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AP ENGLISH LITERATURE · FREE RESOURCE

Literary Terms Master Glossary

A complete reference of the 200+ literary terms an AP English Literature student needs, grouped by category. Each entry gives a working definition, a concrete example (from public-domain texts or written fresh for this glossary and marked "original"), and a note on how the term actually shows up on the exam. Use it as a lookup tool while reading, as a study deck before quizzes, and as a reminder that on the AP exam a term is only worth knowing if you can explain what it does in a specific text.

How to Use This Glossary

The AP English Literature exam almost never asks you to define a term. It asks what a technique **does**: how a simile shapes the reader's sense of a character, how a shift in the final stanza changes the poem's meaning, how a narrator's distance controls what you are allowed to see. The College Board's Course and Exam Description (CED) frames every skill as "explain the function of" (character, setting, structure, narrator, word choice, comparison), and the free-response rubrics reward you for explaining how "literary elements and techniques" contribute to meaning, not for naming them.

So treat the fourth column of every table below ("How it appears on the exam") as the most important one. It tells you the kind of question the term invites, the trap it tends to set, or the kind of commentary it should generate in an essay.

A few conventions:

- **Public-domain examples** are drawn from works published before 1929 (Shakespeare, Donne, Austen, Dickens, Dickinson, Keats, Hardy, Frost's early books, and so on). Where exact wording matters, the quotation is short and well known.
- **Original examples** are written for this glossary and labeled "(original)." They are deliberately plain so the device is easy to see.
- Terms marked with an asterisk (*) appear by name in the CED's skill descriptions or essential-knowledge statements, which makes them especially likely to appear in multiple-choice stems.

The glossary is organized in eleven groups:

1. Poetic Forms
2. Meter and Sound
3. Figurative Language
4. Narrative and Point of View

5. Character
6. Setting
7. Structure
8. Drama
9. Tone and Irony
10. Archetypes and Motifs
11. Argument Terms from the CED

A short self-check with an answer key closes the document.

1. Poetic Forms

Poetic form is the container a poet chooses. On the exam, form matters because it creates expectations the poet can meet, bend, or break. A sonnet that refuses to resolve in its couplet, or a villanelle whose refrains change meaning each time they return, is doing something you can write about.

TERM	DEFINITION	EXAMPLE	HOW IT APPEARS ON THE EXAM
Sonnet*	A fourteen-line lyric poem, traditionally in iambic pentameter, built around a turn (volta) in thought.	Shakespeare's Sonnet 18 ("Shall I compare thee to a summer's day?") moves through comparison and ends with a couplet asserting the poem's power to preserve the beloved.	Sonnets are the single most common poetic form on the exam because the built-in turn makes "shift" questions natural. Expect "The final couplet differs from the preceding quatrains in that it..."
Petrarchan (Italian) sonnet	A sonnet divided into an octave (eight lines, usually abbaabba) and a sestet (six lines, cdecde or cdcdcd), with the turn after line 8.	Milton's "When I consider how my light is spent" poses the speaker's complaint in the octave and answers it in the sestet with "They also serve who only stand and wait."	Questions ask what problem the octave sets up and how the sestet answers or complicates it. A poem may have Italian structure even with English rhymes; watch the thought, not just the rhyme letters.
Shakespearean (English) sonnet	A sonnet of three quatrains and a closing couplet (abab cdcd efef gg), with the turn often at line 9 or at the couplet.	Shakespeare's Sonnet 73 ("That time of year thou mayst in me behold") gives three images of decline (autumn, twilight, dying fire) before the couplet turns to the beloved's love.	"The three quatrains serve respectively to..." or "The function of the couplet is to..." Know that the couplet can confirm, reverse, or undercut what came before.

TERM	DEFINITION	EXAMPLE	HOW IT APPEARS ON THE EXAM
Spenserian sonnet	A sonnet with interlocking rhyme (abab bcbcd cdcd ee), linking each quatrain to the next.	Spenser's <i>Amoretti</i> sonnets, such as "One day I wrote her name upon the strand."	Rare on the exam; appears mostly as a distractor when the question asks you to identify a form. Recognize the chained rhymes.
Volta (turn)*	The point in a poem, especially a sonnet, where the argument, tone, or perspective shifts.	In Sonnet 29 ("When in disgrace with fortune and men's eyes"), the volta comes at "Yet in these thoughts myself almost despising, / Haply I think on thee."	The most frequently tested structural concept. Signals: "but," "yet," "still," "now," a stanza break, a tense change, a change in addressee. Building a thesis around the before/after of the turn is a reliable essay strategy.
Villanelle	A nineteen-line poem of five tercets and a quatrain, using two refrains that alternate as the final lines of the tercets and then appear together at the end.	Edwin Arlington Robinson's "The House on the Hill" (1894) repeats "They are all gone away" and "There is nothing more to say."	When a villanelle appears, questions target how the refrains change meaning through repetition and context. In an essay, trace one refrain across the poem.
Sestina	A thirty-nine-line poem in which six end-words rotate through six stanzas in a fixed pattern, then all appear in a closing three-line envoi.	Sir Philip Sidney's double sestina "Ye Goatherd Gods" (1590).	Rare; mostly a distractor in form-identification items. Recognize it by the recurring end-words.
Ode	A long, serious, elevated lyric, usually addressing or celebrating its subject, often in a formal stanza pattern.	Keats's "Ode on a Grecian Urn" addresses the urn directly as a "still unravish'd bride of quietness."	Questions ask about the speaker's attitude toward the addressed object and how that attitude shifts. Odes often contain apostrophe and a meditative turn.
Elegy	A poem of mourning or serious meditation on loss and death, often moving from grief toward consolation.	Thomas Gray's "Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard" meditates on the anonymous dead of a village.	"The poem is best described as..." (elegy vs. ode vs. lyric). Tone words: elegiac, mournful, somber, consoling. Watch for the shift from lament to acceptance.

TERM	DEFINITION	EXAMPLE	HOW IT APPEARS ON THE EXAM
Ballad	A narrative poem in short stanzas (often quatrains with abcb rhyme), typically telling a dramatic story with repetition and plain diction.	Keats's "La Belle Dame sans Merci" tells a knight's enchantment in ballad stanzas.	Questions test the relation between the simple form and the often dark content, and the function of the refrain or repeated question.
Lyric	A short poem expressing a single speaker's thought or feeling, as distinct from a narrative or dramatic poem.	Wordsworth's "I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud" records a single remembered experience and its afterglow.	"Lyric" is the default category. The question is usually about the speaker: who speaks, in what situation, with what attitude.
Dramatic monologue	A poem spoken by a single character (not the poet) to an implied listener, revealing the speaker's personality, often unintentionally.	Robert Browning's "My Last Duchess": a Duke reveals his jealousy and control while describing a portrait to an envoy.	Exam gold. Questions: "The speaker is best described as...", "The listener is most likely...", and especially unreliability: what does the speaker reveal without meaning to?
Pastoral	Poetry idealizing rural life, shepherds, and natural simplicity, often in contrast to the court or city.	Marlowe's "The Passionate Shepherd to His Love" ("Come live with me and be my love").	Appears as a tone or genre label, and as a tested contrast: the idealized countryside vs. a realistic or ironic counterpoint.
Epic	A long narrative poem in elevated style recounting the deeds of a hero, with grand scope and often divine involvement.	Milton's <i>Paradise Lost</i> opens by announcing "Man's first disobedience."	Full epics do not appear, but epic conventions (elevated diction, catalogues, allusion) are tested when a passage imitates or mocks them.
Mock epic (mock heroic)	A poem that applies epic grandeur to a trivial subject for comic or satiric effect.	Pope's <i>The Rape of the Lock</i> treats the theft of a lock of hair as a Homeric battle.	Questions: "The elevated diction in lines 1–6 serves primarily to..." The answer is usually to mock or to expose triviality by contrast.
Blank verse	Unrhymed iambic pentameter.	Shakespeare's dramatic speeches; Milton's <i>Paradise Lost</i> ; Frost's "Mending Wall."	"The poem is written in..." Know that blank verse is unrhymed but metrical; free verse is neither. A verse-drama passage is almost always blank verse.

TERM	DEFINITION	EXAMPLE	HOW IT APPEARS ON THE EXAM
Free verse*	Poetry without regular meter or rhyme scheme, organized instead by line breaks, rhythm, and image.	Whitman's <i>Leaves of Grass</i> ; Amy Lowell's imagist poems.	Questions ask what replaces meter as the organizing principle: repetition, line length, syntax, white space. The absence of punctuation or capitalization can be an interpretable choice.
Heroic couplet	A pair of rhymed iambic pentameter lines, usually closed (the sense completes within the couplet).	Pope's <i>Essay on Criticism</i> : "True wit is nature to advantage dressed, / What oft was thought, but ne'er so well expressed."	Heroic couplets signal 18th-century satire and balance. Questions target how the tight form creates wit, antithesis, or finality.
Terza rima	Interlocking tercets rhymed aba bcb cdc, and so on.	Shelley's "Ode to the West Wind" uses terza rima in its sections.	Form-identification distractor. Recognize the chain of rhymes.
Ottava rima	An eight-line stanza rhymed abababcc, often used for narrative or comic verse.	Byron's <i>Don Juan</i> .	Rare; the final couplet of each stanza often delivers a comic deflation worth noting.
Haiku	A three-line poem (traditionally 5-7-5 syllables in Japanese) capturing a single image, often from nature, with an implied turn.	Imagist-era English imitations, such as Pound's "In a Station of the Metro" (two lines, haiku-like).	Rare on the exam; useful for the concept of juxtaposed images without connective statement.
Prose poem	A composition in prose that uses poetic techniques (imagery, compression, rhythm) without line breaks.	(original) "The kitchen holds its breath after midnight; the clock's small wrist ticks against the dark, counting nothing."	Occasionally a passage blurs genre. Analyze it by its devices, not its category.
Aubade	A dawn poem, often about lovers parting at morning.	Donne's "The Sun Rising" scolds the sun for interrupting the lovers.	Appears as a distractor in form items and as a genre label when the poem's situation is dawn.
Epigram	A short, witty, pointed poem or saying, often ending with a sting.	Pope: "I am his Highness' dog at Kew; / Pray tell me, sir, whose dog are you?"	Tested as a tone or style label ("epigrammatic") for compressed, witty lines, especially closing couplets.
Epithalamion	A poem celebrating a marriage.	Spenser's "Epithalamion" (1595).	Rare; a genre label to recognize.

TERM	DEFINITION	EXAMPLE	HOW IT APPEARS ON THE EXAM
Occasional poem	A poem written for a specific event or occasion.	Whitman's "O Captain! My Captain!" on Lincoln's death.	The occasion is often given in the prompt or headnote; use it to understand the speaker's stance.
Closed form / open form*	Closed form follows fixed patterns of meter, rhyme, or stanza; open form does not.	A sonnet is closed form; Whitman's "Song of Myself" is open form.	The CED names these in Unit 5. Questions ask what expectation the form creates and how the poet uses or resists it.
Stanza*	A grouped set of lines in a poem, set off by white space, functioning like a paragraph.	The four-line stanzas of Dickinson's "Because I could not stop for Death."	"The final stanza differs from the preceding stanzas in that it..." Stanza breaks are prime locations for shifts.
Couplet / tercet / quatrain / sestet / octave	Stanzas or units of two, three, four, six, and eight lines respectively.	A Shakespearean sonnet has three quatrains and a couplet; a Petrarchan sonnet has an octave and a sestet.	Stems use these labels to point you at sections: "Lines 9–14 (the sestet) serve to..." Know them cold so you do not lose time.
Refrain	A line or phrase repeated at intervals in a poem, often at the end of stanzas.	Longfellow's "The Tide Rises, the Tide Falls" repeats its title line.	Questions: "The effect of the refrain is to..." Strong answers note how the same words change meaning in new contexts.
Envoi	A short closing stanza that addresses the reader or sums up, especially in a sestina or ballade.	The three-line close of a sestina.	Rare; recognize the term if it appears in a stem.

2. Meter and Sound

Sound devices are tested in two ways: identification (rare, usually one item per poetry passage) and effect (more common). Do not spend essay time scanning meter unless the poem clearly breaks its pattern at a meaningful moment. The exam cares about what a sound does, not whether you can label it.

TERM	DEFINITION	EXAMPLE	HOW IT APPEARS ON THE EXAM
Meter	The regular pattern of stressed and unstressed syllables in a line of verse.	iambic pentameter: "Shall I compare thee to a summer's day?"	"The poem is written primarily in..." Also tested when a line breaks the meter: "The metrical irregularity in line 12 emphasizes..."
Foot	The basic unit of meter: a set pattern of stressed and unstressed syllables.	An iamb (da-DUM) is one foot; pentameter has five feet per line.	Foundational vocabulary for meter items; rarely tested alone.
Iamb	An unstressed syllable followed by a stressed one (da-DUM).	"be-HOLD," "a-WAY."	The default English foot. Know it so you can recognize when a poem departs from it.
Trochee	A stressed syllable followed by an unstressed one (DUM-da).	"TY-ger," "DOU-ble." Blake's "Tyger Tyger, burning bright" is largely trochaic.	A trochaic opening often creates emphasis or urgency. Tested as "the inverted foot in line 1 serves to..."
Anapest	Two unstressed syllables followed by a stressed one (da-da-DUM).	"in the NIGHT," "un-der-STAND." Byron's "The Destruction of Sennacherib" gallops in anapests.	Associated with speed and lightness; a distractor in meter items.
Dactyl	A stressed syllable followed by two unstressed ones (DUM-da-da).	"MUR-mur-ing," "HAP-pi-ly." Longfellow's <i>Evangeline</i> is dactylic.	Rare on the exam; a form-identification distractor.
Spondee	Two stressed syllables (DUM-DUM).	"HEART-BREAK," "DEAD STOP."	Spondees slow and weight a line. Tested as the effect of stressed monosyllables in a key phrase.
Pyrrhic	Two unstressed syllables.	The "of the" in "the surge of the sea."	Rarely tested; completes the set of feet.
Monometer through hexameter	Line lengths of one through six feet; pentameter (five) and tetrameter (four) are most common in English.	Dickinson alternates tetrameter and trimeter; Shakespeare uses pentameter.	Know pentameter and tetrameter; others are mostly distractors.
Iambic pentameter	A line of five iambs, the standard meter of English sonnets and blank verse.	"When I have fears that I may cease to be" (Keats).	The meter you must recognize. Variations from it (a trochaic first foot, a feminine ending) are interpretable.

TERM	DEFINITION	EXAMPLE	HOW IT APPEARS ON THE EXAM
Scansion	The act of marking a line's stresses and feet to identify its meter.	Marking "Shall I / com-PARE / thee TO / a SUM / mer's DAY" as five iambs.	Not tested directly; the skill behind meter items. Count syllables only when a question requires it.
Rhyme	Correspondence of sound between words, usually at line ends.	"day" / "May"; "temperate" / "date."	Basic; the interesting questions concern rhyme that is withheld, slant, or that links meaningful words.
End rhyme	Rhyme at the ends of lines.	Most of Sonnet 18.	Default rhyme; tested through rhyme scheme and through the meaning of rhymed pairs.
Internal rhyme	Rhyme within a single line or between words not at line ends.	Poe's "The Raven": "Once upon a midnight dreary, while I pondered, weak and weary."	"The internal rhyme in line 4 serves to..." Answers involve musicality, emphasis, or binding ideas together.
Slant (approximate, near) rhyme	Imperfect rhyme in which sounds are similar but not identical.	Dickinson's "soul" / "all," "Room" / "Storm."	A favorite Dickinson question: how slant rhyme creates unease, incompleteness, or resistance to closure.
Eye rhyme	Words that look alike but sound different.	"love" / "move"; "cough" / "bough."	Rare; recognize it when a stem calls attention to it.
Masculine / feminine rhyme	Masculine rhyme falls on a final stressed syllable (bound / found); feminine rhyme on a stressed syllable followed by an unstressed one (banding / landing).	Shakespeare's Sonnet 20 uses feminine rhymes throughout.	Occasional distractor; feminine endings can soften or trail off a line.
Rhyme scheme	The pattern of end rhymes in a stanza or poem, marked with letters.	abab cdcd efef gg for a Shakespearean sonnet.	Questions ask you to identify a scheme or to note where it breaks. A broken scheme is a shift signal.
Alliteration	Repetition of initial consonant sounds in nearby words.	Coleridge: "The fair breeze blew, the white foam flew, / The furrow followed free."	Identification items are easy; effect items require you to link the sound to meaning (speed, force, unity). Do not simply say it "creates flow."

TERM	DEFINITION	EXAMPLE	HOW IT APPEARS ON THE EXAM
Assonance	Repetition of vowel sounds in nearby words with different consonants.	Tennyson: "The moan of doves in immemorial elms."	Appears in Roman-numeral or EXCEPT items about sound. Effect: mood, slowness, musicality.
Consonance	Repetition of consonant sounds, especially at the ends or middles of words.	"pitter patter," "struts and frets."	Often paired with assonance in sound items. Harsh consonants can create tension or disgust.
Sibilance	Repetition of s, sh, and soft c sounds.	Keats: "Season of mists and mellow fruitfulness."	Effect items: hush, whisper, menace, softness depending on context.
Onomatopoeia	A word whose sound imitates its meaning.	"buzz," "hiss," "clang"; Tennyson's "murmuring of innumerable bees."	Easy identification; effect is immediacy or sensory presence.
Euphony	Pleasant, harmonious sound, usually from long vowels and soft consonants.	Tennyson's "Lotos-Eaters": "music that gentlier on the spirit lies."	Paired with cacophony in "the sound of lines 1–4 contrasts with lines 5–8 in that..."
Cacophony	Harsh, discordant sound, usually from hard consonants and clustered stops.	Shakespeare's "Blow, winds, and crack your cheeks! rage! blow!"	Tested as the sonic correlate of violence, chaos, or disgust.
Rhythm	The actual pattern of stresses and pauses as spoken, which may vary from the underlying meter.	Frost's conversational blank verse in "Mending Wall."	"The rhythm of the final line is best described as..." Answers describe pace and emphasis.
Cadence	The rise and fall of the voice in reading; the natural rhythm of phrases, especially in free verse.	Whitman's long, breath-length lines.	A descriptor in answer choices for free verse rhythm.
Caesura	A strong pause within a line of verse, often marked by punctuation.	Pope: "To err is human,	
Enjambment*	Running a sentence or phrase past the end of a line without a pause.	Keats's "Bright Star": "Not in lone splendour hung aloft the night / And watching, with eternal lids apart."	A high-value term. Effect items ask what the line break emphasizes or suspends. The word hanging at the line's end usually matters.

TERM	DEFINITION	EXAMPLE	HOW IT APPEARS ON THE EXAM
End-stopped line*	A line that ends with a pause, usually marked by punctuation.	Pope's closed heroic couplets.	Contrasted with enjambment: end-stops create finality, control, or separation.
Line break*	The point where one line of verse ends and the next begins; a unit of meaning in itself.	In Dickinson, line breaks often isolate a single charged word.	The CED treats line breaks as structural choices. Ask what a break puts at the end of a line (emphasis) or at the beginning (surprise).
White space	The visual gaps on the page (between stanzas, within lines, around short lines).	The gaps between sections of Whitman or the stanza breaks of a lyric.	Tested when a poem's layout is unusual; the answer connects space to silence, hesitation, or separation.

3. Figurative Language

The CED's Skill Categories 5 and 6 cover word choice, imagery, symbol, simile, metaphor, personification, and allusion. Together they account for 20–26% of multiple-choice questions and are central to Row B of the essay rubric. The exam's favorite trap is the literal reading of a figurative phrase; its favorite reward is an explanation of what a comparison adds that a literal statement would not.

TERM	DEFINITION	EXAMPLE	HOW IT APPEARS ON THE EXAM
Figurative language*	Language that means something other than, or more than, its literal sense.	"Her words cut him" does not describe a blade.	The CED skill 5.A is "distinguish between literal and figurative meanings." Stems: "The word 'X' is used figuratively to suggest..."
Literal*	The plain, dictionary sense of words.	"The lamp went out" as a statement about a lamp.	Distractors often give the literal reading of a figurative phrase. Eliminate them.
Simile*	An explicit comparison using "like," "as," "as if," or "than."	Burns: "O my Luve is like a red, red rose."	"The simile in line 8 compares X to Y in order to emphasize..." The key names the shared quality and its effect, not just the two things compared.

TERM	DEFINITION	EXAMPLE	HOW IT APPEARS ON THE EXAM
Metaphor*	An implicit comparison stating or implying that one thing is another.	Shakespeare: "All the world's a stage."	The most tested figure. Identify tenor (subject) and vehicle (image), then explain what the vehicle imports.
Extended metaphor*	A metaphor developed across several lines, a stanza, or a whole work.	Dickinson's "Because I could not stop for Death" extends the figure of Death as a courteous carriage driver.	"The extended metaphor of lines 1–10 presents X as..." Track how each new detail of the vehicle adds to the comparison.
Conceit*	An elaborate, surprising, intellectually ingenious extended metaphor, especially in metaphysical poetry.	Donne's compass in "A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning": two lovers as the fixed and moving feet.	"The poem's major conceit is..." Also a sophistication opportunity: how the conceit's strangeness fits the speaker's attitude.
Personification*	Giving human qualities, actions, or feelings to nonhuman things or abstractions.	Keats's "To Autumn": autumn "sitting careless on a granary floor."	CED skill 6.C. "The personification in line 12 has the effect of..." Strong answers say which human quality is granted and why that matters.
Anthropomorphism	Treating an animal or object as if it had a fully human mind and speech.	Aesop's talking animals; Ted Hughes's speaking hawk.	A near-synonym distractor for personification; anthropomorphism is more total.
Apostrophe	Direct address to an absent person, an abstraction, or an inanimate object.	Donne: "Death, be not proud." Keats: "Thou still unravish'd bride of quietness."	Frequently tested: "Line 1 is an example of..." and "The effect of addressing the X directly is to..." Signals: "O," "thou," imperatives aimed at a thing.
Allusion*	A reference to another work, person, place, or event the reader is expected to recognize.	Hardy's "The Convergence of the Twain" alludes to the Titanic; Milton alludes constantly to Scripture.	CED skill 6.D. "The allusion to X serves to..." Footnotes often gloss the allusion; use them.
Symbol*	A concrete object, image, or action that also stands for a larger idea.	Hawthorne's scarlet letter; the black veil in "The Minister's Black Veil."	CED skill 5.C. "The X functions as a symbol of..." Distractors overreach. A symbol has to be anchored in how the text treats the object.

TERM	DEFINITION	EXAMPLE	HOW IT APPEARS ON THE EXAM
Image / imagery*	Language that appeals to the senses: sight, sound, touch, smell, taste, and movement.	Keats's "To Autumn" is dense with sensory detail: "the maturing sun," "the fume of poppies."	CED skill 5.D. Stems: "The imagery in lines 20–24 primarily appeals to the sense of ___ in order to..." Imagery items often use EXCEPT format.
Visual / auditory / tactile / olfactory / gustatory / kinesthetic imagery	Imagery of sight, sound, touch, smell, taste, and bodily movement respectively.	Dickinson's "I heard a Fly buzz" is auditory; Keats's "Ode to a Nightingale" is rich in gustatory imagery ("a beaker full of the warm South").	EXCEPT items: "All of the following types of imagery appear EXCEPT..." Check each sense against the text.
Metonymy	Substituting the name of something closely associated for the thing itself.	"The crown" for the monarchy; "the pen is mightier than the sword."	Tested as device identification, often paired with synecdoche as a near-miss distractor.
Synecdoche	Using a part to stand for the whole, or the whole for a part.	"All hands on deck"; "wheels" for a car.	Distractor partner to metonymy. If the substituted term is a physical part, it is synecdoche.
Synesthesia	Describing one sense in terms of another.	Keats: "sunburnt mirth"; "a draught of vintage... tasting of Flora."	Appears in sound/imagery items; effect is intensity or blurred perception.
Hyperbole	Deliberate exaggeration for emphasis or humor.	Marvell: "An hundred years should go to praise / Thine eyes."	"The exaggeration in lines 5–8 serves to..." Note whether the hyperbole is sincere, playful, or ironic.
Understatement	Deliberately presenting something as less significant than it is.	Mercutio's "Ay, ay, a scratch, a scratch" after a fatal wound.	Tone items: understatement often signals restraint, irony, or stoicism.
Litotes	Understatement by negating the opposite.	"Not bad" for "very good"; Beowulf's "that was not a good trade."	A specific form of understatement; recognize the double negative pattern.
Paradox	A statement that seems self-contradictory but reveals a truth.	Donne: "Death, thou shalt die." Wordsworth: "The Child is father of the Man."	Sophistication territory. "The paradox in line 14 suggests..." Explaining how both halves are true earns commentary points.

TERM	DEFINITION	EXAMPLE	HOW IT APPEARS ON THE EXAM
Oxymoron	Two contradictory words placed together.	Romeo's "loving hate," "heavy lightness"; Keats's "sweet unrest."	Easy identification; in essays, explain what tension the pairing captures.
Pun	A play on words with multiple meanings or similar sounds.	Mercutio: "Ask for me tomorrow, and you shall find me a grave man."	Tested in Shakespeare passages especially; the question asks what second meaning is activated.
Double entendre	A phrase with two meanings, one often risqué or hidden.	Many of Shakespeare's comic exchanges.	Rare on the exam; related to pun and ambiguity.
Allegory	A narrative in which characters, settings, and events consistently stand for abstractions or a second level of meaning.	Bunyan's <i>The Pilgrim's Progress</i> ; Spenser's <i>The Faerie Queene</i> .	"The passage can best be read as an allegory of..." Distractors overstate; a few symbols do not make an allegory.
Analogy	An extended comparison explaining something unfamiliar through something familiar.	(original) "Grief works like a tide: it recedes, and you forget it is coming back."	Less common than metaphor as a term; the question is what the comparison clarifies.
Euphemism	A mild or indirect term substituted for a blunt one.	"Passed away" for "died"; "let go" for "fired."	Tone and character items: a character's euphemisms reveal evasion or politeness.
Connotation*	The emotional or cultural associations a word carries beyond its dictionary meaning.	"Slender" vs. "scrawny" vs. "thin."	Central to word-choice items: "The connotation of 'X' in line 5 suggests..." In essays, commentary on connotation is a reliable route to Row B points.
Denotation*	A word's literal dictionary meaning.	"Thin" denotes having little flesh or width.	Paired with connotation; "most nearly means" items ask for the contextual denotation.
Diction*	An author's or speaker's choice of words, characterized by register (formal, colloquial), concreteness, and connotation.	Hemingway's plain monosyllables vs. James's Latinate abstractions.	"The diction of the passage is best described as..." (paired adjectives). In essays, never write "the author uses diction"; name the specific words and their quality.

TERM	DEFINITION	EXAMPLE	HOW IT APPEARS ON THE EXAM
Syntax*	The arrangement of words into phrases and sentences: length, order, complexity.	Faulkner's long subordinated sentences; Dickinson's dashes and fragments.	"The syntax of lines 29–31 could best be characterized as..." Effect: pace, emphasis, a mind's movement.
Inversion	Reversal of normal word order.	Milton: "Of Man's first disobedience... Sing, Heavenly Muse."	Tested in older poetry; effect is emphasis on the displaced word or an elevated register.
Rhetorical question	A question asked for effect, not for an answer.	Shelley: "O Wind, / If Winter comes, can Spring be far behind?"	"The question in line 7 serves to..." Note whether it expresses doubt, certainty, or challenge.
Aphorism	A terse, memorable statement of a general truth.	Pope: "A little learning is a dangerous thing."	Style descriptor ("aphoristic"); also a character trait when a speaker relies on maxims.
Epigraph	A quotation placed at the beginning of a work or chapter to set a theme.	The Dante lines prefacing Eliot's "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock."	Occasionally included with a poem; it is evidence. Ask how it frames the reading.
Epithet	A descriptive phrase attached to a name or thing.	Homer's "rosy-fingered dawn"; "Richard the Lionheart."	Rare; a distractor in device items.
Zeugma	One word (usually a verb) governing two or more others in different senses.	Pope: "Or stain her honour, or her new brocade."	Rare, witty; appears in 18th-century satire passages.
Polysyndeton	Deliberate use of many conjunctions.	"And the rain fell, and the wind rose, and the roof groaned" (original).	Effect: accumulation, breathlessness, biblical weight.
Asyndeton	Deliberate omission of conjunctions.	"I came, I saw, I conquered."	Effect: speed, abruptness, finality. Often a paired distractor with polysyndeton.
Anaphora	Repetition of a word or phrase at the beginning of successive clauses or lines.	Whitman's "I hear America singing"; Blake's "In every cry of every Man, / In every Infant's cry of fear."	"The repetition of 'X' at the start of lines 3–6 emphasizes..." Effect: insistence, ritual, building force.
Epistrophe	Repetition at the ends of successive clauses.	Lincoln: "of the people, by the people, for the people."	Partner distractor for anaphora.

TERM	DEFINITION	EXAMPLE	HOW IT APPEARS ON THE EXAM
Chiasmus	A reversal of grammatical structure in successive phrases.	Pope: "His time a moment, and a point his space."	Rare; signals balance, wit, or reversal.
Antithesis	Juxtaposition of contrasting ideas in parallel structure.	Dickens: "It was the best of times, it was the worst of times."	Structure and tone items; effect is sharp contrast or balance.
Parallelism	Repetition of grammatical structure for balance and emphasis.	The Psalms; Whitman's catalogues.	"The parallel structure in lines 12–15 serves to..." Effect: equivalence, rhythm, accumulation.
Repetition*	Any recurrence of words, phrases, images, or structures.	The repeated "nevermore" in Poe's "The Raven."	The CED notes repetition as a structural choice. Always ask what changes with each recurrence.
Ambiguity*	Deliberate openness to more than one meaning.	The last lines of Frost's "Stopping by Woods" ("And miles to go before I sleep") can be literal or mortal.	Sophistication opportunity. Unit 8 explicitly treats ambiguity and multiple interpretations. Account for both readings rather than picking one.
Pathos	An appeal to the audience's emotions, especially pity.	Little Nell's death in Dickens's <i>The Old Curiosity Shop</i> .	Tone descriptor; sometimes contrasted with bathos.
Bathos	An unintended or deliberate drop from the sublime to the ridiculous.	Pope's mock-epic deflations.	Appears in satire items; the effect is comic collapse.
Verisimilitude	The appearance of being true or real.	The documentary detail of Defoe's <i>Robinson Crusoe</i> .	Rare; a descriptor in answers about realism.
Anachronism	Something placed outside its proper historical time.	A clock striking in <i>Julius Caesar</i> .	Rare; recognize the term.

4. Narrative and Point of View

Skill Category 4 (narrator or speaker) is the largest single category on the multiple-choice section at 21–26%. The exam tests who tells, from what distance, with what reliability, and how that filter shapes what you are shown. In the prose essay (Q2), the Chief Reader repeatedly notes that students ignore the narrator; noticing narrative stance is one of the fastest ways to raise a Q2 score.

TERM	DEFINITION	EXAMPLE	HOW IT APPEARS ON THE EXAM
Narrator*	The voice that tells a story; not to be confused with the author.	Nick Carraway in <i>The Great Gatsby</i> ; Pip in <i>Great Expectations</i> .	CED skill 4.A. "The narrator is best described as..." Even a third-person narrator has a personality and a stance.
Speaker*	The voice of a poem; not to be confused with the poet.	The Duke in "My Last Duchess" is not Browning.	Always write "the speaker," not "the poet," when discussing attitude within a poem.
Point of view*	The vantage from which a story is told: first, second, or third person, and the degree of access to characters' minds.	<i>Jane Eyre</i> is first person; <i>Pride and Prejudice</i> is third person with free indirect discourse.	CED skill 4.B. "The point of view of the passage is best described as..." and "The use of the first-person plural primarily..."
First-person narration	Narration by an "I" who is a character in the story.	<i>Jane Eyre</i> ; <i>Huckleberry Finn</i> ; "The Yellow Wallpaper."	Questions probe reliability, limited knowledge, and the gap between the narrating self and the experiencing self.
Second-person narration	Narration addressed to "you," making the reader a participant or addressee.	Rare in pre-1929 fiction; common in modern stories.	Occasional; the question asks what the "you" does (implicates the reader, distances the self).
Third-person omniscient	A narrator outside the story with access to all characters' thoughts and to information beyond any one character.	George Eliot's <i>Middlemarch</i> ; Tolstoy.	The 2024 Chief Reader noted students missed an omniscient narrator's irony. Ask what the narrator knows that characters do not, and how the narrator judges.
Third-person limited	A narrator outside the story confined to one character's perceptions.	James's <i>What Maisie Knew</i> ; much of Joyce's <i>Dubliners</i> .	Questions ask what the limitation hides or emphasizes.
Objective (dramatic) point of view	Third-person narration that reports only what can be seen and heard, without entering any mind.	Hemingway's "Hills Like White Elephants" (1927).	"The narrator's refusal to interpret serves to..." Effect: the reader infers; tension lives in gaps.
Narrative distance*	How close or far the narrator stands from the characters and events, emotionally and in time.	A middle-aged Pip narrating his childhood; an ironic Austen narrator above her characters.	The CED names this in Units 4 and 7. Tested as tone: detached, intimate, retrospective, ironic.

TERM	DEFINITION	EXAMPLE	HOW IT APPEARS ON THE EXAM
Perspective*	A character's or narrator's way of seeing, shaped by background, values, and situation.	Huck's perspective makes slavery visible in ways adults around him cannot see.	CED skill 4.C: details, diction, and syntax that "reveal a narrator's or speaker's perspective."
Unreliable narrator*	A narrator whose account the reader has reason to doubt because of bias, ignorance, self-deception, or instability.	The narrator of Poe's "The Tell-Tale Heart"; Browning's Duke.	CED skill 4.D. "The narrator's reliability is called into question by..." Look for contradiction between what is claimed and what is shown.
Stream of consciousness*	Narration that presents a character's thoughts as a continuous, associative flow.	Molly Bloom's monologue in Joyce's <i>Ulysses</i> ; Woolf's <i>Mrs Dalloway</i> .	Named in Units 4 and 7. Questions: how the syntax mimics thought; what the associations reveal.
Interior monologue	A direct presentation of a character's inner speech, more organized than stream of consciousness.	Hamlet's soliloquies in prose form; passages in James.	A near-synonym distractor; the difference is degree of order.
Free indirect discourse	Third-person narration that slips into a character's idiom and thought without quotation marks or "she thought."	Austen's <i>Emma</i> : "Emma was not required, by any subsequent discovery, to retract her ill opinion of Mrs. Elton."	High-value for Austen, Joyce, and Woolf passages. Questions ask whose voice a sentence belongs to and whether the narrator endorses it.
Frame narrative	A story within a story; an outer narrator introduces an inner tale.	<i>Frankenstein</i> (Walton frames Victor frames the Creature); <i>Heart of Darkness</i> ; <i>Wuthering Heights</i> .	"The function of the opening paragraph in relation to the rest of the passage is to..." The frame often distances or qualifies the inner tale.
Flashback*	A scene from an earlier time inserted into the present narrative.	Catherine's diary in <i>Wuthering Heights</i> ; memory passages in Woolf.	CED Units 4 and 7 treat flashback as a structural choice. Ask what the juxtaposition of past and present reveals.
Foreshadowing*	Hints of what is to come.	The storm before the murder in <i>Macbeth</i> ; the fog in <i>Bleak House</i> .	"The description in lines 1–6 foreshadows..." Distractors overreach beyond what the text actually hints.

TERM	DEFINITION	EXAMPLE	HOW IT APPEARS ON THE EXAM
In medias res	Beginning a narrative in the middle of the action.	<i>Paradise Lost</i> opens after the fall of the rebel angels.	Structure items on openings: what the reader must infer about prior events.
Exposition	The part of a narrative that establishes setting, characters, and situation.	The first chapter of <i>Pride and Prejudice</i> .	"The first paragraph primarily serves to..." Expository passages are common in Q2 excerpts.
Rising action	The sequence of events building tension toward the climax.	The escalating confrontations in <i>Othello</i> .	Plot vocabulary used in Q3 planning; rarely a stem itself.
Climax	The point of highest tension or the decisive turning point.	Jane's refusal of St. John Rivers; the battle royal in <i>Invisible Man</i> .	Q3: identify the pivotal moment rather than retelling the plot.
Falling action	Events following the climax that move toward resolution.	The aftermath of Duncan's murder as Macbeth unravels.	Plot vocabulary; rarely tested directly.
Resolution / denouement*	The final unraveling and settling of the plot.	The marriages ending <i>Pride and Prejudice</i> .	"The passage's final sentence functions as..." Open or ambiguous endings are sophistication territory.
Pacing*	The speed at which a narrative moves, controlled by sentence length, dialogue, summary, and scene.	Hemingway's clipped dialogue vs. James's slow interiority.	Named in CED Units 4 and 7. "The shift to short sentences in paragraph 3 serves to..."
Epiphany	A sudden moment of insight or revelation experienced by a character.	Gabriel's realization at the end of Joyce's "The Dead."	Q2 passages often build to an epiphany; Q3 often asks about a pivotal moment.
Bildungsroman	A novel of formation tracing a protagonist's growth from youth to maturity.	<i>Jane Eyre</i> ; <i>Great Expectations</i> ; <i>A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man</i> .	The 2013 Q3 asked for a pivotal moment in a bildungsroman. Know the term and two examples.
Picaresque	An episodic narrative following a roguish, lower-class hero through a series of adventures.	<i>Tom Jones</i> ; <i>Huckleberry Finn</i> in part.	Genre identification; rare.

TERM	DEFINITION	EXAMPLE	HOW IT APPEARS ON THE EXAM
Epistolary	A narrative told through letters (or diary entries, documents).	Richardson's <i>Pamela</i> ; parts of <i>Frankenstein</i> and <i>Dracula</i> .	Questions ask what the letter form adds: intimacy, limited knowledge, self-presentation.
Satire	Writing that ridicules folly or vice, usually to correct it.	Swift's <i>A Modest Proposal</i> ; Austen's social comedy.	"The passage is best described as..." and tone items (satiric, mocking, sardonic). Distinguish gentle from savage satire.
Parody	Imitation of a specific work or style for comic effect.	Fielding's <i>Shamela</i> parodies Richardson's <i>Pamela</i> .	Genre distractor; recognize when a passage mimics a recognizable style.
Mood / atmosphere	The emotional feeling a text creates in the reader.	The oppressive gloom of Poe's "The Fall of the House of Usher."	Distinguish from tone (the speaker's attitude). "The mood of lines 1-8 is best described as..."
Tone*	The speaker's or narrator's attitude toward the subject, characters, or audience.	Austen's ironic amusement toward Mrs. Bennet.	The single most tested concept. See Section 9 and the companion Tone and Attitude Word Bank.
Theme	The central insight or idea a work develops about human experience, stated as a full sentence.	<i>Frankenstein</i> suggests that creation without responsibility breeds destruction.	A theme is not a topic ("ambition") but a claim. On Q3, the thesis must state what the work argues through the prompt's concept.
Subject vs. theme	The subject is what a work is about; the theme is what it says about that subject.	Subject: memory. Theme: memory can imprison those who refuse to revise it.	Theses that name only a subject fail Row A.
Motif*	A recurring image, object, phrase, or situation that accumulates meaning across a work.	Blood in <i>Macbeth</i> ; the green light in <i>Gatsby</i> ; windows in <i>Wuthering Heights</i> .	Named in CED Units 6 and 9. Q3 often rewards tracing a motif across the work as a whole.
Persona	The voice or mask an author adopts in a work.	Swift's "projector" in <i>A Modest Proposal</i> .	Related to speaker; the question asks what the persona allows the author to say.
Digression / interruption	A departure from the main narrative line.	Sterne's <i>Tristram Shandy</i> is built from digressions.	CED Structure notes "interruption/digression." "The parenthetical remark in line 30 serves to..."

5. Character

Skill Category 1 accounts for 16–20% of multiple-choice questions and is the backbone of Q2 and Q3. The exam's characteristic question is not "what is this character like?" but "what do these specific details reveal, and what is the function of this contrast, change, or inconsistency?"

TERM	DEFINITION	EXAMPLE	HOW IT APPEARS ON THE EXAM
Protagonist	The central character whose choices drive the narrative.	Jane Eyre; Okonkwo; Hamlet.	Q3 planning vocabulary; in Q2, remember the Chief Reader's warning against tunnel vision on the protagonist.
Antagonist	The character or force opposing the protagonist.	Iago; society in <i>The Awakening</i> ; the Party in <i>1984</i> .	Conflict items; the antagonist may be internal or abstract.
Characterization*	The methods by which an author reveals a character: direct statement, speech, action, appearance, thoughts, and others' reactions.	Austen tells us Mr. Collins is "not a sensible man" (direct) and then lets his letter prove it (indirect).	CED skill 1.A. "In lines 12–15, the narrator characterizes X as..." Paired-adjective answer sets are the norm.
Direct characterization	The narrator explicitly states a character's traits.	"Mrs. Bennet was a woman of mean understanding, little information, and uncertain temper."	Questions ask whether the narrator's direct judgment is reliable or ironic.
Indirect characterization	Traits revealed through speech, action, appearance, thought, and effect on others.	Mr. Collins's proposal speech reveals his vanity.	The richer source of evidence. CED skill 1.E: "a character's own choices, actions, and speech reveal complexities."
Motive / motivation*	The reasons behind a character's actions.	Macbeth's ambition; Heathcliff's revenge.	CED skill 1.A names motives. "X's remark in line 22 reveals that X..."
Dynamic character*	A character who changes significantly over the course of the work.	Pip; Scrooge; Elizabeth Bennet.	CED skill 1.B: "the function of a character changing or remaining unchanged."
Static character*	A character who remains essentially the same.	Mr. Collins; Joe Gargery.	The function of not changing can be a foil or a moral anchor. Both halves of 1.B matter.

TERM	DEFINITION	EXAMPLE	HOW IT APPEARS ON THE EXAM
Round character	A complex, many-sided character capable of surprising the reader.	Emma Woodhouse; Hamlet.	The word "complex" in every FRQ prompt points here: find the contradictions.
Flat character	A character defined by one or two traits.	Dickens's minor comic figures.	Often functions as a foil or a type; its flatness is a choice.
Stock character / stereotype	A conventional type recognizable across many works (the miser, the braggart soldier, the wicked stepmother).	Malvolio as the puritanical killjoy.	The 1975 Q3 asked how a stereotyped character serves the author's purpose.
Foil*	A character who contrasts with another, highlighting the other's traits.	Laertes and Fortinbras for Hamlet; Jane Bennet for Elizabeth.	CED skill 1.C. "The contrast between X and Y serves primarily to..." Q3 2008 asked about a minor character as foil.
Confidant(e)	A character to whom the protagonist reveals private thoughts, often enabling exposition.	Horatio; Nelly Dean in part.	The 1992 Q3 asked about the functions of a confidante.
Antihero	A protagonist lacking conventional heroic qualities.	Meursault in <i>The Stranger</i> ; Jimmy Porter.	Q3 vocabulary; the question is what the lack of heroism reveals.
Tragic hero	A protagonist of high stature whose downfall results from a flaw or error and evokes pity and fear.	Oedipus; Macbeth; Othello; Willy Loman (contested).	Q3 2003 asked for a tragic figure instrumental in others' suffering. Define the term for your text.
Hamartia (tragic flaw)	The error or flaw that brings about the tragic hero's downfall.	Oedipus's pride and relentless pursuit of truth; Othello's jealousy.	Avoid treating it as a simple "flaw"; the Greek sense includes error in judgment.
Hubris	Excessive pride or self-confidence, especially defiance of the gods or limits.	Victor Frankenstein's ambition; Creon in <i>Antigone</i> .	Tone and character items; also a Q3 concept.
Catharsis	The purging of pity and fear the audience experiences at a tragedy's end.	The close of <i>King Lear</i> .	Drama vocabulary; rarely a stem but useful in Q3 conclusions.

TERM	DEFINITION	EXAMPLE	HOW IT APPEARS ON THE EXAM
Anagnorisis	The moment of recognition or discovery when a character understands the truth.	Oedipus learning his identity; Othello learning of Iago's deceit.	Often the pivotal moment a Q3 prompt asks about.
Peripeteia	A reversal of fortune.	Oedipus's fall from king to outcast.	Paired with anagnorisis in tragic structure.
Conflict*	The struggle between opposing forces: internal (within a character) or external (character vs. character, society, nature, fate).	Hamlet's indecision (internal); Antigone vs. Creon (external).	CED skill 3.F: "The central conflict of the passage is best described as..."
Internal conflict	A struggle within a character between competing desires, values, or fears.	Huck's torn conscience over Jim.	Prompts' "complex" often points to internal conflict.
External conflict	A struggle between a character and an outside force.	Okonkwo vs. colonial power; Lear vs. his daughters.	Note how external conflict exposes internal conflict.
Character relationship*	The dynamic between two or more characters, often revealing values and power.	Henchard and Elizabeth-Jane (2016 Q2); Lydgate and Rosamond.	CED skill 1.D: "nuances and complexities in characters' relationships." Q2 prompts frequently ask about a "complex relationship."
Inconsistency*	Contradictions in a character's words, actions, or values.	Emma's intelligence paired with blindness about herself.	CED Units 6 and 9 name inconsistency as a source of complexity. In essays, treat inconsistency as evidence, not confusion.
Values	What a character holds important, revealed through choices and speech.	Mr. Darcy's pride in family; Lily Bart's need for luxury.	CHR-1: characters let readers "explore a range of values, beliefs, assumptions, biases, and cultural norms."
Dialogue	Conversation between characters.	Austen's drawing-room exchanges; Hemingway's spare talk.	"The dialogue in lines 36–38 could best be characterized as..." What is unsaid often matters most.

TERM	DEFINITION	EXAMPLE	HOW IT APPEARS ON THE EXAM
Epiphany (of character)	A character's sudden realization that changes understanding.	Gabriel Conroy's in "The Dead."	See Section 4; in character terms, the question is whether the realization changes behavior.
Doppelgänger / double	A character who mirrors or shadows another, often as a dark twin.	Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde; Victor and the Creature.	Q3 and archetype vocabulary; see Section 10.

6. Setting

Setting is a small slice of the multiple-choice section (3–6%) but a large source of essay evidence. The CED insists that setting “not only depict[s] a time and place, but also convey[s] values associated with that setting,” and that the relationship between a character and a setting is itself interpretable.

TERM	DEFINITION	EXAMPLE	HOW IT APPEARS ON THE EXAM
Setting*	The time, place, and social circumstances in which a narrative occurs.	The moors of <i>Wuthering Heights</i> ; the drawing rooms of Austen.	CED skill 2.A/2.B. “The setting of the passage functions mainly to...”
Social / cultural / historical context	The customs, values, and events of the world in which the story is set.	The marriage market of Regency England; Reconstruction-era Georgia.	SET-1: settings “convey values.” A Q3 sophistication route is situating the work in its historical moment.
Atmosphere	The pervasive emotional quality of a setting.	The decay of the House of Usher.	Overlaps with mood; “The details of the landscape most directly emphasize the speaker’s...”
Character–setting relationship*	How a character relates to, is shaped by, or resists a place.	Lutie Johnson and the street (2009 Q2); Estrella and the fields (2012 Q2).	CED skill 2.C. Q2 prompts have asked directly about a character's relationship to an urban or rural setting.
Pathetic fallacy	Attributing human feelings to nature so that weather or landscape mirrors emotion.	The storm during Lear's madness; rain at funerals.	Questions: “The shift in weather between paragraphs mirrors...”
Locale	The specific physical place of a scene.	Satis House; the Congo River.	Setting items begin with locale; the point is what it reveals.
Milieu	The social environment of a story.	The Parisian salons of Proust; the Harlem of Ellison.	Tone and value items about the social world.

TERM	DEFINITION	EXAMPLE	HOW IT APPEARS ON THE EXAM
Microcosm	A small setting that represents a larger society.	The ship in <i>Moby-Dick</i> ; the island in <i>Lord of the Flies</i> .	Q3 vocabulary for how a setting carries the work's meaning.
Liminal space	A threshold or in-between place (doorway, shore, dusk) often marking transition.	The beach in <i>The Awakening</i> ; the threshold in Dickinson's poems.	Useful in commentary on settings that mark change.
Pastoral vs. urban	The contrast between idealized country and corrupt or energetic city.	Blake's "London" vs. his pastoral <i>Innocence</i> ; Dickens's Coketown.	1991 Q3 asked about contrasting places representing opposed forces.
Interior vs. exterior	The contrast between enclosed, domestic spaces and the outside world.	Jane Eyre's red-room vs. the moors; the nursery in "The Yellow Wallpaper."	A Pearson-style stem: "the interplay of interior and exterior imagery." Settings often mirror a character's mind.
Time of day / season	Temporal setting carrying conventional associations (dawn, dusk, winter).	Keats's "To Autumn"; Frost's winter evenings.	"The setting at twilight contributes to..." Watch for seasons as life stages (see Section 10).

7. Structure

Skill Category 3 (plot and structure) is 16–20% of the multiple-choice section, and it is where the exam's "shift" questions live. The CED defines structure as "the arrangement of the parts and sections of a text, the relationship of the parts to each other, and the sequence in which the text reveals information."

TERM	DEFINITION	EXAMPLE	HOW IT APPEARS ON THE EXAM
Structure*	The arrangement of a text's parts and the order in which information is revealed.	A sonnet's octave/sestet; a story told backward.	CED skill 3.C. "The structure of the passage can best be described as..."
Sequence*	The order in which events or ideas are presented.	Chronological vs. nonlinear.	CED skill 3.B: "the function of a particular sequence of events."
Chronology	The time order of events.	Linear in Austen; scrambled in Faulkner.	Questions about flashback and nonlinear narrative.
Nonlinear narrative	A narrative that does not present events in time order.	<i>Wuthering Heights</i> (nested, retrospective); <i>The Sound and the Fury</i> .	"The function of beginning with the ending is to..."

TERM	DEFINITION	EXAMPLE	HOW IT APPEARS ON THE EXAM
Juxtaposition*	Placing two elements side by side to invite comparison or contrast.	The ball and the slaughterhouse in <i>Madame Bovary</i> ; two stanzas of opposite mood.	CED skill 3.D. "By placing X beside Y, the author..." A commentary staple.
Contrast*	Difference between elements emphasized by their pairing.	Innocence and Experience in Blake; two sisters in <i>Sense and Sensibility</i> .	"The contrast between X and Y serves primarily to..." The CED names "function of contrasts within a text."
Shift*	A change in tone, speaker, tense, setting, perspective, or subject.	The volta in a sonnet; a paragraph break where a narrator moves from description to judgment.	The most important structural concept. Stems: "The shift in line 9 signals..."; "The poem moves from ___ to ___." Essays should be built around the shift.
Turn	See volta; used for any decisive pivot in a poem or passage.	"But there the likeness ends" in Ridge's "To a Star Seen at Twilight" (2024 Q1).	The 2024 Chief Reader noted students missed this turn. Mark every "but," "yet," "still," "now."
Parallelism (structural)	Repetition of a structural pattern across sections.	Three stanzas each beginning with a question.	"Stanza 3 most nearly parallels..."
Framing	Opening and closing a text with related material.	A poem that begins and ends with the same image, changed.	"The final stanza returns to the opening image in order to..."
Circular structure	A text that ends where it began.	<i>Finnegans Wake</i> ; many lyrics.	The return invites a question about what has changed.
Episodic structure	A narrative built from loosely connected episodes.	<i>Don Quixote</i> ; <i>Huckleberry Finn</i> .	Genre item; the function is often cumulative or satiric.
Climactic order	Arrangement building to the most important item last.	A list ending with the gravest term.	"The order of the items in lines 5–8 suggests..."
Anticlimax	A deflating drop after a buildup.	A grand list ending in triviality (Pope's "puffs, powders, patches, bibles, billet-doux").	Satire and tone items.
Exposition / rising action / climax / falling action / resolution	The classic plot arc (Freytag's pyramid).	Any conventional novel.	Q3 planning vocabulary; avoid retelling. See Section 4.

TERM	DEFINITION	EXAMPLE	HOW IT APPEARS ON THE EXAM
Subplot	A secondary story line that parallels or contrasts with the main plot.	Gloucester's story in <i>King Lear</i> .	Q3: how a subplot illuminates the main action.
Pacing	See Section 4.	Rapid dialogue vs. slow description.	"The long sentence in lines 10–14 slows the pace in order to..."
Interruption	A break in the expected flow (a dash, a parenthesis, an intruding voice).	Dickinson's dashes; Sterne's asides.	"The parenthetical remark in line 30 serves to..."
Ending (open / closed)	A closed ending resolves; an open ending leaves questions.	<i>Pride and Prejudice</i> (closed) vs. "The Lady with the Dog" (open).	1973 Q3 asked whether an ending provides closure. Open endings invite sophistication commentary.
Title*	The name of a work, often a lens on its meaning.	"The Convergence of the Twain" (2002 Q1); "One Art" (1980 Q1).	The Chief Reader urges students to "take advantage of the title." Titles have been the subject of Q1 and Q3 prompts.
Chunking	Dividing a text into movements or idea units for analysis.	Reading a sonnet as 4-4-4-2 or 8-6.	Not a tested term but the skill behind structure items; chunk by thought, not just by stanza.
Catalogue	A list, often long, used for accumulation or scope.	Whitman's lists; Homer's catalogue of ships.	"The list in lines 12–20 serves to..." Effect: abundance, democracy, overwhelm.
Tension*	Opposing pulls within a text that create interest and complexity.	Love and resentment in a single speaker; order and chaos in a plot.	Unit 8: "how structure creates tension." The sophistication rubric rewards exploring "complexities or tensions."
Resolution of tension	How, or whether, a text releases its opposing pulls.	A couplet that reconciles; an ending that refuses to.	"The final lines resolve the tension of the poem by..." or "fail to resolve."

8. Drama

One drama excerpt per multiple-choice exam is typical. Drama counts as prose fiction for Q2 purposes and is a legitimate Q3 choice ("work of fiction" includes plays). Drama questions test what a form without a narrator does instead: stage directions, asides, soliloquies, and the gap between what characters say and what the audience

knows.

TERM	DEFINITION	EXAMPLE	HOW IT APPEARS ON THE EXAM
Soliloquy	A speech in which a character alone on stage speaks thoughts aloud.	Hamlet's "To be, or not to be"; Macbeth's "Tomorrow, and tomorrow, and tomorrow."	Soliloquies have been used as Q1 "poems" (1990, 2009). Questions treat the speaker as a lyric speaker: attitude, shift, figurative language.
Monologue	An extended speech by one character to others on stage.	Mark Antony's funeral oration.	Distinguish from soliloquy (alone) and aside (brief, to audience).
Aside	A brief remark to the audience or to oneself, unheard by other characters.	Iago's asides revealing his schemes.	"The aside in line 12 reveals..." Effect: dramatic irony, intimacy with the audience.
Dialogue	Exchange of speech between characters.	The proposal scene in <i>The Importance of Being Earnest</i> .	Pacing and characterization items; what is left unsaid.
Stage directions	The playwright's instructions for action, gesture, setting, and tone, usually in italics or brackets.	Shaw's long descriptive directions; Ibsen's precise domestic settings.	"The stage directions reveal..." A recurring drama item. Treat directions as the playwright's narrative voice.
Act / scene	Major and minor divisions of a play.	Five acts in Shakespeare; three in Ibsen.	Headnotes tell you where an excerpt falls; use that to infer what the audience already knows.
Tragedy	A serious drama in which a protagonist of stature falls through error, fate, or flaw.	<i>Oedipus Rex</i> ; <i>Hamlet</i> ; <i>Death of a Salesman</i> (modern).	Q3 vocabulary; see tragic hero, hamartia, catharsis in Section 5.
Comedy	A drama that ends in reconciliation, often marriage, and treats human folly with amusement.	<i>Twelfth Night</i> ; <i>The Importance of Being Earnest</i> .	Tone items (comic, satiric, farcical); the structure of misunderstanding and resolution.
Tragicomedy	A play mixing tragic and comic elements.	<i>The Winter's Tale</i> ; Chekhov's plays.	Genre item; the question is how the mixture affects tone.
Comic relief	A humorous scene or character placed amid serious action to release tension.	The Porter in <i>Macbeth</i> ; the gravediggers in <i>Hamlet</i> .	"The function of the Porter's speech is to..." Note that comic relief often darkly echoes the main action.

TERM	DEFINITION	EXAMPLE	HOW IT APPEARS ON THE EXAM
Dramatic irony	The audience knows something a character does not.	Oedipus vows to find the murderer he himself is; Duncan praises Macbeth's castle.	The most tested drama concept. "The irony of line 20 depends on the audience's knowledge that..."
Deus ex machina	An improbable intervention that resolves the plot.	The god descending in Euripides; a sudden inheritance.	Rare; a genre or structure distractor.
Chorus	In Greek drama, a group that comments on the action; in later drama, any commenting figure.	The chorus of Theban elders in <i>Antigone</i> ; the Chorus in <i>Henry V</i> .	"The Chorus's speech serves to..." Function: frame, moralize, foreshadow.
Foil (dramatic)	See Section 5; especially common in drama.	Laertes to Hamlet; Banquo to Macbeth.	"The exchange between X and Y highlights X's..."
Exposition (dramatic)	Opening material that establishes situation, often through dialogue.	Horatio and the guards in <i>Hamlet</i> Act 1.	"The opening exchange primarily serves to..."
Subplot	See Section 7.	The Gloucester plot in <i>Lear</i> .	Q3: how a subplot mirrors the main plot.
Catharsis / hubris / tragic flaw	See Section 5.	—	Drama vocabulary that migrates into Q3 essays.
Unities	The classical ideals of unity of action, time, and place.	Racine's tragedies observe them; Shakespeare does not.	Rare; recognize the term.
Farce	Broad comedy of improbable situations, physical humor, and mistaken identity.	Wilde's handbag plot; Molière.	Tone descriptor; "farcical."
Melodrama	Drama of exaggerated emotion, clear villains, and sensational plot.	Victorian stage melodrama; elements in Dickens.	Tone descriptor; "melodramatic" is usually a criticism or a self-aware effect.
Theater of the absurd	Drama presenting human existence as meaningless, through illogical plots and language.	Beckett's <i>Waiting for Godot</i> ; Ionesco.	Q3 vocabulary for modern plays; the question is how absurdity makes meaning.
Blocking / staging	The physical arrangement and movement of actors.	Nora's final exit and the door slam in <i>A Doll's House</i> .	Implied by stage directions; "the physical separation of the characters suggests..."

TERM	DEFINITION	EXAMPLE	HOW IT APPEARS ON THE EXAM
Verse vs. prose (in drama)	Shakespeare's characters shift between blank verse and prose by status, mood, or sanity.	Hamlet speaks prose to Polonius and verse in soliloquy.	"The shift from verse to prose signals..." A high-value Shakespeare item.
Equivocation	Deliberately ambiguous language with double meaning.	The witches' prophecies in <i>Macbeth</i> ; Teiresias's riddles.	Tested in Shakespeare and Sophocles passages.

9. Tone and Irony

Tone is the attitude a speaker or narrator takes toward the subject; irony is the gap between what is said and what is meant, or between expectation and outcome. Together they drive the "attitude" questions that dominate the multiple-choice section and the "complex attitude" prompts of Q1. (For a 200-word tone vocabulary with definitions and practice, see the companion document *Tone and Attitude Word Bank*.)

TERM	DEFINITION	EXAMPLE	HOW IT APPEARS ON THE EXAM
Tone*	The speaker's or narrator's attitude toward the subject, characters, or audience, conveyed through diction, imagery, syntax, and detail.	Austen's amused irony; Hardy's grim fatalism.	"The tone of the passage is best described as..." Answer sets use single or paired adjectives. The key is measured; distractors are extreme or wrong in valence.
Attitude*	The speaker's stance toward a particular subject; nearly synonymous with tone but usually directed at a specific object.	The speaker's attitude toward desire in Sidney's "Thou Blind Man's Mark" (2012 Q1).	Every post-2019 Q1 prompt asks about a "complex" attitude, response, or portrayal. Complex means containing more than one stance at once.
Mood	The emotional atmosphere the text produces in the reader.	The dread of Poe.	Distinguish from tone. "The mood of the opening paragraph is..."
Voice	The distinctive personality conveyed by a narrator's or speaker's language.	Huck's vernacular; Holden's slang.	Related to perspective and diction; "the narrator's voice is best characterized as..."
Irony*	A gap between appearance and reality, saying and meaning, or expectation and outcome.	Austen's opening line of <i>Pride and Prejudice</i> .	The 2024 Chief Reader noted students "overlooked irony and humor." Always test whether a statement is meant straight.

TERM	DEFINITION	EXAMPLE	HOW IT APPEARS ON THE EXAM
Verbal irony	Saying one thing while meaning another, often the opposite.	"It is a truth universally acknowledged, that a single man in possession of a good fortune, must be in want of a wife."	"The statement in line 3 is best understood as..." (ironic). Distractors read the line sincerely.
Situational irony	An outcome contrary to what was expected.	Richard Cory, envied by all, "went home and put a bullet through his head."	"The irony of the final stanza lies in..."
Dramatic irony	The audience knows what a character does not.	See Section 8.	Also appears in fiction when a narrator lets readers see what a character cannot.
Cosmic irony	Fate or the universe seeming to mock human effort.	Hardy's novels and poems; "The Convergence of the Twain."	Tone descriptor: fatalistic, grimly ironic.
Sarcasm	Cutting verbal irony intended to wound or mock, usually aimed at a person.	Mr. Bennet to his wife: "You mistake me, my dear. I have a high respect for your nerves."	Tone items: distinguish sarcastic (harsh, personal) from ironic (broader, cooler) and wry (gentle).
Satire	See Section 4.	Swift; Pope; Austen.	Tone: satiric, mocking, derisive, scathing.
Wit	Quick, clever, verbally inventive intelligence.	Wilde's epigrams; Donne's conceits.	Tone descriptor; "witty."
Wry	Dry, twisted humor; amused and slightly resigned.	Frost's "The Road Not Taken" read as self-mockery.	A measured tone word that is often the key when "sarcastic" is the too-strong distractor.
Understatement / hyperbole (tonal)	See Section 3.	—	Both create ironic distance between words and reality.
Ambivalence*	Holding two opposed feelings at once.	A speaker who both resents and loves a parent.	The tone word most often correct for "complex attitude" questions. Do not confuse with "ambiguous" (unclear).
Detachment	Emotional distance in the narrator's stance.	Hemingway's objective narration; Flaubert.	Tone descriptor: detached, clinical, dispassionate, objective.
Didactic	Intended to teach or moralize.	Blake's "The Lamb"; Aesop.	"The poem is best described as didactic" when it instructs. Distractor when a poem merely implies.

TERM	DEFINITION	EXAMPLE	HOW IT APPEARS ON THE EXAM
Elegiac	Mournful, meditative on loss.	Gray's "Elegy"; Hardy's poems of 1912–13.	A common tone key for poems about death or time.
Nostalgic	Longing for the past, usually with affection.	Lawrence's "Piano" (1977 Q1).	Often paired with a complicating word: "nostalgic yet critical."
Sardonic	Grimly mocking, bitterly scornful.	Swift at his darkest.	Stronger than wry; a frequent too-strong distractor.
Reverent	Deeply respectful, worshipful.	Hopkins's "God's Grandeur."	Positive tone key; distinguish from "sentimental."
Tonal shift	A change in attitude within a text.	Sonnet 29's move from despair to joy.	"The tone shifts from ___ to ___" is a standard two-slot item; both slots must be right.
Register	The level of formality of language.	Elevated vs. colloquial.	Diction items: "the diction is best described as elevated and formal."
Sentimentality	Excessive or unearned emotion.	Victorian deathbed scenes read unsympathetically.	Usually a negative descriptor; be careful that the text, not you, is being sentimental.
Bathos	See Section 3.	—	A tonal collapse, often comic.

10. Archetypes and Motifs

Archetypes are recurring patterns of character, image, and situation that carry meaning across cultures and centuries. They are not tested as vocabulary on the multiple-choice section, but they are powerful tools for Q3 and for the "broader context" route to the sophistication point. Many teachers introduce them through Thomas C. Foster's *How to Read Literature Like a Professor*.

TERM	DEFINITION	EXAMPLE	HOW IT APPEARS ON THE EXAM
Archetype	A recurring character type, image, or situation that evokes deep, shared associations.	The quest; the mentor; the flood.	Q3 sophistication: situating a character within an archetypal pattern can illuminate the reading, if it is specific and not a generalization.

TERM	DEFINITION	EXAMPLE	HOW IT APPEARS ON THE EXAM
Hero's journey / quest	A pattern of departure, trials, transformation, and return.	<i>The Odyssey</i> ; <i>Jane Eyre</i> 's departures and return; <i>Invisible Man</i> .	Q3 prompts on journeys (2006B) and exile (2010). The quest's stated goal is rarely its real one.
Mentor	A guide figure who instructs the hero.	Virgil in Dante; Miss Temple in <i>Jane Eyre</i> .	Character-function vocabulary; a mentor's limits often reveal the hero's growth.
Trickster	A cunning, rule-breaking figure who disrupts order.	Puck; Brer Rabbit; Loki.	Q3 2023 S2 asked about a rebel disrupting order.
Shadow	The dark double or repressed side of a character.	Hyde to Jekyll; the Creature to Victor.	See doppelgänger; a route to complexity in character analysis.
Scapegoat	A character who bears blame or suffering for a community.	Tess; Hester Prynne; the victim in "The Lottery."	Q3 vocabulary for cruelty (2015) and social values (1995).
Outcast / outsider	A character excluded from society by birth, choice, or circumstance.	Heathcliff; the Creature; Bigger Thomas.	Q3 1995 asked about alienation by gender, race, class, or creed.
The fall	A descent from innocence or grace, often through knowledge or transgression.	Adam and Eve; Blake's move from Innocence to Experience.	Framework for coming-of-age and tragedy; use sparingly and specifically.
Death and rebirth	A pattern of symbolic death followed by renewal.	Baptism scenes; near-drownings; spring after winter.	Commentary tool for scenes of water, descent, or illness followed by change.
Initiation	A rite of passage into adulthood or knowledge.	Pip's first visit to Satis House; Huck's river journey.	Bildungsroman vocabulary for Q3.
Garden vs. wilderness	Ordered, cultivated nature vs. wild, dangerous nature.	Eden; Marvell's "The Garden"; the moors in <i>Wuthering Heights</i> .	Setting-as-value: which does the text prefer, and why?
Light / dark	Knowledge, goodness, life vs. ignorance, evil, death, though texts often complicate this.	Conrad reverses it in <i>Heart of Darkness</i> .	Imagery items; the complication is where the sophistication lies.
Water	Baptism, rebirth, the unconscious, death, cleansing.	The sea in <i>The Awakening</i> ; the river in <i>Huckleberry Finn</i> .	A frequent symbol item; anchor the meaning in the text's treatment.

TERM	DEFINITION	EXAMPLE	HOW IT APPEARS ON THE EXAM
Seasons as life stages	Spring (youth), summer (maturity), autumn (decline), winter (death).	Shakespeare's Sonnet 73; Keats's "To Autumn."	Q1 2023 S1 (Cary's "Autumn") asked about a complex response to changing seasons.
The double (doppelgänger)	A second self, mirror, or twin figure.	Jekyll/Hyde; Dorian and his portrait.	Q3 vocabulary for identity and moral ambiguity.
Femme fatale	A seductive woman who brings ruin.	Lady Macbeth (arguably); Keats's "La Belle Dame sans Merci."	A Pearson-style Q3 premise; treat critically rather than accepting the stereotype.
The innocent	A child or naive figure whose perspective exposes adult corruption.	Pip; Huck; Blake's children.	Q3 prompts on childhood (2008B) and on children exposing corruption.
Star-crossed lovers	Lovers doomed by fate or circumstance.	Romeo and Juliet; Catherine and Heathcliff.	Q3 vocabulary; Pearson's "love leads to downfall" premise.
The unhealing wound	A physical or psychological injury that marks a character.	Philoctetes; Ahab's leg; Jake Barnes's war wound.	Commentary tool for characters defined by damage.
Threshold / crossing	A doorway, river, or border marking passage into a new state.	Huck's river; Marlow's river; Jane at Thornfield's gate.	Setting items and journey essays.
Motif (tracked)	A recurring element whose repetitions build meaning across a work.	Hands in <i>Macbeth</i> ; eyes in <i>Invisible Man</i> ; birds in <i>The Awakening</i> .	The Q3 move: trace the motif through three moments and show what accumulates.
Symbolic object	A single object carrying weight across a work.	The quilt (2010 Q1); the house (2021 Q3); the letter A.	Q3 2009 asked how one symbol functions; 2021 asked about a house as symbol.

11. Argument Terms from the CED

Skill Category 7 (literary argumentation) accounts for 10–13% of multiple-choice questions and all of the essay rubric. These items present a student-written claim or paragraph and ask which evidence, thesis, or commentary best serves it. The terms below are the CED's own vocabulary; knowing exactly what each means tells you what the rubric is looking for.

TERM	DEFINITION	EXAMPLE	HOW IT APPEARS ON THE EXAM
Claim*	An assertion about a text that requires defense with evidence.	"The speaker's praise of the star masks envy of its detachment." (original)	CED skill 7.A. MCQ: "A student has written the following claim... Which evidence best supports it?"
Thesis*	The central, defensible claim of an essay, responding to the prompt with an interpretation.	"Although the poem opens in admiration, its turn at line 9 reveals that the speaker envies the star's solitude as much as he fears it." (original)	Row A (1 point). Must be an interpretation, not a restatement of the prompt or a device list. May appear anywhere in the essay.
Defensible*	Able to be supported by evidence from the text; plausible, not necessarily proven.	A claim the poem offers at least minimal support for.	The Row A standard. The thesis need not be correct, only arguable from the text.
Interpretation*	A reasoned account of what a text means, built from its details.	Reading "The Road Not Taken" as a poem about self-justification rather than individualism.	"Which of the following claims about the passage is most defensible?" The key is text-anchored and measured.
Line of reasoning*	The logical sequence of claims that connects evidence to thesis across the essay.	Paragraph 1 establishes the surface attitude; paragraph 2 complicates it; paragraph 3 shows the resolution.	Row B at 3–4 points requires a line of reasoning. Topic sentences that build on each other create it.
Evidence*	Specific textual details (quotations, paraphrase of specific moments) used to support claims.	A six-word quotation with a line number.	Row B. "Specific" means words and details, not "the imagery in the poem." Q3 evidence may be paraphrase of specific scenes.
Commentary*	Explanation of how evidence supports the claim and why it matters to the thesis.	"The verb 'crawl' reduces the speaker to an animal, suggesting that his humility is also self-contempt." (original)	Row B. CED skill 7.C. Commentary must explain function, not restate or summarize. The 4th point requires "consistently" explaining.
Sufficient / relevant evidence*	Enough evidence, and the right evidence, to support a line of reasoning.	Evidence from across the whole text, not one stanza.	CED skill 7.D. A single quotation per paragraph is rarely sufficient.

TERM	DEFINITION	EXAMPLE	HOW IT APPEARS ON THE EXAM
Literary elements and techniques*	The devices and choices (imagery, structure, point of view, diction, and so on) that create meaning.	The stable prompt wording: "analyze how [author] uses literary elements and techniques to convey..."	Row B 3rd and 4th points for Q1/Q2 require explaining how at least one (3) or multiple (4) elements contribute to meaning.
Function*	What a device or choice does for meaning in its context.	The function of the couplet is to undercut the preceding praise.	Every CED skill is "explain the function of." MCQ keys state function; distractors name the device or restate content.
Sophistication*	Complexity of thought or argument, shown by exploring tensions, situating in context, considering alternative readings, or a consistently vivid style.	An essay that holds admiration and envy together throughout, rather than choosing one.	Row C (1 point). Must pervade the argument; a single deep sentence does not earn it.
Complexity*	The presence of more than one attitude, meaning, or force at once.	A speaker who mourns and celebrates in the same breath.	Every FRQ prompt uses "complex." Your thesis should name both sides.
Tension*	Opposing pulls within a text.	Desire and self-reproach in Sidney's sonnet.	Row C pathway 1: "identifying and exploring complexities or tensions."
Alternative interpretation*	A competing reading that a sophisticated essay acknowledges and adjudicates.	"One might read the ending as consolation, but the slant rhyme refuses that comfort." (original)	Row C pathway 3. Merely hinting does not count; engage and then decide.
Broader context*	Historical, cultural, literary, or archetypal framing that illuminates the interpretation.	Situating a 1912 poem about a shipwreck in the era's faith in technology.	Row C pathway 2. Sweeping generalizations ("Throughout history...") do not count.
Qualify	To limit or modify a claim to make it more precise.	"The speaker's acceptance is real but provisional."	Sophisticated theses often qualify; MCQ keys are often the qualified option.
Concede	To acknowledge the strength of an opposing reading.	"Although the opening lines suggest simple praise..."	The "although/yet" thesis structure the Chief Reader recommends.
Complicate	To show that a text or claim is less simple than it first appears.	Showing that the lover's devotion is also possessiveness.	A key analytical verb for topic sentences and commentary.

TERM	DEFINITION	EXAMPLE	HOW IT APPEARS ON THE EXAM
Nuance	A subtle distinction or shade of meaning.	The difference between "solitary," "companionless," and "Alone" (2024 Q1).	The Chief Reader noted that few students explored these distinctions. Nuance at the word level earns Row B points.
Work as a whole*	The meaning of the entire text, which Q3 requires you to address.	How the house in <i>Wuthering Heights</i> figures the novel's whole argument about belonging.	Q3 Row B 4th point requires addressing "the interpretation of the work as a whole." Every paragraph should return to it.
Textual support*	Grounding in specific details of the text.	Line numbers; quoted phrases; named scenes.	"Textually substantiated arguments" is the title of Skill Category 7.
Conveys / reveals / contributes to*	The CED's verbs for how a device relates to meaning.	"The imagery conveys..."; "the shift reveals..."; "the contrast contributes to..."	These are the verbs in stems and prompts. Use stronger, more specific verbs in your own prose (see the companion <i>Verbs for Analysis</i> document).
Plot summary	Retelling what happens, as opposed to analyzing how or why.	"Then Jane leaves Thornfield and goes to Moor House."	Row B caps at 1 point for summary. Q3 explicitly says "Do not merely summarize the plot."
Paraphrase	Restating a text's content in other words.	"The speaker says the star is lonely."	Useful as a reading step; useless as commentary. Paraphrase is not analysis.
Device-hunting	Naming techniques without explaining function.	"The poet uses imagery, metaphor, and alliteration."	The Chief Reader's most common complaint. A named device with no function earns nothing.
Prompt restatement	A "thesis" that repeats the prompt's language without an interpretation.	"The speaker has a complex response to the seasons."	Earns 0 on Row A. Say what the complex response is.
Big idea*	The six CED lenses: Character, Setting, Structure, Narration, Figurative Language, Literary Argumentation.	—	Organizing categories for the course; useful as a checklist when planning an essay.

TERM	DEFINITION	EXAMPLE	HOW IT APPEARS ON THE EXAM
Enduring understanding*	The CED's one-sentence statement of what each big idea teaches.	NAR-1: "A narrator's or speaker's perspective controls the details and emphasizes that affect how readers experience and interpret a text."	Not tested as vocabulary, but each one is a ready-made analytical frame.

Self-Check: 20 Items

For each item, name the term being described or identified. Answers are in the key below.

1. A fourteen-line poem whose argument turns after the eighth line, with an octave and a sestet.
2. "Death, be not proud" addresses an abstraction directly. Name the device.
3. A narrator whose account the reader has reason to doubt.
4. Running a sentence past the end of a verse line without a pause.
5. Two contradictory words placed together, as in "sweet unrest."
6. A character who contrasts with another in order to highlight the other's traits.
7. The audience knows what a character on stage does not.
8. Third-person narration that slips into a character's idiom without quotation marks or "she thought."
9. A recurring image or object that accumulates meaning across a whole work.
10. The point in a poem where tone or argument shifts.
11. Substituting an associated thing for the thing meant, as "the crown" for the monarchy.
12. The CED's term for the logical sequence of claims that connects evidence to thesis.
13. A speech delivered by a character alone on stage.
14. Holding two opposed feelings at the same time.
15. Unrhymed iambic pentameter.
16. A statement that seems self-contradictory but reveals a truth.
17. A nineteen-line poem with two alternating refrains.
18. The rubric row worth one point for "complexity of thought and/or a complex literary argument."
19. An outcome contrary to what was expected.
20. The error or flaw that brings about a tragic hero's downfall.

Answer Key

1. Petrarchan (Italian) sonnet
2. Apostrophe
3. Unreliable narrator
4. Enjambment
5. Oxymoron

6. Foil
7. Dramatic irony
8. Free indirect discourse
9. Motif
10. Volta (turn, shift)
11. Metonymy
12. Line of reasoning
13. Soliloquy
14. Ambivalence
15. Blank verse
16. Paradox
17. Villanelle
18. Row C, Sophistication
19. Situational irony
20. Hamartia (tragic flaw)

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