**ALLEGORY**
An extended metaphorical narrative in which a figure stands for a specific quality. Allegory uses recognizable types, symbols and narrative patterns to indicate that the meaning of the text is to be found not in the represented world but in a body of traditional thought. A more formal and abstract version of [personification](http://www.taylor.k12.ga.us/~wharris/literary_terms.html#personification).

**ALLITERATION**
Alliteration is a rhyme pattern produced inside the poetic line by repeating initial consonant sounds. An example of alliteration is represented by the repetition of th initial "w" sound in the following line from Sonnet 30 by William Shakespeare: “With old woes new wail my dear time’s waste."

**ALLUSION**
A brief or implicit reference to something outside the text. A reference to a well-known person, place, event, literary work, or work of art. Writers often make allusions to the Bible, mythological figures, and Shakespearean plays.

**ANALOGY**
A point by point comparison between two dissimilar things for the purpose of identifying a common relationship between the two and clarifying the less familiar of the subjects.

**ANAPEST**
A metrical [foot](http://www.taylor.k12.ga.us/~wharris/literary_terms.html#foot) consisting of two weak stresses followed by a strong stress. Refer to [meter](http://www.taylor.k12.ga.us/~wharris/literary_terms.html#meter).

**ANTAGONIST**
The character or force that opposes the [protagonist](http://www.taylor.k12.ga.us/~wharris/literary_terms.html#protagonist). May be another character, a force of nature, a group of people, or some part of the protagonist's personality or psyche. Refer to [conflict](http://www.taylor.k12.ga.us/~wharris/literary_terms.html#conflict).

**ASIDE**
A short speech delivered by an actor in a play. An aside expresses the thoughts and true motives of the character and may be directed to the audience or to specific actors within the play, while being inaudible to other characters within the play.

**ASSONANCE**
The rhyme-pattern produced inside the poetic line by repeating similar vowels, or clusters of consonants and vowels. The [repetition](http://www.taylor.k12.ga.us/~wharris/literary_terms.html#repetition) of the long "i" within the following line of "Annabel Lee" by Edgar Allan Poe is an example of assonance: "And the stars never rise, but I feel the bright eyes."

**B**

**BALLAD**
A [narrative poem](http://www.taylor.k12.ga.us/~wharris/literary_terms.html#narrative_poem) which was originally sung and so often includes a refrain. Ballads tend to tell simple stories in simple language. John Keats’s “La Belle Dame Sans Merci” is a literary imitation of the ballad form.

**BLANK VERSE**
[Verse](http://www.taylor.k12.ga.us/~wharris/literary_terms.html#verse) in [iambic](http://www.taylor.k12.ga.us/~wharris/literary_terms.html#iambic) [pentameter](http://www.taylor.k12.ga.us/~wharris/literary_terms.html#pentameter) without [rhyme scheme](http://www.taylor.k12.ga.us/~wharris/literary_terms.html#rhyme_scheme), often used in verse drama and for poetry.

**C**

**CAESURA**
A pause within a line of [verse](http://www.taylor.k12.ga.us/~wharris/literary_terms.html#verse) dictated by speech rhythm rather than [meter](http://www.taylor.k12.ga.us/~wharris/literary_terms.html#meter) (indicated in scanning by the sign || ).The period in the middle of the following line from Shakespeare's Sonnet 116 marks the use of caesura: "Admit impediments. Love is not love." Refer to [scansion](http://www.taylor.k12.ga.us/~wharris/literary_terms.html#scansion).

**CARICATURE**
A ludicrous distortion of characteristics. An exagerrated imitation of a person's qualities to achieve effect for the sake of [comedy](http://www.taylor.k12.ga.us/~wharris/literary_terms.html#comedy) or [satire](http://www.taylor.k12.ga.us/~wharris/literary_terms.html#satire).

**CHARACTER**
A person, animal, or object that takes part in the action of a literary work. A character may be round or flat, dynamic or static. A round character displays many different character traits--faults as well as virtues. In contrast, a flat character is one-dimensional and often [stereotypical](http://www.taylor.k12.ga.us/~wharris/literary_terms.html#stereotype). A dynamic character is an ever-changing character, one that develops and grows during the course of the story. A static character, on the other hand, does not change.

**CHARACTERIZATION**
An author's technique in creating and developing a character. There are two basic types of characterization: (1) The author may choose to directly describe his character. (2) The author may use indirect methods to develop his or her character such as describing the character's actions, manipulating the character's [dialogue](http://www.taylor.k12.ga.us/~wharris/literary_terms.html#dialogue), or describing the reactions of other characters to the character.

**CLIMAX**
The highest point of interest or [suspense](http://www.taylor.k12.ga.us/~wharris/literary_terms.html#suspense) in a story, novel, or play. The moment within a work of literature when the main [conflict](http://www.taylor.k12.ga.us/~wharris/literary_terms.html#conflict) is resolved. See [plot structure](http://www.taylor.k12.ga.us/~wharris/literary_terms.html#plot_structure).

**COMEDY**
A light and amusing drama that usually concludes with a happy ending. Refer to [tragedy](http://www.taylor.k12.ga.us/~wharris/literary_terms.html#tragedy).

**COMIC RELIEF**
Humorous scenes or speeches that alleviate the tension that has built up during the development of the [conflict](http://www.taylor.k12.ga.us/~wharris/literary_terms.html#conflict) or conflicts. Comic relief is used frequently in drama, especially [tragedy](http://www.taylor.k12.ga.us/~wharris/literary_terms.html#tragedy), and allows the audience or reader time to relax, laugh, and consider the developing events within the [plot structure](http://www.taylor.k12.ga.us/~wharris/literary_terms.html#plot_structure).

**CONFLICT**
Struggle between opposing forces that drives the action of the plot. A conflict may be external--one that pits a character against another character, a group of people, expectations of society, or nature. An internal conflict is one between opposing tendencies in the character's mind (e.g. a moral dilemma). See [antagonist](http://www.taylor.k12.ga.us/~wharris/literary_terms.html#antagonist).

**CONNOTATION**
The emotional response evoked by a word within a specific context, as opposed to the literal sense of a word or its strict dictionary definition. See [denotation](http://www.taylor.k12.ga.us/~wharris/literary_terms.html#denotation).

**CONSONANCE**
[Repetition](http://www.taylor.k12.ga.us/~wharris/literary_terms.html#repetition) of consonant sounds to create a pattern--for example:*rider, reader, raider, ruder*. Consonace is used primarily in [verse](http://www.taylor.k12.ga.us/~wharris/literary_terms.html#verse).

**COUPLET**
A pair of lines of [verse](http://www.taylor.k12.ga.us/~wharris/literary_terms.html#verse), usually rhymed and of the same number of feet.

**D**

**DACTYL**
A metrical [foot](http://www.taylor.k12.ga.us/~wharris/literary_terms.html#foot) of one strong [stress](http://www.taylor.k12.ga.us/~wharris/literary_terms.html#stress) and two weak. See [meter](http://www.taylor.k12.ga.us/~wharris/literary_terms.html#meter).

**DENOTATION**
The literal sense of a word or its strict dictionary definition, as opposed to the attitudes, emotions and values that may usually be evoked by the word in a specific context. See [connotation](http://www.taylor.k12.ga.us/~wharris/literary_terms.html#connotation).

**DENOUEMENT**
Any events occuring after the [resolution](http://www.taylor.k12.ga.us/~wharris/literary_terms.html#resolution). Refer to [plot structure](http://www.taylor.k12.ga.us/~wharris/literary_terms.html#plot_structure).

**DIALOGUE**
Converstation between or among [characters](http://www.taylor.k12.ga.us/~wharris/literary_terms.html#CHARACTER).

**DRAMA**
A story written to be performed by actors. The script of a drama is made up of [dialogue](http://www.taylor.k12.ga.us/~wharris/literary_terms.html#dialogue) and stage directions. Dramas are generally divided into large units called *acts*, which are likewise commonly divided into *scenes*. Refer to [comedy](http://www.taylor.k12.ga.us/~wharris/literary_terms.html#comedy), [genre](http://www.taylor.k12.ga.us/~wharris/literary_terms.html#genre), and [tragedy](http://www.taylor.k12.ga.us/~wharris/literary_terms.html#tragedy).

**E**

**ELEGY**
A poem of lamentation for the dead. In Greek and Latin poetry, elegies were written in alternating [pentameters](http://www.taylor.k12.ga.us/~wharris/literary_terms.html#pentameter) and hexameters.

**ELISION**
The omission of part of a word (o’er, ne’er) to make a line conform to a metrical pattern.

**END STOPPED LINE**
A poetic line in which the end of the line coincides with the end of the grammatical unit, usually the sentence. An example of end-stopped lines appear in *Ode on Melancholy* by John Keats:

For shade to shade will come too drowsily,

And drown the wakeful anguish of the soul.

**ENJAMBMENT**
A line which ends before grammatical and semantic unity has been achieved and where the sense therefore carries on to the next line without a pause. An example of enjambment appears in lines 1.89-93 of *Endymion* by John Keats:

Full in the middle of this pleasantness

There stood a marble altar, with a tress

Of flowers budded newly; and the dew

Had taken fairy fantasies to strew

Daisies upon the sacred sward,. . .

**EPIC**
A long narrative poem with an exalted style and heroic theme. See [heroic couplet](http://www.taylor.k12.ga.us/~wharris/literary_terms.html#heroic_couplet).

**EPIGRAPH**
A short quotation cited at the start of a book or chapter to point out its theme. Also an inscription on a monument or building explaining its purpose. Lorraine Hansberry's play *A Raisin in the Sun* takes its title from a line within the Langston Hughes' poem "Dream Deferred," which also serves as the epigraph to the play.

**EPILOGUE**
A final section of a work which serves to conclude the whole.

**EPIPHANY**
A moment of great understanding and clarity for a [character](http://www.taylor.k12.ga.us/~wharris/literary_terms.html#character).

**EPITAPH**
A poem or brief statement about the deceased that sums up that person’s life--sometimes in praise and sometimes in satire. Epitaph's were originally written on a person's tombstone.

**EULOGY**
A work of praise, in either poetry or prose, for a person recently deceased.

**EXPOSITION**
A writing or a speech that explains a process or presents information. In [plot structure](http://www.taylor.k12.ga.us/~wharris/literary_terms.html#plot_structure), the exposition is the part of the work that introduces the [characters](http://www.taylor.k12.ga.us/~wharris/literary_terms.html#character), the [setting](http://www.taylor.k12.ga.us/~wharris/literary_terms.html#setting), and the basic situation.

**F**

**FABLE**
A fictitious moral tale or legend of ancient origin. Fables often predict animals behaving like humans.

**FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE**
Language that communicates ideas beyond the ordinary meanings of the words. Some examples of frequently used figures of speech are [metaphors](http://www.taylor.k12.ga.us/~wharris/literary_terms.html#metaphor), [similes](http://www.taylor.k12.ga.us/~wharris/literary_terms.html#simile), and [personification](http://www.taylor.k12.ga.us/~wharris/literary_terms.html#personification).

**FLASHBACK**
A conversation, a scene, or an event that happened before the beginning of the story, or at an earlier point in the narrative.

**FOOT**
The metrical unit of [verse](http://www.taylor.k12.ga.us/~wharris/literary_terms.html#verse) consisting of a number of stressed and unstressed syllables. These are usually marked up with the sign ‘u’ over the unstressed syllable and a forward slash over the stressed syllable. The kinds of feet appear as:

* Anapest: u u /
* Dactyl: / u u
* Iamb: u /
* Trochee: / u
* Spondee: / /

**FORESHADOWING**
The use of hints or clues by a writer to indicate events that will occur later in the story.

**FREE VERSE**
Poetry written without regular patterns of [rhyme](http://www.taylor.k12.ga.us/~wharris/literary_terms.html#rhyme) and [meter](http://www.taylor.k12.ga.us/~wharris/literary_terms.html#meter).

**G**

**GENRE**
A term used to designate a type of literature according to its subject matter. A category or type of literature. Literature is commonly divided into the following three major genres:

1. [Verse](http://www.taylor.k12.ga.us/~wharris/literary_terms.html#verse)/Poetry
2. [Prose](http://www.taylor.k12.ga.us/~wharris/literary_terms.html#prose)
3. [Drama](http://www.taylor.k12.ga.us/~wharris/literary_terms.html#drama)

**H**

**HAIKU**
A Japanese [verse](http://www.taylor.k12.ga.us/~wharris/literary_terms.html#verse) form dating from the thirteenth century. Haiku consists of seventeen syllables divided into lines or groups of five, seven, and five. The Haiku uses extreme economy to express intense emotion.

**HEROIC COUPLET**
A [couplet](http://www.taylor.k12.ga.us/~wharris/literary_terms.html#couplet) of two lines of [iambic](http://www.taylor.k12.ga.us/~wharris/literary_terms.html#iambic) [pentameter](http://www.taylor.k12.ga.us/~wharris/literary_terms.html#pentameter) with the same end [rhymes](http://www.taylor.k12.ga.us/~wharris/literary_terms.html#rhyme) forming a logical whole.

**HUMORS**
Psychological terms used by the Renaissance writers to describe the temperaments of a human being. The four basic humors were the choleric (bile), the sanguine (blood), the phlegmatic (phlegm), and the melancholy (black bile). A person's temperament was determined by the mixture of these humors. When one humor dominated, the character exhibited that particular temperament:

* Choler = Anger
* Sanguine = Geniality
* Phlegm = Apathy and Lethargy
* Melancholy = Gloomy Self-Absorption

**HYPERBOLE**
Overstatement or exaggeration for the sake of emphasis, as when the little boy says “Hey Dad there’s thousands of cats in our yard!” As literary devices, hyperbole, and its opposite understatement (litotes), are much used in comedy and satire.

**I**

**IAMBIC**
The most common metrical foot in English poetry – a foot of two syllables, with a weak stress followed by a strong. Refer to [foot](http://www.taylor.k12.ga.us/~wharris/literary_terms.html#foot) and [meter](http://www.taylor.k12.ga.us/~wharris/literary_terms.html#meter).

**IMAGERY**
The descriptive and [figurative language](http://www.taylor.k12.ga.us/~wharris/literary_terms.html#figurative_language) used in literature to create word pictures for the reader, mainly by creating details of sight, taste, touch, smell, and movement within the text.

**INFERENCE**
The process of developing a conclusion from a series of facts. Similar to an assumption and a hypothesis.

**INVERSION**
A reversal of position, order, form, or relationship. Change in normal word order, such as placing the verb before its subject.

**IRONY**
A contrast between appearance and actuality, expectation and result. There are three basic types of irony:

1. Verbal Irony
2. Dramatic Irony
3. Irony of Situation

Verbal irony occurs when a character states one thing but in actuality means something quite different.

Dramatic irony occurs when the audience or reader is aware of information of which another character or characters are not aware.

Irony of situation occurs when a character or the reader expects one thing to happen but smoething entirely different occurs.

**J**

**K**

**L**

**LYRIC POEM**
A lyrical poetry is highly musical [verse](http://www.taylor.k12.ga.us/~wharris/literary_terms.html#verse) that expresses personal emotion and the observations and feelings of the [speaker](http://www.taylor.k12.ga.us/~wharris/literary_terms.html#speaker) or [persona](http://www.taylor.k12.ga.us/~wharris/literary_terms.html#persona) of the poem.

**M**

**METAPHOR**
A statement of identity between two things. A metaphor implies a direct comparison such as, "She is a peach," as opposed to the “like” or “as” comparison found within the [simile](http://www.taylor.k12.ga.us/~wharris/literary_terms.html#simile). Refer to [figurative language](http://www.taylor.k12.ga.us/~wharris/literary_terms.html#figurative_language).

**METER**
The regular pattern of accented and unaccented syllables. The line is divided into a number of feet (e.g. quatrameter has four feet, [pentameter](http://www.taylor.k12.ga.us/~wharris/literary_terms.html#pentameter) has five feet). According to their stress pattern the feet are classed as [iambic](http://www.taylor.k12.ga.us/~wharris/literary_terms.html#iambic), [trochaic](http://www.taylor.k12.ga.us/~wharris/literary_terms.html#trochee), [anapestic](http://www.taylor.k12.ga.us/~wharris/literary_terms.html#anapest), [dactylic](http://www.taylor.k12.ga.us/~wharris/literary_terms.html#dactyl), or [spondaic](http://www.taylor.k12.ga.us/~wharris/literary_terms.html#spondee). Refer to [foot](http://www.taylor.k12.ga.us/~wharris/literary_terms.html#foot) and [scansion](http://www.taylor.k12.ga.us/~wharris/literary_terms.html#scansion).

**MONOLOGUE**
A long speech by a character in drama usually addressed to the other characters within the play. See [soliloquy](http://www.taylor.k12.ga.us/~wharris/literary_terms.html#soliloquy).

**MOOD**
The atmosphere or feeling created in a work of literature by the author. The author often uses the [setting](http://www.taylor.k12.ga.us/~wharris/literary_terms.html#setting) and descriptive details to develop the story's mood.

**MOTIF**
A recurrent image, word, phrase, theme, character, or situation.

**N**

**NARRATIVE POEM**
A narrative poem is [verse](http://www.taylor.k12.ga.us/~wharris/literary_terms.html#verse) that relates a story to the reader. The [ballad](http://www.taylor.k12.ga.us/~wharris/literary_terms.html#ballad) is a specific type of narrative poem.

**O**

**OCCASIONAL POEM**
A poem written to commemorate a specific occasion, such as W.B. Yeats’ “Easter 1916.”

**ODE**
In English, a long, serious poem with an elaborate structure for which there is no conventional form.

**ONOMATOPOEIA**
The use of words to imitate non-verbal sound, for example *hiss*, *bang*, and *pow*.

**OXYMORON**
A figurative use of language in which two opposite qualities are conjoined, as in bitter-sweet.

**P**

**PAEN**
A song or hymn of praise, joy, or triumph, originally sung by Greeks in gratitude to Apollo.

**PARADOX**
A statement that is seemingly contradictory yet true.

**PARALLELISM**
Parallelism, or parallel construction, occurs when a writer or speaker expresses ideas of equal worth with the same grammatical form. The statement, "*Veni, vidi, vici*," (I came, I saw, I conquered) by Julius Caesar is an example of parallelism.

**PARODY**
A comical piece of writing that exaggerates and mocks the characteristics of a specific literary form in order to call attention to the ridiculous aspects of its subject.

**PASTORAL**
A [genre](http://www.taylor.k12.ga.us/~wharris/literary_terms.html#genre) that represents the pleasures of rural life, typically that of shepherds.

**PENTAMETER**
A poetic line of five feet; the most common poetic line in English. Refer to [foot](http://www.taylor.k12.ga.us/~wharris/literary_terms.html#foot) and [meter](http://www.taylor.k12.ga.us/~wharris/literary_terms.html#meter).

**PERSONA**
The fictitious narrator imagined by the poet to speak the words of a poem.

**PERSONIFICATION**
A figurative use of language which attributes human qualities to ideas or things. Refer to [figurative language](http://www.taylor.k12.ga.us/~wharris/literary_terms.html#figurative_language).

**PLOT STRUCTURE**
The sequence of events within a literary work. The plot usually begins with an [exposition](http://www.taylor.k12.ga.us/~wharris/literary_terms.html#exposition). The central [conflict](http://www.taylor.k12.ga.us/~wharris/literary_terms.html#conflict) is introduced and developed throughout the rising action until the action reaches its highest point of interest or[suspense](http://www.taylor.k12.ga.us/~wharris/literary_terms.html#suspense), which is known as the [climax](http://www.taylor.k12.ga.us/~wharris/literary_terms.html%22%20%5Cl%20%22climax).The climax is followed by the falling action and eventually the [resolution](http://www.taylor.k12.ga.us/~wharris/literary_terms.html#resolution). Events occuring after the resolution make up the [denouement](http://www.taylor.k12.ga.us/~wharris/literary_terms.html#denouement).

**POINT OF VIEW**
The perspective from which a story is told. If the narrator is part of the action, the story is told from the first-person point of view, and the reader is limited to the thoughts and experiences of that [character](http://www.taylor.k12.ga.us/~wharris/literary_terms.html#character). A third-person point of view is told by someone outside the action of the story. An omniscient third-person narrator is all-knowing and can reveal the thoughts and feelings of several characters. A limited third-person narrator tells only the thoughts and feelings of one character.

**PROSE**
The ordinary form of written language. The two forms of prose are fiction and nonfiction.

**PROTAGONIST**
The main character in a work of literature. Usually the "good guy" or the character whom the audience or reader would like to see succeed. See [antagonist](http://www.taylor.k12.ga.us/~wharris/literary_terms.html#antagonist).

**PUN**
A figure of speech where a word is used ambiguously, thus invoking two or more of its meanings, often for comic effect.

**Q**

**R**

**REPETITION**
The use of any element of language--a sound, word, phrase, clause, or sentence--more than once. See[alliteration](http://www.taylor.k12.ga.us/~wharris/literary_terms.html#alliteration), [assonance](http://www.taylor.k12.ga.us/~wharris/literary_terms.html#assonance), [consonance](http://www.taylor.k12.ga.us/~wharris/literary_terms.html#consonance), and [rhyme](http://www.taylor.k12.ga.us/~wharris/literary_terms.html#rhyme).

**RESOLUTION**
Moment within the action of a story that signifies the end of the central [conflict](http://www.taylor.k12.ga.us/~wharris/literary_terms.html#conflict). Refer to [plot structure](http://www.taylor.k12.ga.us/~wharris/literary_terms.html#plot_structure).

**RHYME**
The pattern of sound that establishes unity in verse forms. Rhyme at the end of [verse](http://www.taylor.k12.ga.us/~wharris/literary_terms.html#verse) lines is “end rhyme." Rhyme inside a line of verse is “internal rhyme." If the rhyme sound falls on the very last syllable of the line (e.g. sound/rebound), it is refered to as "masculine." If the accented syllable is followed by an unaccented syllable (hounding/bounding), the rhyme is refered to as "feminine."

**RHYME SCHEME**
The pattern made by placing words which end in similar sounds at the ends of lines. To mark out a rhyme scheme, letters, starting with *a*, are assigned to the first occurrence of a sound, such that line 1 is always*a* and the first occurrence of the next sound is always *b* and so on. For example, the pattern of the Shakespearean [sonnet](http://www.taylor.k12.ga.us/~wharris/literary_terms.html#sonnet) is three quatrains rhyming *a b a b, c d c d, e f e f* then a closing [couplet](http://www.taylor.k12.ga.us/~wharris/literary_terms.html#couplet) rhyming*g g*.

**S**

**SATIRE**
A work which censures folly or wickedness.

**SCANSION**
The analysis of stressed and unstressed syllables in a poem in order to establish its metre.

**SETTING**
When and where a story takes place. The setting may be implied or directly stated by the author.

**SIMILE**
A figure of speech that expresses the resemblance of two different things usually introduced by "as" or "like" (e.g. blue as the summer sky). Refer to [metaphor](http://www.taylor.k12.ga.us/~wharris/literary_terms.html#metaphor) and [figurative language](http://www.taylor.k12.ga.us/~wharris/literary_terms.html#figurative_language).

**SOLILOQUY**
A long speech in a work of [drama](http://www.taylor.k12.ga.us/~wharris/literary_terms.html#drama) expressing the thoughts and feelings of a [character](http://www.taylor.k12.ga.us/~wharris/literary_terms.html#character) alone on stage.

**SONNET**
A fixed verse form, usually of fourteen lines but occasionally twelve or sixteen, following a sophisticated rhyme scheme. The English form is usually written in of iambic pentameter. The Petrarchan, or Italian, sonnet is divided into an octave which rhymes a b b a, a b b a, and a sestet which usually rhymes c d e c d e, or c d c d c d. The sestet usually replies to the argument of the octet. The Miltonic sonnet follows the Petrarchan but without significant break in meaning between the octave and sestet. The Shakespearean sonnet has three quatrains and a final couplet which usually provides an epigrammatic statement of the theme. The rhyme scheme is a b a b, c d c d, e f e f, g g, or else a b b a, c d d c, e f f e, g g. The Spenserian sonnet rhymes a b a b, b c b c, c d c d, e e, and often has no break in meaning between the octave and sestet.

**SOUND DEVICES**
A writer's strategic use of language, especially in verse, to evoke images and create sounds within his or her work. See[alliteration](http://www.taylor.k12.ga.us/~wharris/literary_terms.html#alliteration), [assonance](http://www.taylor.k12.ga.us/~wharris/literary_terms.html#assonance), [consonance](http://www.taylor.k12.ga.us/~wharris/literary_terms.html#consonance), and [rhyme](http://www.taylor.k12.ga.us/~wharris/literary_terms.html#rhyme).

**SPEAKER**
The imaginary voice (often unnamed) asumed by the poet.

**SPONDEE**
A metrical [foot](http://www.taylor.k12.ga.us/~wharris/literary_terms.html#foot) of two stressed syllables, usually used to vary other feet such as [iambs](http://www.taylor.k12.ga.us/~wharris/literary_terms.html#iambic) or [trochees](http://www.taylor.k12.ga.us/~wharris/literary_terms.html#trochee).

**STANZA**
A group of lines considered as a unit and forming a division of a poem.

**STEREOTYPE**
A [character](http://www.taylor.k12.ga.us/~wharris/literary_terms.html#character) that conforms to a fixed or general understanding, often representing an oversimplified image.

**STRESS**
The prominence of sound or loudness on a particular syllable in verse.

**SUSPENSE**
A feeling of curiosity or uncertainty about the outcome of events in a literary work. An author creates suspense to maintain the attention of his or her reader. Often used in conjunction with dramatic irony and foreshadowing.

**SYMBOLISM** (SYMBOL)
A symbol can be anything that stands for or represents a meaning or understanding beyond its literal definition.

**T**

**THEME**
A central message or insight revealed throughout a literary work. A generalization about life that is communicated through the work of literature.

**TONE**
The writer's attitude toward his or her audience and subject.

**TRAGEDY**
A work of literature, especially a play, that results in a catastrophe for the main character. A tragedy usually involves a significant person, such as a king or hero, with a tragic flaw that results in that character's downfall, which is usually death. A conventional tragic flaw is hubris, or excessive pride.

**TROCHEE**
A metrical [foot](http://www.taylor.k12.ga.us/~wharris/literary_terms.html#foot) of with a strong stress followed by a weak.

**TROPE**
Any use of a word that turns its meaning from literal to figurative. Metaphor is a frequent form.

**U**

**UNIVERSALITY**
The ability of a work of literature to apply to all times and places.

**V**

**VERSE**
Either an individual line of a poem., or metrical language as distinguished from [prose](http://www.taylor.k12.ga.us/~wharris/literary_terms.html#prose).