


Key Literary Terms to Know for All English Classes









Terms usually associated with Poetry




Figurative Language	Writing or speech exaggerated for effect (not meant to be taken literally)	Metaphor - Comparison of two unlike things without using 'like' or 'as.' <i>Example: Juliet is the sun</i>
		Hyperbole - Exaggerating or stretching the truth for literary effect. <i>Example: My shoes are killing me</i>
		Simile - A comparison of two unlike things using the word 'like' or 'as.' <i>Example: Love is like a rose.</i>
		Personification - Giving human characteristics to non-human things. <i>Example: The leaves kissed the tree.</i>
		Imagery - Words that create images in the mind (tactile-touch, gustatory-taste, auditory-hear, olfactory-smell, visual-see)
Sound Devices	Writing or speech that uses sound	Rhyme Scheme – the pattern of rhyming words that appears at the ends of two or more lines of poetry
		Alliteration - Repetition of the beginning consonant sound. <i>Example: Sally sells sea shells by the sea shore.</i>
		Assonance - Repetition of an internal vowel sound. <i>Example: How now brown cow?</i>
		Onomatopoeia - The use of words that imitate sounds, as in buzz, hiss, or murmur.
Structure	The arrangement of the lines in a poem	Stanza - A unit or group of lines in poetry that are separated by spaces.
		Quatrain – 4 line stanza
		Couplet – 2 line stanza
		Meter - The repetition of stressed and unstressed syllables in a line of poetry. Iambic Pentameter - a type of meter that has 10 syllables in a line of poetry
Types of Poems	Free Verse/Form Poetry is not written with a regular pattern	Lyric Poetry - Poems that expresses the observations and feelings of a single speaker.
		Narrative Poetry - Poems that tell a story.
		Epic Poetry - A long narrative poem about the adventures of an almost superhuman character (The Odyssey)
	Fixed Verse/Form Poetry has a regular pattern	Ballad - Poem which tells a story of a person from the past and is often set to music.
		Haiku - A Japanese form of poetry with three lines of 5 syllables, 7 syllables, 5 syllables.
		Sonnet - Fourteen lines of iambic pentameter – popularized by Shakespeare

Terms usually associated with Drama


Aside	Dialogue	Monologue	Soliloquy
When a character speaks to the audience and not to the other characters.	Conversation carried on by one or more characters	A speech given by one character while others are on the stage.	Speech delivered by a character when he is alone on stage.
Dramatic POV	Prologue	Oxymoron	Pun
A play, in which all events are told as dialogue	The opening lines of a drama that give background information.	A phrase made up of 2 contradicting words	A play on words, when a word has more than one meaning.
Foil	Tragedy	Tragic Hero	Tragic Flaw
 Character opposites for emphasis	A play in which the main character suffers a downfall.	The main character in a tragedy	The character trait that leads to the downfall of the tragic hero

Terms usually associated with Fiction

Fiction 	Prose writing that tells about imaginary characters and events.	Myth - A fictional tale that explains the actions of gods or heroes, or the causes of natural phenomenon
		Fantasy - Highly imaginative writing that contains elements not found in real life (<i>Harry Potter</i>)
		Historical Fiction - Stories that include or focus on significant historical events (<i>To Kill A Mockingbird</i>)
		Mystery - A story that involves the reader in guessing who committed the crime or deed.
		Science Fiction - Fictional stories that center upon scientific elements.
Plot 	The sequence of events in a literary work.	Exposition - The part of a story or play that explains the background or makes conflict clear.
		Climax - High point in a story, point of most intense interest, and point of no return.
		Resolution - The tying up of loose ends and the end of a story
Characterization 	The way an author reveals his characters. Can be done directly or indirectly.	Protagonist - The main character in a literary work who drives the plot forward
		Antagonist - The person or thing that opposes the protagonist.
		Static Character - A character who remains the same (mentally) throughout a story
		Dynamic Character - A character who changes (mentally) throughout a story
		Hero - A character whose actions are inspiring or noble, and who overcomes difficulties.
Conflict 	The problem(s) or complication(s) in a story	Internal Conflict - Conflict within a character (man vs. self)
		External Conflict - Conflict between a character and something else (man vs. man / nature / society / fate)
Point of View (POV) 	The perspective from which a story is told (who is telling the story and from where?)	First Person POV - The narrator is in the story (pronouns: I, me, we)
		Third Person POV - The narrator is not a character in the story (pronouns: he, she, they)
		Third Person Omniscient POV - The third person narrator is all knowing and all seeing
		Stream of Consciousness - A narrative technique, or point of view, that presents thoughts as if they were coming straight from a character's mind, with story events and character feelings combined.
Irony 	When something is different than it is supposed to be or thought to be.	Verbal Irony - When someone says something they don't mean, but they are believed by others
		Dramatic Irony - When the audience/reader knows something a character does not
		Situational Irony - An unexpected situation considering the circumstances (usually pessimistic in nature). For example: a car crashes into a Drive Carefully sign

Setting	Theme	Tone	Mood	Symbol
Time and place of a literary work. 	An often universal truth (message) about humanity (life) found in literature.	The writer or speaker's attitude towards the subject of the work.	The feelings created in a reader through the literature	Something seen that stands for something unseen (dove=peace, rose=love) 
Flashback	Foreshadowing	Archetype	Allusion	In Medias Res
When a story's sequence is interrupted and a character goes back to an earlier time.	Clues that suggest events yet to come. 	A recurring pattern in literature (the evil stepmother, the wise old man)	A reference to something mythical, Biblical, or historical	A story that begins in the middle of the action















Terms usually associated with Nonfiction

Non-Fiction Prose that explains ideas or is about real people, places, objects, or events.	Autobiography A story about a person written by that person	Biography An author's account or story of another person's life	Memoir An account of the personal experiences of an author.
Almanac A magazine or book that contains weather forecasts, statistics, or other facts of interest to readers.	Dictionary A reference book containing an alphabetical list of words along with definitions, pronunciations and parts of speech for each word	Thesaurus A reference book containing an alphabetical list of words along with synonyms and antonyms for each word	Encyclopedia A comprehensive reference book containing information and articles on a wide range of subjects
Atlas A book of maps 	Journal A daily autobiographical account of events and personal reactions.	Editorial An article that expressing the opinion of a writer, publishers, news station, or network.	Speech A talk or public address.
Essay A short, nonfiction work about a particular subject.	Persuasive Essay An essay written for the sole purpose of persuasion	Expository Essay An essay written solely for informative purposes	Narrative Essay An essay written to tell the events of a story



Terms usually associated with Research and Writing

Fact A statement that can be proved to be true.	Opinion A statement that reflects a belief and cannot be proved.	Primary Source An original document or firsthand account (interview).	Secondary Source This is a commentary on an original document or firsthand account.
Thesis Statement The main idea of an essay that is supported with concrete evidence.	Topic Sentence A one-sentence summary of a paragraph's main point.	Informal / Colloquial Language Everyday speech (slang) consisting of fairly short sentences & simple vocabulary.	Formal Language Spoken or written language that is grammatically and punctually correct.
Prose The ordinary form of written language (sentences and paragraphs), not poetry, drama, or song.	Anecdote Short summary of a funny event, often used to support a greater point (thesis).	Paradox A contradictory statement that presents a truth.	Cliché An overused word or phrase, like "busy as a bee" or "I slept like a log."
Propaganda Information that is spread for the purpose of promoting some cause.	Appeal to Logic (Logos) Persuasion through the use of facts, statistics, charts and graphs.	Appeal to Emotion (Pathos) Persuasion through the use of pictures or words that create emotion.	Appeal to Character/Authority (Ethos) Persuasion through the use of professional and/or famous people.
Connotation All the emotions or feelings a word arouses, such as negative feelings about 'pig.' It's meaning.	Denotation The literal, dictionary definition of a word.	Diction The words used in a piece of literature	Syntax The order in which words are used in a piece of literature
Parallelism Repetition of phrases that have similar grammatical patterns.	Style An author's unique way of writing that involves word choice and sentence patterns.	Idiom Common cliché sayings that are often metaphorical (Don't judge a book by its cover)	Bibliography / Works Cited A listing of sources (primary and secondary) used in an essay or research paper.

Selecting a Topic for a Research Paper	Examples of Primary Sources	Examples of Secondary Sources
<p>Make sure your topic</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">  is not too broad (vague)  is not too controversial  is on subject  has enough available sources to research 	<ul style="list-style-type: none">  Memoirs, private journals and diaries  Public records and documents  Newspaper, magazine and journal articles  Speeches 	<ul style="list-style-type: none">  Encyclopedias  Textbook and other Nonfiction books  Almanacs  Field studies (statistics, surveys)  Technical Documents (letters, forms, records)

MLA = Modern Language Association (a published and acceptable Style used when writing and formatting essays and research papers)


Bibliography/Works Cited Page - A listing of sources (primary and secondary) used in an essay or research paper.

Bibliography / Works Cited Examples	Book with One Author	Author's Last Name, Author's First Name. <u>Title of Book</u> . City of Publication: Name of Publisher, Year of Publication.
	Article from a Newspaper/Magazine	Author's Last Name, Author's First Name. "Title of Article". <u>Title of Magazine/Newspaper</u> Date Magazine was Published: Page(s) of Article.
	Article from the Internet	Author's Last Name, Author's First Name. "Title of Internet Article". Name of Internet Site or Organization. Date of Access <http: internet address>.


- Don't forget that major works (books, names of magazines and newspapers) are Underlined and minor works (articles, chapters) are in "Quotes".
- don't forget that **Bibliographies** are always in **Alphabetical Order**



Terms usually associated with Parts of a Book

	Front of the Book	Copyright Date Date the book was published	Table of Contents A listing with chapter titles and page numbers	Preface An introduction stating why the book was written
	Back of the Book	Appendix Additional (supplementary) material given at the end of a book	Glossary A list that defines words and terms used in a book	Index A list of topics that can be found in the book along with page numbers

Terms usually associated with Paragraph/Essay Structure

Paragraph / Essay Structure The framework used to organize ideas and information 	Description - "The crocodile is the master of deception in the water. It stalks its prey and then swiftly closes in for the kill."
	Problem/Solution - "One problem to resolve in crocodile watching is transportation. How can an observer get close enough to watch without scaring it away or being attacked? The answer to this problem is food."
	Chronological/Time/Order - "When a crocodile first hatches out of its egg, it is small enough to fit in the palm of a hand. By six months it has grown to half of its adult size and by one year it is large enough to swallow a man whole."
	Comparison/Contrast - "The power of the crocodile is like that of a monster truck. With one lunge it can crush its prey and protect the kill from other predators."
	Cause/Effect - "We watched the crocodile as it stalked a deer moving through the moonlight toward the edge of the water. As a result of a noise we made, the deer bolted and the crocodile lost its chance for a late night snack."