HANDBOOK OF LITERARY TERMS AND TECHNIQUES

ALLEGORY An *allegory* is a literary work with two or more levels of meaning—one literal level and one or more symbolic levels. The events, settings, objects, or characters in an allegory stand for ideas or qualities beyond themselves. Dante's *Divine Comedy* (page 622) is an allegory written in the Middle Ages, when allegorical writing was common. Many works can be read allegorically as well as literally. When reading a work allegorically, one tries to match every element at the literal level with a corresponding element at the symbolic level. Allegories are also written in the form of parables and fables.
See *Fable* and *Parable*.

ALLITERATION *Alliteration* is the repetition of initial consonant sounds. William Wordsworth's "Ode: Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood" uses alliteration of the *s* sound in the following line:

Our *S*ouls have *s*ight of that immortal *s*ea

Alliteration is often used, especially in poetry, to emphasize and to link words as well as to create pleasing, musical sounds.

ALLUSION An *allusion* is a reference to a well-known person, place, event, literary work, or work of art. Writers often make allusions to tales from the Bible, classical Greek and Roman myths, plays by Shakespeare, historical or political events, and other materials with which they expect their readers to be familiar. An allusion appears in Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, when Gonzalo states "Not since widow Dido's time," alluding to a great love story in the Roman epic the *Aeneid*, by Virgil. Writers sometimes use allusions as a sort of shorthand to suggest ideas in a simple and concise manner.

ANTAGONIST An *antagonist* is a character or force in conflict with the main character, or protagonist, in a literary work. In many stories the plot is based on a conflict between the antagonist and the protagonist. In 1 Samuel 17 (David and Goliath), on page 61, the antagonist is Goliath, battling the protagonist, David.
See *Character* and *Protagonist.*

APOSTROPHE An *apostrophe* is a figure of speech in which a speaker directly addresses an absent person or a personified quality, object, or idea. In Ovid's *Metamorphoses* (page 532), Thisbe uses an apostrophe to address a tree. Apostrophe is often used in poetry and in speeches to add emotional intensity.
See *Figurative Language*.

ARCHETYPE An *archetype* is a descriptive detail, plot pattern, character type, or theme that recurs in many different cultures. One such archetype that appears in *The Epic of Gilgamesh* is the battle between the forces of good and the forces of evil.

ASIDE An *aside* is a statement delivered by an actor to an audience in such a way that other characters on stage are presumed not to hear what is said. In an aside the character reveals his or her private thoughts, reactions, or motivations. Act I, Scene ii of *The Tempest* contains the following aside:

Miranda. I might call him
A thing divine; for nothing natural
I ever saw so noble.
Prospero. (Aside) It goes on, I see,
As my soul prompts it. Spirit, fine spirit,
I'll free thee
Within two days for this.

In this aside, Prospero reveals his pleasure that his desire to match Ferdinand and Miranda is working.

ASSONANCE *Assonance* is the repetition of vowel sounds in stressed syllables containing dissimilar consonant sounds. Derek Walcott uses assonance in the following line from *Omeros*:

I bequeath you that clean sheet and an
empty throne.

The long *e* sound is repeated in the words *bequeath*, *clean*, and *sheet* in stressed syllables containing these consonants: *b-q-th*, *cl-n*, and *sh-t*.
See *Consonance*.

BLANK VERSE *Blank verse* is poetry written in unrhymed iambic pentameter lines. Each iambic foot has one weakly stressed syllable followed by one strongly stressed syllable. A pentameter line has five of these feet. Blank verse usually contains occasional variations in rhythm—variations that are introduced to create emphasis, variety, and naturalness of sound. Because blank verse sounds so much like ordinary spoken English it is often used in drama and in poetry. The following lines come from William Shakespeare's *The Tempest*:

Ferdinand. Where should this music be?
I' th' air or th' earth?
It sounds no more; and sure it waits upon
Some god o' th' island. Sitting on a bank,

See *Meter*.

CHARACTER A *character* is a person or animal who takes part in the action of a literary work. Characters can be described in many different ways, as follows:

1. In terms of the importance of their roles: A character who plays an important role in a story is called a *major character*. A character who does not play an important role is called a *minor character*.
2. In terms of their roles: A character who plays the central role in a story is called the *protagonist*. A character who opposes the protagonist is called the *antagonist*.
3. In terms of their complexity: A complex character is called *round*, while a simple character is called *flat*.
4. In terms of the degree to which they change: A character who changes is called *dynamic*; a character who does not change is called *static*.

Character types that readers recognize easily, such as the hard-boiled detective or the wicked stepmother, are called *stereotypes*, or *stock characters*.
See *Characterization* and *Motivation*.

CHARACTERIZATION *Characterization* is the act of creating and developing a character. A writer uses *direct characterization* when he or she states a character's traits explicitly. *Indirect characterization* occurs when the writer reveals a character's traits by some other means. A character's traits can be revealed indirectly by means of what he or she says, thinks, or does; by means of a description of his or her appearance; or by means of the statements, thoughts, or actions of other characters. When using indirect characterization, the writer depends on the reader to infer a character's traits from the clues provided.
See *Character*.

CHOKA A traditional Japanese verse form, *choka* are poems that consist of alternating lines of five and seven syllables, with an additional seven-syllable line at the end. There is no limit to the number of lines in a choka. Choka frequently end with one or more *envoys* consisting of five lines of five, seven, five, seven, and seven syllables. Generally, the envoys elaborate or summarize the theme of the main poem.

CLIMAX The *climax* is the high point of interest or suspense in a literary work. Often the climax is also the point at which the protagonist changes his or her understanding or situation. Sometimes the climax coincides with the *resolution*, the point at which the central conflict is ended. For example, Julio Cortázar's "House Taken Over," on page 1238, reaches its climax with the characters' abandonment of their home.
See *Plot*.

CONFLICT A *conflict* is a struggle between opposing forces. Sometimes this struggle is *internal*, or within a character. At other times the struggle is *external*, or between the character and some outside force. The outside force may be another character, nature, or some element of society such as custom, culture, or a political institution. Often the conflict in a work is complicated and combines several of these possibili-

ties. For example, in *The Tempest* Prospero struggles against Antonio and Sebastian and against different parts of his own nature.
See *Antagonist*, *Plot*, and *Protagonist.*

CONNOTATION A *connotation* is an association that a word calls to mind in addition to its dictionary meaning. For example, the words *home* and *domicile* have the same dictionary meanings. However, the first has positive connotations of warmth and security while the second does not. Therefore, a writer who wants to convey a sense of warmth and security will be more likely to use the word *home* than the word *domicile.* Because the connotations of words are so powerful, writers carefully choose words with connotations that suggest the shades of meaning they intend.
See *Denotation.*

CONSONANCE *Consonance* is the identity of consonant sounds in words without the identity of vowel sounds. Following are some examples of consonance:

black - block
slip - slop
creak - croak
feat - fit
slick - slack

When used at the ends of lines, consonance can create *approximate* or *slant rhyme.*

COUPLET A *couplet* is a pair of rhyming lines written in the same meter. The following iambic tetrameter couplets come from John Milton's "L'Allegro":

And if I give thee honor due,
Mirth, admit me of the crew
To live with her, and live with thee,
In unreproved pleasures free.

A *heroic couplet* is a rhymed pair of iambic pentameter lines. Sonnets written in the English, or Shakespearean style, usually end with heroic couplets.
See *Sonnet.*

DENOTATION The *denotation* of a word is its exact, specific meaning, independent of other associations the word calls to mind. Dictionaries list the denotative meanings of words. Another term for denotative meaning is *referential meaning.*
See *Connotation.*

DIALOGUE A *dialogue* is a conversation between characters. Writers use dialogue to reveal characters, to present events, to add variety to narratives, and to interest readers. The dialogue in a story or play is usually set off by quotation marks and paragraphing. The dialogue in a play script generally follows the characters' names.

DICTION *Diction* is word choice. A writer's diction can be a major determinant of his or her style. Diction can be described as formal or informal, abstract or concrete, plain or ornate, ordinary or technical.
See *Style.*

DRAMA A *drama* is a story written to be performed by actors. It may consist of one or more large sections called *acts*, which are made up of any number of smaller sections called *scenes.*

Drama originated in religious rituals and symbolic reenactments of primitive peoples. The ancient Greeks developed drama into a sophisticated art and created such dramatic forms as comedy and tragedy. *Oedipus the King*, on page 433, is a classic example of Greek tragedy. The classical drama of the Greeks and the Romans declined as the Roman Empire declined.

Drama revived in Europe during the Middle Ages. The Renaissance produced a number of great dramatists, especially in England. Christopher Marlowe's tragedy *Dr. Faustus* and William Shakespeare's romantic comedy *The Tempest* are two examples from that period. Molière's *Tartuffe* is a comedy of manners, a form of drama popular in the seventeenth century. In the middle of the nineteenth century, Henrik Ibsen's *A Doll's House* began a trend toward realistic prose drama and away from drama in verse form. Most of the great Western plays of the twentieth century were written in prose.

Among the many forms of drama from non-Western cultures are the Nō plays of Japan such as Zeami's *The Deserted Crone.*
See *Tragedy.*

EPIC An *epic* is a long narrative poem about the adventures of gods or of a hero. Homer's *Iliad*, on page 335, is a *folk epic*, one that was composed orally and then passed from storyteller to storyteller by word of mouth. Virgil's *Aeneid*, on page 493, and Dante's *Divine Comedy*, on page 622, are examples of literary epics from the Classical and Medieval periods, respectively. John Milton's *Paradise Lost* continues the tradition of the literary epic in the Age of Rationalism. Milton's goal in creating *Paradise Lost* was to write a Christian epic similar in form and equal in value to the great epics of antiquity. Because of an epic's length and seriousness of theme, it presents an encyclopedic portrait of the culture in which it was produced.
See *Epic Convention.*

EPIC CONVENTION An *epic convention* is a traditional characteristic of epic poems. These characteristics include an opening statement of theme; an appeal for supernatural help in telling the story; a beginning *in medias res* (Latin: "in the middle of things"); long lists, or catalogs, of people and things; accounts of past events; and descriptive phrases such as epic similes and Homeric epithets.
See *Epic.*

EPIPHANY *Epiphany* is a term introduced by Irish writer James Joyce to describe a moment of revelation or insight in which a character recognizes some truth. In Colette's "The Bracelet," on page 1122, the main character's epiphany comes at the end of the story when she realizes she cannot recapture her past.

EPITAPH An *epitaph* is an inscription written on a tomb or burial place. In literature, epitaphs also include serious or humorous lines written as if they were intended for such use. Catullus' "I Crossed Many Lands and a Lot of Ocean" on page 528 and Octavio Paz's "Poet's Epitaph" on page 1246 are examples of epitaphs.

EXISTENTIALISM *Existentialism* is a term applied to a kind of philosophical, religious, and artistic thought that emphasizes existence rather than abstract ideas and asserts that human reason is inadequate to explain the meaning of life. Existentialists believe that the universe is indifferent to humans; that things in general exist, but they have no meaning for humans except that meaning which humans create by acting on them. Feodor Dostoevsky, Franz Kafka, and Albert Camus are a few of the writers who utilized existentialist thought in their work.

FABLE A *fable* is a brief story, usually with animal characters, that teaches a lesson, or moral. The earliest extant fables are those attributed to Aesop, a Greek writer of the sixth century B.C. Jean de La Fontaine continued this tradition with the fables he wrote during the Age of Rationalism (see pages 836–840). In the twentieth century, James Thurber of the United States wrote fables that reflect modern times.
See *Allegory*, *Legend*, and *Parable.*

FANTASY *Fantasy* is highly imaginative writing that contains elements not found in real life. In literature of the *fantastic,* fantasy and reality are combined to challenge, puzzle, discomfort, and entertain readers. See Julio Cortázar's "House Taken Over" on page 1238.

FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE *Figurative language* is writing or speech not meant to be interpreted literally. Poets and other writers use figurative language to create vivid word pictures, to make their writing emotionally intense and concentrated, and to state their ideas in new and unusual ways that satisfy readers' imaginations.

FLASHBACK A *flashback* is a section of a literary work that interrupts the sequence of events to relate an event from an earlier time. The writer may present the flashback as a character's memory or recollection, as part of an account or story told by a character, or as a dream or daydream. For example, in Luigi Pirandello's "A Breath of Air" on page 1134, the grandfather thinks back to various events in his life. Writers use flashbacks to show what motivates a character and to supply background information in a dramatic way.
See *Foreshadowing.*

FOLK TALE A *folk tale* is a story composed orally and then passed from person to person by

word of mouth. "The Fisherman and the Jinnee," from *The Thousand and One Nights*, on page 128, is a folk tale.

FORESHADOWING *Foreshadowing* is the use, in a literary work, of clues that suggest events that have yet to occur. Writers use foreshadowing to create suspense or to prepare the audience for the eventual outcome of events.

FREE VERSE *Free verse* is poetry not written in a regular rhythmical pattern, or meter. Instead of having metrical feet and lines, free verse has a rhythm that suits its meaning and that uses the sounds of spoken language in lines of different lengths. Free verse has been widely used in twentieth-century poetry. An example is this stanza from Nguyen Thi Vinh's "Thoughts of Hanoi":

> Brother, we are men,
> conscious of more
> than material needs.
> How can this happen to us
> my friend
> my foe?

HAIKU *Haiku* is a three-line Japanese verse form. The first and third lines of a haiku have five syllables. The second line has seven syllables. The brief form is designed to arouse a specific emotion or suggest an insight about life.

HERO/HEROINE A *hero* or *heroine* is a character whose actions are inspiring or noble. Often heroes struggle to overcome foes or to escape from difficulties. The most obvious examples of heroes and heroines are the larger-than-life characters in myths and legends, such as Achilleus from the *Iliad* and Roland from the *Song of Roland*. However, more ordinary characters can, and often do, perform heroic deeds.

HYPERBOLE A *hyperbole* is a deliberate exaggeration or overstatement. In "Ode to My Socks," Pablo Neruda uses this figure of speech:

> two socks as soft
> as rabbits.
> I slipped my feet
> into them
> as though into
> two
> cases
> knitted
> with threads of
> twilight
> and goatskin.

Hyperbole may be used for heightened seriousness or for comic effect.
See *Figurative Language.*

IMAGERY *Imagery* is the descriptive language used in literature to re-create sensory experiences. The following lines from Boris Pasternak's "The Weeping Garden" show how a poet can use imagery to appeal to several senses:

> Silence. Not a leaf stirs.
> No sign of light; only pathetic sobs
> And scraping of slippers and sighing
> And tears in the pauses.

These lines describe the sights and sounds of a garden in the evening after a storm. Imagery can enrich writing by making it more vivid, by setting a tone, by suggesting emotions, and by guiding a reader's reactions.

IRONY *Irony* is the general name given to literary techniques that involve surprising, interesting, or amusing contradictions. In *verbal irony*, words are used to suggest the opposite of their usual meaning. In *dramatic irony*, there is a contradiction between what a character thinks and what the reader or audience knows to be true. In *irony of situation*, an event occurs that directly contradicts the expectations of the characters, the reader, or the audience.

LEGEND A *legend* is a widely told story about the past, one that may or may not have a foundation in fact. A legend often reflects a people's identity or cultural values, generally with more historical truth and less emphasis on the supernatural than in a myth. *The Epic of Gilgamesh* from Sumeria and the *Shah-nama* from Persia are both based in part on legends. In Europe, the well-known legend of German Johann Faust has inspired novels and plays.
See *Fable.*

LYRIC POEM A *lyric poem* is a poem that expresses the observations and feelings of a single speaker. Unlike a narrative poem, it presents an experience or a single effect, but it does not tell a full story. Early Greeks defined a lyric poem as that which was expressed by a single speaker accompanied by a lyre. The poems of Archilochus, Callinus, Sappho, and Pindar are lyric. Although they are no longer designed to be sung to the accompaniment of a lyre, lyric poems retain a melodic quality due to the rhythmic patterns of rhymed or unrhymed verse. Modern forms of lyrics include the elegy, the ode, and the sonnet. Nearly all poets use the lyric form in some of their work.

METAPHOR A *metaphor* is a figure of speech in which one thing is spoken of as though it were something else, as in "death, that long sleep." Through this identification of dissimilar things, a comparison is suggested or implied. Octavio Paz used the following metaphor in his poem "Fable": "Insects were living jewels." The metaphor suggests the similarities between insects and precious stones.

An *extended metaphor* is one that is developed at length and that involves several points of comparison. For example, Yehuda Amichai uses extended metaphor in "The Diameter of the Bomb," on page 1342.

A *mixed metaphor* occurs when two metaphors are jumbled together. For example, thorns and rain are illogically mixed in "The thorns of life rained down on him."

A *dead metaphor* is one that has been so overused that its original metaphorical impact has been lost. Examples of dead metaphors include "the foot of the bed" and "toe the line."
See *Figurative Language.*

METER The *meter* of a poem is its rhythmical pattern. This pattern is determined by the number and types of stresses, or beats, in each line. To describe the meter of a poem, you must scan its lines. *Scanning* involves marking the strongly stressed and weakly stressed syllables, as follows:

I ween | that, when | the grave's | dark wall
Did first | her form | retain,
They thought | their hearts | could ne'er | recall
The light | of joy | again.
—Emily Brontë, "Song"

As you can see, each strong stress is marked with a slanted line (´) and each weak stress is marked with a horseshoe symbol (˘). The weak and strong stresses are then divided by vertical lines into groups called *feet.* The following types of feet are common in English poetry:

1. *Iamb*: a foot with one weak stress followed by one strong stress, as in the word "afraid"
2. *Trochee*: a foot with one strong stress followed by one weak stress, as in the word "heather"
3. *Anapest*: a foot with two weak stresses followed by one strong stress, as in the word "disembark"
4. *Dactyl*: a foot with one strong stress followed by two weak stresses, as in the word "solitude"
5. *Spondee*: a foot with two strong stresses, as in the word "workday"
6. *Pyrrhic*: a foot with two weak stresses, as in the last foot of the word "unspeakably"
7. *Amphibrach*: a foot with a weak syllable, one strong syllable, and another weak syllable, as in the word "another"
8. *Amphimacer*: a foot with a strong syllable, one weak syllable, and another strong syllable, as in "up and down"

A line of poetry is described as *iambic*, *trochaic*, *anapestic*, or *dactylic* according to what kind of foot appears most often in the line.

Lines are also described in terms of the number of feet that occur in them, as follows:

1. *Monometer:* verse written in one-foot lines
2. *Dimeter:* verse written in two-foot lines
3. *Trimeter:* verse written in three-foot lines
4. *Tetrameter:* verse written in four-foot lines
5. *Pentameter:* verse written in five-foot lines
6. *Hexameter:* verse written in six-foot lines
7. *Heptameter:* verse written in seven-foot lines

A complete description of the meter of a line tells both how many feet there are in the line

and what kind of foot is most common. Thus the stanza from Emily Brontë's poem, quoted at the beginning of this entry, would be described as being made up of alternating iambic tetrameter and iambic trimeter lines. Poetry that does not have a regular meter is called *free verse.*

MODERNISM *Modernism* was a broad and diverse movement that encompassed a vast number of smaller literary movements. It is perhaps best defined by the characteristics commonly found in modernist writings. Modernists shared the desire to break with past literary traditions in order to create new and different literature. They therefore rejected many traditional values and assumptions and strove to capture the reality of the modern world in both the form and the content of their work. They sought to do this through experimentation with language, form, and symbol.

MOOD *Mood,* or atmosphere, is the feeling created in the reader by a literary work or passage. The mood may be suggested by the writer's choice of words, by events in the work, or by the physical setting. Julio Cortázar's "House Taken Over," on page 1238, begins with a description of the narrator's life that sets a mood of comfort and routine. He later introduces an element of unknown danger that contrasts with and finally overcomes the pleasant mood at the beginning.

MOTIVATION A *motivation* is a reason that explains or partially explains a character's thoughts, feelings, actions, or speech. Characters may be motivated by their physical needs; by their wants, wishes, desires, or dreams; or by their beliefs, values, and ideals. Effective characterization involves creating motivations that make characters seem believable.
See *Character.*

NARRATIVE POEM A *narrative poem* tells a story in verse. The *Shah-nama*, the *Iliad*, the *Aeneid*, the *Song of Roland* are some of the epic narrative poems in this book. Poets who have written narrative poems include Alexander Pushkin, Victor Hugo, and Wole Soyinka.

ODE An *ode* is a long, formal lyric poem with a serious theme. It may or may not have a traditional structure consisting of three alternating stanza patterns called the *strophe*, *antistrophe*, and *epode.* An ode may be written for a private occasion or for a public ceremony. Odes often honor people, commemorate events, respond to natural scenes, or consider serious human problems. Wordsworth's "Ode: Intimations of Immortality . . ." and Neruda's "Ode to My Socks" are examples of odes.
See *Lyric Poem.*

ONOMATOPOEIA *Onomatopoeia* is the use of words that imitate sounds. Examples of such words are *buzz*, *hiss*, *murmur*, and *rustle.* For example, in the line ". . . to hear/Rasps in the field," from Wole Soyinka's "Season," on page 1362, *rasps* is onomatopoeic. Onomatopoeia is used to create musical effects and to reinforce meaning or tone, especially in poetry.

OXYMORON *Oxymoron* is a figure of speech that fuses two contradictory or opposing ideas. An oxymoron, such as "freezing fire" or "happy grief," thus suggests a paradox in just a few words. In Book 1 of *Paradise Lost*, Milton uses the oxymoron "darkness visible" to describe the pit into which Satan and the other rebellious angels have been thrown.
See *Figurative Language* and *Paradox.*

PARABLE A *parable* is a brief story that allegorically answers a question or expresses a moral or truth. A parable is a simple and brief form of allegory, usually focusing on one or two characters and one specific action. Often, as in the case of the Bible, parables are used as a means of religious instruction. Tolstoy's "How Much Land Does a Man Need?," on page 944, echoes the biblical parable Luke 12:16–20.
See *Allegory* and *Fable.*

PARADOX A *paradox* is a statement that seems to be contradictory but that actually presents the truth. Wole Soyinka's "Season" presents this paradox, "Rust is ripeness, rust/And the wilted corn-plume . . ." Because rust is often associated with decay, the statement seems contradictory. However, in the context of the color of

harvested crops, the statement makes sense.

Because a paradox is surprising or even shocking, it draws the reader's attention to what is being said.

See *Figurative Language* and *Oxymoron.*

PARALLELISM *Parallelism* is the repetition of a grammatical pattern. Parallelism is used in this stanza from Rubén Darío's "Sonatina" (translated by John A. Crow):

> She no longer wants the gold distaff or palace,
> The magical falcon, the jester's red challis,
> The swans' classic grace on the azure lagoon.
> The flowers are all sad for the yearning king's daughter,
> The lotus has withered with roots in the water,
> To all the four corners dead roses are strewn.

Parallelism is used in poetry and in other writing to emphasize and to link related ideas.

PARODY A *parody* is a humorous, mocking imitation of a literary work. Stanislaw Lem's "The First Sally (A) OR Trurl's Electronic Bard" parodies, among other works, Marlowe's "The Passionate Shepherd to His Love" and the opening lines of Virgil's *Aeneid.*

PERSONA *Persona* means, literally, "a mask." A persona is a fictional self created by an author—a self through whom the narrative of a poem or story is told. In "I Am Goya," on page 1325, Voznesensky adopts the persona of the famous artist Goya.

See *Speaker.*

PERSONIFICATION *Personification* is a type of figurative language in which a nonhuman subject is given human characteristics. Pak Tu-jin used personification in these lines from "August River":

> The August river claps its hands,
> The August river writhes,
> The August river agonizes,
> The river hides its brilliance.

Effective personification of things or ideas makes them seem vital and alive, as if they were human.

See *Figurative Language* and *Metaphor.*

PLOT *Plot* is the sequence of events in a literary work. The two primary elements of any plot are the characters and a conflict. Most plots can be analyzed by dividing them into most or all of the following parts:

1. The *exposition* introduces the setting, the characters, and the basic situation.
2. The *inciting incident* introduces the central conflict.
3. During the *development*, the conflict runs its course and usually intensifies.
4. At the *climax*, the conflict reaches a high point of interest or suspense.
5. At the *resolution*, the conflict is ended.
6. The *denouement* ties up loose ends that remain after the resolution of the conflict.

There are many variations on the standard plot structure. Some stories begin *in medias res* ("in the middle of things"), after the inciting incident has already occurred. In some stories the expository material appears toward the middle, in flashbacks. In many stories there is no denouement. Occasionally, though not often, the conflict is left unresolved.

POINT OF VIEW *Point of view* is the perspective, or vantage point, from which a story is told. If a character within the story tells the story, then it is told from the *first-person* point of view. If a voice from outside the story tells it, then the story is told from the *third-person* point of view. If the knowledge of the storyteller is limited to the internal states of one character, then the storyteller has a *limited* point of view. If the storyteller's knowledge extends to the internal states of all of the characters, then the storyteller has an *omniscient* point of view. The point of view from which a story is told determines what view of events will be presented.

PROTAGONIST The *protagonist* is the main character in a literary work. In R. K. Narayan's "An Astrologer's Day," on page 1410, the protagonist is the astrologer.

See *Antagonist* and *Character.*

PSALM A *psalm* is a song or hymn of praise, especially one included in the Book of Psalms in the Bible. See Psalms 8, 19, 23, and 137 beginning on page 67.

REALISM *Realism* is the presentation in art of the details of actual life. Another term for Realism, one that derives from Aristotle's *Poetics*, is *mimesis*, the Greek word for "imitation." Realism arose in the nineteenth century, in part as a reaction to Romanticism. Toward the end of the nineteenth and the first part of the twentieth centuries, Realism enjoyed considerable popularity in France, England, and America. Nowhere, perhaps, was Realism more evident than in the novel. Novels often dealt with grim social realities and often presented realistic portrayals of the psychological states of characters. Realism also had considerable influence on theater in the early Modern Era. During the first part of this century, for example, the most common sort of stage setting was that in which a room was presented as though one wall had been removed and the audience were peering inside.
See *Romanticism.*

RHYME *Rhyme* is the repetition of sounds at the ends of words. *End rhyme* occurs when the rhyming words are repeated at the ends of lines of poetry. *Internal rhyme* occurs when the rhyming words fall within a line. *Exact rhyme* is the use of identical rhyming sounds, as in *love* and *dove. Approximate* or *slant rhyme* is the use of sounds that are similar but not identical, as in *prove* and *glove.*

RHYME SCHEME A *rhyme scheme* is a regular pattern of rhyming words in a poem or stanza. To indicate a rhyme scheme, one assigns each final sound in the poem or stanza a different letter. Consider, for example, how the following lines from Elizur Wright's translation of La Fontaine's "The Wolf and the Lamb" have been marked:

A lamb her thirst was slaking	*a*
Once at a mountain rill.	*b*
A hungry wolf was taking	*a*
His hunt for sheep to kill,	*b*
When spying on the streamlet's brink	*c*
This sheep of tender age,	*d*
He howled in tones of rage,	*d*
How dare you roil my drink?	*c*

The rhyme scheme of these lines is *ababcddc.*

ROMANTICISM *Romanticism* was a literary and artistic movement of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The Romantics emphasized imagination, fancy, freedom, emotion, wildness, the beauty of the untamed natural world, the rights of the individual, the nobility of the common man, and the attractiveness of pastoral life. Important figures in the Romantic movement included William Wordsworth, Victor Hugo, and Heinrich Heine.
See *Realism.*

SATIRE *Satire* is writing that ridicules or holds up to contempt the faults of individuals or of groups. A satirist may use a sympathetic tone or an angry, bitter tone. Some satire, like Jonathan Swift's "A Modest Proposal" (page 801), is written in prose. Other satire is written in poetry. Although satire is often humorous, its purpose is not simply to make readers laugh but also to correct, through laughter, the flaws and shortcomings that it points out.

SCANSION *Scansion* is the process of analyzing the metrical pattern of a poem.
See *Meter.*

SETTING The *setting* of a literary work is the time and place of the action. A setting can serve many different purposes. It can provide a backdrop for the action. It can be the force that the protagonist struggles against and thus the source of the central conflict. It can also be used to create a mood, or atmosphere. In many works the setting symbolizes some point that the author wishes to emphasize. In Yevgeny Yevtushenko's "Weddings," on page 1329, the setting itself is conflicting—while the place of the setting is a wedding, the time is during war. This conflict in the setting is the cause of the conflicting feelings of the characters. The first lines of the poem sum up the conflicting feelings caused by this setting:

Those weddings in wartime! The deceiving
comfort!
The dishonesty of words about living.

See *Mood* and *Symbol.*

SIMILE A *simile* is a figure of speech that compares two dissimilar things by using a key word such as *like* or *as*. There are many similes used in the *Iliad*, such as the following:

But swift Achilleus kept unremittingly after
Hektor,
chasing him, as a dog in the mountains who
has flushed from his covert
a deer's fawn follows him through the fold-
ing ways and the valleys,

By comparing dissimilar things, the writer of a simile shocks the reader into appreciation of the qualities of the things being compared. Thus a simile makes a description more vivid and memorable.

SONNET A *sonnet* is a fourteen-line lyric poem focusing on a single theme. Sonnets have many variations but are usually written in iambic pentameter, following one of two traditional patterns.

The *Petrarchan* or *Italian sonnet* is divided into two parts, the eight-line octave and the six-line sestet. The octave rhymes *abba abba*, while the sestet generally rhymes *cde cde* or uses some combination of *cd* rhymes. The two parts of the Petrarchan sonnet work together. The octave raises a question, states a problem, or presents a brief narrative, and the sestet answers the question, solves the problem, or comments on the narrative.

The *Shakespearean* or *English sonnet* has three four-line quatrains plus a concluding two-line couplet. The rhyme scheme of such a sonnet is usually *abab cdcd efef gg*. Each of the three quatrains usually explores a different variation of the main theme. Then the couplet presents a summarizing or concluding statement.
See *Lyric Poem.*

SPEAKER The *speaker* is the imaginary voice assumed by the writer of a poem. In other words, the speaker is the character who tells the poem. This character often is not identified by name. The speaker of Wole Soyinka's "Civilian and Soldier" identifies him or herself in the first stanza:

My apparition rose from the fall of lead,
Declared, "I'm a civilian." It only served
To aggravate your fright. For how could I
Have risen, a being of this world, in that
hour
Of impartial death! And I thought also: nor is
Your quarrel of this world.

Recognizing the speaker and thinking about his or her characteristics are often central to interpreting a lyric poem.
See *Persona* and *Point of View.*

STANZA A *stanza* is a group of lines in a poem considered as a unit. Many poems are divided into stanzas that are separated by spaces. Stanzas often function like paragraphs in prose. Each stanza states and develops a single main idea.

Stanzas are commonly named according to the number of lines found in them, as follows:
1. *Couplet:* a two-line stanza
2. *Tercet:* a three-line stanza
3. *Quatrain:* a four-line stanza
4. *Cinquain:* a five-line stanza
5. *Sestet:* a six-line stanza
6. *Heptastich:* a seven-line stanza
7. *Octave:* an eight-line stanza

See *Sonnet.*

STYLE A writer's *style* is his or her typical way of writing. Determinants of a writer's style include his or her formality, use of figurative language, use of rhythm, typical grammatical patterns, typical sentence lengths, and typical methods of organization. John Milton is noted for a grand heroic style while the style of Stanislaw Lem is playful. Yehuda Amichai's colloquial style is an innovation in Hebrew literature and Jorge Luis Borges is noted for a highly allusive style.

SURREALISM *Surrealism* is a movement in art and literature that emphasizes the irrational side of human nature. It focuses on the imaginary world of dreams and the unconscious mind.

Originating in France following World War I, Surrealism was a protest against the so-called rationalism that led the world into a destructive war. Outside of France, Surrealism influenced Latin American poets such as Pablo Neruda, whose "Ode to My Socks" appears on page 1250.

SUSPENSE *Suspense* is a feeling of growing curiosity or anxious uncertainty about the outcome of events in a literary work. Writers create suspense by raising questions in the minds of their readers.
See *Foreshadowing.*

SYMBOL A *symbol* is anything that stands for or represents something else. Thus a flag is a symbol of a country, a group of letters can symbolize a spoken word, a fine car can symbolize wealth, and so on. In literary criticism a distinction is often made between *traditional* or *conventional symbols*—symbols that are part of a general cultural inheritance—and *personal symbols* —symbols that are created by particular authors for use in particular works. For example, the river, the cliff, and other images from nature in Pak Tu-jin's "High Mountain Plant," on page 1426, are conventional symbols inherited from Buddhist and Confucian philosophies. However, the overcoat in Gogol's "The Overcoat," on page 922, is a personal symbol. Gogol created this symbol of a new identity specifically for this story.

SYMBOLISM *Symbolism* was a literary movement of nineteenth-century France. The Symbolist writers reacted against Realism and stressed, instead, the importance of suggestion and evocation of emotional states, especially by means of symbols corresponding to these states. The Symbolists were also quite concerned with using sound to achieve emotional effects. Important Symbolist writers included Arthur Rimbaud, Stéphane Mallarmé, and Paul Verlaine. Many twentieth-century writers around the world were influenced by the Symbolist movement.

TANKA *Tanka* is a form of Japanese poetry consisting of five lines of five, seven, five, seven, and seven syllables. Tanka is the most prevalent verse form in traditional Japanese literature. Tanka often tell a brief story or express a single feeling or thought.

THEME The *theme* is a central idea, concern, or purpose in a literary work. In an essay the theme might be directly stated in what is known as a thesis statement. In a serious literary work, the theme is usually expressed indirectly rather than directly. A light work, one written strictly for entertainment, may not have a theme.

TONE The *tone* of a literary work is the writer's attitude toward the readers and toward the subject. A writer's tone may be formal or informal, friendly or distant, personal or pompous. For example, Jonathan Swift's tone in his "A Modest Proposal," on page 801, is satirical, while Gabriela Mistral's poem "Fear," on page 1170, has a fearful tone.
See *Mood.*

TRAGEDY *Tragedy* is a type of drama or literature that shows the downfall or destruction of a noble or outstanding person, traditionally one who possesses a character weakness called a tragic flaw. The *tragic hero,* through choice or circumstance, is caught up in a sequence of events that inevitably results in disaster. Because the protagonist is neither a wicked villain nor an innocent victim, the audience reacts with mixed emotions—both pity and fear. The outcome of a tragedy, in which the protagonist is isolated from society, contrasts with the happy resolution of a comedy, in which the protagonist makes peace with society. Sophocles' *Oedipus the King,* on page 433, is a Greek tragedy.
See *Drama.*

UNDERSTATEMENT *Understatement* is the literary technique of saying less than is actually meant, generally in an ironic way. An example of understatement is the description of a flooded area as "slightly soggy."
See *Figurative Language.*