



## Advanced Literary Terms Defined

Following is a list of more advanced literary terms that are used when talking about, thinking about, or writing literature. If you don't find what you are looking for here, check the list of common literary terms, the list of literary genre, or the list of literary movements. The list of terms applies mainly to prose writing.

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### A

**Allegory** - a story in which people, things, and events are symbolic of something else and are used to teach a lesson.

**Alliteration** - repetition of consonant sounds at the beginning of words; it is used to emphasize meaning or to improve flow through rhythm.

**Allusion** - a historical or literary reference to a person, place, thing, or event that the reader is expected to recognize.

**Analogy** - a comparison between two things that share certain similarities; its purpose is usually to explain a more difficult concept by comparing it to something simpler that the reader will recognize easily.

**Aphorism** - a short saying with a moral.

**Apostrophe** - a figure of speech in which an abstract concept or an absent or imaginary person is directly addressed.

### C

**Conceit** - a figure of speech in which two completely unlike things are compared; these comparisons are usually very intellectual in nature.

### E

**Epigram** - a very short but witty statement.

**Epiphany** - a moment of insightfulness when a character realizes some truth (usually about himself/herself).

### F

**Foil** - a character who is used as a contrast to another character in order to emphasize the differences between the two characters.

## **H**

**Hyperbole - a figure of speech in which something is grossly exaggerated for emphasis.**

## **M**

**Metonymy - a figure of speech in which one word is replaced by another word that has a similar meaning.**

## **O**

**Onomatopoeia - a word that closely resembles the sound that the word is supposed to make (e.g. buzz, hiss); used most commonly in poetry, but can effectively emphasize meaning in prose writing as well.**

**Oxymoron - a figure of speech in which two opposing ideas are combined.**

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## **P**

**Paradox - a statement that seems to be contradictory but is actually true.**

**Parody - imitates another literary work using humor usually to make the author and/or the work appear ridiculous.**

**Parallelism - the use of similar sentence structure to express similar or related ideas; words, phrases, sentences, or paragraphs may be organized in a parallel structure.**

**Persona - the voice an author takes on to tell the story in a particular work.**

## **R**

**Repetition - a technique in which words, phrases, or sounds are repeated for emphasis.**

## **S**

**Satire - a technique designed to enact social change by using wit to ridicule ideas, customs or institutions; often uses exaggeration to emphasize certain details for the reader.**

**Synecdoche - a figure of speech in which a part of something represents its whole.**

## **U**

**Understatement - a technique in which less is said than is actually true; the opposite of exaggeration or hyperbole.**

## **V**

**Voice - refers to a writer's use of language, including the use of literary techniques, word choice, and sentence structure, that sets one writer apart from another.**