

CRITICAL VOCABULARY

ACROSTIC	A poem where the initial letter of each line reads downwards to reveal a name or other word or phrase. Such poems are often playfully used to conceal the identity of a mistress or patron.
ALLEGORY	(Greek – ‘to speak otherwise’) A story in verse or prose with two parallel narratives, one open and superficial, the other concealed. The presence of the hidden narrative is often indicated by symbolism or allusion. The connections between the two narratives are sustained and continuous. <i>Adjective: Allegorical.</i>
ALLITERATION	Repetition of consonant sounds within poetry or prose. <i>Adjective: Alliterative.</i>
ALLUSION	An implied reference to an individual, event, or another work of art or literature. Allusion relies upon the author’s and reader’s common frame of reference. <i>Eg.</i> The Bloody Captain in <i>Macbeth</i> alludes to the crucifixion of Christ when he describes Macbeth’s attack upon the rebels as ‘another Golgotha’.
AMBIGUITY	When an author intentionally uses language which is unclear or open to interpretation. <i>Adjective: Ambiguous.</i>
ANACRUSIS	One or more unstressed syllables at the beginning of a line of verse, before the normal meter begins. An up-beat of sorts.
ANAGNORISIS	(Greek – ‘recognition’) The moment in a literary work when a character moves from ignorance to knowledge, <i>e.g.</i> Othello’s awareness of his credulity after killing Desdemona.
ANALEPSIS	A flashback or retrospection in a narrative,

often used to provide background information for the benefit of the reader or audience. An example is Prospero's description of events in Milan twelve years before the opening of *The Tempest*. *Adjective: Analeptic.*

ANALOGUE

A literary parallel; a text similar in structure or theme to another. *Adjective: Analogic.*

ANAPAEST

A metrical foot composed of two unstressed syllables followed by one stressed one; e.g., "I went to the Bar as a very young man."

ANAPHORA

The repetition of one or more words in successive lines of verse or prose sentences. It is generally used to generate rhetorical momentum. *Adjective: Anaphoric.*

ANTAGONIST

The chief character in opposition or moral contrast to the **Protagonist** (qv). The antagonist is often villainous, but this is reversed if the protagonist is evil. *Eg.* Shylock in *The Merchant of Venice*; Macduff in *Macbeth*.

ANTI-CLIMAX

A deflation of **Narrative** (qv), switching from intensified expectations to **Bathos** (qv) or disappointment. It is often used for comic effect. *Adjective: Anti-Climactic.*

ANTI-HERO

A central character who conspicuously fails to conform to traditional qualities and moral standards of the hero; a figure who lacks heroic virtues. *Eg.* Pinkie in *Brighton Rock*; Jimmy Porter in *Look Back in Anger*.

ANTITHESIS

A terse oppositional phrase with polarized ideas balanced against each other. *Eg.* "O impotence of mind, in body strong!" (Milton). *Adjective: Antithetical.*

ANTHROPOMORPHISM

To impose human values or attributes upon creatures or the inanimate world. *Eg.* phrases such as "The Hand of God", "The song of the whale". Anthropomorphism is ubiquitous in Aesop's *Fables* – and Rupert the Bear. *Adjective: Anthropomorphic.*

ANTONYM	A word meaning the opposite of another: <i>e.g.</i> fair/foul; truthful/dishonest; short/long; flippant/solemn. Antonym's own antonym is Synonym . <i>Adjective: Antonymous.</i>
APHORISM	A compressed statement, usually philosophical or reflective in character, and often witty. <i>Eg.</i> "A prince should provoke neither fear nor war"; "Dogs, gamblers, lovers and fire are never content with little". See also Maxim . <i>Adjective: Aphoristic.</i>
APOLOGY	A written defence of a controversial published opinion. Also Apologia .
APOSTROPHE	An address to an abstract idea, entity, absent or dead person, location or thing. <i>Eg.</i> "O Death, where is thy sting?"; or "Amen to that, sweet powers."
APTRONYM	A name chosen to reflect the personality, physical appearance or other aspect of a character. <i>Eg.</i> Mr Gradgrind; Miss Dainty Fidget; Sir Toby Belch; Mr Fondlewife. <i>Adjective: Aptronymic.</i>
ARCHAISM	The use of obsolete or outmoded words. It is often used to lend an antiquated or quaint feel to prose or verse; depending upon context, it can also appear affected or self-conscious. <i>Adjective: Archaic.</i>
ARCHETYPE	A paradigmatic or stock character with universal application, regardless of time, place or genre. <i>Eg.</i> The dashing hero; the troubled genius; the scolding wife; the strong-spirited daughter; the lecherous priest; the insolent servant; the loveable rogue; the tart with heart. <i>Adjective: Archetypal.</i>
ASIDE	Dramatic convention where characters express thoughts to themselves or the audience without being overheard by other characters on stage.
ASSONANCE	The repetition of vowel sounds in neighbouring words.

ASYNDETON	The omission of conjunctives to create greater compression. It lends prose greater urgency, edge or immediacy. <i>Eg.</i> “The hot city, menacing, rebellious. Angry people, restless, impatient.”
AUBADE	A poem celebrating the dawn, or a poem about lovers parting at daybreak.
BALLAD	A song telling a story, originally accompanied by dancing. In general, ballads reflect low or humble subjects. The theme is often tragic, sensational and moral, the language direct and simple, and it is often punctuated by a Refrain (qv). <i>Adjective: Balladic.</i>
BATHOS	The unintentional fall into absurdity by an author aiming at elevated expression. <i>Adjective: Bathetic.</i>
BAWDY	The literary term for vulgarity, coarseness and sexual innuendo.
BEAST FABLE	A short moral tale where animals replace men and women yet show human characteristics. They are frequently satirical in intent. Chaucer’s <i>Nun’s Priest’s Tale</i> is an example, as are most of Aesop’s Fables.
<i>BILDUNGSROMAN</i>	(German – ‘formation novel’) A story following a character’s growth or development through childhood, adolescence and into adult life.
BLANK VERSE	Unrhymed lines of iambic pentameters. This is the most common English verse form and is believed to reflect the rhythms of everyday speech. Should not be confused with Free Verse (qv).
BLAZON	(French, ‘coat-of-arms’). Rhetorical device in poetry where the beauties of a mistress are itemized in a schematic top-down manner. The poet conventionally praises the lady’s hair, brow, eyebrows, eyes, nose, lips, teeth, breath, chin, neck, breasts. John Donne had, of course, to work up from the

feet in “Love’s Progress”.... The tradition was introduced by Petrarch and frequently imitated.

BOMBAST

Absurdly inflated language, often ill-suited to the theme. When deployed intentionally by the author, it is usually uttered by pompous or ridiculous characters. *Adjective: **Bombastic**.*

BURLESQUE

A parody of a serious literary work, often applying the style of the elegant original to a low or vulgar theme.

CACOPHONY

Harshness of sound in verse or prose. *Adjective: **Cacophonic**.*

CADENCE

The melodic rise and fall of patterns of speech, prose or verse. See also **Inflection** (qv).

CAESURA

(Latin, ‘cut’). A pause in poetry dictated by the break in clause or sentence. An **initial caesura** occurs near the beginning of a line, a **medial caesura** near the middle of a line, and a **terminal caesura** towards the end of a line.

CANON

A body of works which a consensus of critics, scholars and other experts hold to be exemplary of a nation’s literature. *Adjective: **Canonical**.*

CANTO

(Italian, ‘song’). A subdivision of an **Epic** poem, equivalent to the chapter of a novel.

CARPE DIEM

(Latin – ‘seize the day’) A common theme in poetry where the reader or addressee is advised to make the most of fleeting time. Such poems are often an invitation to sensuality, but can also warn of imminent judgement and the afterlife. Famous examples are Robert Herrick’s “To the Virgins, To Make Much of Time,” and Andrew Marvell’s “To His Coy Mistress.”

CATASTROPHE

(Greek – ‘overturning’) The tragic

	Dénouement (qv) of a play or novel, often involving the death of the Protagonist (qv).
CATHARSIS	(Greek – ‘purgation’) 1. The purging of guilt or unhealthy emotion from the Protagonist in a Tragedy (qqv). 2. The purging of horror and fear from the audience at the end of a tragedy. <i>Adjective: Cathartic.</i>
CHARACTERIZATION	The representation of figures in literature, including details of psychology, motivation, appearance and social role. Flat characters have only one distinguishing feature; Round characters have complex, convincing features; Stock characters conform to familiar stereotypical roles; Static characters do not undergo any moral growth or other transformation through the course of the narrative.
CHARACTERNYM	See Apronym .
CHORUS	A group of actors speaking or singing in unison in drama or poetry. Deriving from Greek drama, the chorus often expresses communal responses to the action. <i>Adjective: Choric.</i>
CIRCUMLOCUTION	Roundabout or digressive speech or writing, perhaps to conceal information or avoid offence. <i>Adjective: Circumlocutory.</i>
CLIMAX	The moment in a narrative where a crisis is resolved. <i>Adjective: Climactic.</i>
CLOSURE	The sense of resolution or completion at the end of a literary work.
COLLOQUIALISM	The use of informal expression or Dialect Words (qv). <i>Adjective: Colloquial.</i>
COMEDY	(Greek – ‘revel’) A play or other work written to amuse an audience. Comedies are usually set in the everyday world, examine social manners, and frequently treat the trials of love. Comedies almost always have happy endings for the chief characters,

perhaps marriage or an improvement in circumstances. In medieval literature the term was applied to any story with a happy ending. *Adjectives: Comic, Comedic.*

COMIC RELIEF

The insertion of a short comic episode within a larger, tragic work. This can be used to alleviate tension, intensify pathos or throw the major issues of a play into contrast.

COMPLAINT

A melancholy poem expressing discontent or emotional trauma. The theme of complaints is typically unhappiness in love, especially the cruelty of a mistress, but they can also treat political estrangement or other misfortunes.

CONCEIT

(Latin – ‘concept’; Italian – ‘witty trifle’) A fanciful metaphor depending upon an unlikely parallel or surprising or daring comparison. Conceits are typically found in sixteenth and seventeenth-century poetry, notably the Metaphysical poets where they are often sustained displays of inventive wit. This species of metaphor appeals principally to the intellect, and is more rarely sensually vivid.

CONFLICT

The collision of ideas, outlooks, interests or ambitions in a narrative. Conflict can occur between individuals, typically perhaps a man and a woman, between an individual and his environment or social context, or between an individual and an element within his own psyche.

CONSONANCE

A form of half-rhyme involving the repetition of consonants, usually at the end of words; *e.g.* “blank” and “think”; “strong” and “string”; “swan” and “stone”. See also **Assonance**.

CONTEMPTUS MUNDI

Expressions of disaffection and mistrust of the world and human achievement. The writer warns of the fleeting nature of human life and the impermanence of human endeavour, contrasting these with the eternal values of heaven.

<i>COPIA</i>	The provision of multiple examples or instances to illustrate a point or argument. Particularly effective in rhetoric, copia is intended to persuade through weight of proof.
COUPLET	Two successive rhyming lines of verse.
CRISIS	The decisive moment of a narrative where tensions reach their peak and the action moves towards resolution.
CRUX	A puzzling or apparently insoluble problem – sometimes intentional; sometimes owing to authorial inattention.
DACTYL	A metrical foot comprised of one stressed and two unstressed syllables.
DÉNOUEMENT	(French – ‘untying’) The resolution of plot complications in a narrative, usually following the Climax (qv).
<i>DEUS EX MACHINA</i>	(Latin – ‘god from the machine’) The resolution of a plot by an improbable coincidence or other fortuitous outcome. <i>E.g.</i> , any James Bond novel.
DIALECT	A distinctive variant of a language, often spoken within a specific geographical region where pronunciation, vocabulary and sometimes grammar differs from the standard form of the language (see Received Pronunciation (qv)). The notion of a standard form of a language is itself suspect, usually reflecting its form in the place of greatest political and economic influence. Examples of dialects within English include Geordie (for the North East of England); Cockney (for East London); Estuary English (for Essex); Glaswegian (for Glasgow); and, perhaps the finest, Ulster English, from Northern Ireland.
DIALECTIC	In one sense, the process or reasoning or logical argument. In another sense, the exchange of contrary or opposing ideas

within an academic or ideological debate.
Adjective: Dialectical.

DIALOGUE

Speech between characters in literary works. In a more specialized application, a discursive work articulated by fictional characters. *Adjective: Dialogic.*

DICTION

The verbal register of a literary work. Typical elements in diction in literature may include figurative expression, literal expression, formal expression or informal expression.

DIDACTICISM

The authoritative communication of knowledge or doctrine, usually with little regard for debate or negotiation. *Adjective: Didactic.*

DIGRESSION

A departure from the narrative or discursive thread. Such wanderings from the point can be used to comic effect, as in the novels of Henry Fielding. *Adjective: Digressive.*

DISCOURSE

A sustained exposition or thesis of a serious, often controversial theme, which develops ideas with care and coherence.

DOGGEREL

Execrable or inept poetry.

DRAMATIC IRONY

The discrepancy between what a character in a play believes to be true and what the audience or reader knows to be true. *Eg.* In *King Lear*, Gloucester's statements of regard for the illegitimate son who is plotting against him.

DYSTOPIA

The creation of a nightmare fictional world where human conduct is brutal and merciless. Dystopic worlds are mirror images of **utopias** (qv) and often satirize contemporary life. *Eg.* Orwell's *1984*; Huxley's *Brave New World*. *Adjective: Dystopian.*

ELEGY

A mournful lyric poem lamenting the death

of an individual or some other personal loss, expressing regret for life's vicissitudes. *Adjective: **Elegaic.***

ELISION

The slurring of a syllable or vowel, usually by running two words together. *Eg.* 'Th'eventide'. *Adjective: **Elided.***

ELLIPSIS

The omission of one or more words from a sentence or line of poetry, drama, *etc.* Commonly used when citing lengthy quotations. Ellipsis is denoted by a line of three full stops, or four, if the omitted words close the sentence. *Adjective: **Elliptical.***

EMBLEM

A literary form of the Renaissance and early modern period in which a motto is combined with a picture and epigram to comment upon morality, love, politics, religion and philosophical concerns. Meaning is often ambiguous or fluid, and emblems are open-ended forms with considerable space for personal interpretation. *Adjective: **Emblematic.***

EMOTIVE LANGUAGE

Language calculated to rouse emotions, such as anger, patriotism, partisanship, *etc.* in the listener.

ENCOMIUM

The glorification and celebration of a person, place or event. A commonly used device in propaganda, but deployed for more innocent purposes in, for example, poems or addresses to great persons, a lover, or even to God. *Adjective: **Encomiastic.***

END-STOPPED

When metre, rhyme and sense all coincide at the end of a line of poetry. See also **Caesura** (qv).

ENJAMBEMENT

Running the sense of a line of poetry over the **Caesura** (qv). As an effect, enjambement can increase of fluidity and speed of verse. It also forces attention upon the terminal word in one line, and the primary word in the next.

EPIC	(Greek, 'song'). A long narrative poem treating a powerful theme on the life and achievements of heroes, rulers and military leaders. Epics typically describe the foundation of nations or civilizations, and combine historical elements with allegory and myth. The leading examples in Western culture are <i>The Iliad</i> , <i>Odyssey</i> and <i>The Aeneid</i> . Spenser's <i>Faerie Queene</i> and Milton's <i>Paradise Lost</i> are the most celebrated examples in English literature. The term is grossly misused when applied to Hollywood blockbuster films.
EPIGRAM	(Greek, 'inscription'). An aphoristic statement in verse or prose, notable for its wit and concision. Epigrams can be moralistic, satiric or eulogistic. <i>Adjective: Epigrammatic.</i>
EPIGRAPH	A short quotation placed on the title page of a book. <i>Adjective: Epigraphic.</i>
EPILOGUE	(Greek, 'long speech'). A speech presented at the close of a play, often summing up the action, or drawing a moral from it. Shakespearean epilogues often make a direct appeal to the audience for applause, thus wittily breaking the Illusion (qv) of the play.
EPIPHANY	(Greek, 'manifestation'). A transcendent moment in a work of literature. They occur commonly in intensely religious works, such as seventeenth-century divine lyrics; but they also appear in modern authors such as Joyce where they reveal the spiritual condition of the Protagonist (qv) or document the experience of heightened sensory awareness. <i>Adjective: Epiphanic.</i>
EPISTOLARY NOVEL	A form of narrative popular in the eighteenth century where the entire action of a story was told through letters exchanged between characters. Famous examples include Samuel Richardson's <i>Pamela</i> and <i>Clarissa</i> .

EPITAPH	(Greek, 'funeral oration'). A memorial inscription carved upon a monument denoting the achievements of the dead.
EPITHALAMION	(Greek, 'bridal chamber'). A poem celebrating a wedding, usually elaborately allegorical in nature. There are famous examples by Spenser and Donne.
EPITHET	(Greek, 'add'). An adjective set before a name to define character or properties. An example is Chaucer's repeated use in <i>The Miller's Tale</i> of the phrase "hende Nicholas" to denote the character's amorous nature.
EPONYMOUS HERO	A character who lends his/her name to a book: <i>eg.</i> Macbeth, Hamlet, Emma, Madame Bovary, Squirrel Nutkin, Rupert the Bear.
EUPHEMISM	Circumlocution. The avoidance of a sensitive, personal, indelicate or taboo subject by the use of mild or evasive language. For example, to avoid talking of death, it might be said that someone has "kicked the bucket", "passed away", "is no longer with us." A pregnant woman is "expecting", "in the family way", "has a bun in the oven", etc. <i>Adjective: Euphemistic.</i>
EUPHONY	Beautiful, soft sounds in poetry, usually achieved through the use of Assonance and Sibilance (qqv). <i>Adjective: Euphonic.</i>
EXEGESIS	The Exposition (qv) of difficult or obscure passages in literature, and, in particular, the Bible. <i>Adjective: Exegetical.</i>
EXEMPLUM	A reference to a universally known story to illustrate a moral. An example might be an Allusion (qv) to the story of Samson to warn against trusting a scheming wife, or reference to Canute to advise against Hubris (qv).
EXPLICATION	The formal analysis and dissection of a passage of text. <i>Adjective: Explicatory.</i>

EXPOSITION	The method of providing necessary knowledge of character, place or circumstance at the beginning of a story or play. <i>Adjective: Expository.</i>
FABLE	A moral story with universal applicability. Fables often treat the follies and virtues of humanity through simple, monolithic stories. Their truths and lessons are timeless. Beast fables Anthropomorphize (qv) human behaviour through a narrative involving animals, and often carry a pronounced Satiric edge (qv).
FABLIAU	A species of Fable (qv) that flourished in the Middle Ages often of a scabrous or Bawdy nature (qv).
FARCE	A dramatic comic mode characterized by slapstick humour, physical comedy, preposterous scenarios, and often a frantic pace. Essentially unrealistic, farces feature exaggerated human types, far-fetched coincidences and comical confrontations. <i>Adjective: Farcical.</i>
FICTION	General term for imaginative writing in prose, that is, novels, short stories, novellas, etc. <i>Adjective: Fictional, Fictive.</i>
FORM	The structure and mechanics of a literary work, embracing such things as genre, style, etc. An analysis of form does not consider contents of the work. <i>Adjective: Formal.</i>
FREE INDIRECT DISCOURSE	A narrative standpoint when the third person narrator uses the language and speech patterns of the character without using the first person (“I”). In free indirect discourse the narrative is flexible and may quickly shift back and forth from intimate and subjective to distant and objective. “He went to the door. Damn. She was waiting for him.” See the opening of Virginia Woolf’s <i>To the Lighthouse</i> for the sophisticated use of it.

FREE VERSE	Verse with no regular Rhythm , line length, or Meter (qqv).
FURNITURE	Props and apparatus in a work that help identify genre; for example, sheep, shepherds, shepherdesses, are all furniture that denote Pastoral ; weapons, warhorses, city walls, denote Epic (qqv).
FUSTIAN	Pompous, inflated or Bombastic literature (qv), always used disparagingly. See also Inkhorn Term (qv).
GENRE	A literary category, such as novel, Epic poetry, dramatic monologue, Lyric , Gothic novel, Jacobean city comedy, etc. <i>Adjective: Generic.</i>
GLOSS	An explanatory note provided either by the author or his/her editor.
GLOSSARY	A list of technical, obscure or difficult words, for example, the present document.
GROTESQUE	The bizarre, exotic, forbidden or unnatural in literature, usually exaggerated human types. Dickens's villains are often styled in the grotesque.
HAIKU	Short Japanese verse form using seventeen syllables in three lines of five, seven and five respectively. Sometimes attempted by modern English poets as demonstration of skill.
HAMARTIA	Tragic misjudgement or error by the Protagonist (qv) in a novel or play. Closely connected to Tragic Flaw , Hamartia normally afflicts the protagonist by coincidence or chance.
HARANGUE	An inflammatory speech calculated to rouse dangerous or passionate emotions in its hearers, for example, Henry V's speech before Agincourt.
HERO/HEROINE	Principal male or female character in a work of literature. See Protagonist (qv).

HEROIC COUPLET	A couplet comprised of two rhymed iambic pentameters.
HOMILY	A sermon or moral address. <i>Adjective: Homiletic.</i>
HOMONYM	A word with identical sounds and spelling to another , but with different meaning, <i>e.g.</i> “bear” (animal) and “bear” (carry); “late” (tardy) and “late” (recently deceased). <i>Adjective: Homonymic.</i>
HOMOPHONE	Words with identical sounds but diverse meanings, for example, “doe” and “dough”; “read” and “reed”; “there”, “they’re” and “their”. <i>Adjective: Homophonic.</i>
HUBRIS (HYBRIS)	(Greek, ‘wanton insolence’). Insolence or overweening arrogance directed towards the gods, Prometheus’s theft of fire. More generally, pompous, high-handed and arrogant behaviour. <i>Adjective: Hubristic, (Hybristic).</i>
HYMN	Song of praise for a god or hero. In the Christian tradition, a thanks offering of song to God. <i>Adjective: Hymnodic.</i>
HYPALLAGE	(Greek, ‘exchange’). Transferring an epithet to an object to which it does not naturally belong, for example, “the fortunate path”; “the lucky trousers”; “the hot seat”.
HYPERBATON	In practice, the placement of a verb at the end of a line of verse to magnify effect, often of grandeur or foreboding, for example, “something wicked this way comes” from <i>Macbeth</i> .
HYPERBOLE	The use of exaggeration for literary or comical or emotional effect, <i>e.g.</i> “I’m so hungry I could eat a horse”; “No woman in the world could match her beauty and grace.” <i>Adjective: Hyperbolic.</i>

IAMB	A metrical foot employing an unstressed syllable followed by a stressed syllable. Iambic meter is the commonest metrical form in English verse as it is judged to correspond closely to spoken patterns. <i>Adjective: Iambic.</i>
IDIOLECT	The vocabulary and spoken forms peculiar to an individual.
IDIOM	Linguistic phrases, constructions and figures of speech peculiar to a language, but not obvious or apparent by themselves, for example, “it’s raining cats and dogs”; “she’s leading him up the garden path”; “he’s not the full shilling”, etc. Differences in idiom between languages are often interesting, <i>e.g.</i> English: “To push up the daisies”; German: “To stare up at the radishes from below”: English: “To shut the stable door when the horse has bolted”; German: “To put the lid on the well when the child has drowned”: English: “To trust the cat to keep the cream”; German: “To appoint the goat to be gardener.” <i>Adjective: Idiomatic.</i>
ILLUSION	The creation of a fictional, believable world, like the social communities conjured by Jane Austen, or the sense of danger in a horror story. Illusion requires the involvement of the reader through suspension of disbelief, etc.
IMAGERY	The use of figurative language to represent or evoke objects, actions, emotions, thoughts, ideas, experiences, <i>etc.</i>
<i>IN MEDIA RES</i>	(Latin, ‘In the middle of things’). When a narrative begins in the middle of significant action. It has the effect of quickly establishing the interest of the reader or audience; preceding events are subsequently related through Analepsis (qv).
INFLECTION	A change of pitch in the pronunciation of a word; inflection can add to the musicality of language. <i>Adjective: Inflected.</i>

INKHORN TERM	Obsolete or pretentious language used pompously or pedantically, or the adoption of affected foreign words.
INTERTEXTUALITY	A way to describe the way in which texts interrelate whether intentionally or not. A popular way of describing the phenomena is to say that later texts are woven from the threads of earlier ones. The threads can range from explicit Allusions (qv) to hidden influences, to the reader's ability to read one text in light of their experience of another, to the fact that they all use language. For the reader, every text is, from minute to significant ways, an absorption and transformation of other texts.
INVOCATION	The appeal made by poets to a muse or deity to assist them in achieving their poetic task. Common in Epic poetry (qv), invocations usually appear at the beginning of the poem, as in Milton's <i>Paradise Lost</i> , or throughout the poem, as in Luis Vaz de Camões' <i>Lusiads</i> .
IRONY	An incongruity or discrepancy of language or action against a situation. Verbal irony is where what is said is at variance with intention; dramatic irony is where a character says or thinks things the audience or reader knows to be untrue; and situational irony is when there is a gap between appearance and reality, or expectation and fulfilment. Irony is a major aspect of comedy, but can also be used to evoke pathos and empathy. <i>Adjective: Ironic.</i>
JEREMIAD	Any writing lamenting the state of the world, or taking a pessimistic view of human nature. Named after the cheerless Old Testament prophet.
JOURNALESE	The populist style of non-fictional writing favoured by print journalists, often rich in a recognized shorthand, vivid phrasing and clichés. Examples might include headlines such as "Tesco Targets Sickies"; "PM Faces

Kicking In Polls”; “Yoga Death Fall Of Imran Ex”; or “Bar Staff Cigs Peril.” Favourite verbs in Journalese include “Blasts”, “Slams”, or “Snubs”; favourite abbreviations “Op”, “KO-ed”, or “Doc”; and favourite slang “Boffin”, “Love Rat” or “Eurocrat.” Personalities are often given truncated forms of their names; “Becks”; “Wozza”; “Wills”; *e.g.* “Macca Fury at Prezza Prank” *i.e.* Paul McCartney is aggrieved at the behaviour of John Prescott.

JUVENILIA

The literary output of an author from their childhood or youth.

JUXTAPOSITION

Placing contrasting ideas, objects, motifs, characters beside each other for effect, for example, a young child standing in a graveyard, a wolf in sheep’s clothing, a fly in the ointment. *Adjective: Juxtaposed.*

KUNSTLERROMAN

German term for a novel charting the growth of an artist from childhood to maturity. Joyce’s *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* is perhaps the best known example in English.

LAMENT

A poem expressing grief in bereavement or regret for the loss of status, former happiness, or other reverse.

LAMPOON

An attack upon an individual and their folly, involving ridicule and personal abuse. It is a form of **Satire** (qv).

LEGEND

A story or cycle of stories passed down through the oral tradition telling the deeds of an improbably heroic character, often a king, saint, warrior, or other exemplary figure. Examples include the tales of King Arthur and his Round Table, or Robin Hood. *Adjective: Legendary.*

LEITMOTIF

A recurring phrase, concept or symbol in a literary work underpinning the general theme. The term has crossed over into literary study from musical terminology.

LEXIS

Either the entire range of vocabulary in a language, or, in critical use, the range of vocabulary extent within a single literary work. A poem on nature could be said to feature a morbid lexis if there is a repeated use of words associated with death. Also **Lexical Field**.

LITOTES

An understatement, *e.g.*, “I wouldn’t say no to winning the Lottery”; “I wouldn’t call her unattractive”; “I’ve heard worse ideas in my time.” Litotes is the opposite of **Hyperbole** (qv).

LOCUS AMOENUS

(Latin, ‘beautiful place’). In literary works, a beautiful setting apposite for a love scene, or trysting place. Typically, such places feature shady groves, with fruit trees, fountains, and flowery meads. Common in Renaissance literature.

LYRIC

Originally a song sung to a lyre, lyric is now understood to mean a short poem conveying personal sentiment or subjective expression. Lyric poems can embrace the themes of love, devotion, reflection and melancholy: they are often beautiful and passionate. Widespread in the medieval and Renaissance periods, and particularly strong in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, lyric poems are perhaps the most common form of poetry of all. *Adjective: Lyrical*.

MACHIAVELLIAN CHARACTER In Renaissance drama, a character whose behaviour corresponds to contemporary understanding of the philosophy of the sixteenth-century Florentine statesman, Niccolo Machiavelli. Notorious for his treatise *The Prince*, Machiavelli was believed to be atheistic, unscrupulous, cunning, plausible and ruthless. Accordingly, Machiavellian characters in Shakespeare’s plays, and those of his contemporaries, are thoroughly villainous and calculating. Examples include Shakespeare’s Richard III, Edmund, or Iago.

MALAPROPISM

An author's deliberate misuse of a word, usually for comic effect. Often placed in the mouth of pompous or foolish characters to betray their ignorance or pretension, *e.g.* Dogberry in *Much Ado About Nothing*. The word derives from Richard Sheridan's character Mrs Malaprop in the play *The Rivals* (1775).

MASQUE

A theatrical form popular in court circles in the first part of the seventeenth century, so-called because of its deployment of masques and disguise, characterized by a blend of drama, song, dance and spectacle. Masques featured elaborate staging and theatrical effects, and were costly and elevated forms of entertainment. They were often staged to celebrate dynastic or political events, such as marriages or peace treaties, and have a strongly allegorical or mythological flavour.

MAXIM

A pithy, **Aphoristic** (qv) sentence expressing a moral precept of universal application.

MELODRAMA

Dramatic form with exaggerated action and emotion, often similar to **Tragedy**, but generally with a happy **Resolution** (qqv). Melodramas typically feature overtly virtuous characters pitched against openly villainous antagonists. *Adjective: Melodramatic.*

META-FICTION

A term given to fictional writing which self-consciously and systematically draws attention to its status as an artefact in order to pose questions about the relationship between fiction and reality. In providing a critique of their own methods of construction, such writings not only examine the fundamental structures of narrative fiction; they also explore the possible fictionality of the world outside the literary fictional text. Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* is a clear contemporary example; the Chorus in *Romeo & Juliet* arguably plays a meta-fictional function as well.

METAPHOR	(Greek, ‘carrying from one place to another’). Imagery (qv) in poetry, prose or drama. A metaphor differs from the Simile (qv) in explicitly suppressing its artificiality, <i>i.e.</i> the act of comparison between entity and concept is not signalled by the use of the formulae “ <i>x</i> is like <i>y</i> ” or “as <i>x</i> does this, so <i>y</i> does this.” <i>Adjective: Metaphorical.</i>
METONYMY	A figure of speech where the name of an entity is substituted by a related Symbol , <i>e.g.</i> The Chamber, for the House of Commons, or the Throne, for the institution of monarchy. Metonymy is related to Synecdoche (qv). <i>Adjective: Metonymic.</i>
METER	The pattern of stressed and unstressed syllables in verse. Useful metrical terms include Monometer (1 syllable); Dimeter (2 syllables); Trimeter (3 syllables); Tetrameter (4 syllables); Pentameter (5 syllables); hexameter (six syllables); Heptameter (7 syllables); Octameter (8 syllables). <i>Adjective: Metrical.</i>
MIMESIS	Where a word or action reflects a larger concept in a work of literature, or where the use of form mirrors the theme, <i>e.g.</i> the fluid structure of D. H. Lawrence’s poem “Snake” which corresponds to the animal’s flexuous movement. <i>Adjective: Mimetic.</i>
MOCK HEROIC	Treating a frivolous or minor subject seriously, especially by using the machinery and devices of the Epic (qv), <i>i.e.</i> Invocations (qv), descriptions of armour, battles, extended similes, <i>etc.</i> See Alexander Pope’s <i>The Rape of the Lock</i> .
MONODY	A poem of mourning. <i>Adjective: Monodic.</i>
MONOGRAPH	A prose essay or composition focussing in a sustained way upon a narrow theme.
MOOD	The overall emotional feeling generated in a passage, scene or poem.

MOTIF	A recurring theme, idea, or character in a literary work.
NARRATIVE	A story, tale, novel: any sustained telling of a story, true or fictional, through related episodes and scenic, contextual consistency. First-Person Narrative is told from the perspective of “I”, a narrator telling of events from his or her position; Third-Person Narrative is where the narrator is not apparently interchangeable with the authorial voice, and the actions and thoughts of characters are described in terms of “he”, “she”, “they” <i>etc.</i>
NEMESIS	The punishment for wrong-doing, often visited upon a protagonist of a tragedy. The Nemesis is often identified with an avenger, after the Greek goddess Nemesis who used human agents to perform her purposes.
NEOLOGISM	A coinage, a new word. <i>Adjective: Neologic.</i>
<i>NOM DE PLUME</i>	An assumed name used by an author, <i>e.g.</i> George Orwell for Eric Arthur Blair.
OCCASIONAL VERSE	Poetry written to mark an occasion, such as New Year, a birthday, marriage, promotion, bereavement, <i>etc.</i>
ODE	Type of poem originating in antiquity that is generally lofty and moral in tone, and ceremonious or public in intention.
OEUVRE	A corpus of writing by an author.
OCTET/OCTAVE	The opening eight-line sequence of a Sonnet (qv), usually presenting an argument or problem to be resolved or answered in the Sextet/sestet (qv).
ODE	A verse form derived from antiquity, originally intended to be sung. In English, odes are generally well-suited to declamation and often have a lofty register. Famous examples by Keats are the best known in the language.

ONOMATOPOEIA	The use of words whose sounds imitate the action they describe, <i>e.g.</i> crash, thump, sizzle, belch, spit, strum, whip. <i>Adjective: Onomatopoeic.</i>
ORAL TRADITION	Poetry passed from generation to generation in spoken, not written form. The outline of stories and themes remain stable, but considerable colouration is given to details of character or circumstance by the individual performer, with the result that the form develops organically over the course of time. Oral poetry is the earliest type of structured utterance, and occurs predominantly within semi-literate cultures. As a consequence it is not part of mainstream international literature today, but holds enormous local and cultural significance.
OXYMORON	A species of Paradox (qv) where two apparently opposed ideas are set in immediate proximity for heightened ironic effect, <i>e.g.</i> cold flame, blinding darkness, evil prayer. <i>Adjective: Oxymoronic.</i>
PÆAN	Originally, a song of triumph after military success; more generally, any poem of praise, especially directed towards political leaders.
PALINDROME	A word that reads the same forwards or backwards, <i>e.g.</i> tenet, eye, level, civic, radar. <i>Adjective: Palindromic.</i>
PALINODE	A poem retracting statements made in earlier poems by the same author.
PANEGYRIC	Enthusiastic praise of an individual, institution or state in poetic form. See also Encomium . <i>Adjective: Panegyric.</i>
PARABASIS	When a character in a play steps out of the action at the close and addresses the audience directly, <i>e.g.</i> Prospero in <i>The Tempest</i> .

PARADOX	A contradictory or absurd statement which conceals a hidden truth or depth, such as Wordsworth's idea that "The child is father to the man." <i>Adjective: Paradoxical.</i>
PARODY	An imitation of the words, ideas, form of literature or social manners in such a way as to point up absurdity, folly or weakness. Parody is widely used in Satire (qv), and therefore shares its reformatory instincts, but it can also be used more abusively. <i>Adjective: Parodic.</i>
PASQUINADE	Alternative name for Lampoon (qv).
PASTICHE	Writing made up of quotations and or imitations of other works and styles. When used Satirically , it can be a form of Parody (qqv).
PASTORAL	A genre originally deriving from antiquity which deals with the lives and concerns of shepherds, but more widely understood as literature extolling the virtues of the rural life, always in implicit contrast to the vices of the city and civilization.
PATHETIC FALLACY	A term coined by John Ruskin in 1856 to denote passages in literature where natural phenomena or climactic conditions reflect the mood of characters in their midst, <i>e.g.</i> heavy downpours of rain reflecting a character's bleakness, or the sun breaking through cloud their emotional recovery.
PATHOS	The emotionally moving power of a work of literature, particularly when the reader/audience shares feelings of compassion, pity or sorrow for the Protagonist (qv). <i>Adjective: Pathetic.</i>
PENTAMETER	See Meter .
PERIPETEIA	(Greek 'sudden change'). The reversal of a protagonist's fortunes from prosperity to misery.

PERIPHRAISIS	(Greek ‘roundabout speech’). Talking around a subject because of its delicacy, or a sense of courtesy. The term can also denote pomposity and verbosity and is related to Circumlocution . <i>Adjective: Periphrastic.</i>
PERSONA	The speaking voice in a work of literature, or identity of the narrator.
PERSONIFICATION	General term for the species of Metaphor (qv) where inanimate or non-human entities are ascribed human characteristics, <i>e.g.</i> The eye of the storm; the sun has got his hat on, <i>etc.</i>
PETRARCHAN	Any literature that deploys themes or tropes from the poetry of the Italian author Francesco Petrarch, particularly his vocabulary of images describing the agonies, desires, hopes and other sensations felt by the lover. Also known as Petrarchist .
PHILIPPIC	A strong denunciation or condemnation in speech or writing, so named after Demosthene’s attacks upon Philip of Macedonia.
PICARESQUE	Strictly, a novel that tells the story of a servant or low character (the picaaroon) employed by a series of masters and who undergoes some low, often comic, experiences. More widely, picaresque stories relate the adventures of comic characters and are coarsely Satirical (qv) of contemporary society. Henry Fielding’s <i>Tom Jones</i> is perhaps the best example in English.
PIVOT WORD	A single word that alters or modifies the meaning, mood or direction of a poem, speech or essay. They often occur, for example, as the first word in the Sextet of a Sonnet , signalling the beginning of the Resolution of the problem posed in the Octet (qqv). See also Volta .

PLOT	The narrative shape of a literary work, involving the organization of events in a play. Plots are manipulated to create effects of tension, suspense, uncertainty, and often conclude with a Crisis , Climax , Dénouement (qqv), <i>etc.</i>
POETIC JUSTICE	A seventeenth-century term indicating when virtue is rewarded and vice punished in a literary work. Poetic justice is closely related to a moralistic conception of literature.
POLYSEMY	(Greek ‘many meanings’). When a word carries more than one meaning, such as <i>crane</i> (bird) and <i>crane</i> (building device); or <i>strike</i> (blow) and <i>strike</i> (industrial action). <i>Adjective: Polysemous.</i>
POLYSYNDETON	The repeated use of conjunctions to link a sequence of words, clauses or sentences, <i>e.g.</i> “Mustard and ham and pickle and lettuce.” Polysyndeton is the opposite of Asyndeton (qv).
PORTMANTEAU WORD	A word created by combining two other words, <i>e.g.</i> ‘brunch’ (<i>breakfast</i> and <i>lunch</i>); ‘Oxbridge’ (<i>Oxford</i> and <i>Cambridge</i>); and ‘Californication’ (<i>California</i> and <i>fornication</i>).
PROLEPSIS	(Greek, ‘anticipation’). When a future episode is alluded to in a narrative; the opposite of Analepsis (qv), or flashback. <i>Adjective: Proleptic.</i>
PROLOGUE	The opening section of a literary work, introducing the author, Protagonist (qv), or situation. In drama, prologues are characters who serve as intermediaries between the action and the audience, <i>e.g.</i> in Shakespeare’s plays <i>Henry V</i> or <i>Romeo and Juliet</i> .

PROSODY	The science or study of Versification (qv), <i>i.e.</i> the mechanics of poetic writing. <i>Adjective: Prosodic.</i>
PROSOPOPOEIA	An alternative term for Personification (qv).
PROTAGONIST	The principal character in a book or play, often, but not always, the Hero/Heroine (qv). Readers and audiences follow the fortunes of the protagonist through the narrative sequence.
PYSCHOMACHIA	An internal battle within a character determining his moral behaviour. Macbeth's agonized inner debate prior to the murder of Duncan is one example; the contrary voices of the devil cat and angel cat on the shoulders of Tom in <i>Tom & Jerry</i> is another.
PUN	A play on words, where Homonymic (qv) terms are interchanged for effect. They are primarily used for comic effect, but can have serious applications, such as the frequent conflation of 'Sun' and 'Son' in religious verse of the Renaissance period. For further examples, let the pun commence: "Reading Ovid's <i>Metamorphoses</i> ? That makes a change"; "You're employing a squirrel in your wholefood store? You must be nuts!"; "The top cosmetic surgeon liked to keep abreast of the latest research"; "The bearded lady burned herself while cooking chips; it was a freak accident", <i>etc.</i> Puns are not always the highest form of humour. <i>Adjective: Punning.</i>
PURPLE PATCH	An overly ornate piece of writing sitting at odds with its context. It is related to Bombast and Fustian (qqv).
QUATRAIN	A Stanza (qv) of four lines, the commonest form in English poetry.
QUINTAIN	A Stanza (qv) of five lines, sometimes conveying an unsettling effect, <i>e.g.</i> A. E. Housman's "Bredon Hill."

RECEIVED PRONUNCIATION	Sometimes called BBC English , received pronunciation is a form of spoken English considered to be the purest and most correct. It does not derive from a specific geographical region (although its origins are in the establishment circles of the South East of England), but through its use in official channels such as BBC broadcasting, and government.
RECEPTION	How a book is received by readers, particularly over a historical period.
REFRAIN	Repeated group of lines in a poem, usually at the end of a Stanza (qv). Popular in older poetry, particularly in the nineteenth century.
REGISTER	The style of language used in different circumstances, or for different audiences.
RESOLUTION	Events that constitute the outcome of the Climax (qv) of a play or narrative, literally, a resolving of problems and difficulties.
<i>REVERDIE</i>	In medieval poetry, a rapturous greeting of Spring-time. The best-known example is the opening lines of Chaucer's "General Prologue" of <i>The Canterbury Tales</i> .
RHAPSODY	An ecstatic or passionate passage in verse or prose.
RHETORICAL QUESTION	A question that does not require an answer, generally asked for persuasive effect. It is commonly used in public speaking, for example, "Are we expected to tolerate this buffoon in public office?" In literature, a well-known example is Caesar's comment "Et tu, Brute?"
RHYME	Paired sounds in poetry or drama, usually at the end of a metrical line (End-Stopped Rhyme), but also occurring within the line (Internal Rhyme). A simple rhyme chiming the last syllables of words together

is called **Masculine Rhyme**, e.g. “dove/love”, “bear/stare”, “begun/shun”. A more complex form chiming the last two syllables of words is called **Feminine Rhyme**, e.g. “moister/oyster”, “clyster/blister”, “confound/compound”.
Adjective: Rhyming.

RHYTHM

The pattern of sounds in verse, drama or prose, heard or sensed as “beats” or intervals. In poetry, or other crafted writing, rhythm can be defined by **Scansion** and **Prosody** (qqv); but the unwritten language of speech also communicates rhythm.
Adjective: Rhythmic.

ROMAN À CLEF

Literally, “a novel with a key.” Such works are thinly veiled accounts of real events, rendered in fictional form. D. H. Lawrence’s *Sons and Lovers* or James Joyce’s *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* are such works; but Orwell’s *Animal Farm* is also a species of *Roman à Clef* because it conceals the events in Russia of 1917.

SATIRE

Writing which reacts against lapses in morality or offences against accepted ideals. Satire is a literary response which is by its nature public-spirited; it attacks the abuses of those in positions of power or authority who are seen to be compromising standards they should be defending. Satire is often humorous in nature, and often scabrous too. Favourite targets for the satirist are hypocrisy, cant and dishonesty: politicians, moral guardians and optimists are frequently picked out for ridicule. Jonathan Swift, one of the language’s greatest satirists, simultaneously defined and illustrated satire with his observation, “Satire is a sort of glass wherein beholders do generally discover everybody’s face but their own....” *Adjective: Satirical.*

SCANSION

The analysis of metrical forms; a branch of **Prosody** (qv).

SCATOLOGY

A preoccupation with bodily functions; therefore, coarse, vulgar, and often funny writing, usually **Satirical**. (qv).

SEXTET/SESTET

The last six lines of a **Sonnet**, following from the **Octet/Octave** (qqv). The proposition or problem posed in the Octet is generally answered in the Sextet, *e.g.* in Shakespeare's "Shall I compare thee to a summer's day", the poet finds the comparison between the addressee's beauty and perfections and summertime deficient in the Octet; in the Sestet he resolves to celebrate these qualities in verse, a medium not subject to time's agency.

SIBILANCE

A variety of **Alliteration** (qv) where the consonant sounds are soft or hissing (s, sh, c, ch) or breathy (wh, f). These effects can be used to convey softness of sound or mood, and contribute to **Euphony** (qv). *Adjective: Sibilant*.

SIGN

In literary studies a term composed of two elements: the **Signifier** (or word) and the **Signified** (or meaning). A text is composed of signifiers, the signifieds of which are unstable owing to the reader's own interpretative strategies and context. (Although the signifiers of *Jane Eyre* have not changed, their associations and contextual origins have). Certain theorists have taken this to extremes, arguing that the distance between the signifier and signified is such that textual meaning can never be fully closed, confirmed and certain, owing to the arbitrary and socially contrived relationship between a signifier and signified. A great deal of contemporary literature (especially the work of post-modern poetry) has enjoyed exploiting this gap, leading to accusations of it being either meaningless, or open to endless interpretation.

SIMILE

Related to **Metaphor** (qv), but where the comparison between entity and concept is made explicitly, such as "My love is *like* a

red, red rose”; or “I wandered lonely *as* a cloud”.

SOLECISM

A deviation from standard language that exposes the speaker’s or writer’s ignorance: *e.g.* “This glossary ain’t done nice”.
*Adjective: **Solecistic**.*

SOLILOQUY

(Latin, ‘to speak alone’). A dramatic speech made by a sole character upon a stage, or a character unheard by other characters on stage. Soliloquies are used to reveal the inner thoughts of a character, and help the audience understand his/her motives, intentions or mentality. Considerable irony can be established between a character’s real thoughts, as expressed through the soliloquy, and his/her apparent thoughts, as conveyed to other characters. Soliloquies are often addressed directly to the audience, drawing it into a character’s plots or schemes: this is particularly true of villainous characters. The quality of language and ideas are often elevated and philosophical in great soliloquies, and they are the epitome of dramatic writing in Shakespearean drama. *Verb: **Soliloquize**.*

SONNET

(Italian, ‘little song’). A fourteen-line poem, usually in **iambic pentameters**, first created by Francesco Petrarch in the 1300s. Originally handling amorous themes, sonnets have been subsequently written on almost all imaginable subjects and issues. Major types of sonnet include the **Petrarchan Sonnet** (perhaps the dominant form), consisting of an **Octet/Octave** (qv) rhyming abbaabba, and a **Sestet/Sextet** (qv) rhyming cdecde or cdcddc; the **Spenserian Sonnet**, consisting of three **Quatrains** (qv) and a **Couplet** (qv) rhyming abab, bcbc, cdcd, ee; and the **Shakespearean Sonnet**, also with three quatrains and a couplet, rhyming abab, cdcd, efef, gg. Sonnets have always been regarded as particularly challenging poems to write, and retain their long-held mystique.

SPONDEE	In verse, two stressed syllables, e.g., “Sleep sleep, old Sun, thou canst not have repast...”
STANZA	A group of lines in a poem forming a subsection of the whole. Stanzas within the same poem are often of uniform length; they also usually share the same rhyme scheme and meter. Such elements within a poem are sometimes called a “verse”: this is a less accurate term than “stanza”. <i>Adjective: Stanzaic.</i>
STREAM OF CONSCIOUSNESS	A Narrative (qv) style that seeks to capture the random nature of human thought processes. Eschewing the ordering and selection of traditional narrative method, stream of consciousness bestows equal significance and weight to all ideas, reflections and sense impressions that crowd in upon an imagined consciousness. The greatest exponent in the language of this mode of writing is James Joyce, particularly in his work <i>Ulysses</i> .
STRESS	The emphasis given to a syllable in pronunciation. It is used in Prosody (qv) to evaluate the metrical characteristics of lines.
SUB-PLOT	Secondary action in a play or story which corresponds thematically to the action of the main plot. Common in Shakespearean drama, well-known sub-plots include the Sir Toby Belch / Feste / Sir Andrew Aguecheek / Malvolio axis, which links thematically with the love intrigues of the Olivia / Orsino / Viola / Sebastian axis in the main plot; or the Caliban / Trinculo / Stephano axis, that relates to the political drama of Prospero / Alonso / Antonio / Sebastian axis in the main plot.
SUB-TEXT	Meanings implied but not stated in a literary text, particularly a dramatic work
SYMBOL	An entity that is understood to represent something other than itself. A cross represents Christianity; a dove, peace.

These are not self-evident meanings, but the result of cultural tradition and shared agreement. Symbols almost always convey a larger idea than the sum of their constituent parts: the clenched fist is not an anatomical contraction, but a symbol of political freedom or resistance; beyond that, the clenched fist hints at complex political histories and agendas for reform. Symbols are elements of **Allegory**, **Metaphor**, and **Simile** (qqv). In some applications they are held to body forth higher truths than those apparent to the human eye; this kind of transcendentalism is common in religious or mystical works, where a ladder symbolizes the soul's ascent towards heavenly enlightenment, or a fountain signifies the purification from sin. *Adjective: Symbolic.*

SYNAESTHESIA

Where words describing one sensation are applied to another, *e.g.* the cold look; the harsh voice; the soft breeze; the heavy silence. *Adjective: Synaesthetic.*

SYNCOPE

Shortening a word in poetry or drama by omitting a letter or syllable: *e.g.* *e'en* for *even*; *heav'n* for *heaven*; *ne'er* for *never*. See also **Elision** (qv).

SYNECDOCHE

Where one part of an entity stands for the whole. An example would be the phrase "All hands to the pump", where "hands" refers to all available persons, not just their hands. Other instances of synecdoche are "Thierry Henry was clearly playing for the shirt this afternoon" ("shirt" meaning Arsenal Football Club); "The Crown forces took the building by storm" ("Crown" representing the legitimate government); or "Give us this day our daily bread" ("Daily bread" signifying a means to life and sustenance).

SYNONYM

A word close to or identical in meaning to another, *e.g.* cold, freezing, chilly, nippy, perishing, wintry, bleak, icy, frigid, frosty, artic, raw, keen. It is the opposite of **Antonym** (qv). *Adjective: Synonymous.*

SYNTAX	Word order in a sentence. <i>Adjective: Syntactical.</i>
TABLEAU	In the theatre, the positions on the stage established by a group of actors which conveys silent significance to the audience. A tableau can be inserted as an artificial, frozen moment in a play, or can arise naturalistically from the action.
TAUTOLOGY	The use of redundant words, <i>e.g.</i> “Sincerely, to be honest...”; “I, for myself, believe...”; “Cooking plaice with butter gives it a lovely buttery taste...”; “This lovely present is truly lovely.” <i>Adjective: Tautological.</i>
TEXT	The words of a literary work as established by the author, before interpretation by a reader or theatrical director.
THRENODY	A poem of lament, especially expressing sorrow in bereavement. <i>Adjective: Threnodic.</i> See also Lament .
TIRADE	A violent and vituperative speech. King Lear offers some good examples in his descent into madness.
TONE	The manner in which a work is written, tone reflects the author’s outlook upon the world, his/her mood, opinion and moral understanding. A writer may interact with the reader in a playful or ironic tone; equally the tone may be moralistic or sincere.
TOPOGRAPHICAL POETRY	Poetry describing landscape, particularly of a specified locality. Often Panegyric (qv) in tone, topographical poetry can be a means to praise the owner of land who is seen as responsible for guaranteeing the orderliness that so impresses the eye. Topographical poetry was particularly popular in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.
TRAGEDY	A serious play detailing the downfall of a mighty or important character, the

Protagonist (qv), who is obliged to die at the end. According to classical rules, the protagonist should experience **Catharsis**, **Hamartia**, **Hubris**, and **Nemesis** (qqv). These concepts are often present in modern tragedies, which can, of course, embrace wider literary forms than the dramatic. Thus Hardy's novels are tragic; so are many films and TV dramas. The tragic effect in all these forms is communicated by the audience's awareness of admirable qualities in the doomed protagonist. His/her downfall is usually the result of the **Tragic Flaw** (qv). *Adjective: Tragic.*

TRAGIC FLAW

A defect of character that leads to the destruction of the **Protagonist** in a **Tragedy** (qqv), *e.g.* ambition in Macbeth; jealousy in Othello; rashness in Michael Henchard.

TRAGICOMEDY

A play featuring both tragic and comic elements, perhaps with a happy ending to trying events. Among Shakespeare's plays, works such as *The Winter's Tale* or *Measure for Measure* have been identified as tragicomic.

TRIPLET

A sequence of three lines of verse sharing a common rhyme sound.

TROCHEE

A metrical foot consisting of a stressed syllable followed by an unstressed syllable; *e.g. mi-ddle*.

TUDOR RANT

An increasingly obsolete term for a set piece speech delivered with **Bombast**, so called after the rhetorical excesses of pre-Shakespearean tragedy.

UBI SUNT

(Latin, 'where are they?'). Any expression of despair over the fleeting nature of human achievement, the question asking what destiny has befallen all the great men and women of history, *i.e.* death.

UNITIES

Conventions from classical drama that required playwrights to observe unity of time, unity of place, and unity of action in

their works. According to this scheme, a play's action should occur within a time-scale of twenty-four hours (sometimes thirty-six); within a closely defined geographical location, such as a town or city; and that the action depicted should relate to a narrow group of characters. Shakespeare showed how brilliantly the unities could be observed in his *Comedy of Errors*.

UTOPIA

(Greek, 'no place'). From Sir Thomas More's 1516 work of the same name, a utopia is any imagined ideal society. Originally More wrote with some **Satirical** intentions (qv), but the term has come to imply an earthly paradise of social equality and reform. Its **Antonym** is **Dystopia** (qqv).

VERISIMILITUDE

Believability, or likeness to truth, Verisimilitude concerns how convincing or persuasive a literary work is to the reader, and how alike it is to life. Verisimilitude helps persuade a reader of a work's "truth". *Adjective: Verisimilar.*

VERNACULAR

The native tongue of an ethnic or national group.

VERSIFICATION

Either the practice of writing poetry, in terms of principles, techniques, approaches; or the framing ideas within verse.

VOLTA

(Italian, "turn"). The change of thought or feeling between the **Octet** and **Sestet** of a **Sonnet**.

ZEUGMA

(Greek, 'yoking'). When a word in a sentence or line of poetry is related to two terms, but with different meaning: *e.g.*, "He struck a blow for America, and to the Republicans' hopes"; or "He marched across the Sahara, and into the history books."