

Allegory	a narrative or description in which the characters or events primarily stand for something other than what they literally are, and in which the second meaning carries most of the interest.
Alliteration	repetition of initial consonant sounds of accented syllables or important words in poetry.
Allusion	a reference, implicit or explicit to something in previous literature or history.
Apostrophe	a figure of speech in which someone absent or dead or something nonhuman is addressed as if it were alive and present and could reply.
Assonance	repetition of vowel sounds in accented syllables or important words.
Ballad	a narrative poem written in song-like stanza form. Often makes use of repetition and dialogue.
Blank verse	un-rhymed iambic pentameter. Understood as elevated (but not stilted) language in much of Shakespeare; Wordsworth thought it reflected the natural rhythm of English speech.
Caesure	a natural pause in the middle of a line of verse. Hexameter often has a pause ("And singing still dost soar, and soaring ever singest." Shelley, "To a Skylark" - this line is also also and example of chiasmus).
Chiasmus	a structure using inverted word order in two parallel phrases (see the example for caesura). Often used in the thematic context of balance, symmetry, or reflection ("These flowery waters and the watery flowers," Frost, "Spring Pools").
Climax	the 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.

<p style="text-align: center;">Couplet</p>	<p>two successive lines, usually in the same meter, linked by rhyme. Favored by Pope (among many others); famously used by Shakespeare as the coda of a sonnet or a dramatic scene.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Denouement</p>	<p>resolution of the plot after the climax. Literally means "untying" or "unknotting" as if snarled plot strands were sorted out. Think of the realignment of lovers with their intended partners at the end of "A Midsummer Night's Dream."</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Diction</p>	<p>word choice that creates a particular effect through the associations it suggests. "Inferno," "bonfire," and "pyre" all describe roughly the same thing, but raise different associations in the mind.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Didactic literature</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">literature having as a primary purpose to teach or to preach.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Elegy</p>	<p>a formal, sustained poem lamenting change or loss, often involving the death of a particular person, and often ending in a consolation for the loss.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Epic</p>	<p>a long, narrative poem, often dealing with heroes and adventures, having an expansive setting, written in deliberately ceremonial style.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Epithet</p>	<p>an adjectival phrase used to define a special quality of a person or thing ("the grey-eyed goddess" Athena in the Odyssey).</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Figurative language</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">language that cannot be taken literally or only literally.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Hyperbole</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">a figure of speech involving great exaggeration.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Imagery</p>	<p>vivid, sensory details that raise a picture (or other sensory response) in the mind in a way that abstract language does not ("And in some perfumes is there more delight/ Than in the breath that from my mistress reeks." Shakespeare, Sonnet 130).</p>

Invocation	the call to a muse or deity for help or inspiration: "Sing in me, Muse..."
Irony	a contrast between appearance or expectation and reality. In verbal irony the intended meaning of a statement is opposite the literal meaning ("Being paid to ski powder is a rough job, but somebody's gotta do it). Situational irony refers to an occurrence or situation that contrasts with what is expected (Hardy's "Ah, are you digging..."). In dramatic irony events or facts not known to one character are known to other characters or to the audience (Sophocles' "Oedipus Rex").
Lyric poem	a poem, usually short, that expresses some basic emotion or state of mind. Often creates a single impression and is highly personal ("When all at once I saw a crowd, / A host of golden daffodils... Wordsworth, "I wandered lonely as a cloud"). Contrast with narrative.
Metaphor	a figure of speech in which an implicit comparison (not using "like" or "as") is made between two things essentially unlike, sometimes referred to as the tenor - the literal subject - and the vehicle - the metaphorical term applied to the subject. Generally carries more rhetorical force than simile, as metaphor creates direct identification between tenor and vehicle, or imaginatively transforms the former into the latter.
Metonymy	the substitution of a specific, closely related term to stand for the thing actually meant ("the crown" stands for the king; "I have read all of Yeats," meaning all of the works Yeats wrote).
Narrative	a story or account of an event or series of events. May be either poetry (Wordsworth's Prelude) or prose (The Sun also Rises); either fictional or true.
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").
Oxymoron	a statement containing two terms that are ordinarily opposites ("A careless shoestring in whose tie / I see a wild civility." Herrick, "Delight in Disorder"). Literally means "pointed nonsense."
Paradox	a statement or situation containing apparently contradictory elements, but which has valid meaning ("A woman's face with Nature's own hand painted / Hast thou, the master mistress of my passion; / A woman's gentle heart but not acquainted / With shifting change as is false women's fashion." Shakespeare, Sonnet 20).
Pastoral	a poem that presents an idealized picture of rural life.

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".
Pathos	a feeling of sympathy - especially sorrow or sympathy - aroused by literature.
Quatrain	a four-line stanza or four-line division of a poem or sonnet, distinguished by the rhyme scheme.
Rhetoric	language meant to persuade through the appeal to sentiment, character, sympathy, duty, etc. Traditionally contrasted with logic, which makes its appeal through reason, though logos - the appeal to reason - has been widely regarded since the postmodern age as a form of rhetoric.
Satire	a form of literature that ridicules human folly or vice in an effort to bring about reform or forestall similar folly or vice. Satire often depends on hyperbole, caricature, and irony (Swift, A Modest Proposal).
Simile	a figure of speech involving an explicit comparison (i.e., using "like" or "as").
Soliloquy	a dramatic speech in which a character speaks his thoughts aloud. Known as an aside when other characters are present who do not hear the speech.
Sonnet	a lyric poem consisting of fourteen lines of iambic pentameter. The Petrarchan or Italian sonnet generally uses an abbaabba cdecde rhyme scheme, forming two sections (octave and sestet) that examine and develop the subject. The Shakespearean or English sonnet generally uses an abab cded efef gg that develops the subject in the first three quatrains and draws a conclusion in the couplet.
Stanza	a group of lines which are set off and form a division in a poem. Stanzas often have repeated metrical patterns and rhyme schemes.
Symbol	a figure of speech in which something relatively concrete (object, character, action, setting) signifies something abstract (love, beauty, justice, betrayal). Night can be a symbol of death, dice a symbol of fate, the wind a symbol of inspiration.

<p>Synecdoche</p>	<p>a figure of speech in which the part stands for the whole ("Friends, Romans, countrymen, lend me your ears..." Shakespeare, Julius Caesar). The whole can also stand for the part: "by the time the law arrived, the thief was gone"; the law stands for the police."</p>
<p>Tercet</p>	<p>a stanza of three rhyming lines.</p>
<p>Tone</p>	<p>the writer's or speaker's attitude toward his subject, his audience, or himself; the emotional coloring or meaning of a work. The tone may be joyous, apprehensive, celebratory, reproachful, weary, haughty, or like the speaker in Donne's Break of Day, alternately bitter, forlorn, and defiant, among many other possibilities.</p>
<p>Vignette</p>	<p>a brief literary sketch or verbal description of a scene or incident.</p>
<p>Villanelle</p>	<p>See Thomas's "Do Not Go Gentle Into That Good Night" and Bishop's "One Art." Many poets have found this form well suited to elegiac poems.</p>
<p>Zeugma</p>	<p>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.</p>