Literary Device Cheat Sheet

**Allegory -** A figurative work in which a surface narrative carries a secondary, symbolic or metaphorical meaning.

**Alliteration** is the repetition of initial consonant sounds in neighboring words.

**Example: s**weet **s**mell of **s**uccess; a **d**ime a **d**ozen, **b**igger and **b**etter, **j**ump for **j**oy sings a **s**olitary **s**ong that whistles in the wind.

**Allusion** is a brief reference to a person, event, place (real or fictitious), a work of art, a famous historical or literary figure or event. An allusion may be drawn from history, geography, literature, or religion.

**Analogy** is the comparison of two pairs which have the same relationship. The key is to ascertain the relationship between the first so you can choose the correct second pair. Part to whole, opposites, results of are types of relationships you should find.

**Example:** hot is to cold as fire is to ice OR hot:cold: :fire:ice

**Antagonist** a character in a story or poem who deceives, frustrates, or works again the main character, or protagonist, in some way.

**Aphorism** is a brief saying embodying a moral, a concise statement of a principle or precept given in pointed words.

**Example:** Hippocrates: “Life is short, art is long, opportunity fleeting, experience treacherous, judgment difficult."

**Apostrophe** is when an absent person, an abstract concept, or an important object is directly addressed.

**Example:** With how sad steps, O moon, thou climbest the skies. Busy old fool, unruly sun.

**Aside** an actor’s speech, directed to the audience, which is not supposed to be heard by other actors on stage. An aside is usually used to let the audience know what a character is about to do or what he or she is thinking.

**Assonance** is the repetition of vowel sounds but not consonant sounds.

**Example:** fl**ee**t **fee**t **s**weep by **s**leeping geeks.

**Caesura** is a natural pause or break. **Example:** England - how I long for thee!

**Characterization** is the method used by a writer to develop a character. The method includes (1) showing the character's appearance, (2) displaying the character's actions, (3) revealing the character's thoughts, (4) letting the character speak, and (5) getting the reactions of others.

**Conflict/Plot** is the struggle found in fiction. Conflict/Plot may be internal or external and is best seen in (1) Man in conflict with another Man: (2) Man in conflict in Nature; (3) Man in conflict with self.

**Connotation** is what comes to mind when you hear a word. (cultural, emotional, basis)

**Example:** Funky means \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ to you. To me it means groovy & hip!

**Consonance** is the repetition of consonant sounds, but not vowels, as in assonance. **Example: l**ady **l**ounges **l**azily, **d**ark **d**eep **d**read crept in

**Couplet** is a rhymed pair of lines, which are usually of the same length.

**Denotation is** the exact meaning of a word, without the feelings or suggestions that the word may imply. It is the opposite of connotation in that it is the dictionary meaning of a word, without attached feelings or associations.

**Dialogue** is the conversation between characters in a drama or narrative.

**Didactic** refers to literature or other types of art that are instructional or informative. In this sense The Bible is didactic because it offers guidance in moral, religious, and ethical matters

**End Rhyme** consists of two words that rhyme at the end of each sentence.

**Euphony** is soothing pleasant sounds. Opposite of cacophony.

**Eye Rhyme** is something that looks like a rhyme but isn't. For example: c**ough**

("kof"), en**ough** ("eenuf"), b**ough** ("bow")

**Figurative Language is** a type of language that varies from the norms of literal language, in which words mean exactly what they say. Also known as the "ornaments of language," figurative language does not mean exactly what it says, but instead forces the reader to make an imaginative leap in order to comprehend an author's point.

**Frame** is the way in which the story can be delivered. Chaucer’s pilgrimage allows for the telling of Canterbury tales.

**Foreshadowing** is the use of hints or clues to suggest what will happen later.

**Genre** is a category in which literature is grouped.

**Gothic novels** are novels which contains supernatural and sublime elements.

**Hyperbole** is an extravagant exaggeration. In literature, such exaggeration is used for emphasis or vivid descriptions.

**Imagery** is language that evokes one or all of the five senses: seeing, hearing, tasting, smelling, touching.

**Internal Rhyme** is rhyming within a line. **Example:** The movie was great; lots of popcorn I ate.

**Irony** when a person, situation, statement, or circumstance is not as it would actually seem which. Many times it is the exact opposite of what it appears to be.

Three kinds of irony:

1. verbal irony is when an author says one thing and means something else.

2. dramatic irony is when an audience perceives something that a character in the literature does not know.

3. irony of situation is a discrepancy between the expected result and actual results.   
 **Lyric** a lyric is a song-like poem written mainly to express the feelings of emotions or thought from a particular person, thus separating it from narrative poems. These poems are generally short, averaging roughly twelve to thirty lines, and rarely go beyond sixty lines. These poems express vivid imagination as well as emotion and all flow fairly concisely. Because of this aspect, as well as their steady rhythm, they were often used in song.

**Metaphor** comparison of two unlike things using the verb "to be" and not using like or as as.

**Example: He is a man of steel**.

**Motif** is a recurrent thematic element in an artistic or literary work or a dominant theme or central idea.

**Nemesis** The term has several possible meanings: (1) the principle of retributive justice (sometimes referred to as "poetic justice") by which good characters are rewarded and bad characters are appropriately punished; (2) the agent or deliverer of such justice, who exacts vengeance and meets out rewards. In classical mythology, Nemesis was the patron goddess of vengeance; the expression often denotes a character in a drama who brings

about another's downfall. (Batman is the Joker’s nemesis)

**Onomatopoeia** is a word that imitates the sound it represents.

**Examples:** gush, kerplunk, buzz, whirr, clang, hiss, purr, squeak, mumble, boom.

**Oxymoron** is putting two contradictory words together.

**Examples:** Icy hot, tears of joy,

**Parody –**imitative work of a person or event that mocks and pokes fun at original. (SNL)

**Paradox** reveals a kind of truth which at first seems contradictory.

**Example:** Stone walls do not a prison make, Nor iron bars a cage.

**Point of View -** a way the events of a story are conveyed to the reader, it is the vantage point from which the narrative is passed from author to the reader. The point of view can vary from work to work.

**Personification** is giving human qualities to non-humanoid things.

**Example:**a smiling moon, a jovial sun, the wind whispered, the trees danced.

**Rhyme Scheme** is rhymed words at the ends of lines.

**Example:**

Roses are red **a**

Violents are blue **b**

Sugar is sweet **c**

And so are you. **b**

**Satire –**The use of humor to improve or point out the political or social problems in society.

**Setting -** the time, place, physical details, and circumstances in which a situation occurs. Settings include the background, atmosphere or environment in which characters live and move, and usually include physical characteristics of the surroundings. Settings enable the reader to better envision how a story unfolds.

**Simile** is the comparison of two unlike things using like or as. Related to metaphor **Example:** He eats like a pig. The vines were like emerald prisons.

**Stanza** is a unified group of lines in poetry.

**Stream of Consciousness** - the unbroken flow of thought and awareness of the waking

mind.

**Symbol** a symbol is a word or object that stands for another word or object. The object or word can be seen with the eye or not visible. For example a dove stands for Peace. The dove can be seen and peace cannot.

**Theme -** a common thread or repeated idea that is incorporated throughout a literary work. A theme is a thought or idea the author presents to the reader that may be deep and possibly difficult to understand.

**Tone** is the attitude a writer takes towards a subject or character: serious, humorous, sarcastic, ironic, satirical, tongue-in-cheek, solemn, objective.

**Verse** is a **line** of poetry.