**A.P. Literature and Composition**

**Literary Terms**

**Drama**

**Act** – a major division in the action of the play, comprising one or more \*scenes. A break between acts often coincides with a point at which the plot jumps ahead in time.

**Antagonist** – the most prominent of the characters who oppose the \*protagonist or hero (ine) in a dramatic or narrative work. The antagonist is often a villain seeking to frustrate a heroine or hero; but, in those works in which the protagonist is represented as evil, the antagonist will often be a virtuous or sympathetic character, as Macduff is in *Macbeth.*

**Aside** – a short speech or remark spoken by a character in a drama, directed either to the audience or to another character, which by \*convention is supposed to be inaudible to the other characters on stage. (See also *soliloquy*.)

**Catastrophe** – the final resolution or \*denouement of the plot in a \*tragedy, usually involving the death of the \*protagonist.

**Catharsis** – the effect of purgation or purification achieved by tragic drama, according to Aristotle's argument in his *Poetics* (4th century BCE). Aristotle wrote that a \*tragedy should succeed "in arousing pity and fear in such a way as to accomplish a catharsis of such emotions." There has been much dispute about his meaning, but Aristotle seems to be rejecting Plato's hostile view of poetry as an unhealthy emotional stimulant. His metaphor of emotional cleansing has been read as a solution to the puzzle of audiences' pleasure or relief in witnessing the disturbing events enacted in tragedies. Another interpretation is that it is the \*protagonist's guilt that is purged, rather than the audience's feelings of terror. (Adjective: *cathartic*)

**Character** – (1) Any of the persons involved in a story. (2) The distinguishing moral qualities and personal traits of a *character.*

* **Flat character** – a character (1) whose character (2) is summed up in one or two traits.
* **Round character** – a character (1) whose character (2) is complex and multifaceted.
* **Stock character** – a stereotyped character; one whose nature is familiar to us from prototypes in previous fiction.
* **Dynamic character** – a character that is changed by the actions in which he or she is involved.
* **Static character** – a character that remains unchanged or little changed throughout the course of the story

**Climax** – the turning point or high point in a plot's action.

**Comic Relief** – the interruption of a serious work, especially a \*tragedy, by a short, humorous episode that relieves emotional tension.

**Conflict** – a clash of actions, desires, ideas, or goals in the plot of the story. Conflict may exist between the main character and some other person or persons (man vs. man), between the main character and some external force – physical nature, society or "fate" (man vs. nature), or between the main character and some destructive element in his own nature (man vs. himself).

**Crisis** – a decisive point in the plot of a play or story, upon which the outcome of the remaining action depends, and which ultimately precipitates the \*catastrophe or \*denouement.

**Denouement** – the portion of a plot that reveals the final outcome of its conflict or the solution of its mysteries.

**Deus ex machina** – ("god from the machine"). The resolution of a plot by use of a highly improbable chance, coincidence, or artificial device that solves some difficult problem or crisis.

**Epilogue** – a concluding section of any written work during which the characters' subsequent fates are briefly outlined.

**Exposition** – the setting forth of systematic explanation of or argument about any subject; or the opening part of a play or story, in which we are introduced to the characters and their situation, often by reference to preceding events. (Adjective: *expository;* Verb: *expound*)

**Falling Action** – the segment of the plot that comes between the climax and the conclusion.

**Foil** – a character whose qualities or actions serve to emphasize those of the \*protagonist (or of some other character) by providing a strong contrast with them.

**Hamartia** – the Greek word for error or failure, used by Aristotle in his *Poetics* (4th century BCE) to designate the false step that leads the \*protagonist in a \*tragedy to his or her downfall. The term should not be confused with "tragic flaw" which is a defect in character. Hamartia the action that the character takes.

**Hero or Heroine** – the main character in a narrative or dramatic work. The term protagonist is preferable since the leading character may not be morally or otherwise superior. When our expectations of heroic qualities are strikingly disappointed, the central character may be known as an **anti-hero** or **anti-heroine.**

**Hubris** – the Greek word for "insolence" or "affront", applied to the arrogance or pride of the \*protagonist in a \*tragedy in which he or she defies moral laws or the prohibitions of the gods. The protagonists' transgression or \*hamartia leads eventually to his or her downfall, which may be understood as divine retributions. In proverbial terms, hubris is thus the pride that comes before a fall. (Adjective: *hubristic*)

**In medias res** – "in the middle of things"; the technique of beginning a story in the middle of the action.

**Monologue** – an extended speech uttered by one speaker, either to others or as if alone. (See also *soliloquy*)

**Narrator** – the teller of a story. (See also *point of view*)

* Reliable narrator – trustworthy
* Unreliable narrator – untrustworthy
* Naïve narrator – is uncomprehending (child, simple-minded adult) who narrates the story without realizing its true implications
* Intrusive narrator – keeps interrupting the narrative to address the reader

**Plot** – the careful arrangement by an author of incidents in a narrative to achieve a desired effect.

**Prologue** – an introductory section of a literary work or an introductory speech in a play.

**Protagonist** – the central character in a story.

**Rising Action** – the part of a plot that leads through a series of events of increasing interest and power to the climax or turning point. The rising action begins with an inciting moment, an action or event that sets a conflict of opposing forces into motion, and moves through complication(s), an entangling of the affairs of the characters into a conflict, toward the climax, the major crisis that brings about a change in the fortunes of the protagonist.

**Scene** – a subdivision of an act or of a play not divided into acts. A scene normally represents actions happening in one place at one time, and is marked off from the next scene by a curtain, a black-out, or a brief emptying of the stage.

**Setting** – the general locale, time in history, or social milieu in which the action of a literary work takes place.

**Soliloquy** – a dramatic speech uttered by one character speaking aloud while alone on stage, or while under the impression of being alone. The soliloquist thus reveals his or her inner thoughts and feelings to the audience, either in supposed self-communion or in a consciously direct address.

**Stage directions** –the information provided in addition in the dialogue to help a reader visualize the setting, characters, and action; usually in italics and intended for the director, actors, etc.

**Tragedy** – a type of drama in which the protagonist, a person of unusual moral or intellectual stature or outstanding abilities, suffers a fall in fortune due to some error of judgment or flaw in his or her nature.

**Tragic Flaw** –the defect in character that brings about the protagonist's downfall in a \*tragedy.

**Turning Point** – the point in the plot where the protagonist's situation changes for the better or the worse; after this the action begins its movement toward a final resolution.

**Villain** – the principal evil character in a play or story. The villain is usually the antagonist opposed to the protagonist, but in some cases may be the protagonist himself/herself.

**Elements of Style** *(A writer’s way of saying things, or a philosophy that influences the author’s viewpoint; his/her unique way of saying things.)*

**Aestheticism** – reverence for beauty; movement that held beautiful form is to be valued more than instructive content.

**Ambiguity** – a word, phrase or attitude that has double or even multiple meanings, resulting in multiple interpretations.

**Atmosphere** – the pervasive \*mood or \*tone of a literary work - gloom, foreboding, joyful expectation, etc.

**Attitude** – the author's viewpoint regarding his subject matter. Attitude can usually be detected in author's tone.

**Baroque** –a grand and exuberantly ornamental style.

**Classicism** – an adherence to the principles of Greek and Roman literature.

**Colloquialisms** – words or phrases that are used in everyday conversation or informal writing which are usually considered inappropriate for a formal essay.

**Connotation** – the range of further associations that a word or phrase suggests in addition to its straightforward dictionary meaning.

**Convention** – a device of style or subject matter so often used that it becomes a recognized means of expression. For example, a conventional lover cannot eat or sleep. An author who mocks the convention might create an overweight lover who sleeps a lot.

**Denotation** – the precise, literal meaning of a word, without emotional associations or overtones.

**Determinism** – philosophy that suggests people's actions and all other events are determined by forces over which human beings have no control.

**Dialect** – the version of a language spoken by people of a particular region or social group.

**Dialogue** – the conversation of two or more people as represented in writing.

**Diatribe** – violently bitter verbal attack.

**Diction** – the choice of words used in a literary work.

**Digression** – a portion of a written work that interrupts or pauses the development of the theme or plot.

**Epigraph** – the use of a quotation at the beginning of a work that hints at its theme.

**Existentialism** – a philosophical movement the focuses on the individual human being's experience of, recognition of, and triumph over the meaninglessness of existence.

**Expressionism** – presents life not as it appears on the surface, but as it is passionately felt to be by an author or character.

**Feminism** – the view that women are inherently equal to men and deserve equal rights and opportunities.

**Flashback** – a way of presenting scenes or incidents that took place before the opening scene.

**Hedonism** – the pursuit of pleasure above all else.

**Inference** – a conclusion the reader can draw based upon details presented by the author.

**Invective** – direct denunciation or name-calling.

**Irony** – in its broadest sense, the incongruity, or difference, between reality (what is) and appearance (what seems to be).

* Dramatic irony – a situation in which the audience knows more about the character’s situation than the character does, foreseeing an outcome contrary to the character’s expectations.
* Situational irony – the contrast between what is intended or expected and what actually occurs.
* Verbal irony – a contrast between what is said and what is actually meant.

**Jargon** – the special language of a profession or group.

**Juxtaposition** – the "side by side" comparison of two or more objects or ideals for the purpose of highlighting similarities or differences.

**Local Color** – the use of the physical setting, dialect, customs and attitudes that typify a particular region.

**Malapropism** – the comic substitution of one word for another similar in sound, but different in meaning. Functions to make characters look ignorant or amusingly uneducated. "I would have her instructed in geometry that she might know of contagious countries." –*The Rivals* by Sheridan

**Narrative Pace** – the speed at which an author tells a story; the movement from one point or section to another.

**Naturalism** – style of writing that rejects idealized portrayals of life and attempts complete accuracy, disinterested objectivity, and frankness in depicting lie as a brutal struggle for survival.

**Mood** – the prevailing emotional attitude in a literary work, for example, regret, hopefulness, bitterness, etc.

**Pantheism** – the identification of God within the universe.

**Primitivism** – the belief that nature provides a truer and more healthful model than culture; the noble savage.

**Pseudonym** – pen-name, nom de plume, alias; a fictitious name assumed by a writer who wished to remain anonymous or who chooses not to use his/her name professionally.

**Realism** – an author's use of accuracy in the portrayal of life or reality.

**Regionalism** –the tendency in literature to focus on a specific geographical region or locality, re-creating as accurately as possible its unique setting, speech, customs, manners, beliefs, and history.

**Romanticism** – literature depicting emotional matter in an imaginative form. Characteristics include: individuality, subjectivity, spontaneity, freedom from rules, solitary life vs. life in society, the belief that imagination is superior to reason, devotion to beauty, worship of nature, fascination with the past, etc.

**Sarcasm** – harsh, cutting, personal remarks to or about someone, not necessarily ironic.

**Satire** – any form of literature that blends ironic humor and wit with criticism directed at a particular folly, vice or stupidity. Satire seeks to correct, improve, or reform through ridicule.

**Stream-of-consciousness** – a technique that allows the reader to see the continuous, chaotic flow of half-formed and discontinuous thoughts, memories, sense impressions, random associations, images, feelings, and reflections that constitute a character's consciousness.

**Surrealism** – employs illogical, dreamlike images and events to suggest the unconscious.

**Tone** – the reflection in a work of the author's attitude toward his or her subject. Tone in writing is comparable to tone of voice in speech, and may be describe as brusque, friendly, imperious, insinuating, teasing, etc.

**Transcendentalism** – the American version of Romanticism; held that there was something in human beings that transcended human nature - a spark of divinity. This philosophy stood in opposition to the pessimism of Puritanism.

**Unity** – the quality of oneness in a literary work, in which all parts are related by some principle or organization so that they form an organic whole, complete and independent in itself.

**Voice** – the sense a written work conveys to a reader of the writer's attitude, personality, and character.

**Wit** – ingenuity in connecting amusingly incongruous ideas; intellect, humor.

**Fiction Terms**

**Anticlimax** – an effect that spoils the climax (Adjective: *anticlimactic*)

**Archetype** – a pattern or model of an action, a character type, or an image that recurs consistently enough in life and literature to be considered universal.

**Characterization** – the method by which an author creates the appearance and personality of imaginary persons. The author may choose to tell the reader what a character is like through narration, show what a character is like through actions and dialogue, or have the character reveal him/herself through inner thoughts.

**Confidant/confidante** – someone that the protagonist talks to, enabling the audience or reader to become aware of the protagonist's motivation.

**Dystopia** – an undesirable imaginary society. Orwell's *1984* or Huxley's *Brave New World* are examples.

**Explication de texte** – the detailed analysis, or close reading of a passage of verse or prose. Such explication seeks to make meaning clear through a painstaking examination and explanation of style, language, symbolism, and the relationship of parts to the whole.

**Incident** – an event or episode in a work of fiction that moves the plot forward or reveals character.

**Motif** – a recurring image, word, phrase, action, idea, object or situation that appears in various works or throughout the same work.

**Motivation** – the psychological and moral impulses and external circumstances that cause a character to act, think, or feel a certain way.

**Narrative voice** – the attitude, personality or character of the narrator as it is revealed through dialogue or descriptive and narrative commentary.

**Point of View** – the vantage point, or stance, from which a story is told; the eye and mind through which the action is perceived and filtered, sometimes called **narrative perspective.**

* **First person** – the story is told by one of its characters, using the first person pronoun “I” which does not give the reader insight into other characters’ motives or thoughts.
* **Third person objective** – the author limits him/herself to reporting what the characters say or do; he or she does not interpret their behavior or tell us their private thoughts or feelings.
* **Third person omniscient** – the author knows all (godlike) and is free to tell us anything, including what the characters are thinking or feeling and why the act as they do.
* **Third person limited** – the author limits him/herself to a complete knowledge of one character in the story and tells us only what that one character feels, thinks, sees, or hears.

**Reliability** – the extent to which a narrator can be trusted or believed. The closer the narrator is to the story, the more his/her judgment will be influenced by forces in the story.

**Stereotype** – a character who represents a trait generally attributed to a social or racial group and lacks other individualizing traits. (Example: the nagging wife, the hardboiled detective, the hot-headed Italian, etc.)

**Subplot** – a secondary series of events that are subordinate to the main story; a story within a story.

**Suspense** – quality that makes the reader or audience uncertain or tense about the outcome of events.

**Suspension of Disbelief** – the demand made of an audience to provide some details with their imagination and to accept the limitations of reality and staging; also the acceptance of the incidents of a plot by a reader.

**Symbol** – anything that stands for or represents something else beyond it, usually an idea conventionally associated with it.

**Theme** – an abstract idea that emerges from a literary work's treatment of its subject-matter, or a topic recurring in a number of literary works. Themes include: love, war, revenge, betrayal, fate, etc.

**Utopia** – a desirable imaginary society.

**Figures of Speech**

**Allusion** – an indirect or passing reference to an event, person, place, or artistic work that the author assumes the reader will understand.

**Anachronism** – an event, object, custom, person, or thing that is out of its natural order of time. (Example: a clock strikes in *Julius Caesar.*)

**Analogy** – a comparison of similar things, often to explain something unfamiliar with something familiar (the branching of a river system is often explained using a tree and its branches).

**Aphorism** – a terse statement of a principle or truth; a maxim. (Example: life is long, reasoning difficult, etc.)

**Apostrophe** – a rhetorical device in which the speaker addresses a dead or absent person, or an inanimate object or abstraction.

**Cliché** – any expression that has been used so often it has lost its freshness. (Example: sharp as a tack, the last straw, etc.)

**Epigram** – any terse, witty, pointed saying. For example, “she knows the cost of everything, but the value of nothing.”

**Euphemism** – the substitution of a mold term for one more offensive or hurtful.

**Figurative language** – language that contains figures of speech such as metaphor, simile, personification, etc.

**Hyperbole** – exaggeration for the sake of emphasis in a figure of speech not meant literally. (Example: “I’ve been waiting here for ages.”

**Kenning** – a metaphoric compound word or phrase used as a synonym for a common noun. “Ring-bestower” for king; “whale-road” for sea; “candle-of-heaven” for the sun; “war-brand” for a sword (common in Old English poetry).

**Litotes** – a figure of speech by which an affirmation is made indirectly by saying its opposite, usually with an effect of understatement. (Example: “I’d not be averse to a drink.”)

**Malapropism** – the comic substitution of one word for another similar in sound, but quite different in meaning. (Example: “I would have instructed her in geometry (geography) that she might know of contagious (contiguous) countries.”)

**Metaphor** – the most important and widespread figure of speech in which one thing, idea, or action is referred to by a word or expression normally denoting another thing, idea, or action, so as to suggest some common quality (qualities) shared by the two. (Example: “He is a pig.”)

**Metonymy** – figure of speech in which a representative term is used for a larger idea. (Example: “The pen is mightier than the sword.”)

**Onomatopoeia** – the use of words that seem to imitate the sounds they refer to (Example: fizz, crackle, POW, etc.)

**Oxymoron** – a figure of speech in which two contradictory words or phrases are combined in a single expression. (Example: wise fool, living death, etc.)

**Personification** – the technique by which animals, abstract ideas, or inanimate objects are referred to as if they were human. (Example: “The wind howled through the tress.”)

**Proverb** – a short saying that expresses some commonplace truth or bit of folk wisdom. (Example: “A stich in time saves nine.”)

**Pun** – a form of wit, not necessarily funny, involving a play on a word with two or more meanings.

**Simile** – a less direct metaphor, using like or as. (Example: “He is *like* a pig.”)

**Syllogism** – a form of logical reasoning, consisting of two premises and a conclusion.

**Synaesthesia** – the description of one kind of sensation in terms of another. (Example: “He is wearing a loud shirt.”)

**Synecdoche** – a figure of speech that utilizes a part as representative of the whole. (Example: “hands” for manual labor; “the law” for a police officer, etc.)

**Understatement** – a type of verbal irony in which something is purposefully represented as being far less important than it actually is.

**Literary Forms**

**Allegory** – a story or visual image with a second distinct meaning partially hidden behind its literal or visible meaning. An allegory may be conceived at a metaphor that is extended into a structured system.

**Anecdote** – a brief narrative of an entertaining and presumably true incident.

**Argument** – discourse intended to convince or persuade through appeals to reason or emotion.

**Autobiography** – an account of all or a part of a person’s life written by that person.

**Biography** – a written account of someone’s life, written by someone else, which focuses on the character and career of the subject.

**Comedy** – a literary work written chiefly to amuse its audience. It usually provides a happy ending and emphasizes human limitations rather than human greatness.

* **High Comedy** – characterized by grace, elegance, and wit; intellectual comedy
* **Low Comedy** – crude, boisterous comedy; slapstick and crude jokes; physical comedy

**Confessional Literature** – autobiographical writing in which the author discuses highly personal and private experiences normally withheld.

**Convention** – an accepted or expected style or form. (Example: wicked step-mothers in fairy tales, happy endings, etc.)

**Courtly Love** – the emotion that a knight was expected to feel toward a noble lady (a convention of literature of the Middle Ages).

**Didactic** – any text whose main purpose is to teach or instruct.

**Discourse** –spoken or written language.

* **Argument** – discourse intended to convince or persuade through appeals to reason or emotion.
* **Description** – the picturing in words of people, places, and activities through detailed observations.
* **Exposition** – the setting forth of a systematic explanation of or argument about any subject.
* **Narration** – the process of relating a sequence of events.
* **Rhetoric** – the art of persuasion in speaking or writing.

**Essay** –a short written composition in prose that discusses a subject or proposes an argument without claiming to be a complete or thorough exposition. Essays can be formal, informal, or humorous.

**Epistolary** – a novel written in the form of correspondence between characters.

**Eulogy** – a formal composition or speech in high praise of someone (usually dead, but dead or alive) or something.

**Exemplum** – a brief tale told to illustrate a biblical text or to teach a lesson or moral.

**Exposé** – article exposing scandal or crime.

**Fable** – a brief tale that conveys a moral lesson, usually by giving human speech and manners to animals and inanimate objects.

**Farce** – a type of drama related to comedy but emphasizing improbable situations, violent conflicts, physical action, and coarse wit over characterization or an articulated plot.

**Genre** – a French term for a type, species, or class of composition such as a novel, poem, short story, and such sub-categories as sonnet, science fiction, or mystery.

**Gothic** – a type of novel characterized by mystery, horror, and the supernatural, often with haunted castles, secret passageways, grisly visions, and all of the paraphernalia of the tale of terror.

**Historical novel** – attempts to re-create a historically significant personage or series of events.

**Homily** – religious sermon or discourse.

**Melodrama** – drama that pits unbelievably good characters against a despicably evil character. The plot includes dire events and near disasters. Good is always rewarded, and evil punished.

**Memoir** – an account of a single period in a writer’s life, often one that coincides with important historical events.

**Metaphysical poetry** – intricate 17th century English poetry employing wit and unexpected images.

**Miracle play** – medieval religious drama based on a miraculous event in a saint’s life or a story from the Bible.

**Mock Epic** – comically or satirically imitates the form and style of the epic, treating a trivial subject in a lofty manner.

**Morality Play** – allegory in dramatic form. The hero, who represents all mankind, is surrounded by personifications of virtues, vices, angles, demons, and death, who battle for possession of the hero’s soul.

**Myth** – an anonymous narrative, originating in the primitive folklore of a race or nation that explains natural phenomena, or recounts the deeds of heroes, passed on through oral tradition.

**Novel** – a lengthy fictional narrative in prose dealing with character, incidents, and settings that imitate those found in real life.

**Novelette** – built on one incident; shorter than a novel, but has more development of character and theme than a short story.

**Novella** – a short novel.

**Novel of manners** – a novel, usually comical and satirical, whose characters and plot emerge from and are limited by the social customs, values, habits, and mores of a particular social class in a particular time and place.

**Paean** – a song of triumph or thanksgiving.

**Parable** – a brief tale intended to be understood as an allegory illustrating some lesson or moral.

**Parody** – a composition that ridicules another composition by imitating and exaggerating aspects of its content.

**Pedantic** – writing that borders on lecturing which is scholarly, academic, and often overly difficult and distant.

**Picaresque novel** – a novel whose principal character is a low-born rogue who lives by his/her wits and who becomes involved in one predicament after another.

**Play** – a literary work written in dialogue and intended for performance before an audience by actors on stage.

**Poetry** – literature in its most intense, most imaginative, and most rhythmic form.

**Prose** – in the broadest sense, all forms of ordinary writing and speech lacking the sustained and regular rhythmic patterns found in poetry. It resembles closely everyday speech.

**Psychological Novel** – novel that focuses on the “interior” lives of its characters, their mental states and emotions, and their psychological motivations of their actions than on the actions themselves.

**Romance** – any extended work of fiction that deals with adventure, extravagant characters, strange or exotic places, mysterious or supernatural incidents, heroic or marvelous achievements, or passionate love.

**Science Fiction** – novels and short stories set either in the future or on some imaginary world.

**Short Story** – a fictional narrative in prose, short in length (500-15,000 words approx.), usually limited to a few characters, a single setting, and a single incident.

**Sociological Novel** – concerned primarily with social issues and problems.

**Tract** – a formal, religious essay or pamphlet.

**Poetic Terms**

**Alliteration** – the repetition of the same sounds, usually initial consonants, in neighboring words.

**Assonance** – the repetition of identical or similar vowel sounds in neighboring words.

**Ballad** – a form of narrative poetry that presents a single dramatic episode, which is often tragic or violent.

**Blank verse** – poetry written in unrhymed iambic pentameter, which must not be confused with free verse.

**Cacophony** – harsh, clashing, or dissonant sounds, often produced by combinations of words that require a clipped, explosive delivery, or words that contain a number of explosive consonants.

**Cadence** – the rising and falling rhythm of speech, especially that of the balanced phrases in free verse or in prose; also, the fall or rise in pitch at the end of each phrase or sentence.

**Caesura** – a pause in a line of verse, often coinciding with a break between clauses or sentences.

**Conceit** – an unusually far-fetched or elaborate metaphor presenting a surprisingly apt parallel between two apparently dissimilar things or feelings.

**Consonance** – the repetition of identical or similar consonants in neighboring words whose vowel sounds are different (example: coming home, hot foot, etc.)

**Couplet** – two consecutive lines of poetry that rhyme and that are written to the same meter, or pattern, of stressed and unstressed syllables.

“Three be the things I shall have till I die:

Laughter and hope and a sock in the eye.” ~Dorothy Parker

**Dactyl** – metrical foot of three syllables, one accented followed by two unaccented.

**Dirge** – a funeral song of lamentation; a short lyric of mourning.

**Dissonance** – harshness of sound and/or rhyme, either inadvertent or deliberate.

**Dramatic monologue** – a kind of poem in which a single fictional or historical character other than the poet speaks to a silent audience of one or more persons. Such poems reveal not the poet’s own thoughts, but the mind of the impersonated character.

**Elegy** – an elaborately formal lyric poem lamenting the death of a friend or public figure, or serious reflection on a serious subject.

**End-stopped line** – a line brought to a pause at which the end of a verse line coincides with the completion of a sentence, clause, or other independent unit of syntax. It is the opposite of enjambment.

**Enjambment** – the running over of the sense and grammatical structure from one verse line or couplet to the next without a punctuated pause.

**Epic** – a long narrative poem celebrating the great deeds of one or more legendary heroes in a grand style.

**Euphony** – a pleasing smoothness of sound, perceived by the ease with which the words can be spoken in combination. (Adjective: *euphonious*)

**Extended metaphor** – a metaphor that is sustained for several lines or that becomes the controlling image of an entire poem.

**Foot** – the basic unit of rhythmic measurement in a line of poetry.

**Free verse** – poetry that is free of rhyme and meter resembling natural speech.

**Heroic Couplet** – two end-stopped iambic pentameter lines rhymed aa, bb, cc, with the thought usually completed in the two-line unit.

**Hexameter** – a line containing six feet.

**Iamb** – a metrical foot consisting of two syllables, an unaccented syllable followed by an accented as in the word invade.

**Image** – language referring to something that can be perceived through one or more of the senses.

**Imagery** – the making of pictures in words.

**In Medias res** – Latin for “the middle of things.” The term describes the narrative practice of beginning a story in the middle of the action to involve the reader, and then using one or more flashbacks to fill in what led up to that point.

**Lyric** – a usually short, personal poem expressing the poet’s emotions and thoughts rather than telling a story.

**Measure** – an older word for meter. The term is also used to refer to any metrical unit such as a foot.

**Meter** – the pattern of measured sound-units recurring more or less regularly in lines of verse.

**Octave** – a group of eight verse lines forming the first part of a sonnet; or a stanza of eight lines.

**Ode** – an elaborately formal lyric poem, often in form of a lengthy address to a person or abstract entity, always serious and elevated in tone.

**Pastoral** – a poem dealing with shepherds and rural life.

**Pentameter** – a line of five feet. Iambic pentameter, normally 10 syllables, has had special status as the standard line in many poetry forms.

**Persona** – the assumed identity or fictional “I” assumed by a writer in a literary work.

**Prosody** – the study of sound and rhythm in poetry.

**Quatrain** – a verse stanza of four lines, rhymed or unrhymed.

**Refrain** – a line, group of lines, or part of a line repeated at regular or irregular intervals in a poem.

**Rhyme** – the similarity of sound between two words.

* **End rhyme** – rhyme which comes at the end of a line of poetry.
* **Internal rhyme** – rhyme which comes within the line.
* **Feminine rhyme** – two-syllable rhyme.
* **Forced rhyme** – meaning in the poem suffers because of the stilted nature of the rhyme.
* **Masculine rhyme** – one-syllable rhyme.
* **Exact rhyme** – identical rhyme between two words (feature/creature)
* **Slant rhyme** – approximate or near; inexact rhyme between two words
* **Eye rhyme** – rhyme based on spelling rather than sound (bough/though)

**Rhythm** – the patterned flow of sound in poetry and prose. Sound devices create rhythm.

* **Sprung rhythm** – measured by counting only the accented syllables and by varying the number of unaccented syllables.

**Scansion** – analyzing the meter in lines of poetry by counting and marking the accented and unaccented syllables, and dividing the lines into metrical feet.

**Sestet** – a six-line poem or stanza.

**Sonnet** – a fourteen-line lyric poem in iambic pentameter.

* **English sonnet** – rhyme scheme abab, cdcd, efef, gg (aka Shakespearean sonnet)
* **Italian sonnet** – rhyme scheme of abba, abba, cde, cde (aka Petrarchan sonnet)

**Stanza** – a section or division of a poem, resembling paragraphs in prose.

**Stress** – the emphasis placed on a word or syllable.

**Trochee** – a metrical foot consisting of two syllables, an accented syllable followed by an unaccented syllable, as in the word fortune.

**Verse** – poetry as distinct from prose. The term is usually more neutral than poetry, indicating the technical requirements or rhythm and meter are present, while poetic merit may or may not be present.

**Villanelle** – a lyric poem made up of five stanzas of three lines, plus a final stanza of four lines.

**Volta** – the Italian term for the turn in the argument or mood of a sonnet, occurring between the octave and the sestet in the 9th line.

**Syntax & Grammatical Terms**

**Anaphora** – the regular repetition of the same word or phrase at the beginning of successive phrases or clauses.

“We shall fight on the beaches, we shall fight on the landing grounds.

We shall fight in the fields and in the streets…” ~Winston Churchill

**Anastrophe** – a rhetorical term for the inversion of the normal order of the parts of a sentence.

“After great pain a formal feeling comes –

The nerves sit ceremonious like tombs.” ~Emily Dickinson

**Antecedent** – the word, phrase, or clause to which a pronoun refers.

**Antithesis** – a figure of speech in which opposing or contrasting ideas are balanced against each other using grammatically parallel syntax.

“There is no king who has not had a slave among his ancestors,

And no slave who has not had a king among his.” ~Helen Keller

**Asyndeton** – conjunctions are omitted, producing a fast-paced and rapid prose.

I came. I saw. I conquered.

**Chiasmus** – grammatical structure in which the first clause or phrase is reversed in the second, sometimes repeating the same words.

“And so, my fellow Americans, ask not what your country can do for you: ask what you can do for your country.” ~John F. Kennedy

**Clause** – a group of words containing a subject and verb that may or may not be a complete sentence.

**Gerund** – a noun formed from a verb. (Example: living)

**Imperative** – sentence structure that gives a command. (Example: “Eat your spinach.”)

**Inversion** – reversing the normal order of sentence parts for poetic effect.

**Loose sentences** – modifiers follow the SVC pattern allowing the strength of the sentence to come first. (Example: “A car hit him just as he bent over to tie his shoelace.”)

**Paradox** – a statement or expression so surprisingly self-contradictory as to provoke us into seeking another sense in which it would be true.

“Success is counted sweetest

By those who ne’er succeed.” ~Emily Dickinson

**Parallelism** – expressing similar or related ideas in similar grammatical structure. (Example: “He tried to make the law clear, precise, and equitable.”)

**Periodic sentences** – the main idea comes last in the sentence, leaving the reader with a more powerful last impression. (Example: “Just as he bent over to tie his shoelace, a car hit him.”)

**Polysyndeton** – the opposite of asyndeton. The use of many conjunctions has a slowing effect on the text.

**Rhetorical question** – questions that do not require an answer.

**Logical Fallacies (Errors in Reasoning) in Argumentation**

**Ad Hominem** – “against the man”; attacking the arguer rather than the argument or issue.

**Ad Populum** – “to the crows”; the misconception that because a great number of people do something, it is therefore correct. (Example: the parents of Sylvia’s friends allowed their daughters to stay out until 2:00am, therefore Sylvia’s parents should let Sylvia stay out until 2:00am as well; also known as “teenage logic.”)

**Appeal to Authority** – person A is (or claims to be) an authority on subject S. Person A makes claim to C about subject S, therefore person C is true.

**Appeal to Belief** – most people believe that X is true, therefore X is true.

**Appeal to Emotion** – when the arguer manipulates emotions in order to get people to accept a claim as being true.

* **Appeal to popularity** – “The new UltraSkinny diet will make you feel great. No longer be troubled by your weight. Enjoy the admiring stares of the opposite sex. Revel in your new freedom from fat.”
* **Appeal to fear** – “You must believe that God exists. After all, if you don’t accept the existence of God, you’ll face the horrors of Hell.”
* **Appeal to flattery** – “Might I say that this is the best class I’ve ever taken. By the way, about those two points I need to get an A…”
* **Appeal to novelty** – “Our Company has to be on the cutting edge. That means new ideas and new techniques have to be used. The GK method is new, so it will do better than the old method.”
* **Appeal to pity** – “I’m positive that my work will meet your requirements. I really need the job since my grandmother is very sick.”
* **Appeal to ridicule** – “Support the ERA? Sure, when women start paying for the drinks!”
* **Appeal to spite** – “You can’t be serious about nominating John for president. Remember what he pulled last year?”
* **Appeal to tradition** – “I believe in God. People have believed in God for generations, so God must exist.”

**Bandwagon** – threat of rejection from one’s peers replaces evidence in an argument. (Example: “I realize prejudice is wrong, but we don’t allow African Americans or women in our group. You understand, of course.”)

**Begging the Question** – taking for granted something that needs proving. (Example: “Free all political prisoners.”)

**Biased Sample** – drawing a conclusion about a population based on a sample that is biased or prejudiced. (Example: in determining the population’s stance on gun control, polling only NRA members would be a biased sample.)

**Circular Reasoning** – trying to prove one idea with another idea that is too similar to the first. (Example: “A writer is a person who writes.”)

**Confusing Cause and Effect** – A and B regularly occur together. Therefore, A is the cause of B.

**Hasty Generalization** – drawing a general and premature conclusion on the basis of only one or two cases. (Example: “All dogs should be muzzled because a Golden Retriever disturbed the peace in the park recently.”)

**Middle Ground** – position A and B are too extreme. C rests in between A and B. Therefore, C is the correct stance.

**Motivational Appeal** – an attempt to reach an audience by recognizing their needs and values and how these contribute to their decision making.

**Non Sequitur** – “it does not follow”; and inference or conclusion that does not follow established evidence or premises. (Example: “He’s the more popular; therefore, he should be president.”)

**Poisoning the Well** – unfavorable information about person A is presented (true or false). Therefore, any claims made by person A will be false.

**Post Hoc Ergo Propter Hoc** – “after this, therefore because of this”; assuming that an incident that precedes another is the cause of the second. (Example: “Andy worked on his science project longer than his English paper, therefore he felt he should earn an A.”)

**Propaganda** – writing or images that seek to persuade through emotional appeal rather than through logical proof; written or visual texts that describe or depict using highly connotative words or images without justification.

**Red Herring** – diverting attention from the issue by introducing a new point.

**Reductio ad Absurdum** – “to reduce to the absurd”; reducing an argument to an either/or choice. (Example: “The possession of firearms

**Slippery Slope** – predicting without justification that one step in a process will lead unavoidably to a second, generally undesirable step.

**Straw Man** – disputing a view similar to, but not the same as, that of the arguer’s opponent.

**Two Wrongs Make a Right** – Bill has borrowed Jane’s pen, but found he didn’t return it. He tells himself that it is okay to keep it since she would have done the same.

**Rhetorical Devices, Techniques & Strategies**

**Antithesis** – “against the thesis”; the statement of the opposing viewpoint.

**Argument** – a single assertion or series of assertions presented and defended by the writer.

**Concession** – an admission in an argument that the opposing side has points; to grant, allow, or yield to a point.

**Credibility** – the audience’s belief in the arguer’s trustworthiness.

**Deduction** – the process of moving from a general rule to a specific example.

**Details** – facts that support the thesis or assertion in a piece of writing.

**Ethos** – appeal to the credentials of the person speaking; character, goodwill, trustworthiness, intelligence, etc.

**Induction** – the process of moving from a given series of specifics to a generalization.

**Logic** – the process of reasoning.

**Logos** – appeal to logic.

**Pathos** – appeal to emotion.

**Persuasion** – type of argument that has its goal and action on the part of the audience.

**Repetition** – the deliberate use of any element of language more than once; repeating words or phrases for effect.

**Rhetoric** – the entire process of effective written communication.

**Rhetorical shift** – a change of movement in a piece from one point, idea, concept, etc. to another; signaled by words such as but, then, however, etc.

**Thesis** – the main idea of a piece of writing.

**Modes of Rhetorical Discourse**

**Cause and Effect** – reasoning that proposes one event or condition can bring about another.

**Classification** – identifies the subject as part of a larger group with shared features.

**Compare/Contrast** – showing a subject more clearly by pointing out ways that it is similar, or unlike something else.

**Definition** – places a subject into an appropriate group and then differentiates the subject from the other parts of the group

**Description** – a mode of writing that conveys the evidence of the senses (sight, hearing, touch, taste, and smell).

**Division** – breaking the subject into smaller segments.

**Example** – illustration of a premise by citation of examples.

**Narration** – the classification of discourse that tells a story or relates an event.

**Persuasion** – a mode of writing intended to influence people’s actions by engaging their beliefs and feelings.

**Process Analysis** – a method of development that most often explains step-by-step how something is done or how to do something.