

**A.P. English**  
**Audino**

**LITERARY TERMS**

**alliteration** is the repetition of consonants, especially at the beginning of words or of stressed syllables.

**anapestic foot** is two unstressed syllables followed by a stressed syllable: in-ter-rúpt.

**consonance** is the repetition of a pattern of consonants, with the changes in the intervening vowels: live-love, hill-hall, lean-alone.

**assonance** is the repetition of identical or related vowel sounds, especially in stressed syllables. Ex. recurrent *a* and *u* sounds in Coleridge's poem: "In Xanadu did Kubla Khan A stately pleasure dome decree;" or "I rose and told him of my woe".

**allusion** in poetry is a brief reference to a person, place, or event assumed to be well known by the reader.

**blank verse** is unrhymed iambic pentameter verse. It comes the closest to the natural rhythms of English speech and is used for passages of passion and grandeur. Ex. Milton's *Paradise Lost*; Wordsworth's *Prelude* and *Tintern Abbey*.

**connotation** consists of the associated meanings of a word that it implies or suggests.

**denotation** of a word is the thing or situation the word specifically refers to.

**dactylic foot** is a stressed syllable followed by two unstressed syllables: ó-pén-ly.

**diction** refers to the selection of words, the 'vocabulary' used in a work of literature. The arrangement of these words into sentences and larger units constitutes a style. The diction of a work, in verse or prose, can be analyzed under such categories as the degree to which the words are abstract or concrete, Latinate or Anglo-Saxon, colloquial or formal, technical or common, literal or figurative, and according to the precision of denotation and the richness of connotation.

**Epic or heroic poem** is a long narrative poem on a serious subject related in an elevated style and centered about an heroic figure on whose actions depend to some degree the fate of a nation or a race.

**iambic foot** is an unstressed syllable followed by a stressed syllable: re-cáll.

**irony** is a contrast or discrepancy between what is said and what is meant or between what happens and what is expected to happen. In **verbal irony** a word or phrase is used to suggest the opposite of its 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, of the reader, or of the audience.

**hyperbole** is an extravagant exaggeration of fact, used either for serious or comic effect: "Her eyes opened wide as saucers." Andrew Marvell used a description in a poem "To His Coy Mistress" of his "vegetable love"; Ben Jonson compliments his lady in "Drink to me only with thine eyes."

**metaphor** is a figure of speech in which one thing is spoken of as though it were something else, a comparison of two unlike things: "death is a long sleep" or "the sleeping dead" or "My love is a red, red rose."

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

**onomatopoeia** is the use of words whose sounds seem to resemble the sounds they describe: "hiss" "buzz" "rustle" "bang".

Tennyson exploited the device in his poetry: "The moan of doves in immemorial elms, / And murmur of innumerable bees, . . ."

**sonnet** is the name for a lyric stanza form consisting of fourteen lines and written in an elaborate rhyme scheme which, in English, usually follows one of two patterns. The Petrarchan sonnet, named after the Italian writer, Petrarch (1304-1374) is divided into octave (8 lines) and sestet (6 lines) by the rhyme scheme: abbaabba cdecde. The sestet is variable, sometimes containing only two instead of three rhymes, and with the rhymes in differing arrangements. English experimenters in the sixteenth century also developed a new form of the sonnet, called the English or Shakespearean sonnet, in which the rhyme scheme falls into three quatrains (4-line units) and a concluding couplet: abab cdcd efef gg.

**spondaic foot** is two successive stressed syllables: heart-break. This foot occurs only occasionally in English, as a variant rather than a standard metric unit.

**stanza** is a division in the formal pattern of a poem. Usually the stanzas of a given poem are uniform in the number and length of the component lines and in the rhyme scheme. The couplet is a pair of rhymed lines. The tercet is a three-line stanza, usually with a single rhyme. Terza rima is composed of tercets which are not separate stanzas, because each is joined to the one preceding and the one following by a common rhyme: aba, bcb, cdc, ded, and so on.

Examples include Shelley's "Ode to the West Wind" and Browning's "The Statue and the Bust." The quatrain or four-line stanza is the most common in English poetry. Ottava rima is an eight-line stanza: a b a b a b c c. (See Byron's "Don Juan") A longer stanza is the Spenserian, devised by Edmund Spenser for "The Fairie Queene, nine lines, the first eight iambic pentameter and the last iambic hexameter, or an Alexandrine. The rhyme scheme is a b a b b c b c c.

**syntax** is the grammatical order of words in a sentence or line of verse or dialogue; how words are arranged relative to each other.

**tone** refers to a passage which might be characterized as formal or intimate, solemn or playful, serious or ironic, condescending or obsequious.

**trochaic foot** is a stressed syllable followed by an unstressed syllable: ol-der.

Trochaic always dropping

Iambic must go up

Dactyls go galloping, galloping, galloping

Anapestic cannot stop, cannot stop, cannot stop

Former editions of this teacher's guide have not included a list of required literary terms and neither does this one. Despite the danger that teachers will misuse or misunderstand it, this teacher's guide does include a list of terms that have appeared on former exams. The worst that can happen is the list will become fodder for the most mind-numbing of futile drills. Prudent teachers will know, however, that the terms are useful only if they are considered tools for fostering understanding and discussion, both oral and written. Terms unconnected to the development of understanding and appreciation are without value for anyone. No essay is more painful to read than the one that is filled with terms the student has used willy-nilly, throwing them in as if their appearance on the page is sufficient proof of knowledge. It is far better for students to know essential terms well rather than *autotelic* and *zeugma* superficially.

The following list is not meant to be exhaustive. Nonetheless, it does list terms that have been commonly used over the years in the multiple-choice and free-response sections of the AP Exam. Categorical terms, such as *elements of style*, *rhetorical devices*, and *resources of languages*, which are often used on the exam, are not included because they frequently overlap. The concern is less with the category than with students being able to apply the terms accurately to specific works instead of merely parroting them. The terms are listed once, though obviously many could belong to more than one category.

## Literary Terms

### Drama

Many of the following terms are applicable to both drama and fiction.

act	comic relief	monologue
antagonist	conflict	prologue
aside	crisis	protagonist
catastrophe	denouement	rising action
catharsis	deus ex machina	scene
character	epilogue	soliloquy
dynamic	exposition	tragedy
flat	falling action	tragic flaw
round	farce	villain
static	foil	
stock	hamartia	
climax	hero	
comedy	hubris	

### Elements of Style

atmosphere  
colloquial  
connotation  
denotation  
dialect  
dialogue  
diction  
epigram  
invective  
inversion  
irony  
    dramatic  
    situation  
    verbal  
mood  
paradox  
proverb  
pun  
sarcasm  
satire  
slang  
tone  
voice

### Fiction

anecdote  
anticlimax  
character  
flashback  
incident  
motivation  
narrative voice  
point of view  
    first person  
    objective  
    omniscient  
    limited  
    third person  
    unlimited  
stream-of-consciousness  
subplot  
theme

### Figures of Speech

allusion  
apostrophe  
euphemism  
hyperbole  
litotes  
metaphor  
onomatopoeia  
personification  
simile  
symbol  
synecdoche  
understatement

### Form

allegory  
anecdote  
diary  
discourse  
    argumentation  
    description  
    exposition  
    narration  
essay  
    formal  
    humorous  
    informal  
fable  
genre  
novel  
novella  
parable  
prose  
verse

  
**Poetry**

alliteration  
assonance  
blank verse  
cacophony  
cadence  
caesura  
conceit  
connotation  
consonance  
controlling image  
couplet  
dirge  
dissonance  
dramatic monologue  
elegy  
end-stopped line  
enjambment  
epic

image  
imagery  
in medias res  
lyric  
measure  
meter  
octave  
ode  
pentameter  
persona  
quatrain  
refrain  
repetition  
rhyme  
end  
external  
feminine  
internal

sonnet  
English  
Italian  
stanza  
stress  
trochee  
volta

**Syntax**

antithesis  
balanced sentence  
coherence  
complex sentence  
compound-complex  
ellipsis  
inverted sentence  
loose sentence

Good Duke stuff!

Terms drawn from AP English scoring guides.

style	organization
diction	imagery
syntax	allusion
repetition	consistent control
language devices	rhetorical devices
point of view	stylistic maturity
sentence structure	contrast
writer's attitude toward X	changes in attitude
complex attitude	narrative elements
defend, challenge, or qualify	observation, experience, reading
tone	metaphor
simile	rhyme
ambiguity	complexity
irony	paradox
time shifts	dialogue
interior monologue	dramatic monologue
authorial persona	unifying image
rhetorical question	naturalistic detail
emotive imagery	acknowledging both sides of an argument
denotation and connotation	thematic contrasts
connection between theme and style	connection between plot and meaning
figurative language	direct statement
understatement	

Other terms drawn from multiple choice questions.

parallel construction or syntax  
extended definition  
concessions to opposing viewpoints  
cause and effect relationship  
syllogism  
appeals to authority  
*ad hominem* argument  
satire  
personification  
euphemism  
onomatopoeia  
apostrophe  
antithesis