

A-level Literature

Expected Knowledge: GCSE Vocabulary

Allegory	A story, poem, or picture that can be interpreted to reveal a hidden meaning, typically a moral or political one.
Alliteration	The occurrence of the same letter or sound at the beginning of adjacent or closely connected words
Allusion	An expression designed to call something to mind without mentioning it explicitly; an indirect or passing reference.
Aside	A remark or passage in a play that is intended to be heard by the audience but unheard by the other characters in the play.
Assonance	The resemblance of sound between syllables of nearby words, arising particularly from the rhyming of two or more stressed vowels, but not consonants (e.g. sonnet, porridge), but also from the use of identical consonants with different vowels (e.g. killed, cold, culled).
Blank verse	Verse without rhyme, especially that which uses iambic pentameters.
Caesura	Usually a rhetorical break in the flow of sound in the middle of a line of verse.
Dialogue	A conversation between two or more people as a feature of a book, play, or film.
Dramatic irony	Where the significance of a character's words or actions is clear to the audience or reader although unknown to the character(s)
Enjambment	The continuation of a sentence without a pause beyond the end of a line, couplet, or stanza.
Extended metaphor	A metaphor that unfolds across multiple lines or even paragraphs of a text, making use of multiple interrelated metaphors
Flashback (Analepsis)	A move to a scene in a film, novel, etc. that is set in a time earlier than the main story.
Flashforward (Prolepsis)	A move to a scene in a film, novel, etc. that is set in a time later than the main story.
Form	A way of categorizing literature based on its structure or purpose.
Foreshadow	Where or warnings about events to come are dropped or planted
Genre	A style or category of art, music or literature
Hyperbole	Exaggerated statements or claims not meant to be taken literally.
Iambic pentameter	A line of verse with five metrical feet, each consisting of one short (or unstressed) syllable followed by one long (or stressed) syllable
Imagery	Visually descriptive or figurative language
Irony	Expression of one's meaning by using language that normally signifies the opposite, typically for humorous or emphatic effect
Juxtaposition	Where two things seen or placed close together have contrasting effect.
Metaphor	A figure of speech in which a word or phrase is applied to an object or action to which it is not literally applicable.
Monologue	A long speech by one actor in a play or film.
Narrative	A spoken or written account of connected events; a story.
Narrator	The voice that an author takes on to tell a story. This voice can have a personality quite different from the author's.
Oxymoron	A figure of speech in which apparently contradictory terms appear in conjunction

Pathetic fallacy	Pathetic fallacy is <i>always</i> about giving emotions to something non-human. It is often used to describe the environment. The weather and season can be described with human emotions to reflect the mood of a character or create a tone.
Personification	Giving <i>any</i> human attribute to an object. For example, 'The wind whispered through the trees.' or 'The flowers danced in the breeze.'
Protagonist	The protagonist drives the story forward by pursuing a goal. The protagonist of a story is sometimes called the main character.
Pun	A figure of speech that plays with words that have multiple meanings, or with homophones (words that sound the same but mean different things)
Semantic field	Is a group of words or expressions that are related in meaning often used by writers to keep a certain image persistent in their readers' mind.
Sibilance	Where a hissing sound is created within a group of words through the repetition of "s" sounds.
Simile	A figure of speech comparing two unlike things that is often introduced by 'like' or 'as'
Soliloquy	Where a character speaks their thoughts aloud, alone or regardless of any hearers, especially by a character in a play.
Sonnet	A poem of fourteen lines using any of a number of formal rhyme schemes, in English typically having ten syllables per line. Often about love.
Stage directions	Instruction in the text of a play indicating the movement, position, or tone of an actor, or the sound effects and lighting.
Symbol	A thing that represents or stands for something else, especially a material object representing something abstract.
Stanza	A group of lines forming the basic recurring metrical unit in a poem; a verse.
Symbolism	The use of symbols (sometimes objects) to represent ideas or qualities.
Verse	Writing arranged with a metrical rhythm, typically having a rhyme.