biographical and historical author. Instead, the authorial voice may be another fiction created by the author. It is often considered poor form for a modern literary critic to equate the authorial voice with the historical author, but this practice was common in the nineteenth century. However, twentieth-century critics have pointed out that often a writer will assume a false persona of attitudes or beliefs when she writes, or that the authorial voice will speak of so-called biographical details that cannot possibly be equated with the author herself. In the early twentieth-century, New Critics also pointed out that linking the authorial voice with the biographical author often unfairly limited the possible interpretations of a poem or narrative. Finally, many writers have enjoyed writing in the first person and creating unreliable narrators--speakers who tell the story but who obviously miss the significance of the tale they tell, or who fail to connect important events together when the reader does. Because of these reasons, it is often considered naive to assume that the authorial voice is a "real" representation of the historical author.

**24. ballad meter**- a four-line stanza rhymed *abcd* with four feet in lines one and three and three feet in lines two and four.

O mother, mother make my bed.

O make it soft and narrow.

Since my love died for me today,

I'll die for him tomorrow.

**25. bathos** - an effect of anticlimax created by an unintentional lapse in mood from the sublime to the trivial or ridiculous. (ex: The ballerina rose gracefully en pointe and extended one slender leg behind her, like a dog at a fire hydrant.)

**26. bildungsroman** - a novel in which an adolescent protagonist comes to adulthood by a process of experience and disillusionment. This character loses his or her innocence, discovers that previous preconceptions are false, or has the security of childhood torn away, but usually matures and strengthens by this process. Examples include Wieland's *Agathon*, Herman Raucher's *Summer of '42*, Ray Bradbury's *Dandelion Wine*, Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, and Jane Austen's *Northanger Abbey*.

**27. blank verse**- unrhymed iambic pentameter. Blank verse is the meter of most of Shakespeare's plays, as well as that of Milton's *Paradise Lost*.

**28. cacophony**- a harsh, unpleasant combination of sounds or tones. It may be an unconscious flaw in the poet's music, resulting in harshness of sound or difficulty of articulation, or it may be used consciously for effect, as Browning and Eliot often use it. See, for example, the following line from Browning's "Rabbi Ben Ezra":

Irks care the crop-full bird? Frets doubt the maw-crammed beast? Its opposite is 29. euphony (pleasant-sounding).

**30. cadence** - The melodic pattern just before the end of a sentence or phrase--for instance an interrogation or an exhortation. More generally, the natural rhythm of language depending on the position of stressed and unstressed syllables. Cadence is a major component of individual writers' styles. A **cadence group** is a coherent group of words spoken as a single rhythmical unit, such as a prepositional phrase, "of parting day" or a noun phrase, "our inalienable rights."

**31. caesura**- a pause, usually near the middle of a line of verse, usually indicated by the sense of the line, and often greater than the normal pause. Adds suspense, emphasis. For example, one would naturally pause after "human" in the following line from Alexander Pope: To err is human, to forgive divine.

**32. catalogue** - the creation of long lists for poetic or rhetorical effect. The technique is common in epic literature, where conventionally the poet would devise long lists of famous princes, aristocrats, warriors, and mythic heroes to be lined up in battle and slaughtered. The technique is also common in the practice of giving illustrious genealogies ("and so-and-so begat so-and-so," or "x, son of y, son of z" etc.) for famous individuals.

**33. catharsis** - An emotional discharge that brings about a moral or spiritual renewal or welcome relief from tension and anxiety. According to Aristotle, catharsis is the marking feature and ultimate end of any tragic artistic work. He writes in his *Poetics* (c. 350 BCE): "Tragedy is an imitation of an action that is serious, complete, and of a certain magnitude; . . . through pity [eleos] and fear [phobos] effecting the proper purgation [catharsis] of these emotions" (Book 6.2).

**34. chiasmus** - Repetition of words in successive clauses in reverse grammatical order. Moliere: "One should eat to live, not live to eat."

**35. chivalry** - An idealized code of military and social behavior for the aristocracy in the late medieval period. The word "chivalry" comes from Old French cheval (horse), and chivalry literally means "horsemanship." Normally, only rich nobility could afford the expensive armor, weaponry, and warhorses necessary for mounted combat, so the act of becoming a knight was symbolically indicated by giving the knight silver spurs. The right to knighthood in the late medieval period was inherited through the father, but it could also be granted by the king or a lord as a reward for services. The tenets of chivalry attempted to civilize the brutal activity of warfare. The chivalric ideals involve sparing non-combatants such as women, children, and helpless prisoners; the protection of the church; honesty in word and bravery in deeds; loyalty to one's liege; dignified behavior; and single-combat between noble opponents who had a quarrel. Other matters associated with chivalry include gentlemanly contests in arms supervised by witnesses and heralds, behaving according to the manners of polite society, courtly love, brotherhood in arms, and feudalism.

**36. circumlocution** - the use of a longer phrasing in place of a possible shorter format of expression; around about manner of writing/speaking. ex: John is the father of Sean's father (instead of grandfather).

**37. climax** - decisive moment or turning point in a story or play when the action changes course and begins to resolve itself. Often the point of greatest interest in a work.

**38. colloquialism** - A word or phrase used everyday in plain and relaxed speech, but rarely found in formal writing. (Compare with cliché, jargon and slang.).

**39. comedy** - (from Greek: komos, "songs of merrymakers"): In medieval and Renaissance use, the word comedy came to mean any play or narrative poem in which the main characters manage to avert an impending disaster and have a happy ending and procreation rites. The comedy did not necessarily have to be funny, and indeed, many comedies are serious in tone. It is only in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries that comedy's exclusive connotations of humor arose. In essence: A comedy is a story of the rise in fortune of a sympathetic central character. Aristotle suggests that comic figures are mainly "average to below average" in terms of moral character, perhaps having in mind the wily servant or witty knave who was already a stock character of ancient comedy. Traditionally, comedy has to do with the concerns and exploits of ordinary people. **Black comedy**--where we're invited to laugh at events that are mortifying or grotesque.

**40. comedy of manners:** A comic drama consisting of five or three acts in which the attitudes and customs of a society are critiqued and satirized according to high standards of intellect and morality. The dialogue is usually clever and sophisticated, but often risqué.

Characters are valued according to their linguistic and intellectual prowess. It is the opposite of the slapstick humor found in a farce

**41. comic relief** - A humorous scene, incident, character, or bit of dialogue occurring after some serious or tragic moment. Comic relief is deliberately designed to relieve emotional intensity and simultaneously heighten and highlight the seriousness or tragedy of the action. *Macbeth* contains Shakespeare's most famous example of comic relief in the form of a drunken porter.

**42. conceit**- an ingenious and fanciful notion or conception, usually expressed through an elaborate analogy, and pointing to a striking parallel between two seemingly dissimilar things. A conceit may be a **brief metaphor**, but it also may form the framework of an entire poem. A famous example of a conceit occurs in John Donne's poem "A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning," in which he compares his soul and his wife's to legs of a mathematical compass.

**43. consonance**- the repetition of similar consonant sounds in a group of words. The term usually refers to words in which the ending consonants are the same but the vowels that precede them are different. Consonance is found in the following pairs of words: "add" and "read," "bill and ball," and "born" and "burn."

**44. couplet**- a two-line stanza, usually with end-rhymes the same.

**45. dialect** - the language of a particular district, class, or group of persons. The term dialect encompasses the sounds, spelling, grammar, and diction employed by a specific people as distinguished from other persons either geographically or socially. Dialect is a major technique of characterization that reveals the social or geographic status of a character. For example, Mark Twain uses exaggerated dialect in his *Huckleberry Finn* to differentiate between characters:

Jim: "We's safe, Huck, we's safe! Jump up and crack yo' heels. Dat's de good ole Cairo at las', I jis knows it."

Huck: "I'll take the canoe and go see, Jim. It mightn't be, you know."

**46. dialogue:** The lines spoken by a character or characters in a play, essay, story, or novel, especially a conversation between two characters, or a literary work that takes the form of such a discussion (e.g., Plato's *Republic*). Bad dialogue is pointless. Good dialogue either provides characterization or advances the plot. In plays, dialogue often includes within it hints akin to stage directions. For instance, if one character asks, "Why are you hitting me?" the reader can assume that on stage another character is striking the speaker. Noticing such details is particularly important in classical drama and in Shakespeare's plays since explicit stage directions are often missing.

**47. devices of sound**- the techniques of deploying the sound of words, especially in poetry. Among devices of sound are **rhyme, alliteration, assonance, consonance, and onomatopoeia**. The devices are used for many reasons, including to create a general effect of pleasant or of discordant sound, to imitate another sound, or to reflect a meaning.

**48. deus ex machina** (from Latin, meaning "god from the machine") is a plot device whereby a seemingly unsolvable problem is suddenly and abruptly resolved by the contrived and unexpected intervention of some new event, character, ability, or object. Depending on how it is done, it can be intended to move the story forward when the writer has "painted himself into a corner" and sees no other way out, to surprise the audience, to bring a happy ending into the tale, or as a comedic device.

**49. diction**- the use of words in a literary work. Diction may be described as formal (the level of usage common in serious books and formal discourse), informal (the level of usage found in the relaxed but polite conversation of cultivated people), colloquial (the everyday usage of a group, possibly including terms and constructions accepted in that group but not universally acceptable), or slang (a group of newly coined words which are not acceptable for formal usage as yet).

**50. didactic poem**- a poem which is intended primarily to teach a lesson. The distinction between didactic poetry and non-didactic poetry is difficult to make and usually involves a subjective judgement of the author's purpose on the part of the critic or the reader. Alexander Pope's *Essay on Criticism* is a good example of didactic poetry.

**51. dirge** - a somber song or lament expressing mourning or grief, such as would be appropriate for performance at a funeral

**52. dramatic poem**- a poem which employs a dramatic form or some element or elements of dramatic techniques as a means of achieving poetic ends. The **dramatic monologue** is an example.

**53. ekstasos** (Greek, "ecstasy"): In Greek thinking, ekstasos is a non-rational state of mind that people achieve by losing themselves in an experience--becoming so engrossed in a sensation or a moment that one forgets about one's ego, one's life, and all other considerations beyond that emotion or feeling. That ekstasos can be provided by wild dancing, profound mourning and weeping, alcoholic intoxication, sexual pleasure, or religious enthrallment. This mental state contrasted with logos (rationality and logic). Ekstasos was a dangerous condition due to that irrationality, but it was a necessary and holy one for the ancient Greeks--a transcendental experience that took the initiate beyond the normal bounds of behavior and his or her mortal limitations for a short time.

Unlike the English word "ecstasy," which implies pleasure, the Greeks thought of ekstasos as coming from any sufficiently strong emotion whether positive or negative. Grief and pain could be gateways to it as easily as pleasure.

**54. elegy-** a sustained and formal poem setting forth the poet's meditations upon death or another solemn theme. Examples include Thomas Gray's "Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard"; Alfred, Lord Tennyson's *In Memoriam*; and Walt Whitman's "When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloom'd."

**55. ellipsis** - the omission of a word or phrase which is grammatically necessary but can be deduced for the context ("Some people prefer cats; others, dogs."). In addition, the ... is an ellipsis. This device allows the reader to "do the work" in constructing meaning from elements of literature which are intentionally absent.

**56. end-stopped-** a line with a pause at the end. Lines that end with a period, a comma, a colon, a semicolon, an exclamation point, or a question mark are end-stopped lines.

True ease in writing comes from Art, not Chance,  
As those move easiest who have learn'd to dance.

**57. enjambment-** the continuation of the sense and grammatical construction from one line of poetry to the next. Milton's *Paradise Lost* is notable for its use of enjambment, as seen in the following lines:

. . . Or if Sion hill  
Delight thee more, and Siloa's brook that flow'd  
Fast by the oracle of God, . . .

**58. epigram** – brief, clever, and memorable statement. ex: Coleridge - What is an Epigram? A dwarfish whole, / Its body brevity, and wit its soul.

**59. epilogue:** A conclusion added to a literary work such as a novel, play, or long poem. It is the opposite of a prologue. Often, the epilogue refers to the moral of a fable. Sometimes, it is a speech made by one of the actors at the end of a play asking for the indulgence of the critics and the audience. Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* contains one of the most famous epilogues. Contrast with prologue.

**60. epiphany** - Revelation of such power and insight that it alters the entire world view. ex: In Joyce's "Araby," the narrator's understanding of his futility in purchasing a gift for his friend's sister drastically changes his world view and erodes his innocence.

**61. epistle** - A poem addressed to a friend, patron, or family member. A "letter" inverse. (Like the Epistles from The Bible)

**62. epistrophe** - Ending a series of lines, phrases, clauses, or sentences with the same word or words. What lies behind **us** and what lies before **us** are tiny compared to what lies within **us**. —Emerson

**63. epithet** - A short poetic nickname. Common in epics. ex: "Grey-eyed goddess" for Athena in *The Odyssey*

**64. etymology** - Study of the history of words, origins, form, and meaning have changed over time.

**65. euphemism** - The substitution of an agreeable or less offensive expression in place of one that may offend or suggest something unpleasant to the listener. ex: "kick the bucket" instead of died

**66. euphony-** a style in which combinations of words pleasant to the ear predominate. Its opposite is **cacophony (harsh sounding words/lines)**. The following lines from John Keats' *Endymion* are euphonious:

A thing of beauty is a joy for ever: / Its loveliness increases; it will never  
Pass into nothingness; but still will keep / A bower quiet for us, and a sleep  
Full of sweet dreams, and health, and quiet breathing.

**67. extended metaphor-** an implied analogy, or comparison, which is carried throughout a stanza or an entire poem. In "The Bait," John Donne compares a beautiful woman to fish bait and men to fish who want to be caught by the woman. Since he carries these comparisons all the way through the poem, these are considered "extended metaphors." Also called an **allegory**.

**68. existentialism:** A twentieth-century philosophy arguing that ethical human beings are in a sense cursed with absolute free will in a purposeless universe. Therefore, individuals must fashion their own sense of meaning in life instead of relying thoughtlessly on religious, political, and social conventions. These merely provide a façade of meaning according to existential philosophy. Those who rely on such conventions without thinking through them deny their own ethical responsibilities. The basic principles of existentialism are (1) a concern with man's essential being and nature, (2) an idea that existential "angst" or "anguish" is the common lot of all thinking humans who see the essential meaninglessness of transitory human life, (3) the belief that thought and logic are insufficient to cope with existence, and (4) the conviction that a true sense of morality can only come from honestly facing the dilemma of existential freedom and participating in life actively and positively. The ethical idea is that, if the universe is essentially meaningless, and human existence does not matter in the long run, then the only thing that can provide a moral backdrop is humanity itself, and neglecting to build and encourage such morality is neglecting our duty to ourselves and to each other.

**69. eye rhyme-** rhyme that appears correct from spelling, but is half-rhyme or **slant rhyme** from the pronunciation. Examples include "watch" and "match," and "love" and "move."

**70. fable** - Succinct fictional story featuring animals, ect. which are given human qualities that illustrate a moral lesson. Aesop had many.

**71. farce** (from Latin Farsus, "stuffed"): a farce is a form of low comedy designed to provoke laughter through highly exaggerated caricatures of people in improbable or silly situations. Traits of farce include (1) physical bustle such as slapstick, (2) sexual misunderstandings and mix-ups, and (3) broad verbal humor such as puns. Many literary critics (especially in the Victorian period) have tended to view farce as inferior to "high comedy" that involves brilliant dialogue. Many of Shakespeare's early works, such as *The Taming of the Shrew*, are considered farces. Contrast with comedy of manners.

**72. feminine rhyme-** a rhyme of two syllables, one stressed and one unstressed, as "waken" and "forsaken" and "audition" and "rendition." Feminine rhyme is sometimes called double rhyme.

**73. figurative language-** writing that uses figures of speech (as opposed to literal language or that which is actual or specifically denoted) such as **metaphor, irony, and simile**. Figurative language uses words to mean something other than their literal

meaning. "The black bat night has flown" is figurative, with the **metaphor** comparing night and bat. "Night is over" says the same thing without figurative language.

**74. flashback** - a method of narration in which present action is temporarily interrupted so that the reader can witness past events-- usually in the form of a character's memories, dreams, narration, or even authorial commentary (such as saying, "But back when King Arthur had been a child. . ."). Flashback allows an author to fill in the reader about a place or a character, or it can be used to delay important details until just before a dramatic moment.

**75. fool** - originally a jester-at-court who would entertain the king and nobles, the court jester was often a dwarf or a mentally incompetent individual. His role was to amuse others with his physical or mental incapacity. (While this may sound cruel to a modern reader, the practice also constituted a sort of medieval social security for such individuals who would otherwise be left to starve; a fool at court would at least be assured of food, shelter, and clothing.) In later centuries, the court fool was often a professional entertainer who would juggle, tell jokes, and generally amuse the king and his guests with keen wit. Such performers were often given an unparalleled degree of freedom in their speech. As long as they spoke their words in rhyme or riddle, the fool theoretically had the freedom to criticize individuals and mock political policy. In Shakespearean drama, the fool becomes a central character due to this immunity. The fool is also sometimes referred to as the clown, though "clown" can refer to any bumpkin or rural person in Elizabethan usage.

**76. frame narrative:** The result of inserting one or more small stories within the body of a larger story that encompasses the smaller ones. Often this term is used interchangeably with both the literary technique and the larger story itself that contains the smaller ones, which are called *pericopes*, "framed narratives" or "embedded narratives." The most famous example is Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*, in which the overarching frame narrative is the story of a band of pilgrims traveling to the shrine of Thomas a Becket in Canterbury. The band passes the time in a storytelling contest. The framed narratives are the individual stories told by the pilgrims who participate.

**77. free indirect discourse:** A style of third-person narration that mingles within it traits from first-person narration, often shifting pronouns, adverbs, tense, and grammatical mode. The term comes from the French "style indirect libre," and Flaubert's use of this technique in French literature strongly influenced English-speaking authors like James Joyce. M. H. Abrams provides a hypothetical example for illustrative purposes in *A Glossary of Literary Terms*:

Thus, a direct, "He thought, 'I will see her home now, and may then stop at my mother's,'" might shift, in an indirect representation, to: "He would see her home then, and might afterward stop at his mother's" (Abrams 169).

**78. free verse-** poetry which is not written in a traditional meter but is still rhythmical. The poetry of Walt Whitman is perhaps the best-known example of free verse.

**79. gothic literature** - Poetry, short stories, or novels designed to thrill readers by providing mystery and blood-curdling accounts of villainy, murder, and the supernatural. As J. A. Cuddon suggests, the conventions of gothic literature include wild and desolate landscapes, ancient buildings such as ruined monasteries; cathedrals; castles with dungeons, torture chambers, secret doors, and winding stairways; apparitions, phantoms, demons, and necromancers; an atmosphere of brooding gloom; and youthful, handsome heroes and fainting (or screaming!) heroines who face off against corrupt aristocrats, wicked witches, and hideous monsters. Conventionally, female characters are threatened by powerful or impetuous male figures, and description functions through a metonymy of fear by presenting details designed to evoke horror, disgust, or terror.

**80. hamartia** - A term from Greek tragedy that literally means "missing the mark." Originally applied to an archer who misses the target, a hamartia came to signify a tragic flaw, especially a misperception, a lack of some important insight, or some blindness that ironically results from one's own strengths and abilities. In Greek tragedy, the protagonist frequently possesses some sort of hamartia that causes catastrophic results after he fails to recognize some fact or truth that could have saved him if he recognized it earlier. The idea of hamartia is often ironic; it frequently implies the very trait that makes the individual noteworthy is what ultimately causes the protagonist's decline into disaster. For instance, for the character of Macbeth, the same ambition that makes him so admired is the trait that also allows Lady Macbeth to lure him to murder and treason. Similarly, what ennobles Brutus is his unstinting love of the Roman Republic, but this same patriotism causes him to kill his best friend, Julius Caesar. These normally positive traits of self-motivation and patriotism caused the two protagonists to "miss the mark" and realize too late the ethical and spiritual consequences of their actions.

**81. heroic couplet-** two end-stopped iambic pentameter lines rhymed aa, bb, cc with the thought usually completed in the two-line unit. See the following example from Alexander Pope's *Rape of the Lock*:

But when to mischief mortals bend their will,  
How soon they find fit instruments of ill!

**82. hubris** - (sometimes spelled Hybris): The Greek term hubris is difficult to translate directly into English. It is a negative term implying both arrogant, excessive self-pride or self-confidence, and also a *hamartia* (see above), a lack of some important perception or insight due to pride in one's abilities. It is the opposite of the Greek term *arête*, which implies a humble and constant striving for perfection and self-improvement combined with a realistic awareness that such perfection cannot be reached. As long as an individual strives to do and be the best, that individual has *arête*. As soon as the individual believes he has actually achieved *arête*, however, he or she has lost that exalted state and fallen into hubris, unable to recognize personal limitations or the humble need to improve constantly. This leads to overwhelming pride, and this in turn leads to a downfall.

**83. hyperbole-** a deliberate, extravagant, and often outrageous exaggeration. It may be used for either serious or comic effect. Macbeth is using hyperbole in the following lines:

. . . No; this my hand will rather  
The multitudinous seas incarnadine,  
Making the green one red.

**84. imagery-** the images of a literary work; the sensory details of a work; the figurative language of a work. Imagery has several definitions, but the two that are paramount are the visual auditory, or tactile images evoked by the words of a literary work or the images that figurative language evokes. **When an AP question asks you to discuss imagery, you should look especially carefully**

at the sensory details and the metaphors and similes of a passage. Some diction is also imagery, but not all diction evokes sensory responses.

**85. imperatives** - verbs used to give orders; give me the tape please. The verb "make" in the following example is an imperative: "Make my day, punk."

**86. implied audience** - the "you" a writer or poet refers to or implies when creating a dramatic monologue. This implied audience might be (but is not necessarily) the reader of the poem, or it might be the vague outline or suggestion of an extra character who is not described or detailed explicitly in the text itself. Instead, the reader gradually learns who the speaker addresses by garnering clues from the words of the speaker. For instance, Browning's "Porphyria's Lover" and Poe's "The Cask of Amontillado" raise some intriguing questions. To whom are these speakers confessing their murders? Likewise, Browning's "My Last Duchess" contains an implied audience who appears to be a messenger or diplomat sent to make marriage arrangements between the poem's speaker and some unknown young girl. From context, the speaker is taking this messenger on a tour of his castle and showing off portraits and paintings. Likewise, in T. S. Eliot's "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock," the speaker begins by saying, "Let us go then, you and I . . ." The "you" might be the actual reader of the poem, or it might be an implied audience (some unknown dinner companion) accompanying Prufrock, or it might be that the implied audience is the speaker himself; i.e., Prufrock is talking to himself, trying to build up his courage to make a declaration of love. Contrast with audience and ideal reader.

**87. irony**- the contrast between actual meaning and the suggestion of another meaning. **Verbal irony** is a figure of speech in which the actual intent is expressed in words which carry the opposite meaning. Irony is likely to be confused with **sarcasm**, but it differs from sarcasm in that it is usually lighter, less harsh in its wording though in effect probably more cutting because of its indirectness. Among the devices by which verbal irony is achieved are hyperbole and understatement. **Dramatic irony** – The audience knows something a character doesn't. **Situational irony** – situations are drastically different than one would predict.

**88. in media res** - (Latin: "In the middle[s] of things"): The classical tradition of opening an epic not in the chronological point at which the sequence of events would start, but rather at the midway point of the story. Later on in the narrative, the hero will recount verbally to others what events took place earlier. Usually in medias res is a technique used to heighten dramatic tension or to create a sense of mystery.

**89. internal rhyme**- rhyme that occurs within a line, rather than at the end. The following lines contain internal rhyme:

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

Over many a quaint and curious volume of forgotten lore—

While I nodded, nearly napping, . suddenly there came a tapping. . . .

**90. invective** - speech or writing that attacks, insults, or denounces a person, topic, or institution, usually involving negative emotional language.

**91. kenning** - a form of compounding in Old English, Old Norse, and Germanic poetry. In this poetic device, the poet creates a new compound word or phrase to describe an object or activity. Specifically, this compound uses mixed imagery (catachresis) to describe the properties of the object in indirect, imaginative, or enigmatic ways. The resulting word is somewhat like a riddle since the reader must stop and think for a minute to determine what the object is. Kennings may involve conjoining two types of dissimilar imagery, extended metaphors, or mixed metaphors. Kennings were particularly common in Old English literature and Viking poetry. The most famous example is hron-rade or hwal-rade ("whale-road") as a poetic reference to the sea.

**92. lament** - a formulaic expression of grief or sorrow for the loss of a person, position, or culture. It is typically non-narrative.

**93. leit-motif** - From the German term for "lead motif," a leit-motif originally was coined by Hans von Wolzuegen to designate a musical theme associated with a particular object, character, or emotion. For instance, the ominous music in Jaws plays whenever the shark is approaching. That particular score is the leit-motif for the shark. Other examples are found in musical compositions such as "Peter and the Wolf" and many Wagnerian operas. In literature, critics have adapted the term leit-motif to refer to an object, animal, phrase, or other thing loosely associated with a character, a setting, or event. For instance, the color green is a leit-motif associated with Sir Bercilak in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*; thus, the appearance of the Green Chapel and a green girdle should cause the reader to recall and connect these places and items with the Green Knight. In Shakespeare's *Midsummer Night's Dream*, the moon is a leit-motif associated with the fairy court, and it appears again in the stage scenery and stage discussion of Bottom's play about Pyramus and Thisbe. The leit-motif is not necessarily a symbol (though it can be). Rather, it is a recurring device loosely linked with a character, setting, or event. It gives the audience a "heads-up" by calling attention to itself and suggesting that its appearance is somehow connected with its appearance in other parts of the narrative.

**94. litote** - the opposite of hyperbole. It is a kind of irony that deliberately represents something as being much less than it really is. For example, Macbeth, having been nearly hysterical after killing Duncan, tells Lenox, "Twas a rough night."

**95. lyric poem**- any short poem that presents a single speaker who expresses thoughts and feelings. Love lyrics are common, but lyric poems have also been written on subjects as different as religion and reading. **Sonnets and odes** are lyric poems.

**96. malapropism** -misusing words to create a comical effect or making the character to seem flustered to use the correct diction. ex: In the play *Much Ado About Nothing*, Shakespeare's character Dogberry says, "Our watch, sir, have indeed comprehended two auspicious persons." Instead, what the character means to say is "Our watch, sir, have indeed apprehended two suspicious persons."

**97. masculine rhyme**- rhyme that falls on the stressed and concluding syllables of the rhyme-words. Examples include "keep" and "sleep," "glow" and "no," and "spell" and "impel."

**98. masque** - not to be confused with a masquerade, a masque is a type of elaborate court entertainment popular in the times of Queen Elizabeth I, King James I, and Charles I--i.e., the early 17th Century after Queen Elizabeth's death. The masque as a performance grew out of medieval plays, but it was more spectacle than drama proper. The content was suitable for amateur actors rather than professional performers. The masques tended to use long speeches and little action. They combined poetic drama, singing, dancing, music, and splendid costumes and settings. The imagery was influential on later poets and poems, such as Andrew Marvell, who makes use of masque-imagery in "Upon Appleton House."

**99. memoir** - (usually appearing in plural form as memoirs, from Latin, memoria "memory" via French *mémoire*): An autobiographical sketch--especially one that focuses less on the author's personal life or psychological development and more on the notable people and events the author has encountered or witnessed. Examples include memoirs published by Winston Churchill and Dwight D. Eisenhower. The memoir contrasts with a diary or journal, i.e., the memoir is not an informal daily record of events in a person's life, it is not necessarily written for personal pleasure, and the author of such memoir has in mind the ultimate goal of publication.

**100. metadrama** - Drama in which the subject of the play is dramatic art itself, especially when such material breaks up the illusion of watching reality. When Macbeth cries out, "Life's but a walking shadow, a poor player / who struts and frets his hour upon the stage, / and then is heard no more," his references to "shadows" and "players" (Renaissance slang for actors) and his discussion of the stage serve to remind the audience forcefully that they are watching a dramatic artifice, not a real historical event. The references break down verisimilitude to call attention to the fact that viewers are watching a staged performance. Likewise, the opening to *Taming of the Shrew* forcefully emphasizes that the events we see are a fiction, as does Hamlet's plan to use *The Mouse-Trap* as an ethical litmus test for Claudius: "The play's the thing / wherein I'll catch the conscience of the king."

**101. metaphor** - a figurative use of language in which a comparison is expressed without the use of a comparative term like "as," "like," or "than." A **simile** would say, "night is like a black bat"; a metaphor would say, "the black bat night."

**102. meter** - the repetition of a regular rhythmic unit in a line of poetry. The meter of a poem emphasizes the musical quality of the language and often relates directly to the subject matter of the poem. Each unit of meter is known as a foot.

**103. metonymy** - a figure of speech which is characterized by the substitution of a term naming an object closely associated with the word in mind for the word itself. In this way we commonly speak of the king as the "crown," an object closely associated with kingship.

**104. mixed metaphors** - the mingling of one metaphor with another immediately following with which the first is incongruous. Lloyd George is reported to have said, "I smell a rat. I see it floating in the air. I shall nip it in the bud."

**105. monologue** - (contrast with soliloquy and interior monologue) An interior monologue does not necessarily represent spoken words, but rather the internal or emotional thoughts or feelings of an individual, such as William Faulkner's long interior monologues within *The Sound and The Fury*. Monologue can also be used to refer to a character speaking aloud to himself, or narrating an account to an audience with no other character on stage.

**106. motif** - A recurring element, such as an incident, a device, a reference, or verbal formula, which appears frequently in a work of literature.

**107. narrative poem** - a non-dramatic poem which tells a story or presents a narrative, whether simple or complex, long or short. **Epics and ballads** are examples of narrative poems.

**108. nostos** - the theme or motif of the homecoming--a return to one's family, community, or geographic origins after a long time away. Traditionally, this Greek designation refers specifically to Odysseus's return to Ithaca after two decades of wandering, but the motif appears in many other myths, folktales, and literary works.

**109. novel of manners** - A novel that describes in detail the customs, behaviors, habits, and expectations of a certain social group at a specific time and place. Usually these conventions shape the behavior of the main characters, and sometimes even stifle or repress them. Often the novel of manners is satiric, and it always realistic in depiction. Examples include Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*, William Makepeace Thackeray's *Vanity Fair*, and various works by Edith Wharton.

**110. octave** - an eight-line stanza. Most commonly, octave refers to the first division of an Italian sonnet.

**111. ode** - a long lyric poem of formal style and complex form that commemorates or celebrates a special quality, object, or occasion. Often addressed to its subject ("O wild West Wind, thou breath of autumn's being, / Thou, from whose unseen presence the leaves dead / Are driven..." Shelley, *Ode to the West Wind*).

**112. onomatopoeia** - the use of words whose sound suggests their meaning. Examples are "buzz," "hiss," or "honk."

**113. "othering"** - In literary theory, the process of "othering" is the depiction or categorization of another person or group of people as distinctly different from the writer's or speaker's own group--often with overtones of dehumanization. The term "othering" originates in Edward Said's influential book *Orientalism*, and theorists often capitalize the term as "Othering," and they do likewise with corresponding terms like "the Other," and "Otherness." It is a key concept in postcolonialism, psychology, sociology, and anthropology. Psychologically and sociologically, this tendency toward othering might have originated in humanity's tribal past, which required bands to cohere together as a close-knit groups and struggle against other tribal bands. The tendency is to feel stronger connections and allegiances to those who are "like you," and have an easier time empathizing with them, while rejecting or deriding "the Other" as inferior, strange, dangerous, savage, or foreign--often in connection with stereotypes or while simplistically lumping diverse groups together in a single category. Partly this mental process allows the thinker to do violence or harm to the Other without feeling corresponding guilt for one's actions, which can make othering a dangerous phenomenon in multi-ethnic or biracial societies. On the other hand, othering may have a positive function in helping form one's identity--as it is one way to create a sense of self by contrasting one's own group with external ones. In its original use, Said's interest was how European writers "othered" the cultures of the Middle East and Asia, depicting them as mystical rather than rational in mental outlook, pleasure-seeking and indulgent rather than disciplined and abstemious in behavior, and tyrannical rather than democratic in political tendencies. At best, western writers would use the Orient as a contrasting point with their own cultures, and at worst, psychologically project their own repressed (and unsavory) desires and practices on them. However, the term is widely applicable even outside of the Oriental context.

**114. oxymoron** - a form of paradox that combines a pair of contrary terms into a single expression. This combination usually serves the purpose of shocking the reader into awareness. Examples include "wise fool," "sad joy," and "eloquent silence."

**115. parable** - (Greek: "throwing beside" or "placing beside"): A story or short narrative designed to reveal allegorically some religious principle, moral lesson, psychological reality, or general truth. Rather than using abstract discussion, a parable always teaches by comparison with real or literal occurrences--especially "homey" everyday occurrences a wide number of people can relate

to. Well-known examples of parables include those found in the synoptic Gospels, such as "The Prodigal Son" and "The Good Samaritan."

**116. paradox-** a situation or action or feeling that appears to be contradictory but on inspection turns out to be true or at least to make sense. The following lines from one of John Donne's *Holy Sonnets* include paradoxes:

Take me to you, imprison me, for I  
Except you enthrall me, never shall be free,  
Nor ever chaste, except you ravish me.

**117. parallelism-** a similar grammatical structure within a line or lines of poetry. Parallelism is characteristic of Asian poetry, being notably present in the Psalms, and it seems to be the controlling principle of the poetry of Walt Whitman, as in the following lines:

. . . .Ceaselessly musing, venturing, throwing, seeking the spheres to  
connect them.  
Till the bridge you will need be form'd, till the ductile anchor hold,  
Till the gossamer thread you fling catch somewhere, O my soul.

**118. paraphrase-** a restatement of an idea in such a way as to retain the meaning while changing the diction and form. A paraphrase is often an amplification of the original for the purpose of clarity.

**119. parody** - A composition imitating or ridiculing another, usually serious, piece of work; Designed to ridicule in nonsensical fashion an original piece of work; Parody is in literature what the caricature and cartoon are in art

**120. pastoral** - (Latin pastor, "shepherd"): An artistic composition dealing with the life of shepherds or with a simple, rural existence. It usually idealized shepherds' lives in order to create an image of peaceful and uncorrupted existence. More generally, pastoral describes the simplicity, charm, and serenity attributed to country life, or any literary convention that places kindly, rural people in nature-centered activities. The Greek Theocritus (316-260 BCE) first used the convention in his Idylls, though pastoral compositions also appear in Roman literature, in Shakespeare's plays, and in the writings of the Romantic poets. Typically, pastoral liturgy depicts beautiful scenery, carefree shepherds, seductive nymphs, and rural songs and dances. Conventional names for the shepherds and nymphs come from bastardized Latin nicknames such as Mopsy, Flopsy, and Dorcas (from *Mopsius*, *Doricus*, etc.).

**121. pathetic fallacy** - the attribution to nonhuman objects of human traits, emotions, sentiments. Often specifically the reflection in nature of human doings, such as the strange storms and the bizarre conduct of animals after the murder of Duncan in "Macbeth".

**122. personification-** a kind of **metaphor** that gives inanimate objects or abstract ideas human characteristics.

**123. peripeteteia** - (Also spelled peripeteia, Greek for "sudden change"): The sudden reversal of fortune in a story, play, or any narrative in which there is an observable change in direction. In tragedy, this is often a change from stability and happiness toward the destruction or downfall of the protagonist.

**124. periphrasis** - adding superfluous words to extend message you are trying to give. ex: *The Denver Post* elongated 'mustache' into 'under-nose hair crops.

**125. poetic foot-** a group of syllables in verse usually consisting of one accented syllable and one or two unaccented syllables associated with it (u=unstressed; / =stressed. The most common type of feet are as follows:

<b>iambic</b> u /	<b>trochaic</b> / u	<b>anapestic</b> u u /	<b>dactylic</b> / u u
<b>pyrrhic</b> u u	<b>spondaic</b> //		

The following poem by Samuel Taylor Coleridge illustrates all of these feet except the pyrrhic foot:

Trochee trips from long to short.  
From long to long in solemn sort  
Slow Spondee stalks; strong foot! yet ill able  
Ever to come up with Dactyl trisyllable.  
Iambics march from short to long;  
With a leap and a bound the swift Anapests throng.

**126, 127. polysyndeton** -using many conjunctions to achieve an overwhelming effect in a sentence. ex: "It is respectable to have no illusions--and safe--and profitable--and dull." **asyndeton** - conjunctions are deliberately omitted from a series of related clauses. ex: "But all these things are rendered useless, inefficacious, abortive, through the power of corruption."

**128. propaganda** - (Latin, "things that must be sent forth"): In its original use, the term referred to a committee of cardinals the Roman Catholic church founded in 1622 (the Congregatio de propaganda fide). This group established specific educational materials to be sent with priests-in-training for foreign missions. The term is today used to refer to information, rumors, ideas, and artwork spread deliberately to help or harm another specific group, movement, belief, institution, or government. The term's connotations are mostly negative. When literature or journalism is propaganda and when it is not is hotly debated. For instance, the Roman Emperor Augustus commissioned Virgil to write *The Aeneid* for specific goals. He wanted Virgil to glorify Rome's greatness, instill public pride in Rome's past, and cultivate traditional Roman virtues such as loyalty to the family, the Empire, and the gods. Is this propaganda? Or patriotism?

**129. pun-** a play on words that are identical or similar in sound but have sharply diverse meanings. Puns can have serious as well as humorous uses. An example is Thomas Hood's: "They went and told the sexton and the sexton tolled the bell."

**130. quatrain-** a four-line stanza with any combination of rhymes.

**131. refrain-** a group of words forming a phrase or sentence and consisting of one or more lines repeated at intervals in a poem, usually at the end of a stanza.

**132. rhyme-** close similarity or identity of sound between accented syllables occupying corresponding positions in two or more lines of verse. For a true rhyme, the vowels in the accented syllables must be preceded by different consonants, such as "fan" and "ran."

**Internal rhyme** – rhyming words within single lines of poetry; **External rhyme** – rhyming words at the ends of successive lines

**133. rhythm-** the recurrence of stressed and unstressed syllables. The presence of rhythmic patterns lends both pleasure and heightened emotional response to the listener or reader.

**134. sarcasm**- a type of irony in which a person appears to be praising something but is actually insulting it. Its purpose is to injure or to hurt. Verbal irony.

**135. satire**- writing that seeks to arouse a reader's disapproval of an object by ridicule. Satire is usually comedy that exposes errors with an eye to correct vice and folly. Satire is often found in the poetry of Alexander Pope.

**136. scansion**- a system for describing the meter of a poem by identifying the number and the type(s) of feet per line. Following are the most common types of meter:

monometer	one foot per line	pentameter	five feet per line
dimeter	two feet per line	hexameter	six feet per line
trimeter	three feet per line	heptameter	seven feet per line
tetrameter	four feet per line	octameter	eight feet per line

Using these terms, then, a line consisting of five iambic feet is called "iambic pentameter," while a line consisting of four anapestic feet is called "anapestic tetrameter."

In order to determine the meter of a poem, the lines are "scanned," or marked to indicate stressed and unstressed syllables which are then divided into feet. The following line has been scanned:

u / u / u / u / u /

And still she slept an az ure- lid ded sleep

**137. sestet**- a six-line stanza. Most commonly, sestet refers to the second division of an Italian sonnet.

**138. simile**- a directly expressed comparison; a figure of speech comparing two objects, usually with "like," "as," or "than." It is easier to recognize a **simile** than a **metaphor** because the comparison is explicit: my love is like a fever; my love is deeper than a well. (The plural of "simile" is "similes" not "similies.")

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

**140. soliloquy** -a dramatic speech in which a character speaks his thoughts aloud. The conventional Italian, or Petrarchan sonnet is rhymed *abba, abba, cde, cde*; the English, or Shakespearean, sonnet is rhymed *abab, cdcd, efef, gg*.

**141. spoonerism** - The comic (and usually unintentional) transposition of two initial consonants or other sounds. For example, saying "the queer old dean" when one means to say, "the dear old queen," or speaking of "beery wenches" when one means "weary benches" would be spoonerisms.

**142. stanza**- usually a repeated grouping of three or more lines with the same meter and rhyme scheme.

**143. stock character** - A character type that appears repeatedly in a particular literary genre, one which has certain conventional attributes or attitudes. In the Old Comedy of Greek drama, common stock characters included the alazon (the imposter or self-deceiving braggart), the bomolochos (the buffoon); and the eiron, the self-derogatory and understating character. Stock characters in Elizabethan drama include the miles gloriosus (the braggart soldier), the melancholic man, the heroine disguised as a handsome young man, the gullible country bumpkin, and the machievella as a villain. Stock characters in medieval romances include the damsel in distress, the contemptuous dwarf, the chivalrous, handsome young knight, the wild man of the woods, and the senex amans (the ugly old man married to a younger girl). In modern detective fiction, the prostitute-with-a-heart-of-gold, the hard-drinking P.I., and the corrupt police-officer are stereotypical stock characters.

**144. strategy (or rhetorical strategy)**- the management of language for a specific effect. The strategy or rhetorical strategy of a poem is the planned placing of elements to achieve an effect. The rhetorical strategy of most love poems is deployed to convince the loved one to return to the speaker's love. By appealing to the loved one's sympathy, or by flattery, or by threat, the lover attempts to persuade the loved one to love in return.

**145. stream of consciousness**: Writing in which a character's perceptions, thoughts, and memories are presented in an apparently random form, without regard for logical sequence, chronology, or syntax. Often such writing makes no distinction between various levels of reality--such as dreams, memories, imaginative thoughts or real sensory perception. William James coined the phrase "stream of consciousness" in his *Principles of Psychology* (1890). The technique has been used by several authors and poets: Katherine Anne Porter, Dorothy Richardson, James Joyce, Virginia Woolf, Dorothy Richardson, T. S. Eliot, and William Faulkner. Some critics treat the interior monologue as a subset of the more general category, stream of consciousness.

**146. structure**- the arrangement of materials within a work; the relationship of the parts of a work to the whole; the logical divisions of a work. The most common units of structure in a poem are the line and stanza.

**147. style**- the mode of expression in language; the characteristic manner of expression of an author. Many elements contribute to style, and if a **question calls for a discussion of style or of "stylistic techniques," you can discuss diction, syntax, figurative language, imagery, selection of detail, sound effects, and tone, using the ones that are appropriate.**

**148. sublime** - The Greek rhetorician Longinus wrote a treatise *On the Sublime*, which argued that sublimity ("loftiness") is the most important quality of fine literature. The sublime caused the reader to experience *elestasis* ("transport"). Edmund Burke developed this line of thought further in his influential essay, "The Sublime and the Beautiful" (1757). Here, he distinguished the sublime from the beautiful by suggesting that the sublime was not a stylistic quality but the powerful depiction of subjects that were vast, obscure, and powerful. These sublime topics or subjects evoked "delightful horror" in the viewer or reader, a combination of terror and amazed pleasure. To illustrate the difference between beauty and sublimity, we might say that gazing thoughtfully into a rosebud merely involves the beautiful; gazing in awe into the Grand Canyon from its edge involves the sublime--particularly if the viewer is about to fall in. Contrast with *bathos*.

**149. suspense** - n literary works with a plot, suspense is "a state of uncertainty, anticipation, and curiosity as to the outcome of a story or play, or any kind of narrative in verse or prose", i.e., emotional tension resulting from the reader's desire to know "what will happen next?" or "what is actually happening now"? Frequently, the greatest moment of suspension occurs at the climax of the plot in Freytag's Pyramid. As T. A. Shipley notes, the two main types of suspense (uncertainty and anticipation) appear in the earliest surviving literary works in Greece. While Euripides and Sophocles usually wrote about mythological materials already familiar to

their audience (and thus could not create suspense by making the audience guess what would happen next), Euripides created suspense by mixing false or misleading foreshadowing with real foreshadowing alluding to upcoming events (563). Such playwrights were also fond of creating suspense by dramatic irony in which the characters on stage would make statements or take actions ironically incongruous with what the audience would know is about to happen. A good example here would be the dialogue between Oedipus and the prophet Teiresias in Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex*.

**150. syllepsis** - a construction in which one word is used in two different senses ("After he threw the ball, he threw a fit.")

**160. symbol**- something that is simultaneously itself and a sign of something else. For example, winter, darkness, and cold are real things, but in literature they are also likely to be used as symbols of death.

**161. synecdoche**- a form of metaphor which in mentioning a part signifies the whole. For example, we refer to "foot soldiers" for infantry and "field hands" for manual laborers who work in agriculture.

**162. synesthesia** - a rhetorical trope involving shifts in imagery. Taking one type of sensory input and combining it with another sense. ex: "A bright sound" or "A loud color"

**163. syntax**- the ordering of words into patterns or sentences. If a poet shifts words from the usual word order, you know you are dealing with an older style of poetry or a poet who wants to shift emphasis onto a particular word.

**164. tercet**- a stanza of three lines in which each line ends with the same rhyme.

**165. terza rima**- a three-line stanza rhymed *aba, bcb, cdc*, etc. Dante's *Divine Comedy* is written in terza rima.

**166. theme**- the main thought expressed by a work. In poetry, it is the abstract concept which is made concrete through its representation in person, action, and image in the work.

**167. tone**- the manner in which an author expresses his or her attitude; the intonation of the voice that expresses meaning. (Remember that the "voice" need not be that of the poet.) Tone is described by adjectives, and the possibilities are nearly endless. Often a single adjective will be enough, and tone may change from stanza to stanza or even line to line. Tone is the result of **allusion, diction, figurative language, imagery, irony, symbol, syntax, and style**.

**168. tragedy**: A serious play in which the chief character, by some peculiarity of psychology, passes through a series of misfortunes leading to a final, devastating catastrophe. According to Aristotle, catharsis is the marking feature and ultimate end of any tragedy. He writes in his *Poetics* (c. 350 BCE): "Tragedy is an imitation of an action that is serious, complete, and of a certain magnitude; . . . through pity [*eleos*] and fear [*phobos*] effecting the proper purgation [catharsis] of these emotions" (Book 6.2). Traditionally, a tragedy is divided into five acts. The first act introduces the characters in a state of happiness, or at the height of their power, influence, or fame. The second act typically introduces a problem or dilemma, which reaches a point of crisis in the third act, but which can still be successfully averted. In the fourth act, the main characters fail to avert or avoid the impending crisis or catastrophe, and this disaster occurs. The fifth act traditionally reveals the grim consequences of that failure.

**169. tragic hero** - The main character in a Greek or Roman tragedy. In contrast with the epic hero (who embodies the values of his culture and appears in an epic poem), the tragic hero is typically an admirable character who appears as the focus in a tragic play, but one who is undone by a hamartia--a tragic mistake, misconception, or flaw. That hamartia leads to the downfall of the main character (and sometimes all he or she holds dear). In many cases, the tragic flaw results from the character's hubris, but for a tragedy to work, the audience must sympathize for the main character. Accordingly, in many of the best tragedies, the tragic flaw grows out of some trait we find admirable.

**170. tragicomedy** - A experimental literary work--either a play or prose piece of fiction--containing elements common to both comedies and tragedies. The genre is marked by characters of both high and low degree, even though classical drama required upper-class characters for tragedy and lower-class characters for comedy. Tragicomedies were of some interest in the Renaissance, but some modern dramas might be considered examples as well. Typically, the early stages of the play resembled those of a tragedy, but an abrupt reversal of circumstance prevent the tragedy.

**171. transcendentalism** - (Latin *trans* + *ascendere*, "to climb beyond"): Transcendentalism is an American philosophical, religious, and literary movement roughly equivalent to the Romantic movement in England (see Romanticism). The transcendentalist philosophy is not systematic or sharply defined, but it generally stresses individual intuition and conscience, and it holds that nature reveals the whole of God's moral law. It suggests that ultimate truth can be discovered by a human's inmost feelings. It argues for morality guided by personal conscience rather than religious dogma or the laws of a society. Human nature in this philosophy is basically good if humans are allowed to pursue their normal desires in a natural and wholesome environment, an idea that contrasts sharply with Calvinist doctrines like total depravity. Transcendentalism also suggests the presence of an "Over-Soul," the Emersonian sense that humanity collectively has a defining spirit.

**172 .trope** – any use of figurative language

**173. verisimilitude** - how precisely characters/events in fiction match reality

**174. vernacular** - of, relating to, or using the language of ordinary speech rather than formal writing. ex: Jim in *Huck Finn*

**175. vignette** - a brief literary sketch or verbal description of a scene or incident.

**176. wit** - (from Anglo-Saxon *witan*, "to know"): In modern vernacular, the word wit refers to elements in a literary work designed to make the audience laugh or feel amused, i.e., the term is used synonymously with humor In the seventeenth-century usage, usage changed. The term humor then generally referred to broad emotional mood--but wit much more exclusively denotes intellectual originality, ingenuity, and mental acuity--especially in the sense of using paradoxes, making clever verbal expressions, and coining concise or deft phrases. As Alexander Pope put it, "True Wit is Nature to advantage dress'd, / What oft was thought, but ne'er so well express'd."

**178. zeitgeist**- the spirit of the age; the trend, fashion, or taste of a particular period

**177. zeugma** - An expression in which a single word stands in the same grammatical relation to two other words, but does not have the same figurative meaning with respect to both ("Or stain her honour, or her new brocade," Pope, "The Rape of the Lock"). Literally means "yoking together"; fittingly, sometimes found keeping company with oxymoron, paradox, chiasmus, and bathos - Pope's vertiginous conjunction of high and low.

## AP Style Analysis Notes

Domain	Questions to Ask
<b>Imagery</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sensory details</li> <li>• Symbols</li> <li>• Allusions</li> <li>• Words/phrases</li> <li>• Effect/intent</li> <li>• Connection to:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Mood/tone</li> <li>○ Theme</li> <li>○ Plot</li> <li>○ Character</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What sensory information do I find in the language: color, scents, sounds, tastes, or textures?</li> <li>• What is the author trying to convey or achieve by using this imagery?</li> <li>• Are these images part of a larger pattern or structure within the text (e.g., does it connect to one of the major themes)?</li> <li>• What figures of speech—metaphors, similes, analogies, personification—does the writer use? How do they affect the meaning of the text? What is the author trying to accomplish by using them?</li> </ul>
<b>Diction</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Types               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Slang</li> <li>• Colloquial</li> <li>• Jargon</li> <li>• Dialect</li> <li>• Concrete</li> <li>• Abstract</li> <li>• Denotation</li> <li>• Connotation</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Which of the following categories best describes the diction in the passage or text?               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Low or informal (e.g., dialect, slang, or jargon)</li> <li>○ Elevated or formal language</li> <li>○ Abstract and concrete diction</li> <li>○ Denotation and connotation</li> </ul> </li> <li>• What effect is the author trying to achieve through the use of a specific type of diction?</li> <li>• What does the author's use of diction suggest about his or her attitude toward the subject, event, or character?</li> <li>• What are the connotations of a given word used in a particular context? (To <i>begin</i>, you might ask if the word(s) have a positive or negative connotation, then consider them in the specific context.)</li> <li>• What words would best describe the diction in a specific passage or the text in general?</li> </ul>
<b>Syntax</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sentence structure</li> <li>• Sentence patterns               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Declarative</li> <li>• Imperative</li> <li>• Interrogative</li> <li>• Exclamatory</li> <li>• Simple</li> <li>• Compound</li> <li>• Complex</li> <li>• Comp-Complex</li> <li>• Loose/Cumulative</li> <li>• Periodic</li> <li>• Balanced</li> <li>• Inversion</li> <li>• Interruption</li> <li>• Juxtaposition</li> <li>• Parallelism</li> <li>• Repetition</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Punctuation</i>: How does the author punctuate the sentence and to what extent does the punctuation affect the meaning?</li> <li>• <i>Structure</i>: How are words and phrases arranged within the sentence? What is the author trying to accomplish through this arrangement?</li> <li>• How would you characterize the author's syntax in this text?</li> <li>• <i>Changes</i>: Are there places where the syntax clearly changes? If so, where, how, and why?</li> <li>• <i>Sentence length</i>: How many words are in the different sentences? Do you notice any pattern (e.g., a cluster of short sentences of a particular type)?</li> <li>• <i>Devices</i>: How would you describe the author's use of the following:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Independent and dependent clauses</li> <li>○ Coordinating, subordinating, or correlative conjunctions</li> <li>○ Repetition</li> <li>○ Parallelism</li> <li>○ Fragments</li> <li>○ Comparisons</li> </ul> </li> <li>• <i>Sentence beginnings</i>: How does the author begin his or her sentences? (Does the author, for example, consistently begin with introductory phrases or clauses?)</li> <li>• <i>Language</i>: What use does the author make of figurative language or colloquial expressions?</li> </ul>
<b>Attitude (Tone)</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Word choice</li> <li>• Details</li> <li>• Imagery</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How does the author's use of words, imagery, or details such as gesture or allusions reveal the author's attitude toward a character or event in the story?</li> <li>• What words best describe the author's attitude toward this subject, character, or event?</li> </ul>
<b>Literary Elements</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Setting</li> <li>• Characterization</li> <li>• Plot</li> <li>• Theme</li> <li>• Point of View</li> <li>• Tone/Attitude</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How does the author's use of these different elements contribute to the text's meaning?</li> <li>• Do the different elements interact with or otherwise affect the meaning of the others?</li> <li>• Do you notice any significant shifts in any of the elements at any point? If so, what changes, how, and why? What is the importance and meaning of this change?</li> <li>• What words best describe the different use of these elements? For example, how would you describe the point of view and the effect it has on the meaning of the text?</li> </ul>
<b>Organization</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Compare/Contrast</li> <li>• Importance</li> <li>• Chronology</li> <li>• Cause-Effect</li> <li>• Order of degree</li> <li>• Classification</li> <li>• Spatial</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Which organizational pattern does the author use?</li> <li>• Why does the author choose to use that particular organizational strategy?</li> <li>• Are there places where the author blends or alternates between different organizational patterns? If so, what is the author trying to accomplish by mixing them in these ways?</li> <li>• To what extent and in what ways do you think the author's organizational strategy is effective? Why?</li> </ul>
<b>Types of Writing</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Narrative</li> <li>• Persuasive</li> <li>• Expository</li> <li>• Descriptive</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Exposition</i>: Is the author defining, comparing, classifying, analyzing (a process), describing, or narrating?</li> <li>• <i>Persuasion</i>: Is the author arguing about what something means, whether something is true, which alternative is the best (or most important), or what course of action someone should take?</li> <li>• <i>General</i>: What is the author trying to accomplish? How is the writer using e.g., narrative to solve that problem?</li> </ul>

**Tone** is more than merely an author's attitude toward his or her subject, audience, and/or characters; it is the stylistic means by which an author conveys his or her attitude(s) in a work of literature. Tone is an integral part of a work's meaning because it controls the reader's response, which is essential to fully experiencing literature. In order to recognize tonal shift and to interpret complexities of tone, the reader must be able to make inferences based on an active reading of the work.

### Tonal Scale of Author/Speaker's Attitude

reverence	love	happiness	calm	hope	irony	fear	sadness	anger	hate
admiring	affectionate	blissful	content	anticipatory	absurd	agitated	bleak	acrimonious	abhorrent
adoring	ardent	buoyant	composed	assured	acerbic	alarmed	dejected	aggravated	averse
amazed	compassionate	ecstatic	mellow	confident	biting	angst-ridden	depressed	antipathetic	contemptuous
awed	enamored	elated	mild	eager	caustic	anguished	despairing	bitter	despising
deferential	fond	exalting	passive	expectant	cynical	anxious	despondent	bristling	detesting
elegiac	impassioned	exultant	peaceful	halcyon	derisive	appalled	disconsolate	choleric	disdainful
fawning	infatuated	fervent	placid	idealistic	flippant	apprehensive	dismal	consternated	disgusted
flattering	lustful	jubilant	satisfied	intrepid	humorous	averse	empty	enraged	jealous
honoring	narcissistic	thrilled	sedate	naïve	icy	dismayed	forlorn	exasperated	loathing
humbled	passionate	carefree	serene	optimistic	inconsistent	disquieted	funereal	frustrated	malevolent
nostalgic	Platonic	cheerful	submissive	Pollyannaish	jeering	distressed	gloomy	furiose	malicious
obsequious	rapturous	delightful	tranquil	positive	mocking	dreading	grave	futile	misanthropic
respectful	romantic	gay	undisturbed	rose-colored	paradoxical	horrified	grievous	galled	misogynistic
submissive	sentimental	gleeful	unruffled	sanguine	playful	intimidated	hopeless	hostile	piqued
venerating	tender	joyful		trusting	sarcastic	pessimistic	lamenting	incensed	rancorous
worshipful	wistful	merry			sardonic	sinister	lugubrious	indignant	repugnant
	zealous	mirthful			scornful	spooky	melancholic	irascible	repulsed
		pleased			smirking	startled	miserable	irate	resentful
					sneering	terrified	morose	irritated	vengeful
					witty	timid	pitiful	miffed	
					wry	timorous	regretful	outraged	
						trepid	remorseful	perturbed	
						troubled	solemn	petulant	
						uneasy	somber	riled	
							sorrowful	vexed	
							sullen	wrathful	
							woeful		

### Reader's Perception of Speaker or Character

affable	compassionate	foolish	insightful	perceptive	sincere
aloof	condescending	gullible	insipid	pernicious	subservient
arrogant	confident	haughty	insolent	pedantic	triumphant
audacious	credulous	humble	judgmental	petulant	unreliable
austere	demoralized	imperious	keen	proud	unsophisticated
benevolent	detached	inane	loathsome	querulous	vain
bold	didactic	incredulous	naïve	rational	vapid
cerebral	fatuous	insecure	pathetic	shallow	vivacious