Glossary

**Aesthetic:** Pertaining to art and/or beauty

**Alliteration:** The placement of same or similar sounds near each other to draw our attention, sometimes to the sound, sometimes to meanings of the words being linked to each other by the sounds, and sometimes both

**Allusion:** A work’s reference, sometimes subtle, to another work in order to “plug into” the meaning the reader associates with the other work

**Analysis:** Breaking down a thing or idea to its smaller parts in order to better understand the whole

**Annotate:** Adding explanation or comment; to annotate a work is to make notes on it for increased understanding; annotation can also refer to the summary of a source in an annotated bibliography

**Archetype:** A character-figure that is seen often in stories (such as “the hero” or “the devil”); some attribute the archetype’s symbolic power to the idea that these patterns are etched in the human psyche

**Ballad:** Associated with common songs and poetry; the ballad stanza is a quatrain (a four-line stanza), and the rhythm alternates iambic tetrameter lines (featuring four iambs) with iambic trimeter lines (containing three iambs each). While there may be no rhyme with line one or line three of the stanza, line two rhymes with line four, giving the poem a “sing- song” quality. A ballad is a song/story that uses this form

**Blank Verse:** An iambic pentameter line (five two-foot syllables with the stress on each second syllable) but without rhyme

**Catalog:** A list; often used by writers for poetic effect to produce a “panoramic view” of a scene or experience

**Central Argument:** See thesis

**Cite:** To mention or refer to a source

**Climax of Plot:** The point in the plot where the conflict is “brought to a head,” to its most intense moment

**Comedy:** Associated with Greek drama, maintains a farcical tone and usually ends in marriage

**Conflict:** The struggle between two opposing forces

**Controlling or Extended Metaphor:** A metaphor developed all the way through a work and which, through its structural role, conveys the poem’s meaning

**Conventions:** Rules that govern genres, such as visual appearance, line length, subject, and plot patterns

**Couplet:** Two rhyming lines of poetry in iambic pentameter

**Creative Nonfiction:** Written in prose form, the creative nonfiction essay generally strives for a poetic effect, employing a kind of compressed, distilled language so that most words carry more meaning than their simple denotation (or literal meaning). Generally, this kind of essay is not heavy with researched information or formal argument; its priority, instead, is to generate a powerful emotional and aesthetic effect

**Critical Perspective:** An interpretation based on evidence gathered from a text combined with the values of the critic

**Deductive Reasoning:** Conclusion based on logical equation; see syllogism and enthymeme

**Denouement:** The resolution of a story where “loose ends are tied up” (in French, “the knot is untied”)

**Description:** Revelation of a thing’s or person’s state, usually through sensory detail or exposition

**Dialogue:** Conversation related as if it were actually occurring

**Diction:** Word choice

**Drama:** A play in which characters “dramatize,” or act out the story

**Enjambment:** Carries one poetic line into the following one, yielding two meanings—one generated by the first line alone, and the other produced by taking the finished phrase or clause as it is completed in the next line

**Enthymeme:** A logical statement missing the major premise; for example, “Cynthia is mortal because she is a woman.” That she is a woman is the minor premise, and the conclusion is that she is mortal. What is missing is the major premise, that “All women are mortal.” See syllogism

**Ethos:** The appeal to ethics, or a reader’s trust in the author/speaker

**Exposition:** Direct explanation rather than illumination by narrative or dialogue

**Fiction:** Non-historical story

**Figurative Language:** As opposed to literal language, suggests meaning beyond a word’s denotation

**Form:** Refers to the category and/or conventions of a work; for example, detective fiction or sonnet

**Formalism:** An approach to literary criticism that came about in the 1920s and remains well-regarded by many today; holds that the art work (including literature) should be considered as an object separate from the author. Formalists feel that a text means on its own and that its meaning can be derived by analyzing its elements and their function

**Free Verse:** Poetry not governed by common rules

**Genre:** Refers to types or categories of literature

**Inductive Reasoning:** Forming conclusions based on samples

**Irony:** An idea turned back upon itself; in an ironic passage, the words mean something different than the literal meanings would suggest

**Logos:** The appeal to intellect or logic

**Lyric Poem:** Originated in classical poetry, following specific rhythms and rhyme schemes; these poems were often accompanied by music

**Metaphor:** A comparison of two generally unlike things in order to emphasize a particular quality that they do share

**Narrative:** A story, composed of a sequence of events, often associated in a cause-effect relationship

**One-Act Play:** A drama that can usually be performed in an hour or less and in which the entire story is performed in one act as opposed to several

**Paraphrase:** Restatement of a passage in one’s own words; the retelling is roughly the same length as the original

**Pathos:** The appeal to a reader’s emotions

**Peer-Reviewed Source**: A researched article or book that has been reviewed and evaluated by experts in the same field before being approved for publication

**Persona:** Term for the main “character” in a poem, spoken of in third person, “he” or “she”

**Plot:** The sequence of events that develops the conflict and shapes a story

**Poetry:** Literary genre by which the author expresses a story and/or ideas in verse, employing rhythm and other aesthetic qualities of language to achieve the desired effect

**Point of View:** Perspective on the events or ideas of a work; common points of view are first person limited (an “I” in the story or poem who only knows what he or she thinks, experiences and observes), third person limited omniscient (speaks in third person about the characters, using “he” and “she,” but only knows the thoughts and feelings of the protagonist), and third person omniscient (is not a character in the story, thus speaks of all characters using “he” and “she”; knows what all characters think and feel as well as information the characters don’t know sometimes)

**Popular Source:** An article, book, newspaper, blog, website, or other source written for and marketed to the common reader, rather than to experts on the subject

**Primary Source or Primary Evidence:** The thing being studied; for example, a lab report recording direct observations of an experience or a poem

**Prose:** Non-poetic writing; that is, writing not broken up into distinct lines

**Protagonist:** The main character of a work, generally expected to learn and mature

**Rhetoric:** The art of persuasion

**Rhyme:** The effect that occurs when two words ending in the same vowel sound are juxtaposed with one another

**Rhythm:** Sound created by patterns of language; often based on numbers of syllables in the words of a line; sometimes based on number of stressed sounds (beats) in a line

**Scholarly Source:** See peer reviewed source

**Script:** The written version of a play, including dialogue designated for each character

**Secondary Source:** A source analyzing and interpreting a primary source; for example, a scholarly article about *The Sun Also Rises*

**Sensory Detail:** Detail that can be observed by the senses: taste, smell, hearing, touch, sight

**Set:** The backdrop and props in a play that recreate the setting for an audience

**Setting:** The place that provides the context for a story or poem

**Simile:** A comparison—using “like” or “as”—of two generally unlike things in order to emphasize a particular quality that they do share

**Slant Rhyme:** An “almost rhyme” with words that look like they should rhyme but don’t (like “be” and “fly”) or with words that sound alike but not exactly the same (like “room” and “storm”)

**Sonnet:** A fourteen line poem usually following recognized rules for rhythm, line-length, and rhyme scheme. In the fourteen-line Shakespearean sonnet, each line is written in iambic pentameter, and the rhyme scheme of the poem follows this pattern: ABAB CDCD EFEF GG. Concluding with a couplet, the Shakespearean sonnet resolves the conflict or problem in the final two lines, and the GG rhyme enhances this feeling of completion

**Speaker:** A consciousness (or person) constructed by the author to provide point of view for the work

**Stage Direction:** Directions in a play’s script regarding where and how actors should stand and move, instructions regarding props, and sometimes recommendations regarding tone and speech delivery

**Stanza:** Unit of text in a poem (paralleled by the paragraph in prose); many poetic forms dictate a certain number of lines in each stanza

**Summary:** A condensed reiteration in one’s own words of a passage from another source

**Syllogism:** A three part logical statement including:   
A general statement, or major premise: All women are mortal.   
A minor premise: Cynthia is a woman. And a conclusion: Cynthia is a mortal.

**Symbol:** Represents something else, usually because of long-term association with that thing (For example, for many people, an American flag symbolizes freedom and a red rose symbolizes love)

**Tag words and phrases:** Words and phrases attributing credit to an author for an idea or original wording (“according to,” “claims,” “asserts,” “argues,” etc.)

**Tension:** Intensity generated by two conflicting forces

**Textual evidence:** Examples from a text (conveyed through direct quote, paraphrase, or summary) that can be used to interpret the work as a whole

**Theme:** Emphasis regarding the topic or meaning of a text; for example, fear of death or the dangers of pride

**Thesis:** The central argument of a text which controls the text as a whole

**Tone:** The feeling, atmosphere, or mood of a work

**Tragedy:** Associated with Greek drama, maintains a gloomy tone and usually ends in death

**Working thesis:** A tentative thesis for use while composing an essay; refined and crafted over time into its final form

**Villanelle:** Poetic form requiring nineteen lines, distributed into five tercets and a quatrain, and also requiring that the first and third line of the first stanza be repeated alternately in the last lines of the stanzas that follow it. In the final quatrain, the two repeated lines conclude the poem