**Allegory**—A narrative or description having a second meaning beneath the surface one. A story, fictional or nonfiction, in which characters, things, and events represent qualities or concepts. The interaction of these characters, things, events is meant to reveal an abstraction or a truth. These characters, etc. may be symbolic of the ideas referred to.  
  
**Alliteration**—The repetition at close intervals of initial identical consonant sounds. Or, vowel sounds in successive words or syllables that repeat.  
  
**Allusion**—An indirect reference to something (usually a literary text) with which the reader is expected to be familiar. Allusions are usually literary, historical, Biblical, or mythological.

**Analogy**—An analogy is a comparison to a directly parallel case. When a writer uses an analogy, he or she argues that a claim reasonable for one case is reasonable for the analogous case.  
  
**Anaphora**—Repetition of a word, phrase, or clause at the beginning of two or more sentences in a row. This device is a deliberate form of repetition and helps make the writer's point more coherent.  
  
**Anecdote**—A brief recounting of a relevant episode. Anecdotes are often inserted into fictional or nonfiction texts as a way of developing a point or injecting humour.

**Anthropomorphism:** Where animals or inanimate objects are portrayed in a story as people, such as by walking, talking, or being given arms, legs and/or facial features. (This technique is often incorrectly called **personification.**)

*The King and Queen of Hearts and their playing-card courtiers comprise only one example of Carroll’s extensive use of* ***anthropomorphism*** *in Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland*

**Aside**—A dramatic convention by which an actor directly addresses the audience but it is not supposed to be heard by the other actors on the stage.  
  
**Assonance**—Repetition of a vowel sound within two or more words in close proximity. "Fake" and "lake" denote rhyme; "lake" and "fate" demonstrate assonance.

**Characterisation**—The method an author uses to develop characters in a work. In direct characterisation, the author straightforwardly states the character’s traits. With indirect characterisation, those traits are implied through what the character says, does, how the character dresses, interacts with other characters, etc.

**Comic relief**—Humorous speeches and incidents in the course of the serious action of a tragedy; frequently comic relief widens and enriches the tragic significance of the work.  
  
**Conceit**—Unusual or surprising comparison between two very different things (a special kind of metaphor or complicated analogy.  
  
**Concrete Language**—Language that describes specific, observable things, people or places, rather than ideas or qualities.  
  
**Connotation**—Rather than the dictionary definition, the associations associated by a word. Implied meaning rather than literal meaning or denotation.  
  
**Consonance**—Repetition of a consonant sound within two or more words in close proximity.

**Diction**—Word choice, particularly as an element of style. Different types and arrangements of words have significant effects on meaning. An essay written in academic diction, for example, would be much less colourful, but perhaps more precise, than street slang.  
  
**Didactic**—A term used to describe fiction or nonfiction that teaches a specific lesson or moral or provides a model or correct behavior or thinking.

**Dramatic Irony**—When the reader is aware of an inconsistency between a fictional or nonfiction character's perception of a situation and the truth of that situation.  
  
**Elegy**—A formal sustained poem lamenting the death of a particular person.  
  
**Emotional Appeal**—When a writer appeals to an audience's emotions (often through "pathos") to excite and involve them in the argument.

**Ethical Appeal**—When a writer tries to persuade the audience to respect and believe him or her based on a presentation of image of self through the text. Reputation is sometimes a factor in ethical appeals, but in all cases the aim is to gain the audience's confidence.  
  
**Euphemism**—The use of a word or phrase that is less direct, but is also considered less distasteful or less offensive than another. E.g. "He is at rest" instead of "He is dead." Also consider "Technicolor yawn" for "vomiting."

**Farce**—A type of comedy in which one-dimensional characters are put into ludicrous situations; ordinary standards of probability and motivation are freely violated in order to evoke laughter.

**Figurative Language**—A word or words that are inaccurate literally, but describe by calling to mind sensations or responses that the thing described evokes. Figurative language may be in the form of metaphors or similes, both non-literal comparison. Shakespeare's "All the world's a stage" is an example of non-literal figurative language (metaphor specifically).

**Foreshadowing:** Where future events in a story, or perhaps the outcome, are **suggested** by the author before they happen. Foreshadowing can take many forms and be accomplished in many ways, with varying degrees of subtlety. However, if the outcome is deliberately and explicitly revealed early in a story (such as by the use of a narrator or flashback structure), such information does ***not*** constitute foreshadowing.

*Willy’s concern for his car* ***foreshadows*** *his eventual means of suicide.*

**Generalisation**—When a writer bases a claim upon an isolated example or asserts that a claim is certain rather than probable. Sweeping generalisations occur when a writer asserts that a claim applies to all instances instead of one.  
  
**Genre**—French, a literary form or type; classification. e.g. tragedy, comedy, novel, essay, poetry.

**Hyperbole:** A description which exaggerates.

*The author uses* ***hyperbole*** *to describe Mr. Smith, calling him “the greatest human being ever to walk the earth.”*

**Imagery**—The use of images, especially in a pattern of related images, often figurative, to create a strong unified sensory impression.

**Irony**—When a reader is aware of a reality that differs from a character's perception of reality (dramatic irony)/ The literal meaning of a writer's words may be verbal irony. Generally speaking, a discrepancy between expectation and reality.

**Metaphor**—A comparison of two things, often unrelated. A figurative verbal equation results where both "parts" illuminate one another. Metaphors may occur: in a single sentence —"Talent is a cistern; genius is a fountain;" as a controlling image of an entire work —"Pilgrim at Sea by Par F. Lagerkvist; as obvious ("His fist was a knotty hammer.") or implied (But O beware the middle mind that purrs and never shows a tooth.").

* Dead Metaphor—So overused that its original impact has been lost.
* Extended Metaphor—One developed at length and involves several points of comparison.
* Mixed Metaphor—When two metaphors are jumbled together, often illogically.

**Mood**—An atmosphere created by a writer's word choice (diction) and the details selected. Syntax is also a determiner of mood because sentence strength, length, and complexity affect pacing.  
  
**Moral**—The lesson drawn from a fictional or nonfictional story. A heavily didactic story.

**Motif**—A frequently recurrent character, incident, or concept in literature.

**Onomatopoeia**—The use of a word whose pronunciation suggests its meaning. "Buzz," "hiss," "slam," and "pop" are commonly used examples.  
  
**Oxymoron**—A rhetorical antithesis. Juxtaposing two contradictory terms, like "wise fool" or "deafening silence."

**Parody**—An exaggerated imitation of a usually more serious work for humorous purposes. The writer of a parody uses the quirks of style of the imitated piece in extreme or ridiculous ways.  
  
**Pathos**—Qualities of a fictional or nonfictional work that evoke sorrow or pity. Over-emotionalism can be the result of an excess of pathos.

**Periodic Sentence**—Sentence that places the main idea or central complete thought at the end of the sentence, after all introductory elements—e.g. "Across the stream, beyond the clearing, from behind a fallen a tree, the lion emerged."

**Persona**—A writer often adopts a fictional voice to tell a story. Persona or voice is usually determined by a combination of subject matter and audience.  
  
**Personification**—Figurative Language in which inanimate objects, animals, ideas, or abstractions are endowed with human traits or human form—e.g. "When Duty whispers…”

**Plot**—System of actions represented in a dramatic or narrative work.  
  
**Point of View**—The perspective from which a fictional or nonfictional story is told. First-person, third-person, or third-person omniscient points of view are commonly used.

**Protagonist**—Chief character in a dramatic or narrative work, usually trying to accomplish some objective or working toward some goal.  
  
**Pun**—A play on words that are identical or similar in sound but have sharply diverse meanings.

**Repetition**—Word or phrase used two or more times in close proximity.

**Rhetorical Question**—A question asked for rhetorical effect to emphasize a point; no answer is expected.  
  
**Round Character**—A character drawn with sufficient complexity to be able to surprise the reader without losing credibility.

**Setting**—Locale and period in which the action takes place.  
  
**Simile**—A figurative comparison of two things, often dissimilar, using the connecting words: "like," "as," or "then." E.g. "More rapid than eagles his coursers they came."  
  
**Soliloquy**—When a character in a play speaks his thoughts aloud —usually by him or herself.  
  
**Stock Character**—Conventional character types that recur repeatedly in various literary genres. E.g. the wicked stepmother or Prince Charming or the rascal.  
  
**Stream of Consciousness**—Technique of writing that undertakes to reproduce the raw flow of consciousness, with the perceptions, thoughts, judgments, feelings, associations, and memories presented just as they occur without being tidied into grammatical sentences or given logical and narrative order.

**Symbol**—A thing, event, or person that represents or stands for some idea or event. Symbols also simultaneously retain their own literal meanings. A figure of speech in which a concrete object is used to stand for an abstract idea —e.g. the cross for Christianity.

**Theme**—A central idea of a work of fiction or nonfiction, revealed and developed in the course of a story or explored through argument.  
  
**Tone**—A writer's attitude toward his or her subject matter revealed through diction, figurative language, and organization of the sentence and global levels.