

Critical Terms

- allegory:** a type of narrative which makes literal sense in its own right but also has a double meaning.
- alliteration:** the repetition of consonants in words and phrases. Eg. *Peter Piper picked a peck of pickled pepper.*
- ambiguity:** words, phrases or whole texts which have several or unclear meanings.
- assonance:** the repetition of vowel sounds in words and phrases. Eg. *and howls and hollos long and loud.*
- blank verse:** unrhymed poetry written in iambic pentameter.
- chorus:** a character or group in a play who comments on the action.
- comedy:** nowadays a work which makes us laugh but used to be a work with a happy ending.
- compound words:** double-barrelled words made by combining two existing, and often unrelated, words. They are often used to condense description. Eg. *sea-dog, white-mossed, wool-clouds, ivy-mantled.*
- connotation:** the suggestion or implication evoked by a word, phrase or statement.
- couplet:** two lines of poetry together. A rhyming couplet is two lines of poetry together which rhyme.

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| dialogue: | two or more characters speaking to each other. |
| diction: | the vocabulary chosen by a writer. |
| dramatic irony: | the audience of a play is aware of facts that the character(s) are not. |
| first person: | the use of 'I' in speech or writing. |
| form | the shape or pattern in which a poem is written. |
| free verse: | poetry which seems to have no set pattern, stanzas or rhyme scheme. |
| hyperbole: | huge exaggeration or overstatement. |
| iambic pentameter: | a line of poetry made up of ten syllables with alternating light or heavy beats. Eg. <i>Is this the face that launched a thousand ships?</i> |
| imagery: | writing that creates a picture in the mind, usually through the use of comparisons. |
| irony: | saying one thing but meaning the opposite. |
| juxtaposition: | putting two things side by side in order to show a relationship between them. |
| metaphor: | a comparison that says one thing is another thing. Eg. <i>The moon was a ghostly galleon tossed upon cloudy seas.</i> |
| metre: | a regular rhythm in verse; the measurement of poetry. |
| mood: | the overall feeling generated by a written or spoken piece. |

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| narrative: | a story: it can be a novel, short story, poem or spoken. |
| onomatopoeia: | words which describe sounds and also sound like that which they describe. Eg. <i>splash, screech, crash, howl.</i> |
| oxymoron: | the linking together of contradictory or opposite words. Eg. bitter-sweet, mute music. |
| paradox: | the joining together of ideas or concepts which appear to be contradictory but actually make sense in another way. |
| parody: | the style of an author or work is imitated and either matched to a trivial subject or exaggerated for comic purposes. |
| personification: | objects are given human characteristics. Eg. <i>Old Father Time, the wind moaned, England mourns for her dead, the walls have ears.</i> |
| prose: | a piece of continuous writing which is not verse or dialogue. |
| protagonist: | the leading character in a play or novel. |
| pun: | a play on words which sound the same or similar which is usually used for comic effect. |
| quatrain: | four lines of poetry. |
| rhyme scheme: | the distinctive pattern of rhyme in a poem. |
| rhythm: | the movement of language in speech, verse or prose, often with a regular beat. |
| satire: | a work attacks or criticises something by holding it to |

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| | ridicule. |
| simile: | a comparison which use the words like or as. Eg. <i>He ran like the wind.</i> |
| sonnet: | a poem of fourteen lines written in iambic pentameter |
| stanza: | sections of poetry comprising a group of verse lines. |
| symbolism: | objects which are used to represent something else. Eg. a flag symbolises its country; in his poem 'Time', Shelley uses the sea to represent time. |
| theme: | the central idea or message the writer is trying to put across. |
| tone: | <i>see mood.</i> |
| tragedy: | a work with an unhappy ending. It must be serious and often shows the downfall of a great character. |
| tragic hero: | a protagonist who begins as a great character and is destroyed by a combination of a fatal flaw in his character and the workings of fate. |