

LITERARY TERMS COMMONLY USED IN POETRY
(Can also be found in fiction or non-fiction)

| Figure of Speech/ Literary Device | Definition | Example |
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| Alliteration | The repetition of an initial consonant sound. | “Once upon a midnight dreary <u>wh</u> ile I pondered <u>w</u> eak and <u>w</u> ear <u>y</u> ” (Edgar Allen Poe) |
| Assonance | Identity or similarity in sound between internal vowels in neighboring words. | “From the <u>m</u> olten- <u>g</u> olden <u>n</u> otes” (Edgar Allen Poe) |
| Consonance | The repetition of consonant sounds (not initial sounds – especially at the end of words) | Whose <u>wo</u> ods <u>the</u> se are I think I know. (Robert Frost) |
| Hyperbole | An extravagant statement; the use of exaggerated terms for the purpose of emphasis or heightened effect. | "An hundred years should go to praise / Thine eyes and on thy forehead gaze. (Andrew Marvell) |
| Metaphor | A direct comparison between two unlike things that actually have something important in common. | “Well, son, I’ll tell you: Life for me ain’t been no crystal stair .” (Langston Hughes) |
| Onomatopoeia | The formation or use of words that imitate the sounds associated with the objects or actions they refer to. | “Silver bells! What a world of merriment their melody foretells! How they tinkle ” (Edgar Allen Poe) |
| Oxymoron | A figure of speech in which incongruous or contradictory terms appear side by side. | Back to back they faced each other/ Jumbo Shrimp/Pretty Ugly |
| Personification | A figure of speech in which an inanimate object or abstraction is endowed with human qualities or abilities. | [The daffodils were] Beside the lake, beneath the trees, Fluttering and dancing in the breeze. William Wordsworth |
| Pun | A play on words, sometimes on different senses of the same word and sometimes on the similar sense or sound of different words. | The portrait tumbled from the wall /And hit the young man’s head./ “A striking likeness!” That was all /The rueful punster said. |
| Simile | A stated comparison (usually formed with "like" or "as") between two fundamentally dissimilar things that | “I wandered lonely as a cloud That floats on high o’er vales and hills,” (William Wordsworth) |

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| | have certain qualities in common. | |
| Imagery | When words are used to stimulate one or more of the five senses | “The winter evening settles down With smell of steaks in passageways. Six o'clock. The burnt-out ends of smoky days.” (T.S. Eliot) |
| Symbolism | A thing which stands for or represents something else | Two roads diverged in a yellow wood / And sorry I could not travel both” (Robert Frost) Road symbolize life choices |
| Synecdoche | When a part of something represents the whole thing | "Friends, Romans, countrymen: lend me your ears" (Shakespeare) The part (ears) represents the whole – (person listening). |

**LITERARY TERMS COMMONLY USED IN FICTION
(NOVELS, SHORT STORIES, ETC)**

| Literary Device | Definition | Example |
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| Allusion | To call something to mind without discussing it explicitly – an indirect or passing reference. | “When she lost her job, she acted like a Scrooge, and refused to buy anything that wasn’t necessary.” (Allusion made to Scrooge from <i>A Christmas Carol</i> by Charles Dickens) |
| Antagonist | A character in conflict with the main character or protagonist. | Dracula The Wicked Witch of the West Mr. Hyde |
| Conflict | The central problem or issue to be resolved in a plot, involving the main character struggling against other character(s) or obstacle(s). | Person Vs Person Person Vs Self Person Vs Society Person Vs Nature |
| Character (Dynamic) | A character who changes, especially one who comes to a major realization | Scrooge in <i>A Christmas Carol</i> (changes from cheap to generous) |
| Character (Flat) | A one-dimensional character who has only a few, easily defined traits. | Step-mother in <i>Cinderella</i> (only character trait – evil) |
| Character (Round) | A multi-faceted character, especially one who is capable of choosing right or wrong. | Harry Potter is a round character because he encounters great conflict and emotional turmoil. Through this, we can relate to him because he is a fully developed character. |
| Character (Static) | A character that undergoes no change. | Step-mother in <i>Cinderella</i> (mean in the beginning, mean in the end) |
| Climax | The high point of tension in the plot, when the outcome is decided. | The climax of <i>Cinderella</i> occurs when the prince puts the shoe on her foot and it fits. |
| Exposition | The part of the plot diagram where the characters, setting, mood, and atmosphere are introduced (usually at the beginning) | The exposition of <i>Cinderella</i> occurs in the beginning when we learn about the characters and setting. |
| Falling Action | The part of the plot when things begin to turn around. Usually comes right after the climax | The falling action of <i>Cinderella</i> occurs after the shoe fits and she and the Prince are together. |
| Foreshadowing | A hint that is fully understood only in retrospect after the reader discovers more information later in the plot. | In the opening of <i>The Wizard of Oz</i> , set in Kansas, the transformation of Miss Gulch into a witch on a broomstick foreshadows her reappearance as Dorothy's enemy in Oz. |
| Flashback | A flashback is a scene that returns to events in the past. | She smelled of lemons, just as Jodie used to. Lemons had been Jodie's answer to everything. On their first date they drank an entire pitcher of lemonade, the pitcher sweating between them on the white wicker table. |

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| Initial Incident | The initial incident is an event of the plot that starts the conflict(s). | The initial incident of <i>Cinderella</i> occurs when the step-mother will not allow her to go to the Ball. |
| Irony | The use of words to convey the opposite of their literal meaning. A statement or situation where the meaning is contradicted by appearance or presentation of the idea. | (see 3 examples below) |
| Irony (Verbal) | Saying something but meaning the opposite | “Well, I see we dressed up today” said to someone looking obviously disheveled. |
| Irony (Situational) | When the audience expects something to happen but the opposite occurs | A man takes a step aside in order to avoid getting sprinkled by a wet dog, and falls into a swimming pool |
| Irony (Dramatic) | When the reader is aware of something that the characters are not. | In horror movies, when you know the murderer is behind the character, but they do not. |
| Mood | The emotional atmosphere of the story – the reader usually emotionally responds to the mood. | "It was a dark and stormy night..." establishes a dangerous and foreboding mood. |
| Narrator | If you are the narrator, you tell the story from your own point of view. | (see below for narrative points of view) |
| Point of View (First Person) | The person speaking is involved in the story. Uses “I” | I held my hand out, waiting for my mother. |
| Point of View (3rd Person) | The narrator is not a character. Uses “he, she, they” | He moved carefully not to disturb those who were sleeping. |
| Point of View (Omniscient) | An omniscient narrator is similar to a third person narrator, but they can see all (into character’s thoughts, feelings etc) | John had been feeling rather delicate lately, a result of his father’s abandonment. |
| Protagonist | The main character of the story. Usually seen as the “good guy” | The protagonist of <i>Harry Potter</i> is (you guessed it) Harry Potter! |
| Resolution | The part of the plot where the conflict has been resolved (usually at the end) | The resolution of <i>Cinderella</i> occurs when they live “Happily Ever After” |
| Rising Action | The part of the plot that includes the events that develop the clues and the actions (building to the climax) | The rising action of <i>Cinderella</i> includes all of the events up until the shoe fits. |
| Setting | The time and place of the story. | The setting of <i>A Christmas Carol</i> is London England in the 1840’s. |

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| Satire | The use of irony, exaggeration, or humor to criticize peoples' and society's vices (often political and topical) | The movie Scary Movie, or Austin Powers are satire – making fun of the horror genre and hippies. |
| Theme | The main idea of the story. It is usually something that connects the story to the real world. It also often leads to a discussion or debate. | Possible themes could be friendship, love, courage, loyalty, survival etc. |