

Vocabulary Lists 1, 2, 3: Definitions and Examples

Literary Term	Definition	Example
Imagery	Language that appeals to the senses; the use of figurative speech or vivid description to produce mental images	He fumed and charged like an angry bull.
Metaphor	A comparison of two often unrelated things	Simon is an animal.
Simile	A comparison of two things or ideas through the use of words like or as	His smile is like the ray of light.
Hyperbole	A deliberate, extravagant, and often outrageous exaggeration; may be used for either serious or comic effect.	I've told you a million times!
Understatement	Intentionally making something seem less important than it really is	It's just a scratch - referring to a large dent
Personification	When a thing, an idea or an animal is given human attributes	Snowflakes danced
Oxymoron	When two opposite ideas are joined to create an effect. The common oxymoron phrase is a combination of an adjective followed by a noun with contrasting meanings	cruel kindness living death
Theme	A main idea or an underlying meaning of a literary work that may be stated directly or indirectly	It is possible to survive against all odds.
Tone	An attitude of a writer toward a subject or an audience	Aggressive, pessimistic, cheerful, sarcastic, hopeful, etc.
Motif	An object or idea that repeats itself throughout a literary work	<i>To Kill a Mockingbird</i> : A motif in the narrative is the small town life of Maycomb, which depicts goodness and pleasantness in life.

Literary Term	Definition	Example
Diction	Style of speaking or writing determined by the choice of words by a speaker or a writer	“Ah, happy, happy boughs! that cannot shed Your leaves, nor ever bid the spring adieu.” It is more formal to use “adieu” than to say “goodbye.”
Syntax	A set of rules in a language. It dictates how words from different parts of speech are put together in order to convey a complete thought	Writing all of his plays and sonnets in iambic pentameter, Shakespeare reversed the general order of English sentences by placing verbs at the end of the sentences.
Denotation	Literal or dictionary meanings of a word	“He jumped over the wall.” The word “wall” means an actual wall.
Connotation	A meaning that is implied by a word besides its literal definition. Words carry cultural and emotional associations or meanings in addition to their literal meanings.	In <i>Animal Farm</i> , the actions of the animals on the farm illustrate the greed and corruption that arose after the Communist Revolution of Russia
Allusion	A brief and indirect reference to a person, place, thing or idea of historical, cultural, literary or political significance	I can’t do that because I am not Superman
Foreshadowing	When a writer gives an advance hint of what is to come later in the story	In “The Lottery,” the end is hinted at when the author describes the pile of rocks.
Myth	A traditional or legendary story, usually concerning some being or hero or event	Myth of Hercules
Epic	A long narrative poem, which is usually related to heroic deeds of a person of an unusual courage and unparalleled bravery	Homer’s <i>Odyssey</i>
Archetype	A typical character, an action or a situation that seems to represent such universal patterns of human nature	The mother figure, the villain, the scapegoat, etc.
Allegory	When abstract ideas and principles are described in terms of characters, figures and events	The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe by C.S. Lewis is a religious allegory with Aslan as Christ and Edmund as Judas.

Literary Term	Definition	Example
Irony	The use of words to convey a meaning that is the opposite of its literal (actual) meaning	After begging for a cat and finally getting one, she found out she was allergic
Figurative Language	Language in which figures of speech are used to make it effective, persuasive and impactful	metaphors, similes, imagery, etc.
Consonance	Repetitive sounds produced by consonants within a sentence or phrase	He thrusts his fists against the posts and still insists he sees the ghosts.
Antithesis	A rhetorical device in which two opposite ideas are put together in a sentence to achieve a contrasting effect	Money is the root of all evils; poverty is the fruit of all goodness
Alliteration	When multiple (typically 3+) words have the same first consonant sound and fall within the same sentence or phrase	Sally sells seashells by the sea shore
Anaphora	The deliberate repetition of the first part of the sentence in order to achieve an artistic effect	I came, I saw, I conquered
Parallelism	The use of components in a sentence that are grammatically the same; or similar in their construction, sound, meaning or meter	I went to the store, parked the car and bought a pizza.
Memoir	A written factual account of somebody's life	<i>Dreams of my Father</i> by Barack Obama
Anecdote	A short and interesting story or an amusing event often used to support or demonstrate some point and make readers and listeners laugh	In <i>Curious Incident</i> Christopher tells about the time he refused to speak to the new teacher at school until he trusted her.
Assonance	When two or more words close to one another repeat the same vowel sounds but start with different consonant sounds.	<u>Men</u> <u>se</u> ll the <u>wed</u> d <u>ing</u> <u>be</u> lls.

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Shakespearean Sonnet	Poem of 14 lines Shakespeare's were mostly written in iambic pentameter	
Iambic Pentameter		
Blank Verse		
Heroic Couplet		
Soliloquy		
Aside		
Prologue		
Epilogue		
Pun		
In Media Res		