**Alliteration**  *Alliteration* is the repetition of initial consonant sounds in accented syllables.

**Allusion**  An *allusion* is a reference within a work to something famous outside it, such as a well-known person, place, event, story, or work of art.

**Antagonist**  The *antagonist* is the character who opposes the protagonist in a work of fiction.

**Apostrophe**  An *apostrophe* is a figure of speech in which a speaker directly addresses an absent person as if he or she were present or addresses some personified quality, object, or idea as if it were capable of hearing.

**Aside**  In drama, an *aside* is a brief comment made by one character that is not heard by other characters. An aside is spoken to the audience or to the character himself or herself. It is generally assumed that the information revealed in an aside is true.

**Atmosphere**  *Atmosphere* is the mood or feeling of a work of literature created by details of setting or action. In poetry, rhythm, rhyme, and other sound devices can also contribute to atmosphere.

**Author's bias**  *Author's bias* refers to the writer's feelings toward or personal interest in his or her subject.

**Author's message**  The *author's message* includes the ideas, information, and attitudes that the writer of a work wants to convey to his or her audience.

**Author's purpose**  *Author's purpose* is the author's reason for writing a particular work. The four most common purposes of authors are *to inform*, *to entertain*, *to persuade*, and *to reflect*.

**Autobiography**  *Autobiography* is a form of nonfiction in which a person tells his or her life story. Autobiographical writing may tell about the person's whole life or only part of it.

**Biography**  *Biography* is a form of nonfiction in which a writer tells the life story of another person.

**Blank verse**  *Blank verse* is unrhymed lines of poetry, mostly in *iambic pentameter*.

**Character**  A *character* is a person or animal that takes part in the action of a literary work. *Major characters* are individuals who dominate a narrative. *Minor characters* are individuals who enrich a narrative but are not the focus of attention. A *dynamic character* is one who changes over the course of a story. A *static character* is one who does not change. A *round character* is one with many aspects to his or her personality, possibly including internal conflicts. A *flat character* is one who is defined by only one or a few qualities.

**Character motivation**  *Character motivation* is the reason or reasons behind a character's behavior.

**Characterization**  *Characterization* is the way or ways in which a writer reveals information about a character. In *direct characterization*, a writer makes direct statements about a character's appearance, personality, and actions. In *indirect characterization*, a writer suggests information about a character through what the character says and does, what other characters say about him or her, or how other characters behave toward him or her.

**Conflict**  A *conflict* is a struggle between opposing forces in a narrative. *Internal conflict* occurs within a character who faces opposing ideas, feelings, or choices. *External conflict* occurs between characters or between a character and a larger force, such as nature or society.

**Dialect**  *Dialect* is the form of language spoken by people in a particular region or group. Pronunciation, vocabulary, and sentence structure are affected by dialect.

**Dialogue**  In a drama or play, the *dialogue* is the words that characters speak to one another or to the audience.

**Diction**  *Diction* is the writer's choice of words in a literary work. It might be described as formal or informal, abstract or concrete, plain or ornate, or ordinary or technical.

**Dramatic monologue**  A *dramatic monologue* is a poem in which a single character speaks to a listener or listeners who remain silent. In the poem, the speaker reveals his or her personality and attitudes.

**Epic** An *epic* is a long, serious narrative—often a poem—about the deeds and adventures of gods or of a hero. Epics usually tell a story that bears great historical significance to a nation or people.

**Epic conventions** *Epic conventions* are traditional characteristics of epic poems. They include an invocation, an opening statement of the theme, a beginning *in medias res* (Latin for "in the middle of things"), and epic similes (also called Homeric or extended similes).

**Epic hero** An *epic hero* is the central figure of an epic. This character usually is a figure of great, even larger-than-life, stature.

**Essay** An *essay* is a short nonfiction work of prose about a specific subject. An *expository essay* is one that informs or explains. A *persuasive essay* is one that attempts to convince the reader to accept a position or take a desired action. A *personal essay* is one in which the writer relates a personal experience. A *reflective essay* is one in which the writer shares his or her insight about something or someone.

**Fable** A *fable* is a brief story or poem, often with animal characters, that teaches a lesson.

**Fantasy** *Fantasy* includes elements not found in real life, such as supernatural occurrences and imaginary places, creatures, and things.

**Figurative language** *Figurative language* is language that is not meant to be taken literally. *Simile*, *metaphor*, *personification*, *apostrophe*, *oxymoron*, *paradox*, and *hyperbole* are examples of figurative language.

**Folk literature** *Folk literature* is the body of stories, legends, folk tales, fables, myths, and other works arising out of the oral traditions of peoples around the world. Folk literature usually reflects the values of the culture from which it originates.

**Folk tale** A *folk tale* is a short traditional narrative, often based on a larger-than-life hero. Folk tales often include elements of fantasy. These stories tend to evolve as they are modified and embellished by the various groups and tellers who pass them down through oral tradition.

**Foreshadowing** *Foreshadowing* is the use of clues to suggest events that have yet to occur.

**Genre** A *genre* is a category, or type, of literature. Literature is commonly divided into three major genres: poetry, prose, and drama. Each major genre can be divided into smaller genres.

**Heroic couplets** In poetry, *heroic couplets* are rhymed pairs of lines, mostly in iambic pentameter.

**Historical and cultural context** The *historical and cultural context* of a work is the background of events, laws, beliefs, and customs of the particular time and place in which a work is set or in which it was written.

**Humor** *Humor* is a quality in writing that is meant to amuse. A writer may use several techniques to achieve humor. *Situational humor* can arise from a setting or turn of events that is unpredictable and not in line with the reader's expectations. *Verbal humor* is the surprising and comic use of words (for example, exaggeration, puns, and odd names). *Physical humor* arises from odd motions, actions, or appearances (for example, clumsy behavior, unusual facial expressions, or other sight gags).

**Hyperbole** *Hyperbole* is a deliberate exaggeration or overstatement.

**Iambic pentameter** In poetry, *iambic pentameter* is a meter, or pattern of rhythm, in which a line has five unstressed syllables, each followed by a stressed syllable.

**Imagery** *Imagery* is the use of language that appeals to one or more of the five senses: sight, hearing, taste, smell, and touch. An instance of imagery—a word or phrase that appeals to one or more of the five senses—is called an *image*.

**Interior monologue** An *interior monologue* is a poem that presents the thoughts and feelings of a single character as though the character were speaking aloud.

**Irony** *Irony* is the result of a contrast between appearance or expectation and reality. In *verbal irony*, words are used to suggest the opposite of their usual meaning. In *dramatic*

*irony*, what appears to be true to a character is not what the reader or audience knows to be true. In *situational irony*, an event occurs that directly contradicts expectations.

**Legend** A *legend* is a traditional story that tends to have more historical truth and fewer supernatural elements than other forms of folk literature. Usually, a legend deals with a particular person, such as a hero, a saint, or a national leader.

**Lyric poetry** *Lyric poetry* is poetry that expresses the observations and feelings of a single speaker. *Odes*, *sonnets*, *elegies*, and *songs* are all forms of lyric poetry.

**Metaphor** A *metaphor* is a direct comparison of two unlike things, describing one as if it were the other, without using *like* or *as*.

**Meter** *Meter* is the rhythmical pattern of a poem. This pattern is determined by the number and types of stresses, or beats, in each line.

**Modernism** *Modernism* was a literary movement of the early to mid-twentieth century in which writers tried to break away from the traditional forms and styles of the past.

**Monologue** In drama, a *monologue* is a long, uninterrupted speech by one character, to which other characters may or may not listen.

**Mystery** A *mystery* is a work that centers on a crime or puzzle that is usually solved near the end. Common elements in mysteries include danger, a strong sense of suspense, a detective hero, the hero's partner, and a red herring (a plot element or misleading clue used to divert the reader's attention from the real issue).

**Myth** A *myth* is a story that explains the actions of gods or heroes or the causes of natural phenomena, such as the origins of earthly life.

**Narrative poetry** *Narrative poetry* is poetry that tells a story. Epics and ballads are examples of narrative poetry.

**Narrative structure** *Narrative structure* is the way in which story events are organized and revealed. *Chronological order* is time order, the order in which events normally happen. A *flashback* is a scene or incident that jumps back to an earlier time. A *frame story* contains a story inside a larger narrative framework— a story within a story. Some longer works consist of *interrelated stories*, stories that are separate but share a common element.

**Naturalism** *Naturalism* was a literary movement that occurred around the same time as Realism. Naturalism expanded on Realism by putting forth the idea that people and their lives are often deeply affected and even controlled by natural and social forces that are beyond their control.

**Onomatopoeia** *Onomatopoeia* is the use of words that imitate sounds.

**Oxymoron** An *oxymoron* combines two words with opposite or conflicting meanings.

**Paradox** A *paradox* is a statement that seems to be contradictory but actually presents a truth.

**Personification** *Personification* is a description of something nonhuman as if it were human.

**Persuasive writing** *Persuasive writing* contains a message that tries to convince readers to hold particular views or take particular actions.

**Plot** *Plot* is the sequence of events in a literary work. It is structured around a character or characters involved in a conflict. Most plots can be broken down into many or all of the following parts:

1. The *exposition* introduces the setting, characters, and basic situation.

2. The *inciting incident* introduces the central conflict.

3. During the *rising action*, or *development*, the conflict runs its course and usually intensifies.

4. The *climax* is the turning point of the plot, during which the conflict reaches the height of its interest or suspense.

5. The *falling action* includes the events that follow the plot's climax.

6. At the *resolution*, the conflict is ended.

7. The *denouement* ties up loose ends that remain after the resolution of the conflict.

**Point of view**  The *point of view* is the perspective from which a literary work is told. In a work with a *first-person point of view,* the narrator is part of the action and uses the pronouns *I, me,* and *my.* The reader knows only what the narrator knows and chooses to share about other characters and the events in which they are involved. A narrative with a *third-person point of view* is told by someone outside the action. Sometimes, this narrator is *limited* and reveals only his or her own thoughts and feelings. At other times, the narrator is *omniscient*, or all-knowing, and able to reveal the thoughts and feelings of all characters in the story.

**Prose**  *Prose* is the ordinary form of written language. Most writing that is not poetry, drama, or song is considered prose. Prose is one of the major genres of literature and occurs in two forms: fiction and nonfiction.

**Protagonist**  The *protagonist* is the main character in a work of fiction and usually the character that readers most want to succeed.

**Realism**  *Realism* was a literary movement of the late nineteenth century that tried to represent people and their lives as realistically as possible. Unlike the earlier Romantic movement, which favored the dramatic, Realism dealt with the everyday occurrences of common people's lives.

**Repetition**  *Repetition* in a poem is the reiteration of a word, phrase, or sound.

**Rhyme**  *Rhyme* is the repetition of sounds at the ends of words. Specifically, rhyme involves the vowels and succeeding consonants in the stressed syllables of two or more words. *End rhyme* occurs when rhyming words appear at the ends of two or more lines. *Internal rhyme* occurs when the rhyming words fall within a single line. *Exact rhyme* occurs when the stressed syllables of two or more words share the same vowel sound and succeeding consonant sound but not the same preceding consonants. *Approximate, slant,* or *half rhyme* occurs when the sounds repeated in words are similar but not identical.

**Rhyme scheme**  *Rhyme scheme* is the regular pattern of rhyming words at the ends of lines in a poem or stanza. A rhyme scheme is expressed using the letters of the alphabet, with each letter indicating the final sound in a line—for example, *abab.*

**Rhythm**  *Rhythm* in a poem is the beat or pulse that results from the repetition of certain combinations of stressed and unstressed syllables.

**Romanticism**  *Romanticism* was a literary movement of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. It was a reaction to the Neoclassicism of the previous age. Neoclassicism emphasized reason, intellect, and order; Romanticism emphasized the individual, emotions, and nature. Characteristics of Romanticism include imagination, writing from the heart, love of nature, a sense of freedom, and the idea that each person is unique.

**Satire**  *Satire* is writing that pokes fun at society or human behavior, usually with the aim of improving it.

**Science fiction**  *Science fiction* is writing that tells about imaginary events involving science or technology. Many science-fiction stories are set in the future and include technology that the writer suggests might someday exist.

**Setting**  The *setting* of a literary work is the time and place of the action.

**Simile**  A *simile* is a comparison of two unlike things that uses the word *like* or *as.*

**Soliloquy**  In drama, a *soliloquy* is a longer speech in which a character reveals his or her true thoughts or feelings. Soliloquies are unheard by other characters, and they usually occur when the speaker is alone on stage.

**Sonnet**  A *sonnet* is a fourteen-line lyric poem with a single theme. Sonnets vary, but they are usually written in rhymed iambic pentameter, following one of two traditional patterns: Petrarchan/Italian or Shakespearean/English.

**Speaker**  The *speaker* is the voice in a poem. Although the speaker is often the poet, the speaker may also be a fictional character or even an inanimate object or another type of nonhuman entity.

**Speech**  A *speech* is an oral presentation of facts or ideas. A speech can be made to persuade, to inform, to entertain, or to reflect on an experience.

**Stage directions** *Stage directions* are the playwright's instructions and other information for staging, or putting on, the play.

**Staging** *Staging* is the act of putting on a play. It includes all the elements that bring a drama to life, such as scenery, props, costumes, makeup, lighting, visual effects, music, sound effects, directing, and acting.

**Stanza** A *stanza* is a group of lines in a poem that are seen as a unit. Stanzas are different from verse paragraphs in that they usually are part of some pattern with other stanzas in terms of length, rhyme, or meter.

**Subplot** *Subplots* are the smaller stories contained in a literary work that either enrich and add interest to the main plot or provide relief from it.

**Surprise ending** A *surprise ending* is a conclusion that is unexpected. The reader has certain expectations about the ending based on details in the story. Often, a surprise ending is foreshadowed, or subtly hinted at, in the course of the work.

**Suspense** *Suspense* is a feeling of curiosity or uncertainty about the outcome of events that keeps the reader interested in the plot of a story.

**Symbol** A *symbol* is a person, place, or thing that stands for something else.

**Theme** A *theme* is a central message or insight conveyed in a work of literature. A *stated theme* is stated directly in the text of the work. An *implied theme* is not stated but is merely suggested by the details in the work.

**Tone** The *tone* of a literary work is the narrator or speaker's attitude toward his or her audience or subject as revealed through diction. Tone can be described using words like *friendly*, *distant*, *serious*, or *playful*.

**Tragedy** A *tragedy* is a work of literature, especially a play, that shows the downfall or destruction of a noble or outstanding person.

**Tragic hero** A *tragic hero* is the main character of a tragedy. Traditionally, the tragic hero possesses a character trait called his or her *tragic flaw*, which causes his or her downfall.

**Transcendentalism** *Transcendentalism* was a philosophical and literary movement of the mid-nineteenth century that placed great importance on intuition, self-reliance, and the idea that divinity is present in all forms of being. Transcendentalists believed that human intuition can transcend (rise above) the limits of the senses and logic to receive higher truths and greater knowledge. They believed this could best be achieved by living simply, spiritually, and close to nature.

**Verse drama** A *verse drama* is a play in which most or all of the dialogue is in the form of poetry.

**Verse paragraph** A *verse paragraph* is a series of lines in a poem grouped together by content. Verse paragraphs are different from stanzas in that they vary in length within a poem and don't follow a set pattern