

Glossary of Terms

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| A Cappella | Choral music without instrumental accompaniment. |
| Abacus | The uppermost member of the capital of an architectural column; the slab on which the architrave rests. |
| Absolute Music | Music that is free from any reference to nonmusical ideas, such as a text or program. |
| Abstract, Abstraction | Nonrepresentational; the essence of a thing rather than its actual appearance. |
| Absurdism | A style dealing with life's apparent meaninglessness and the difficulty or impossibility of human communication. |
| Academy | From the grove (the Academeia) where Plato taught; the term has come to mean the cultural and artistic establishment which exercises responsibility for teaching and the maintenance of standards. |
| Accent | In music, a stress on a note. In the visual arts, any device used to highlight or draw attention to a particular area, such as an accent color. See also <i>focal point</i> . |
| Action Theatre | A contemporary phenomenon in which plays, happenings, and other types of performance are strongly committed to broad moral and social issues with the overt purpose of effecting a change for the better in society. |
| Aerial Perspective | The indication of distance in painting through use of light and color. Also called atmospheric perspective. |
| Aesthetics | A branch of philosophy dealing with the nature of beauty and art and their relation to human experience. |
| Affective | Relating to feelings or emotions, as opposed to facts. See <i>cognitive</i> . |
| Agent Of Change | A person or spirit that produces a significant change in a situation. The witches in Macbeth, for instance, do not commit any outrageous crimes themselves, but we suspect that without them Macbeth would not become a murderous tyrant. |
| Aleatory | Chance or accidental. A term used for twentieth-century music in which the composer deliberately incorporates elements of chance. |
| Allegory | A story illustrating an idea or a moral principle in which objects take on symbolic meanings. In Dante Alighieri's Divine Comedy, Dante, symbolizing humankind, is taken by Virgil the poet on a journey through Hell, Purgatory and Paradise in order to teach him the nature of sin and its punishments, and the way to salvation. |
| Alliteration | Used for poetic effect, a repetition of the initial sounds of several words in a group. The following line from Robert Frost's poem Acquainted with the Night provides us with an example of alliteration: I have stood still and stopped the sound of feet. The repetition of the 's' sound creates a sense of quiet, reinforcing the meaning of the line. |
| Allusion | A reference in one literary work to a character or theme found in another literary work. T. S. Eliot, in The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock alludes (refers) to the biblical figure John the Baptist in the line, Though I have seen my head (grown slightly bald) brought in upon a platter . . . In the New Testament, John the Baptist's head was presented to King Herod on a platter. |
| Altarpiece | A painted or sculpted panel placed above or behind an altar to inspire religious devotion. |
| Ambiguity | A statement which can contain two or more meanings. For example, when the oracle at Delphi told Croesus that if he waged war on Cyrus he would destroy a great empire, Croesus thought the oracle meant his enemy's empire. In fact, the empire Croesus destroyed by going to war was his own. |

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| Ambulatory | A covered passage for walking, found around the apse or choir of a church. |
| Amphitheatre | A building, typically Roman, that is oval or circular in form and encloses a central performance area. |
| Amphora | A two-handled vessel for storing provisions, with an opening large enough to admit a ladle, and usually fitted with a cover. |
| Analogy | The comparison of two things, which are alike in several respects, for the purpose of explaining or clarifying some unfamiliar or difficult idea or object by showing how the idea or object is similar to some familiar one. While simile and analogy often overlap, the simile is generally a more artistic likening, done briefly for effect and emphasis, while analogy serves the more practical purpose of explaining a thought process or a line of reasoning or the abstract in terms of the concrete, and may therefore be more extended: You may abuse a tragedy, though you cannot write one. You may scold a carpenter who has made you a bad table, though you cannot make a table. It is not your trade to make tables. --Samuel Johnson |
| Antagonist | A person or force which opposes the protagonist in a literary work. In Stephen Vincent Benet's The Devil and Daniel Webster, Mr. Scratch is Daniel Webster's antagonist at the trial of Jabez Stone. The cold, in Jack London's To Build a Fire is the antagonist which defeats the man on the trail. The antagonist may not be obvious, in which case you could choose a candidate and discuss why he or she deserves to be thought of as the antagonist. An antagonist may not even be a person - or may be the same person as the main character. (See also Protagonist.) |
| Anthropomorphic | With human characteristics attributed to nonhuman beings, or things. |
| Antiphonal | A responsive style of singing or playing, in which two groups alternate. |
| Apse | A large niche or niche-like space projecting from and expanding the interior space of an architectural form such as a basilica. |
| Arcade | A series of arches side by side. |
| Arch | In architecture, a structural system in which space is spanned by a curved member supported by two legs. |
| Archetype | An original model or type after which other similar things are patterned. |
| Architrave | In post-and-lintel architecture, the lintel or lowest part of the entablature, resting directly on the capitals of the columns. |
| Aria | An elaborate solo song found primarily in operas, oratorios, and cantatas. |
| Art Deco | An individual decorative art style that emerged between World War I and World War II. Its name was coined from the title of a Paris exhibit of 1925, the Exposition Internationale des Arts Décoratifs et Industriels Modernes. Art Deco style is characterized by slender forms, straight lines, and a sleekness expressive of modern technology. |
| Art Nouveau | A style of decoration and architecture first current in the 1890s, characterized by curvilinear floral forms. |
| Art Song | A solo musical composition for voice, usually with piano accompaniment. |
| Articulation | The connection of the parts of an artwork. In music or speech, the production of distinct sounds. |
| Artifact | An object produced or shaped by human workmanship. |

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| Assonance | The repetition of vowel sounds in a literary work, especially in a poem. Edgar Allan Poe's "The Bells" contains numerous examples: Hear the mellow wedding bells . . . and From the molten-golden notes . . . The repetition of the short 'e' and long 'o' sounds denotes a heavier, more serious bell than the bell encountered in the first stanza where the assonance included the 'i' sound in examples such as tinkle, sprinkle, and twinkle. |
| Atonality | The avoidance of tonal centers or keys in musical compositions. |
| Atrium | An open courtyard within or related to a building. |
| Avant-Garde | A term used to designate innovators, the "advanced guard," whose experiments in art challenge established values. |
| Balance | In composition, the equilibrium of opposing or interacting forces. |
| Ballade | A verse form usually consisting of three stanzas of eight or ten lines each, with the same concluding line in each stanza, and a brief final stanza, ending with the same last line as that of the preceding stanzas. In musical composition, either a medieval French song, or a lyrical piano piece from the nineteenth century. |
| Baroque | A seventeenth- and eighteenth-century style of art, architecture, and music that is highly ornamental. |
| Barrel Vault, Tunnel Vault | A series of arches placed back to back to enclose space. |
| Basilica | In Roman times, a term referring to building function, usually a law court; later used by Christians to refer to church buildings and a specific form. |
| Bathos | Writing is bathetic when it strives to be serious (impassioned or elevated) but achieves only a comic effect because it is anti-climactic. "Anticlimax" is synonymous with bombast but can also refer to a bathetic effect which is intentional. In Tom Thumb the Great (1731), Fielding uses anticlimax for the purposes of satire, as when King Arthur observes the signs of love in his daughter: "Your eyes spit fire, your cheeks grow red as beef." Here figurative language that begins with an ennobling (though bombastic) fire metaphor then descends to the mean level of raw steak. |
| Bel Canto | An Italian baroque style of operatic singing characterized by rich tonal lyricism and brilliant display of vocal technique. |
| Binary Form | A musical form consisting of two sections. |
| Biomorphic | Representing life forms as opposed to geometric forms. |
| Blank Verse | Simply put, this is unrhymed verse. More specifically it is unrhymed iambic pentameter verse. Blank verse was the metre favored by Shakespeare. It was first used in the 1530s and '40s by Henry Howard in his translation of Books 2 and 4 of Virgil's Aeneid. It became the chief verse form in Elizabethan verse drama, and was later used by Milton in Paradise Lost and in a wide range of subsequent poems. A poem written in unrhymed iambic pentameter. |
| Bridge | A musical passage of subordinate importance played as a link between two principal themes. |
| Buttress | A support, usually an exterior projection of masonry or wood, for a wall, arch, or vault. |
| Cadence | In music, the specific harmonic arrangement that indicates the closing of a phrase. |
| Canon | A body of principles, rules, standards or norms; a criterion for establishing measure, scale, and proportion. In music, a composition for two or more voices or instruments, where one enters after another in direct imitation of the first. |

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| Cantata | A type of composition developed in the baroque period, for chorus and/or solo voice(s) accompanied by an instrumental ensemble. |
| Cantilever | Part of a beam or structure that projects beyond its support. A beam that is fixed at only one end. |
| Capital | The transition between the top of a column and the lintel. |
| Carpe Diem | A Latin phrase which translated means "Seize (Catch) the day," meaning "Make the most of today." The phrase originated as the title of a poem by the Roman Horace (65-8 B.C.) and caught on as a theme with such English poets as Robert Herrick and Andrew Marvell. Consider these lines from Herrick's To the Virgins, to Make Much of Time: Gather ye rose-buds while ye may, Old Time is still a-flying: And this same flower that smiles today, To-morrow will be dying. |
| Caryatid | A sculpted female figure standing in the place of a column. |
| Catharsis | The cleansing or purification of the emotions through the experience of art, the result of which is spiritual release and renewal. |
| Cella | The principal enclosed room of a temple; the entire body of a temple as opposed to its external parts. |
| Chamber Music | Vocal or instrumental music suitable for performance in small rooms. |
| Character | Character. (1) Any of the persons involved in a story. (2) The distinguishing moral qualities and personal traits of a character. They may perform actions, speak to other characters, be described by the narrator, or be remembered (or even imagined) by other characters. Characters to notice in a story are the story's Narrator, the Main Character or Protagonist, the Antagonist, characters who are Parallel or Foils for each other, and sometimes Minor Characters. Developing (or dynamic) character. A character who during the course of a story undergoes a permanent change in some aspect of his/her personality or outlook. Flat character. A character who has only one outstanding trait or feature, or at the most a few distinguishing marks. Round character. A character who is complex, multi-dimensional, and convincing. Stock character. A stereotyped character: one whose nature is familiar from prototypes in previous fiction. Static character. A character who is the same sort of person at the end of a story as s/he was at the beginning. |
| Characterization | The method a writer uses to reveal the personality of a character in a literary work. Personality may be revealed (1) by what the character says about himself or herself; (2) by what others reveal about the character; and (3) by the character's own actions. |
| Chiaroscuro | Light and shade. In painting, the balance of light and shade across the whole picture. See also <i>modeling</i> . In theatre, the use of light to enhance plasticity of human and scenic form. |
| Chorale | A Protestant hymn, for voices or organ. |
| Chord | Three or more musical tones played at the same time. |
| Choreography | The composition of a dance work; the arrangement of patterns of movement in dance. |
| Citadel | A fortress or a fortified place. |
| City-State | A sovereign state consisting of an independent city and its surrounding territory. |
| Classical | Adhering to traditional standards. May refer to Greek and Roman art in which simplicity, clarity of structure, and appeal to the intellect are fundamental. |
| Clerestory | A row of windows in the upper part of a wall. |
| Cloister | A covered walk with an open colonnade on one side, running along the inside walls of buildings that face a quadrangle. A place devoted to religious seclusion. |

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| Coffer | A recessed panel in a ceiling. |
| Cognitive | Facts and objectivity as opposed to emotions and subjectivity. See <i>affective</i> . |
| Collage | An artwork constructed by pasting together various materials, such as newsprint, to create textures, or by combining two- and three-dimensional media. |
| Colonnade | A row of columns usually spanned or connected by lintels. |
| Colonnette | A small column-like vertical element or narrow, engaged column; colonnettes are usually attached to piers in buildings such as Gothic cathedrals. Colonnettes are decorative features. |
| Color | In visual design, the hue or wavelength of light or pigment. In sound, the characteristic of an individual tone. |
| Column | A cylindrical post or support which often has three distinct parts: base, shaft, and capital. |
| Comedy | A light, amusing style of drama that usually has a happy ending. Comedy tends to emphasize human limitations, rather than dealing with human greatness. A theatre genre of complex qualities involving humor. Comedy may or may not involve laughter and may or may not end "happily"; compare tragedy. |
| Commedia Dell'arte | A type of comedy developed in Italy in the sixteenth century, characterized by improvisation from a plot outline and by the use of stock characters. |
| Composition | The arrangement of line, form, mass, color, and so forth, in a work of art. |
| Compression, Compressive Strength | In architecture, stress that results from two forces moving toward each other. |
| Concerto Grosso | A baroque composition for a small group of solo instruments and a small orchestra. |
| Concerto | A composition for one or more solo instruments, accompanied by an orchestra, typically in three movements. |
| Conjunct Melody | In music, melody comprising neighboring notes in the scale. The opposite of <i>disjunct melody</i> . |
| Connotation And Denotation | The denotation of a word is its dictionary definition. The word 'wall', therefore, denotes an upright structure which encloses something or serves as a boundary. The connotation of a word is its emotional content. In this sense, the word 'wall' can also mean an attitude or actions which prevent becoming emotionally close to a person. In Robert Frost's Mending Wall, two neighbors walk a property line each on his own side of a wall of loose stones. As they walk, they pick up and replace stones that have fallen. Frost thinks it's unnecessary to replace the stones since they have no cows to damage each other's property. The neighbor only says, "Good fences make good neighbors." The wall, in this case, is both a boundary (denotation) and a barrier that prevents Frost and his neighbor from getting to know each other, a force prohibiting involvement (connotation). |
| Consonance | The repetition of consonant sounds with differing vowel sounds in words near each other in a line or lines of poetry. Consider the following example from Theodore Roethke's Night Journey". We rush into a rain That rattles double glass. The repetition of the 'r' sound in 'rush', 'rain', and 'rattles', occurring so close to each other in these two lines, would be considered consonance. |
| Consonance | The feeling of a comfortable relationship between elements of a composition. Consonance may be both physical and cultural in its ramifications. The opposite of <i>dissonance</i> . |

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| Continuo, Basso Continuo | In baroque music, a bass line played on a low melodic instrument, such as a cello, while a keyboard instrument (or other chord-playing instrument) also plays the bass line and adds harmonies. |
| Contrapposto, Counterpoise | In sculpture, the arrangement of body parts so that the weight-bearing leg is apart from the free leg, thereby shifting the hip/shoulder axis. |
| Corinthian | A specific order of Greek architecture employing an elaborate leaf motif in the capital. |
| Cornice | A crowning, projecting, architectural feature. |
| Counterpoint | In music, two or more independent melodies played in opposition to each other at the same time. |
| Couplet | A stanza of two lines, usually rhyming. The following by Andrew Marvell is an example of a rhymed couplet: Had we but world enough and time, This coyness, lady, were no crime. |
| Crisis Or Climax | The moment or event in the Plot in which the conflict is most directly addressed: the main character "wins" or "loses"; the secret is revealed; the ending of the story becomes inevitable, etc. Example: In Cinderella, the climactic moment of the plot occurs when Cinderella fits her foot into the glass slipper, thereby "winning" marriage with the Prince. In many stories, there are several points in the plot which are plausible crises. This is especially true when there are several almost-equal major characters. Try finding the moment which you think is the most important and discussing why it deserves to be thought of as the crisis of the plot. Or you could also try explaining why this particular story seems to have no crisis (if that is how you see it). |
| Crosscutting | In film, alternation between two independent actions that are related thematically or by plot to give the impression of simultaneous occurrence. |
| Crossing | The area in a church where the transept crosses the nave. |
| Cruciform | Arranged or shaped like a cross. |
| Crypt | A vaulted chamber, wholly or partly underground, that usually contains a chapel. Found in a church under the choir. |
| Cubism | A revolutionary art form from the early decades of the twentieth century involving the use of geometric shapes to represent objects and figures. |
| Curvilinear | Formed or characterized by curved line. |
| Cutting Within The Frame | Changing the viewpoint of the camera within a shot by moving from a long or medium shot to a close-up, without cutting the film. |
| Deism | A belief, based solely on reason, that God created the universe and, after setting it in motion, abandoned it, assuming no control over life or natural phenomena and giving no supernatural revelation. |
| Dénouement | The section of a play's structure in which events are brought to a conclusion. |
| Deposition | A painting or sculpture depicting the removal of the body of Christ from the cross. |
| Design | A comprehensive scheme, plan or conception. |
| Diatonic | Referring to the seven tones of a standard major or minor musical scale. |

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| Diction | An author's choice of words. Since words have specific meanings, and since one's choice of words can affect feelings, a writer's choice of words can have great impact in a literary work. The writer, therefore, must choose his words carefully. Discussing his novel <i>A Farewell to Arms</i> during an interview, Ernest Hemingway stated that he had to rewrite the ending thirty-nine times. When asked what the most difficult thing about finishing the novel was, Hemingway answered, "Getting the words right." |
| Diptych | A painting on two hinged panels. |
| Disjunct Melody | In music, melody characterized by skips or jumps. The opposite of <i>conjunction melody</i> . |
| Dissonance | The occurrence of inharmonious elements in music or the other arts. The opposite of <i>consonance</i> . |
| Doric | A Greek order of column having no base and only a simple slab as a capital. |
| Dynamics | The various levels of loudness and softness of sounds. |
| Echinus | In the Doric order, the round, cushion-like element between the top of the shaft and the abacus. |
| Eclecticism | A combination of several differing styles in a single composition. |
| Empirical | Based on experiments, observation, and practical experience, without regard to theory. |
| Engaged Column | A column, often decorative, which is part of and projects from a wall surface. |
| Entablature | The upper portion of a classical architectural order above the column capital. |
| Entasis | The slight convex curving on classical columns to correct the optical illusion of concavity which would result if the sides were left straight. |
| Ephemeral | Transitory, not lasting. |
| Epic | A long narrative poem in heightened style about the deeds and adventures of a hero. |
| Étude | Literally, a study, a lesson. An instrumental composition, intended for the practice or display of some technique. |
| Exposition | The first section of the typical Plot, in which Characters are introduced, the Setting is described, and any necessary background information is given. Example: Every fairy tale begins with expository information: "There once was a king and queen who wanted a child . . ." or "Once upon a time there lived a merchant with one daughter and two stepdaughters . . ." and so forth. The characters are described and sometimes named; their family relationships are specified. Think about how much information the story gives at the beginning. Sometimes there is a lot, and the exposition stretches out; sometimes the story starts in the middle (or, if you want to use an impressive Latin term, <i>in medias res</i>) and the expository information is tucked in unobtrusively as people talk to each other or inside the narrator's descriptions. What does this author do with the exposition and why did he or she make that choice? The introductory material or opening section of a play or a musical composition. |
| Expressionism | A style of painting that seeks to express the artist's emotions rather than accurately represent line or form. |
| Façade | The front of a building, or the sides, if they are emphasized architecturally. |

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| Falling Action | The part of the Plot after the Climax, containing events caused by the climax and contributing to the Resolution. Example: In most fairy tales, there is not much falling action: "So they were married and lived happily ever after" combines the falling action of the marriage and the resolution of everlasting happiness into one sentence. But in some versions of Snow White, the wicked queen comes to Snow White's marriage and is punished: the prince has ordered someone to make iron shoes, and they have been heated in an oven; the queen is forced to wear them to dance at the wedding feast, and so she dies. These events are falling action. Depending on where you place the story's crisis, there may not appear to be much falling action. What events are required to finish the conflict once and for all? Try to name the events of the falling action, or explain why the crisis and resolution do not require much (or any) falling action. |
| Fan Vaulting | An intricate style of traceried vaulting, common in the late English Gothic style, in which ribs arch out like a fan from a single point such as a capital. |
| Farce | A theatrical genre characterized by broad, slapstick humor and implausible plots. |
| Fenestration | Windows or window-like openings in an architectural structure. |
| Ferro-Concrete | Concrete reinforced with rods or webs of steel. |
| Figurative Language | In literature, a way of saying one thing and meaning something else. Take, for example, this line by Robert Burns, "My luv is a red, red rose." Clearly Mr. Burns does not really mean that he has fallen in love with a red, aromatic, many-petaled, long, thorny-stemmed plant. He means that his love is as sweet and as delicate as a rose. While figurative language provides a writer with the opportunity to write imaginatively, it also tests the imagination of the reader, forcing the reader to go below the surface of a literary work into deep, hidden meanings. |
| Figure Of Speech | An example of figurative language that states something that is not literally true in order to create an effect. Similes, metaphors and personification are figures of speech which are based on comparisons. Metonymy, synecdoche, synesthesia, apostrophe, oxymoron, and hyperbole are other figures of speech. |
| Flashback | A reference to an event which took place prior to the beginning of a story or play. In Ernest Hemingway's "The Snows of Kilamanjaro," the protagonist, Harry Street, has been injured on a hunt in Africa. Dying, his mind becomes preoccupied with incidents in his past. In a flashback Street remembers one of his wartime comrades dying painfully on barbed wire on a battlefield in Spain. |
| Fluting | Vertical ridges in a column. |
| Flying Buttress | A semi-detached buttress. |
| Focal Point, Focal Area | A major or minor area of visual attraction in pictures, sculpture, dance, plays, films, landscape design, or buildings. |
| Foil | A character in a play who sets off the main character or other characters by comparison. In Shakespeare's Hamlet, Hamlet and Laertes are young men who behave very differently. While Hamlet delays in carrying out his mission to avenge the death of his father, Laertes is quick and bold in his challenge of the king over the death of his father. Much can be learned about each by comparing and contrasting the actions of the two. Finding character foils and explaining the contrasts between them is a standard type of assignment, though the term may not be used. "Compare and contrast X and Y" (with characters' names instead of "X" and "Y") usually means either "discuss why X and Y are character foils" or "discuss why X and Y are parallel characters." |
| Foreground | The area of a picture, usually at the bottom, that appears to be closest to the viewer. |
| Foreshadowing | A method used to build suspense by providing hints of what is to come. |

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| Form | The shape, structure, configuration, or essence of something. |
| Found Object | An object taken from life that is presented as an artwork. |
| Four-Part Harmony | A standard musical texture, where four tones fill out each chord. |
| Framing Tale | Overall unifying story within which one or more tales are related. |
| Free Verse | Unrhymed Poetry with lines of varying lengths, and containing no specific metrical pattern. The poetry of Walt Whitman provides us with many examples. Consider the following lines from Song of Myself: I celebrate myself and sing myself, And what I assume you shall assume, For every atom belonging to me as good belongs to you. I loaf and invite my soul, I lean and loaf at my ease observing a spear of summer grass. |
| Fresco | A method of painting in which pigment is mixed with wet plaster and applied as part of the wall surface. |
| Frieze | The central portion of the entablature: any horizontal decorative or sculptural band. |
| Fugue | Originated in the baroque period from a Latin word meaning "flight." A musical composition in a fixed form in which a theme is developed by counterpoint. |
| Full-Round | See <i>sculpture</i> . |
| Genre | A literary type or form. Drama is a genre of literature. Within drama, genres include tragedy, comedy and other forms. A category of artistic composition characterized by a particular style, form, or content. |
| Geometric | Based on man-made patterns such as triangles, rectangles, circles, ellipses, and so on. The opposite of <i>biomorphic</i> . |
| Gesamtkunstwerk | A complete, totally integrated artwork; associated with the music dramas of Richard Wagner in nineteenth-century Germany. |
| Gesso | A mixture of plaster of Paris and glue, used as a base for low relief or as a surface for painting. |
| Greek Cross | A cross in which all arms are the same length. |
| Gregorian Chant | A medieval form of monophonic church music, also called plainchant or chant, sung unaccompanied, and named for Pope Gregory I. |
| Groin Vault | The ceiling formation created by the intersection of two tunnel or barrel vaults. |
| Half Cadence | A type of harmonic ending to a musical phrase which does not have a feeling of finality because it does not end on the home or tonic chord. |
| Hamartia | The "tragic flaw" in the character of the protagonist of a classical tragedy. |
| Harmony | The relationship of like elements such as musical notes, colors, and patterns of repetition. See <i>consonance</i> and <i>dissonance</i> . |
| Hellenistic | Relating to the time from the reign of Alexander the Great to the first century b.c. |

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| Hero/Heroine | The man/woman who is the principal character in a literary or dramatic work. Usually, heroes are sympathetic characters with noble qualities that we admire. Macbeth, with his evil acts, might better be described as an anti-hero. The everyday definition of hero — a dashing, courageous figure — also applies to Macbeth, who is described as a brave warrior at the start of the play. Ironically, though, he does not behave heroically for most of the play. He murders Duncan in his sleep, has Banquo and Fleance ambushed and MacDuff's defenseless family slain. These are all cowardly acts. At the end of the play the heroic figure reappears, killing Young Siward and being killed by MacDuff. |
| Heroic | Larger than life-size. |
| Hierarchy | Any system of persons or things that has higher and lower ranks. |
| Hieratic | A style of depicting sacred persons or offices, particularly in Byzantine art. |
| Hieroglyph, Hieroglyphic | A picture or symbol of an object standing for a word, idea, or sound; developed by the ancient Egyptians into a system of writing. |
| Homophony | A musical texture characterized by chordal texture supporting one melody. See <i>monophony</i> and <i>polyphony</i> . |
| Horizon Line | A real or implied line across the picture plane which, like the horizon in nature, tends to fix the viewer's vantage point. |
| Hubris | Pride; typically the "tragic flaw" found in the protagonist of a classical tragedy. See <i>hamartia</i> . |
| Hue | The spectrum notation of color; a specific, pure color with a measurable wavelength. There are primary hues, secondary hues, and tertiary hues. |
| Humanism | A philosophy concerned with human beings, their achievements, and interests, as opposed to abstract beings and problems of theology; a cultural and intellectual movement occurring during the Renaissance focusing on humans and their capabilities. |
| Humanitarianism | The ideas and philosophies associated with people who are concerned about human need and the alleviation of human suffering. |
| Hymnody | The singing, composing, or study of hymns; the hymns of a particular period or church. |
| Hyperbole | A figure of speech in which an overstatement or exaggeration occurs as in the following lines from Act 2, scene 2 of Shakespeare's Macbeth. In this scene, Macbeth has murdered King Duncan. Horrified at the blood on his hands, he asks: Will all great Neptune's ocean wash this blood, Clean from my hand? No. This my hand will rather, The multitudinous seas incarnadine, Making the green one red. Literally, it does not require an ocean to wash blood from one's hand. Nor can the blood on one's hand turn the green ocean red. The hyperbole works to illustrate the guilt Macbeth feels at the brutal murder of his king and kinsman. |
| Hypostyle | A building with a roof or ceiling supported by rows of columns, as in ancient Egyptian architecture. |
| Iambic Pentameter | A metrical pattern in poetry which consists of five iambic feet per line. (An iamb, or iambic foot, consists of one unstressed syllable followed by a stressed syllable, i.e. "away.") |
| Icon | A Greek word meaning "image." Used to identify paintings which represent the image of a holy person. |
| Iconography | The meanings of images and symbols. |
| Idealization | The portrayal of an object or human body in its ideal form rather than as a true-to-life portrayal. |
| Idée Fixe | A recurring melodic motif representing a nonmusical idea; used by, among others, the composer Berlioz. |

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| Illumination | The practice of decorating the pages of books--especially medieval manuscripts--with colorful pictures or motifs. |
| Imagery | A word or group of words in a literary work which appeal to one or more of the senses: sight, taste, touch, hearing, and smell. The use of images serves to intensify the impact of the work. Consider the following example of imagery in T. S. Eliot's The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock: When the evening is spread out against the sky, Like a patient etherized upon a table. This example uses images of pain and sickness to describe the evening, which as an image itself represents society and the psychology of Prufrock, himself. |
| Improvisation | Music or other art produced on the spur of the moment, spontaneously. |
| Indeterminacy | Several modern approaches to language and literature propose that the meaning of a text can never be fully determined or fixed because the immediate meaning of a text is the result of the particular cultural and social background of the reader; further, the nature of language itself is such that the author's original "intention" cannot itself have been fixed and definite when the work was originally created, quite apart from the tendency of language to generate its own meaning over time. That a text is inevitably indeterminate does not mean that all readings are of equal validity; it does mean, however, that all meanings we draw from it are partial and provisional, and that what we write about it is itself a text, open to further interpretation. |
| Intensity | The degree or purity of a hue. In music, theatre, and dance, that quality of dynamics denoting the amount of force used to create a sound or movement. |
| Interval | The difference in pitch between two tones. |
| Intrinsic | Belonging to a thing by its nature. |
| Ionic | A Greek order of column that has a scroll-like capital with a circular base. |
| Irony | Irony takes many forms. In irony of situation, the result of an action is the reverse of what the actor expected. Macbeth murders his king hoping that in becoming king he will achieve great happiness. Actually, Macbeth never knows another moment of peace, and finally is beheaded for his murderous act. In dramatic irony, the audience knows something that the characters in the drama do not. For example, the identity of the murderer in a crime thriller may be known to the audience long before the mystery is solved. In verbal irony, the contrast is between the literal meaning of what is said and what is meant. A character may refer to a plan as "brilliant," while actually meaning that (s)he thinks the plan is foolish. Sarcasm is a form of verbal irony. |
| Jamb | The upright piece forming the side of a doorway or window frame. |
| Key | A system of tones in music based on and named after a given tone--the tonic. |
| Kouros. | An archaic Greek statue of a standing, nude youth. |
| Krater | A bowl for mixing wine and water, the usual Greek beverage. |
| Kylix | A vase turned on a potter's wheel; used as a drinking cup. |
| Lancet Window | A tall, narrow window whose top forms a lancet or narrow arch shaped like a spear. |
| Lantern | A relatively small structure on the top of a dome, roof, or tower, frequently open to admit light into the area beneath. |
| Last Plays | Some people describe Shakespeare's later works as the 'Last Plays'. These include Cymbeline, The Winter's Tale and The Tempest. They are also known as his 'Romances'. The Last Plays are tragicomedies. They have darker stories than the early Comedies and focus on a renewal of hope that comes from penitence and forgiveness, together with a faith in the younger generation who, through love, will heal the wounds of the past. |

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| Latin Cross | A cross in which the vertical arm is longer than the horizontal arm, through whose midpoint it passes. |
| Leitmotif | A "leading motif" used in music to identify an individual, ideal, object, and so on; associated with Wagner. |
| Lekythos | An oil flask with a long, narrow neck adapted for pouring oil slowly; used in funeral rites. |
| Lied | German secular art song. |
| Line | The basic building block of visual design; may be a thin mark, a color edge, or implied. |
| Linear Perspective | The creation of the illusion of distance in a two-dimensional artwork through the convention of line and foreshortening. That is, the illusion that parallel lines come together in the distance. |
| Linear Sculpture | See <i>sculpture</i> . |
| Lintel | The horizontal member of a post-and-lintel structure in architecture, or a stone bridging an opening. |
| Loggia | A gallery open on one or more sides, sometimes with arches or with columns. |
| Lost-Wax (Cire-Perdue) | A method of casting sculpture in which the basic mold is created by using a wax model, which is then melted to leave the desired spaces in the mold. |
| Low Relief | See <i>sculpture</i> . |
| Lyric | A category of poetry differentiated from dramatic or narrative. In music, the use of sensual sound patterns. |
| Madrigal | An unaccompanied musical composition for two to five independent voices using a poetic text. |
| Masonry | In architecture, stone or brickwork. |
| Mass | Actual or implied physical bulk, weight, and density. Also, the most important rite of the Catholic liturgy, similar to the Protestant communion service. |
| Medium (Pl. Media) | The process employed by the artist. Also the binding agent used to hold pigments together. |
| Melismatic | Music where a single syllable of text is sung on many notes. |
| Melodrama | A theatrical genre characterized by stereotyped characters, implausible plots, and an emphasis on spectacle. |
| Melody | In music, a succession of single tones; a tune. |
| Metaphor | A figure of speech wherein a comparison is made between two unlike quantities without the use of the words "like" or "as." Jonathan Edwards, in his sermon "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God," has this to say about the moral condition of his parishioners: There are the black clouds of God's wrath now hanging directly over your heads, full of the dreadful storm and big with thunder. The comparison here is between God's anger and a storm. Note that there is no use of "like" or "as" as would be the case in a simile (See also Simile.). A figure of speech in which one object is used to represent another in order to imply characteristics. |
| Metonymy | A figure of speech in which a word represents something else which it suggests. For example in a herd of fifty cows, the herd might be referred to as fifty head of cattle. The word "head" is the word representing the herd. |
| Microtone | A musical interval smaller than a half-step. |
| Miniature | An artwork, usually a painting, done in very small scale. |
| Mobile | A constructed structure whose components have been connected by joints to move by force of wind or motor. |
| Mode | A particular form, style, or manner. In music, a scale; often used with reference to non-Western music. |
| Modeling | The shaping of three-dimensional forms. Also the suggestion of three-dimensionality in two-dimensional forms. |
| Modulation | The changing from one key to another in a musical composition. |

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| Monody | A style of musical composition in which one melodic line predominates; a poetic form expressing personal lament. |
| Monolithic | Architecture or sculpture using a single large block of stone. |
| Monophony | In music, a texture employing a single melody line without harmonic support. |
| Monotheism | The belief that there is only one God. |
| Montage | The process of making a single composition by combining parts of others. A rapid sequence of film shots bringing together associated ideas or images. |
| Monumental | Works actually or appearing larger than life-size. |
| Morality Play | A type of drama popular in Europe during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. In Morality Plays characters embody moral qualities (such as charity or vice) or abstract concepts (like death or youth). Through the events of the play moral lessons are taught. |
| Mosaic | A decorative work for walls, vaults, floors, or ceilings, composed of pieces of colored material set in plaster or cement. |
| Motet | A polyphonic musical composition based on a sacred text and usually sung without accompaniment. |
| Motif | A motif, or <i>topos</i> is a recurring concept or story element in literature. It includes concepts such as types of incident or situation, as in the parting of lovers at dawn; plot devices, such as the lady's love token, which inspires courage in her lover, or the recognition tokens in plots of mistaken identity; or plot formulas,) such as the "loathly lady" who later becomes a beautiful princess, or the "femme fatale" whose attraction proves deadly; and character types, such as the despairing lover, conquering hero, or wicked stepmother. In a more narrow sense, "motif" is also used to describe recurring elements within particular works, such as phrases, descriptions, or patterns of imagery. In music, a short, recurrent melodic or rhythmic pattern. In the other arts, a recurrent element. |
| Mural | A painting on a wall, usually large. |
| Musique Concète | A twentieth-century musical approach in which conventional sounds are altered electronically and recorded on tape to produce new sounds. |
| Myth | An unverifiable story based on a religious belief. The characters of myths are gods and goddesses, or the offspring of the mating of gods or goddesses and humans. Some myths detail the creation of the earth, while others may be about love, adventure, trickery, or revenge. In all cases, it is the gods and goddesses who control events, while humans may be aided or victimized. It is said that the creation of myths was the method by which ancient, superstitious humans attempted to account for natural or historical phenomena. In Homer's, <i>The Odyssey</i> , the Greek hero, Odysseus, is thwarted in his attempt to reach home by an angry Poseidon, god of the sea and patron of Troy. The Trojan horse, the trick the Greeks used to gain entrance into the city of Troy when a ten-year siege had failed, was the plan of Odysseus' creation. Poseidon, in his anger, kept Odysseus from reaching home for ten years after the war ended. |
| Narrator | The voice telling the story. This voice might belong to a Character in the story whom other characters can see, hear, interact with, etc.; or the voice might appear to belong to the author. The narrator may fit into one or more of these categories: First-person narrator: stands out as a character and refers to himself or herself, using "I." Example: Jane Eyre narrates Charlotte Bronte's novel <i>Jane Eyre</i> , which allows Bronte to let her readers know just how the limitations of Jane's life galled her, and how Jane secretly fell in love with her employer, Mr. Rochester. Second-person narrator: addresses the reader and/or the Main Character as "you" (and may also use first-person narration, but not necessarily). Example: This technique is rarely used, except briefly; Beatrix Potter addresses the readers near the end of <i>Peter Rabbit</i> in order to underline the "proper" moral which the bulk of the story undermines. Another brief example is the opening of each of Rudyard Kipling's <i>Just-So Stories</i> , in which the narrator refers to the child-listener as "O Best-Beloved." Third-person narrator: not a character in the story; refers to the story's characters as "he" and "she." This is probably the most common form of narration, so I won't give a specific example. Limited Narrator: can only tell what one person is thinking or feeling. Example: in <i>Peter Rabbit</i> , we don't find out what Mr. McGregor thinks about, or what Mother rabbit thinks about, or what Flopsy, Mopsy, and Cottontail |

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| | thought about - only what Peter thinks about. Omniscient narrator: not a character in the story; can tell what any or all characters are thinking and feeling. Example: In Cinderella, several important plot events, such as the finding of the glass slipper, take place when Cinderella herself is not present; in these scenes, the audience sometimes knows what other characters, like the Prince or the stepmother, are thinking. Reliable narrator: everything this narrator says is true, and the narrator knows everything that is necessary to the story. Unreliable narrator: may not know all the relevant information; may be intoxicated or mentally ill; may lie to the audience. Example: Edgar Allan Poe's narrators are frequently unreliable. Think of the delusions that the narrator of The Tell-Tale Heart has about the old man, or consider the lying narrator in Poe's Black Cat. The type of narrator telling the story can be vitally important to you as the reader or interpreter, especially if the narrator is unreliable. Not every unreliable narrator is as easy to spot as Poe's in The Tell-Tale Heart; there may be a lot of scholarly debate about whether a given narrator is reliable or not, and obviously you need to know how much of the narration you can trust. If you cannot trust the narrator to tell you what happened, then just summarizing the events of the story can be very challenging. A first-person narrator may easily be a little unreliable, since everyone wants to tell his/her own story in a way which shows himself or herself in a good light. If the narration is limited, why has the author chosen to show readers only this person's thoughts? If the narrator addresses the reader directly, does that draw you in or alienate you? All these issues and more arise when discussing the narrators. (See also Point of View.) |
| Narthex | A portico or lobby of an early Christian church, separated from the nave by a screen or railing. |
| Naturalistic | Carefully imitating the appearance of nature. |
| Nave | The great central space in a church, usually running from west to east, where the congregation sits. |
| Negative Space | Any opening in a work of sculpture. |
| Neo-Attic | Literally, "new Greek." A reintroduction of the classical Greek and Hellenistic elements of architecture and visual art. |
| Neoclassicism | Various artistic styles that borrow the devices or objectives of classical art. |
| Niche | A recess in a wall in which sculpture can be displayed. |
| Nimbus | The circle of radiant light around the head or figures of God, Christ, the Virgin Mary, and the saints. |
| Nonobjective | Without reference to reality; may be differentiated from "abstract." |
| Nonrepresentational | Without reference to reality; including abstract and nonobjective. |
| Obelisk | A tall, tapering, four-sided stone shaft with a pyramidal top. |
| Octave | In music, the distance between a specific pitch vibration and its double; for example, concert A equals 440 vibrations per second, the A one octave above that pitch equals 880, and the A one octave below equals 220. |
| Oculus | A circular opening in the top of a dome. |
| Oligarchy | Government by a small, select group. |
| Onomatopoeia | A literary device wherein the sound of a word echoes the sound it represents. The words "splash," "knock," and "roar" are examples. The following lines end Dylan Thomas' Fern Hill: Out of the whinnying green stable, On to the fields of praise. The word "whinnying" is onomatopoetic. "Whinny" is the sound usually selected to represent that made by a horse. |
| Opera | A lengthy work combining music and drama, fully staged with scenery and costumes. |
| Opus | A single work of art. |
| Oratorio | A large choral work for soloists, chorus, and orchestra, developed in the baroque period. |
| Orchestra | A large instrumental musical ensemble; the first-floor seating area of a theatre; the circular playing area of the ancient Greek theatre. |
| Organum | Singing together. Earliest form of polyphony in Western music, with the voices moving in parallel lines. |
| Ornament | Anything used as a decoration or embellishment. |

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| Oxymoron | A combination of contradictory terms, such as used by Romeo in Act 1, scene 1 of Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet: Why then, O brawling love! O loving hate! O heavy lightness, serious vanity; Misshapen chaos of well-seeming forms! Feather of lead, bright smoke, cold fire, sick health! |
| Palette | In the visual arts, the composite use of color, including range and tonality. |
| Palmette | A decoration taking the form or abstracting the form of a palm branch. |
| Pantheon | A Greek word meaning all the gods. |
| Pantomime | A genre of Roman drama in which an actor played various parts, without words, with a musical background. |
| Paradox | A situation or a statement that seems to contradict itself, but on closer inspection, does not. These lines from John Donne's Holy Sonnet 10 provide an example: That I may rise, and stand, o'erthrow me. The poet paradoxically asks God to knock him down so that he may stand. What he means by this is for God to destroy his present self and remake him as a holier person. |
| Parallel Character | A person whose role in the story is mostly important because of his or her likeness to another Character, especially the Main Character. Example: In the children's novel The Secret Garden by Frances Hodgson Burnett, the main character Mary Lennox is a spoiled, neglected child who eventually learns to care for a garden and to feel sympathy for others. Partly, she is able to change because of her interactions with her cousin Colin Craven, who is even more spoiled and even more neglected. Colin's role in the story is to show Mary and the reader how badly she needs to change, before she becomes as friendless and helpless as Colin. Parallel characters often have Subplots of their own, which reflect the main Plot and its Themes. Understand the parallel characters, and the main character and the overall theme(s) of the story will be easier to understand. |
| Parody | A literary work that imitates the style of another literary work. A parody can be simply amusing or it can be mocking in tone, such as a poem which exaggerates the use of alliteration in order to show the ridiculous effect of overuse of alliteration. (See also Satire.) |
| Pathos | A Greek term for deep emotion, passion, or suffering. When applied to literature, its meaning is usually narrowed to refer to tragic emotions, describing the language and situations which deeply move the audience or reader by arousing sadness, sympathy, or pity. There are many examples in Shakespeare's King Lear, such as Cordelia's acceptance of defeat: We are not the first / Who with best meaning have incurred the worst. Pathos which seems excessive or exaggerated becomes melodramatic or sentimental, and when its disproportion to its subject results from anticlimax, pathos becomes bathetic. Modern tastes usually prefer pathetic effects achieved through understatement and suggestion, rather than an extended focus upon suffering, though some movies still attract large audiences by offering a good cry. The "suffering" aspect of drama usually associated with the evocation of pity. |
| Pediment | The typically triangular roof piece characteristic of classical architecture. |
| Pendentive | A triangular part of the vaulting which allows the stress of the round base of a dome to be transferred to a rectangular wall base. |
| Performing Arts | Music, theatre, and dance; in contrast to <i>visual arts</i> --painting and sculpture. |

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| Persona | The persona was the mask worn by an actor in Greek drama. In a literary context, the persona is the character of the first-person narrator in verse or prose narratives, and the speaker in lyric poetry. The use of the term "persona" (as distinct from "author") stresses that the speaker is part of the fictional creation, invented for the author's particular purposes in a given literary work. The persona may be completely different from the author, as in the naive narrator of Swift's Gulliver's Travels (1726), or may seem to be identifiable with the author, as in the lyric poems of Wordsworth and Keats. But even in the latter case the persona can only be an aspect of the author - a mood or attitude adopted for the purposes of a particular work, and which changes subtly or drastically from one work to another. |
| Personification | A figure of speech in which something nonhuman is given human characteristics. Consider the following lines from Carl Sandburg's Chicago: Stormy, husky, brawling, City of the big shoulders. Carl Sandburg description of Chicago includes shoulders. Cities do not have shoulders, people do. Sandburg personifies the city by ascribing to it something human, "shoulders." "Justice is blind" is another example. |
| Perspective | The representation of distance and three-dimensionality on a two-dimensional surface. See also <i>linear perspective</i> and <i>aerial perspective</i> . |
| Picaresque | An artwork referring to the environment of rogues and adventurers. |
| Piers | Upright architectural supports--usually rectangular. |
| Piètà | A painting or sculpture of the dead Christ supported by Mary. |
| Pigment | Any substance used as a coloring agent. |
| Plainsong, Plainchant | Medieval liturgical music sung without accompaniment and without strict meter. |
| Plan | An architectural drawing that reveals in two dimensions the arrangement and distribution of interior spaces and walls, as well as door and window openings, of a building as seen from above. |
| Plaque | A decorative or informative design placed on a wall. |
| Plasticity | The capability of being molded or altered. In film, the capacity to be cut and shaped. In painting and theatre, the accentuation of dimensionality of form through chiaroscuro. |
| Plot | The structure of a story. Or the sequence in which the author arranges events in a story. The structure of a five-act play often includes the rising action, the climax, the falling action, and the resolution. The plot may have a protagonist who is opposed by antagonist, creating what is called, conflict. A plot may include flashback or it may include a subplot which is a mirror image of the main plot. For example, in Shakespeare's, King Lear, the relationship between the Earl of Gloucester and his sons mirrors the relationship between Lear and his daughters. |
| Point Of View | Point of view is the perspective from which a narrative is presented; it is analogous to the point from which the camera sees the action in cinema. The two main points of view are those of the third-person (omniscient) narrator, who stands outside the story itself, and the first-person narrator, who participates in the story. The first type always uses third-person pronouns ("he," "she," "they"), while the latter narrator also uses the first-person ("I"). The all-knowing third-person narrator may choose to guide the reader's understanding of characters and the significance of their story. This type of narrator may be intrusive (commenting and evaluating, as in the novels of Austen, Dickens, and Tolstoy), or unobtrusive (describing without much commentary, as in Flaubert's Madame Bovary [1857] and Hemingway's short stories). Another possibility is the limited omniscient narrator, who describes in the third-person only what is experienced by a few characters or one alone. The first-person narrator is a character within the story and therefore limited in understanding. He or she might be an observer who happens to see the events of the story (as in Conrad's Heart of Darkness [1902]), or play a minor role in the action (as in Melville's Moby-Dick [1851]), or might be a protagonist (as in Salinger's The Catcher in the Rye [1951]). Other points of view include the self-conscious narrative, which draws attention to its own fictional nature (as in Fielding's Tom Jones [1749]); its cousin the self-reflexive narrative, which describes an act of fictional composition |

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| | within its story (like a play-within-a-play); and the fallible or unreliable narrator, as in Henry James' <i>The Turn of the Screw</i> (1898). (See also Narrator.) |
| Pointillism | A style of painting in which the paint is applied to the surface by dabbing the brush so as to create small dots of color. |
| Polyphony | Literally, "many voiced." See <i>counterpoint</i> . |
| Polyrhythm | The use of contrasting rhythms at the same time in music. |
| Post-And-Lintel | An architectural structure in which horizontal pieces (lintels) are held up by vertical columns (posts). |
| Problem Plays (Shakespeare) | All's Well That Ends Well, Troilus and Cressida and Measure for Measure are known as the 'Problem Plays'. They defy simple analysis. Essentially they are Comedies, but at the same time they tackle serious, complicated themes and tend to focus on human disillusionment. |
| Program Music | Music that refers to nonmusical ideas through a descriptive title or text. The opposite of <i>absolute music</i> . |
| Proportion | The relation, or ratio, of one part to another and of each part to the whole with regard to size, height, width, length, or depth. |
| Proscenium | A Greek word meaning "before the skene." The plaster arch or "picture frame" stage of traditional theatres. |
| Prose | Written language in its ordinary form. This contrasts with poetry, which is more rhythmic and structured. Shakespeare employed prose to achieve specific effects. |
| Protagonist | The hero or central character of a literary work. In accomplishing his or her objective, the protagonist is hindered by some opposing force either human (one of Batman's antagonists is The Joker), animal (Moby Dick is Captain Ahab's antagonist in Herman Melville's Moby Dick), or natural (the sea is the antagonist which must be overcome by Captain Bligh in Nordhoff and Hall's <i>Men Against the Sea</i> , the second book in the trilogy which includes <i>Mutiny on the Bounty</i>). There may be more than one character who is important enough to be called "main"; there may not be any character who seems to qualify. In those cases, figuring out whether there is a main character and who it is may be an interesting and even difficult interpretive job. (See also Antagonist.) |
| Prototype | The model on which something is based. |
| Psalmody | A collection of psalms. |
| Pun | A play on words wherein a word is used to convey two meanings at the same time. The line below, spoken by Mercutio in Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet, is an example of a pun. Mercutio has just been stabbed, knows he is dying and says: Ask for me tomorrow and you shall find me a grave man. Mercutio's use of the word "grave" renders it capable of two meanings: a serious person or a corpse in his grave. |

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| Putti | Nude male children--usually winged--especially shown in Renaissance and later art. |
| Pylon | A gateway or a monumental structure flanking an entranceway. |
| Quatrefoil | A carved ornament with four leaflets or lobes arranged around a common center. |
| Rake | To place at an angle. A raked stage is one in which the floor slopes slightly upward from one point, usually downstage, to another, usually upstage. |
| Realism | A style of painting, sculpture, and theatre based on the theory that the method of presentation should be true to life. |
| Recitative | Sung monologue or dialogue, in opera, cantata, and oratorio. |
| Reinforced Concrete | See <i>ferro-concrete</i> . |
| Relief | See <i>sculpture</i> . |
| Repetition | How various elements are duplicated or alternated in a design. |
| Representational | Art showing objects that are recognizable from real life. |
| Requiem | A mass for the dead. |
| Resolution | The part of a story or drama which occurs after the climax and which establishes a new norm, a new state of affairs - the way things are going to be from then on. Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet climaxes with the death of the two lovers. Their deaths resolve the feud between the two families. In the play's resolution, Lords Capulet and Montague swear to end their feud and build golden monuments to each other's dead child. In the resolution of the film Star Wars," Luke Skywalker, Han Solo, and Chewbacca are given medals by Princess Lea for destroying the death star and defeating the empire. Is there a resolution section in the story you are examining? If so, what needs to be explained or re-evaluated? If not, why doesn't the story need resolution - or why has the author chosen to leave certain matters in the story unresolved? Answering questions like this can often be useful and interesting. (See also Plot.) |
| Revenge Tragedy | A play in which the main motive is avenging a real or imagined injury. It was a favorite form of English tragedy in the Elizabethan and Jacobean eras. Hamlet is perhaps the greatest of the Revenge Tragedies. |
| Rhetorical Question | A rhetorical question implies that the answer is obvious - the kind of question that does not need actually to be answered. It is used for rhetorically persuading someone of a truth without argument, or to give emphasis to a supposed truth by stating its opposite ironically. Rhetorical question is often used for comic effect, as in Shakespeare's Henry IV, Part 1 (1597) when Falstaff lies about fighting off eleven men single-handedly, then responds to the prince's doubts, "Art thou mad? Is not the truth the truth?" On the other hand, Iago uses rhetorical question for sinister ends, persuading Othello that his loving wife is a whore. Iago hints with questions ("Honest, my lord?" "Is't possible, my lord?"), encouraging Othello to view his own unjustified suspicions as foregone conclusions. |
| Rhythm | The relationship, either of time or space, between recurring elements of a composition. |
| Rib | A slender architectural support projecting from the surface in a vault system. |
| Ribbed Vault | A vault to which slender, projecting supports have been added. A structure in which arches are connected by diagonal as well as horizontal members. See <i>vault</i> . |

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| Rising Action | The second section of the typical Plot, in which the Main Character begins to grapple with the story's main conflict; the rising action contains several events which usually are arranged in an order of increasing importance. Example: In most versions of Cinderella, Cinderella finds out about the ball, is forbidden to go by her stepmother, gets magical help, acquires at least one beautiful dress, goes to the ball, dances with the prince, and runs away before the ball is over. These events are all part of the rising action. Another example of rising action is in a mystery novel: the events that take place in between the initial crime and the capture of the criminal (in most cases) are the rising action, which is also the section in which the clues are placed. Not all the events of a long or complicated story are part of the rising action. Some events belong to Subplots; or in the case of the mystery novel, may exist only to distract you from the really important rising action. Identifying the events that are really part of the rising action can in some cases be a rewarding interpretive activity. (See also Plot.) |
| Rite | A customary form for conducting religious or other solemn ceremonies. |
| Ritornello Form | A baroque musical form in which a recurrent orchestral theme alternates with solo passages. |
| Rondeau | A medieval French secular song based on a poetic form. |
| Rondo Form | A predominantly classical form of musical composition based around recurrence of the main theme, alternating with contrasting themes. |
| Sarcophagus (Plural Sarcophagi) | A stone coffin. |
| Satire | A piece of literature designed to ridicule the subject of the work. While satire can be funny, its aim is not to amuse, but to arouse contempt. Jonathan swift's Gulliver's Travel satirizes the English people, making them seem dwarfish in their ability to deal with large thoughts, issues, or deeds. Satire arouses laughter or scorn as a means of ridicule and derision, with the avowed intention of correcting human faults. Common targets of satire include individuals (personal satire), types of people, social groups, institutions, and human nature. Like tragedy and comedy, satire is often a mode of writing introduced into various literary forms; it is only a genre when it is the governing principle of a work. In direct satire, a first-person speaker addresses either the reader or a character within the work (the adversaries) whose conversation helps further the speaker's purposes, as in Alexander Pope's Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot (1735). Indirect satire uses a fictional narrative in which characters who represent particular points of view are made ridiculous by their own behavior and thoughts, and by the narrator's usually ironic commentary. In Jonathan Swift's Gulliver's Travels (1726) the hero narrating his own adventures appears ridiculous in taking pride in his Lilliputian title of honor, "Nardac"; by making Gulliver look foolish in this way, Swift indirectly satirizes the pretensions of the English nobility, with its corresponding titles of "Duke" and "Marques." (See also Irony.) |
| Saturation | In color, the purity of a hue in terms of whiteness; the whiter the hue, the less saturated it is. |
| Scale | In music, a graduated series of ascending or descending musical tones. In architecture, the mass of the building in relation to the human body. |
| Schema | A summarized or diagrammatic representation. |
| Sculpture | A three-dimensional art object. Among the types are 1. <i>cast</i> : created from molten material utilizing a mold. 2. <i>relief</i> : attached to a larger background. 3. <i>full-round</i> : freestanding. 4. <i>linear</i> : emphasizing linear items such as wire or tubing. |
| Semidome | A roof covering a semicircular space; half a dome. |
| Serial Music | A twentieth-century musical style utilizing the tone row; can also employ serialization of rhythms, timbres, and dynamics. |
| Setting | The place(s) and time(s) of the story, including the historical period, social milieu of the characters, geographical location, descriptions of indoor and outdoor locales, etc. |

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| Sfumato | A smoky or hazy quality in a painting, with particular reference to Leonardo da Vinci's work. |
| Shaft | The main trunk of a column. |
| Shape | A two-dimensional area or plane with distinguishable boundaries. |
| Short Story | A short fictional narrative. It is difficult to set forth the point at which a short story becomes a short novel (novelette), or the page number at which a novelette becomes a novel. Here are some examples which may help in determining which is which: Ernest Hemingway's Big Two-Hearted River is a short story; John Steinbeck's Of Mice and Men is a novelette; and Nathaniel Hawthorne's The Scarlet Letter is a novel. The short story, or tale, has many of the same characteristics as the novel. Generally, all details of a short story are arranged to achieve a single effect. The action moves rapidly, with minimal complication or detail of setting, and the significant characteristics of the protagonist's life are revealed economically through a central incident. Short stories range from the short short-story (as few as five hundred words in length) to the novelette or novella (a more complex story but still lacking the breadth of a novel). An example of the latter type is Joseph Conrad's Heart of Darkness (1902). In between these two types is the short story proper, which Edgar Allan Poe (one of its originators) described as "the prose tale." The fable and folk tale are precursors of the short story form. |
| Silhouette | A form as defined by its outline. |
| Simile | A figure of speech which takes the form of a comparison between two unlike quantities for which a basis for comparison can be found, and which uses the words "like" or "as" in the comparison, as in this line from Ezra Pound's "Fan-Piece, for Her Imperial Lord": "clear as frost on the grass-bade"; In this line, a fan of white silk is being compared to frost on a blade of grass. Note the use of the word "as." (See also Metaphor.) |
| Skene | The stage building of the ancient Greek theatre. |
| Skyphos | A two-handled ancient Greek drinking pot with an open top, tapering bowl, and flat, circular base. |
| Sonata | Instrumental composition of the seventeenth through twentieth centuries, consisting of several movements. |
| Sonnet | A lyric poem of fourteen lines whose rhyme scheme is fixed. The rhyme scheme in the Italian form as typified in the sonnets of Petrarch is abbaabba cdecde. The Petrarchian sonnet has two divisions: the first is of eight lines (the octave), and the second is of six lines (the sestet). The English, or Shakespearean sonnet is divided into three quatrains (four-line groupings) and a final couplet. The rhyme scheme is abab cdcd efef gg. The meter is iambic pentameter. The change of rhyme in the English sonnet is coincidental with a change of theme in the poem. The structure of the English sonnet explores variations on a theme in the first three quatrains and concludes with an epigrammatic couplet. In Shakespeare's Sonnet 29, the subject shifts towards a conclusion in the third quatrain and ends with the epigram: For thy sweet love rememb'red such wealth brings, That then I scorn to change my state with kings. In sonnet sequences, or cycles, a series of sonnets are linked by a common theme. Though sonnets began as love poetry and were introduced to England as such by Thomas Wyatt, the form was extended to other subjects and other structures by Donne, Milton and later writers such as Shelley, Keats, Dylan Thomas, and e. e. cummings. |
| Statuary | Freestanding, three-dimensional sculpture. |
| Still Life | In the visual arts, an arrangement of inanimate objects used as a subject of a work of art. |
| Strainer Arch | An arch in an internal space that prevents the walls from being pushed inward. |
| Stream Of Consciousness | A style of writing in which the author reveals character and event by expressing a continuous flow of a character's thoughts. |
| Strophic Form | Form of vocal music in which all stanzas of the text are sung to the same music. |
| Stucco | A plaster or cement finish for interior and exterior walls. |
| Style | The characteristics of a work of art that identify it with an artist, a group of artists, an era, or a nation. |
| Stylized | A type of depiction in which verisimilitude has been altered for artistic effect. |

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| Stylobate | The foundation immediately below a row of columns. |
| Subplot | A smaller story embedded in the main story you are reading. Often subplots have important likenesses to the main Plot, which will help you understand the story better as a whole; in other stories, subplots fill in what would otherwise be logical gaps in the main plot. |
| Subtext | A term denoting what a character means by what (s)he says when there is a disparity between diction and intended meaning. In irony a character may say one thing and mean something entirely different. The real meaning of the speech is the subtext. |
| Suite | A grouping of musical movements, usually unrelated except by key. |
| Symbol | A form, image, or subject standing for something else. |
| Symbolism | A device in literature where an object represents an idea. In William Blake's The Lamb, the speaker tells the lamb that the force that made him or her is also called a lamb: Little lamb, who made thee? Little lamb, who made thee? Little lamb, I'll tell thee, Little lamb, I'll tell thee! He is called by thy name, For he calls himself a lamb. The symbol of the lamb in the above lines corresponds to the symbolism of the lamb in Christianity wherein Christ is referred to as "The Lamb of God." |
| Symmetry | The balancing of elements in design by placing physically equal objects on either side of a center line. |
| Symphony | A lengthy orchestral composition, usually in four movements. |
| Syncopation | In a musical composition, the displacement of accent from the normally accented beat to the offbeat. |
| Synecdoche | A figure of speech wherein a part of something represents the whole thing. In this figure, the head of a cow might substitute for the whole cow. Therefore, a herd of fifty cows might be referred to as "fifty head of cattle." In Alfred Lord Tennyson's Ulysses, Ulysses refers to his former companions as "free hearts, free foreheads." |
| Synthesis | The combination of independent factors or entities into a compound that becomes a new, more complex whole. |
| Synthesizer | An electronic instrument that produces and combines musical sounds. |
| Temperament | In music, a system of tuning. Equal temperament--the division of the octave into twelve equal intervals--is the most common way of tuning keyboard instruments. |
| Tempo | The rate of speed at which a musical composition is performed. In theatre, film, or dance, the rate of speed of the overall performance. |
| Tensile Strength | The ability of a material to resist bending and twisting. |
| Text Painting | See <i>word painting</i> . |
| Theatricality | Exaggeration and artificiality; the opposite of <i>verisimilitude</i> . |
| Theme | An ingredient of a literary work which gives the work unity. The theme provides an answer to the question, "What is the work about?" Each literary work carries its own theme(s). The main theme of Robert Frost's Acquainted with the Night is loneliness. Shakespeare's King Lear contains many themes, among which are blindness and madness. The subject of an artwork, whether melodic or philosophical. |
| Timbre | The characteristic of a sound that results from the particular source of the sound. For example, the difference between the sound of a violin and the sound of the human voice, also called tone color. |
| Toccata | A baroque keyboard composition intended to display technique. |
| Tonality | In music, the specific key in which a composition is written. In the visual arts, the characteristics of value. |
| Tondo | A circular painting. |

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| Tone | Tone expresses the author's attitude toward his or her subject. Since there are as many tones in literature as there are tones of voice in real relationships, the tone of a literary work may be one of anger or approval, pride or piety - the entire gamut of attitudes toward life's phenomena. Here is one literary example: The tone of John Steinbeck's short novel Cannery Row is non-judgmental. Mr. Steinbeck never expresses disapproval of the antics of Mack and his band of bums. Rather, he treats them with unflagging kindness. |
| Tonic | In music, the root tone (<i>doh</i>) of a key. |
| Tragedy | A drama in which the protagonist is in conflict with a superior force, such as destiny. Tragedies usually have unhappy or disastrous conclusions. It is often the case that a flaw in the protagonist's character brings about his or her downfall. In Macbeth's case, ambition leaves him vulnerable to the siren words of the witches. A serious drama or other literary work in which conflict between a protagonist and a superior force (often fate) concludes in disaster for the protagonist. |
| Tragicomedy | A drama combining the qualities of tragedy and comedy. |
| Transept | The crossing arm of a cruciform church, at right angles to the nave. |
| Travertine | A creamy-colored type of calcium carbonate used as a facing in building construction. |
| Triforium. | The section of the nave wall above the arcade and below the clerestory windows. |
| Triptych. | An altarpiece or devotional picture composed of a central panel and two wings. |
| Trompe L'oeil | "Trick of the eye" or "fool the eye." A two-dimensional artwork so executed as to make the viewer believe that three-dimensional subject matter is being perceived. |
| Trope | A medieval dramatic elaboration of the Roman Catholic mass or other offices. |
| Tunnel Vault | See <i>barrel vault</i> . |
| Twelve-Tone Technique | A twentieth-century atonal form of musical composition associated with Arnold Schoenberg. |
| Tympanum | The space above the door beam and within the arch of a medieval doorway. |
| Value, Value Scale | In the visual arts, the range of tonalities from white to black. |
| Vanishing Point | In linear perspective, the point on the horizon toward which parallel lines appear to converge and at which they seem to vanish. |
| Variation | Repetition of a theme with small or large changes. |
| Vault | An arched roof or ceiling usually made of stone, brick, or concrete. |
| Verisimilitude | Lifelikeness or nearness to truth. The opposite of <i>theatricality</i> . |
| Virtuoso | Referring to the display of impressive technique or skill by an artist or performer. |
| Volute | A spiral architectural element found notably on Ionic and other capitals, but also used decoratively on building façades and interiors. |
| Woodcut | A block of wood with an engraved design; a print made from such a piece of wood. |
| Word Painting | The use of language by a poet or playwright to suggest images and emotions; in music, the use of expressive melody to suggest a specific text. |