

ENGLISH DEPARTMENT
Glossary of Common Literary Terms

Allegory: an allegory is a narrative in which the characters often stand for abstract concepts. An allegory generally teaches a lesson by means of an interesting story.

Alliteration: the repetition at close intervals of consonant sounds for a purpose. For example: wailing in the winter wind.

Allusion: a reference to something in literature, history, mythology, religious texts, etc., considered common knowledge.

Connotation: the associations, images, or impressions carried by a word, as opposed to the word's literal meaning.

Consonance: the close repetition of identical consonant sounds before and after differing vowel sounds.

Convention: In general, an accepted way of doing things.

Denotation: the precise, literal meaning of a word, without emotional associations or overtones.

Denouement: the final unraveling or outcome of the plot in drama or fiction during which the

Irony: a contrast between appearance and actuality:

Verbal irony: a writer says one thing, but means something entirely different.

Situational irony: occurs when something happens that is entirely different from what is expected.

Dramatic irony: occurs when the reader knows information that the characters do not.

Literal: A word for word interpretation for what is written or said.

Metaphor

Protagonist: the central character in a story; the one upon whom the actions center. The protagonist faces a problem and must undergo some conflict to solve it.

Pun: A form of wit, not necessarily funny, involving a play on a word with two or more meanings.

Resolution: the final unwinding, or resolving of the conflicts and complications in the plot.

Rhyme scheme: the pattern of end rhyme in a poem.

Rising Action: That part of the plot that leads through a series of events of increasing interest and power to the climax or turning point. The rising action begins with an inciting moment, an action or event that sets a conflict of opposing forces into motion.

Satire: a literary technique in which foolish ideas or customs are ridiculed for the purpose of improving society.

Setting: the time and place in which the action of a story occurs.

Simile: a figure of speech in which two seemingly unlike things are compared. The comparison is made explicit by the use of a word or phrase such as: like, as, than, similar to, resembles, or seems—as in: He was strong as a bull.

Soliloquy: A dramatic convention in which a character in a play, alone on stage, speaks his or her