

A Few Literary Terms

alliteration	verbal irony	assonance	protagonist	inference	cliché	repetition	situational irony	
idiom	rising action	analogy	denouement	foil	metaphor	oxymoron	nemesis	paradox
onomatopoeia	foreshadowing	flashback	hyperbole	consonance	dramatic irony	theme	point of view	
personification	antagonist	ambiguity	rhyme	syntax	simile	diction	symbolism	tone

Complete the sentences using words from the bank. Use each word exactly once.

1. A CLICHÉ is a word or phrase that has become very familiar and is perhaps **over-used**.
2. An ANTAGONIST is a force **against** which **the protagonist** must struggle in order to achieve his or her goal.
3. A FOIL is a character that **helps bring into light** the most pertinent **attributes of the protagonist**.
4. ONOMATOPOEIA is when a word's **name mirrors its sound**, for example, "buzz" or "meow."
5. SITUATIONAL IRONY is a surprising **twist of events** like when a cop lands behind bars or a dropout opens a school.
6. The RISING ACTION is right **after the set-up**. It is when the **first action** occurs.
7. HYPERBOLE is a form of extravagant **exaggeration**, for example, "You never listen" or "You always do that."
8. PERSONIFICATION is when **human qualities** are attributed to **non-human entities**.
9. CONSONANCE is when a **consonant sound**, usually ending consonant sound, **is repeated for effect** as in "Barb and Abe."
10. SYMBOLISM is when a **material object** represents either a larger, more complex object or an **abstract idea**, for example when a red cap represents independence of spirit or when a cage represents slavery.
11. SYNTAX is the organization of sentences and the placement or **order of words within a sentence**.
12. An ANALOGY **is a comparison of relationships** and is written mathematically: **Finger : hand :: branch : tree**.
13. ALLITERATION is when sounds, usually beginning sounds, are **repeated**, as in "Pink Peter Piper picked poppies."
14. RHYME is when the **entire endings of words** sound alike as in "hop" and "pop" and "dime" and "time."
15. A PARADOX is an apparent **conceptual contradiction** or when something is both itself and its opposite at once. For example, boundaries provide freedom or we are often the meanest to those whom we love the most.
16. An IDIOM is an **expression that is unique to a culture** and is **literally untrue**, for example, "It's raining cats and dogs."
17. ASSONANCE is when a **vowel sound**, usually middle vowel sound, **is repeated** as in "Homostrophic Ode to Conan O".
18. A METAPHOR suggests that **one thing is another thing**, offering profound insight, for example "Ignorance is prison."
19. DICTION is an author's **word choice**.
20. A SIMILE compares two **dissimilar** things, often **using words such as "like" or "as."**
21. DRAMATIC IRONY is when the reader or audience **knows something that the characters do not**.
22. TONE is the **author's attitude** toward the subject matter, the characters and/or the reader.
23. FORESHADOWING is when the writer gives you a **clue early on** as to what will happen later in the story.
24. An OXYMORON is a **term or phrase that is seemingly contradictory**, such as "cold hotplate" or "jumbo shrimp."
25. The DENOUEMENT is the **ending** of the story wherein all the complexities are unraveled (much like knots are untied).
26. VERBAL IRONY is another way of saying **"sarcasm."**
27. THEME has a few meanings, including: 1) **central message**; 2) **topic**; and 3) a **recurring motif**.
28. The PROTAGONIST is the **main character** of a story. He or she is also often referred to as the hero or heroine.
29. AMBIGUITY is when something is **unclear** and may be **interpreted in a variety of ways**.
30. INFERENCE is when you come to a **conclusion**, based on evidence, about aspects that are **not directly stated**.
31. FLASHBACK is when the **setting suddenly shifts to a place and time in the past**.
32. NEMESIS is the **rival** whom the protagonist just **can't seem to beat**.
33. REPETITION is when a word, element or device repeats over and over for style or effect.
34. POINT OF VIEW is the perspective from which the narrator tells the story: **first person** (use of the pronoun "I" in the narrative); **third person objective** (no thoughts or feelings of the characters, only words and actions); **third person limited omniscient** (thoughts and feelings of just the protagonist); or **third person omniscient** (thoughts and feelings of all characters).

A Few More Literary Terms Along with Some Rhetorical Terms

allusion	parable	connotation	denotation	ethos	logos	pathos	anaphora	explication	problem-solution	
compare-contrast	fact	opinion	bias	parody	satire	allegory	euphemism	imagery	hubris	foot
catharsis	climax	deus ex machina	motif	utopia	juxtaposition	slant rhyme	fable	prose	asyndeton	
rhetoric	figurative language	tragedy	aphorism	portmanteau	bildungsroman	zeugma	doppelganger			

35. BIAS is an inappropriate slant toward one side of an issue; **prejudice**.
36. A DENOTATION is the **explicit and direct** definition of a word.
37. An ALLEGORY is a **short, symbolic narrative intended to provide insight into a parallel narrative or historical event**, for example, the children’s book “Terrible Things” is an allegory for the Holocaust.
38. An APHORISM is a **pithy saying** that embodies a general truth. For example, “Absolute power corrupts absolutely.”
39. A TRAGEDY is a **narrative** whose hero, due to his own **tragic flaw**, takes a **tragic fall**. Shakespeare’s *Macbeth* is one.
40. A MOTIF is a **recurring symbol or idea** in an artistic work.
41. PORTMANTEAU is the **blending together of two words**, for example “Brangelina” for Brad and Angelina.
42. A FACT is a provable, **objective “truth.”**
43. UTOPIA is a perfect or **ideal society**.
44. DEUS EX MACHINA is when an external force, such as a **god, comes to save the day**.
45. JUXTAPOSITION is the **side-by-side placement** of objects or ideas for the purpose of comparing and contrasting.
46. ZEUGMA is when **a single word, usually a verb, is used to govern two words or phrases**, for example “She stole my heart and my cat” or “He held his breath and the door.” It is closely related to *syllipsis*.
47. A CONNOTATION is an **associated meaning of a word** and is often considered to be either “positive” or “negative.”
48. A SLANT-RHYME is a **half rhyme**, usually involving consonance and/or assonance. Example: “worm” and “warm.”
49. The CLIMAX is the heightened part of the narrative during which the protagonist overcomes his or her **biggest obstacle**.
50. PROSE is **ordinary, non-poetic** written or spoken expression; regular sentences not written in verse.
51. A PARABLE is a type of short, **simple story** involving **human characters** that carries a **strong message**.
52. A FABLE is a type of short, **simple story** involving **animal characters** that conveys a **strong message**.
53. ETHOS is the part of a rhetorical expression that involves an appeal to **ethics and the author’s credibility**.
54. LOGOS is the part of a rhetorical expression that involves an appeal to **reason and logic**.
55. PATHOS is the part of a rhetorical expression that involves an appeal to **emotion**.
56. HUBRIS is a type of **tragic flaw** that involves **putting oneself in the position of a god**.
57. A CATHARSIS is an **emotional purging or cleansing** experienced by the audience, usually as part of an artistic work’s climax.
58. SATIRE is a genre of expression that involves the **humorous teasing** or mocking of a subject **in order to effect change**.
59. PARODY is a **type of satire that involves mimicking** the person being mocked.
60. FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE is **language that is not scientific and literal**. *Metaphor, simile* and *hyperbole* are examples.
61. A EUPHEMISM is an inoffensive word that takes the place of a potentially offensive word.
62. EXPLICATION is the **analysis and explanation** of a work, usually a **poem**.
63. An OPINION is a **belief** that has **yet to be proven** as fact (except in Law where it is the judge’s ruling).
64. An ALLUSION is a **nod or reference** to something else that is **not directly stated**.
65. IMAGERY involves the use of images, which are basically **chunks of words that evoke a sensory response**.
66. A PROBLEM-SOLUTION essay explores a problem and a suggested solution.
67. A COMPARE-CONTRAST essay compares and contrasts two works, and when poorly written, reads like a bad tennis match.
68. A FOOT is a **metrical unit of two or more syllables**. An *iamb* is one. A *trochee* is another.
69. RHETORIC is written or spoken expression that is intended **to persuade**.
70. A BILDUNGSROMAN is a **coming-of-age story** – a story that involves the evolution of a young protagonist.
71. A DOPPELGANGER is the **ghostly double** of a living being.
72. ANAPHORA is a rhetorical device wherein **beginning words or phrases are repeated** as in “I have a dream...I have a dream...”
73. ASYNDETON is a stylistic device wherein conjunctions are omitted. Example: “...of the people, by the people, for the people.”