

Glossary of Rhetorical and Literary Terms

[AP Language and Composition]

1. **Ad hominem:** directed against an opponent's personal character rather than the position they are maintaining (From the Latin meaning *to the man*)
2. **Allegory:** an extended narrative in prose or verse in which characters, events, and settings represent abstract qualities and in which the writer intends a second meaning to be read beneath the surface story; the underlying meaning may be moral, religious, political, social, or satiric
3. **Alliteration:** the repetition of initial sounds in successive or neighboring words (Ex. "while I nodded, nearly napping")
4. **Allusion:** a reference to something literary, mythological, or historical
5. **Anaphora:** a rhetorical device of repeating the same word or words at the start of two or more lines of poetry or successive phrases or sentences in prose
6. **Antithesis:** a rhetorical device contrasting words, clauses, sentences, or ideas, balancing one against the other in strong opposition. The contrast is reinforced by the similar grammatical structure
7. **Appeal to authority:** an argument made in which truth is attributed to a statement based on the authority of the speaker or the authority of someone supporting the statement
8. **Appeal to Ignorance:** an argument made in which an assumption of a conclusion is based primarily on lack of evidence to the contrary (*X is true because you cannot prove that X is false // X is false because you cannot prove that X is true*)
9. **Aphorism:** a concise statement which expresses succinctly a general truth or idea often using rhyme or balance
10. **Apostrophe:** a rhetorical device in which an absent or imaginary person or an abstraction is directly addressed as though present (Ex. "Death, be not proud.")
11. **Assonance:** the repetition of vowel sounds between different consonants, such as in *neigh / fade*
12. **Asyndeton:** the omission or absence of conjunctions between a series of related clauses, used for the stylistic purpose of increasing rhythmic speed or emphasis ("*...government of the people, by the people, for the people shall not perish from the Earth.*" – *The Gettysburg Address*)
13. **Blank Verse:** unrhymed iambic pentameter
14. **Caesura:** a pause in a line of poetry created not by the meter, but by the natural speaking rhythm, sometimes coinciding with punctuation
15. **Cacophony:** harsh, awkward, or dissonant sounds used deliberately in poetry or prose; the opposite of euphony
16. **Circular Argument:** an argument in which the proposition is supported by the premises, which is supported by the proposition, thus creating a "circular" fallacy in which no useful information is conveyed (*X is true because of Y // Y is true because of X*)

17. **Chiasmus:** a statement consisting of two parallel parts in which the second part is structurally reversed (Ex. “Out went the taper as she hurried in.”)
18. **Colloquialism:** informal words or expressions not usually acceptable in formal writing
19. **Complaint:** a lyric poem of lament, regret, and sadness which may explain the speaker’s mood, describe its cause, discuss remedies, and appeal for help
20. **Conceit:** an elaborate figure of speech in which two seemingly dissimilar things or situations are compared
21. **Confirmation:** the part of a speech/essay providing logical arguments in support of a position
22. **Connotation:** the implied or associative meaning of a word (as opposed to denotation)
23. **Consonance:** Though the final consonants in several stressed syllables agree, the vowel sounds that precede them are different.
24. **Deduction:** a method of reasoning in which the conclusion follows from several premises (as opposed to induction)
25. **Denotation:** the literal meaning of a word (as opposed to connotation)
26. **Diction:** word choice
27. **Didactic:** intended to teach, particularly in conveying moral instruction as an ulterior motive
28. **Dissonance:** the grating of sounds that are harsh or do not go together
29. **Elegy:** a formal poem focusing on death or mortality, usually beginning with the recent death of a particular person
30. **Ellipsis:** the omission of a word or phrase which is grammatically necessary but can be deduced from the context (Ex. Kathleen wants to be a firefighter; Sara, a nurse.)
31. **End-stopped line:** a line of poetry that ends when the grammatical unit ends. Its opposite is enjambment.
32. **Enjambment:** From the French meaning “a striding over,” this term describes a line of poetry in which the sense and grammatical construction continue on to the next line. In an enjambed line, the lack of completion creates pressure to move rapidly to the closure promised in the next line.
33. **Epigram:** a concise, witty saying in poetry or prose that either stands alone or is part of a larger work; may also refer to a short poem of this type
34. **Epiphora:** a rhetorical device of repeating the same word or phrase at the end of several clauses (almost a reciprocal of anaphora) (“*Sweet Portia,/ If you did know to whom I gave the ring/ If you did know for whom I gave the ring/ And would conceive for what I gave the ring/ And how unwillingly I left the ring/ When nought would be accepted but the ring./ You would abate the strength of your displeasure.*”)
35. **Ethos:** the ethical appeal based on the character, credibility, or reliability of the speaker/writer – persuading the audience that the person making the argument is worth listening to (from the Greek meaning *character*)
36. **Euphemism:** an indirect, less offensive way of saying something that is considered unpleasant (ex. “laid to rest” for “buried”)

37. **Euphony:** a succession of harmonious sounds used in poetry or prose; the opposite of cacophony
38. **Exemplum:** a brief tale used in medieval times used to illustrate a sermon or teach a lesson
39. **Fallacy:** an erroneous argument dependent upon an unsound or illogical contention
40. **False Dilemma:** a fallacy of oversimplification, presenting the audience with a limited number of options (usually two) when more are actually available
41. **Foil:** a character who, by contrast, highlights the characteristics of another character
42. **Free Verse:** poetry that is written without a regular meter, usually without rhyme
43. **Hasty generalization:** a fallacy in which a conclusion is not logically justified given the evidence at hand (meaning insufficient or discernibly biased evidence)
44. **Hyperbole:** deliberate exaggeration in order to create humor or emphasis
45. **Idyll:** a short descriptive narrative, usually a poem, about an idealized country life; also called a pastoral
46. **Induction:** a method of reasoning in which specific instances move towards a generalized conclusion (as opposed to deduction)
47. **Internal Rhyme:** a rhyme occurring within a line of poetry, as in Edgar Allan Poe's "The Raven": While I nodded, nearly *napping*, suddenly there came a *tapping*
48. **Irony:** a situation or statement where the truth is the opposite of appearances
49. **Invective:** Speech or writing that attacks, insults, or denounces a subject, generally in an abusive, injurious manner
50. **Jargon:** the use of specific words and phrases by those in a particular area of study, profession, or trade
51. **Litotes:** a type of understatement in which something affirmative is expressed by negating its opposite (Ex. "The teacher was not overly impressed by the poor test results.")
52. **Logos:** the appeal to reason, relying on logic. Logos often relies on the use of inductive or deductive reasoning (from the Greek meaning *word*)
53. **Lyric:** a type of melodious, imaginative, and subjective poetry that is usually short and personal, expressing the thoughts and feelings of a single speaker rather than telling a story
54. **Metonymy:** a figure of speech that uses the name of an object, person, or idea to represent something with which it is associated, such as using "the crown" to refer to a monarch
55. **Modes of Discourse:** Systems of thoughts composed of different beliefs, practices, ideas, and attitudes, which present a subject in a particular way. The four main modes are exposition, narrative, description, and argument.
56. **Motif:** a standard theme or dramatic situation which recurs in various works
57. **Mood:** the atmosphere that pervades a literary work with the intention of evoking a certain emotion or feeling from the audience.

58. **Non Sequitur**: an inference that does not logically follow from the premise(s)
59. **Ode**: a long lyric poem, usually serious and elevated in tone; often written to praise someone or something
60. **Onomatopoeia**: the formation of a word from the imitation of natural sounds, such as *hiss* and *boom*
61. **Oxymoron**: an expression in which two words that contradict each other are joined (ex. jumbo shrimp)
62. **Parable**: a short tale that teaches a moral; similar to but shorter than an allegory
63. **Paradox**: a statement that seems to contradict itself but that turns out to have a rational meaning, as in this quotation from Henry David Thoreau: "I never found the companion that was so companionable as solitude."
64. **Pastoral**: a poem about idealized rural life, or shepherds, or both; also called an idyll
65. **Pathos**: the appeal to emotion/passion, relying on the manipulation of the audience's sentiments as a means of persuasion (from the Greek meaning *suffering* or *experience*)
66. **Polysyndeton**: the use of many conjunctions to achieve an overwhelming effect
67. **Refutation**: the part of an argument in which the speaker/writer confronts (and, ideally, dismantles) the contradicting point of view
68. **Rhetoric**: the art of effective, persuasive speaking or writing, especially through the use of figurative language and compositional techniques
69. **Stock Character**: a standard character who may be stereotyped, such as the miser or the fool, or universally recognized, like the hard-boiled private eye in detective stories
70. **Syllepsis**: the linking of one word with two other words in two strikingly different ways (Ex. The migrants "exhausted their credit, exhausted their friends.")
71. **Syllogism**: a kind of logical argument using deductive reasoning; two (or more) propositions are asserted to be true, and a conclusion follows. (*All men are mortal / Socrates is a man / Therefore, Socrates is mortal*)
72. **Symbol**: an object which is something in itself yet is used to represent something else
73. **Synechdoche**: the use of one part of an object to represent the entire object, such as using "boards" to mean "a stage" or "wheels" to mean "a car"
74. **Synesthesia**: Describing one kind of sensation in terms of another, e.g., sound as color, color as sound, sound as taste, color as temperature
75. **Syntax**: the arrangement of words within a sentence – includes sentence length and complexity; the variety and pattern of sentence form; inversion of natural word order; unusual juxtaposition; repetition; parallelism; use of active or passive voice; level of discourse
76. **Tautology**: needless repetition which adds no meaning or understanding
(Ex. widow woman; free gift; close proximity)

77. **Tone:** the attitude of a writer, usually implied, toward the subject or audience (may be described with words such as sardonic, apologetic, light-hearted, or somber)
78. **Transition:** words and phrases providing connections between ideas, sentences, and paragraphs, thus increasing flow and presenting the piece as a unified whole
79. **Understatement:** the deliberate representation of something as less in magnitude than it really is
80. **Zeugma:** a figure of speech in which a word, usually a verb or adjective, applies to more than one noun, blending together ideas that are grammatically (and logically) different (*EX: John held the door and his breath.*)