Basic Terms

**connotation**: the implied or suggested meaning connected with a word

**denotation:**the dictionary meaning of a word

**literal** meaning: limited to the simplest, ordinary, most obvious meaning

**figurative** meaning: associative or connotative meaning; representational

**meter**: measured pattern of rhythmic accents in a line of verse

**rhyme**: correspondence of terminal sounds of words or of lines of verse

Figurative Language

**apostrophe**: a direct address of an inanimate object, abstract qualities, or a person not living or present

*Example*: “Beware, O Asparagus, you’ve stalked my last meal.”

**hyperbole**: exaggeration for emphasis (the opposite of understatement)

*Example*: “I’m so hungry I could eat a horse.”

**metaphor**: comparison between essentially unlike things, or the application of a name or description to something to which it is not literally applicable

*Example*: "[Love] is an ever fixed mark, / that looks on tempests and is never shaken.”

**metonymy**: a word or phrase that replaces the name of an object or concept for another to which it is related

*Example*: “We have always remained loyal to *the crown*" instead of “We have always remained loyal to *the monarchy*.”

**oxymoron**: a combination of two words that appear to contradict each other

*Example*: bittersweet

**paradox**: a situation or phrase that appears to be contradictory but which contains a truth worth considering

*Example*: “In order to preserve peace, we must prepare for war.”

**personification**: the endowment of inanimate objects or abstract concepts with animate or living qualities

*Example*: “Time let me play / and be golden in the mercy of his means”

**pun**: play on words, or a humorous use of a single word or sound with two or more implied meanings; quibble

*Example*: “They’re called lessons . . . because they lessen from day to day.”

**simile**: comparison between two essentially unlike things using words such as “like," “as," or “as though”

*Example*: “My mistress’ eyes are nothing like the sun”

**synecdoche**: a part substituted for the whole

*Example*: “All *hands* on deck” instead of “All *sailors* on deck.”

Poetic Devices

**alliteration**: the repetition of consonant sounds, particularly at the beginning of words

*Example*: ". . . like a wanderer white”

**allusion**: a reference to a person, event, or work outside the poem or literary piece

*Example*: “Shining, it was Adam and maiden”

**assonance**: the repetition of similar vowel sounds

*Example*: “I rose and told him of my woe”

**imagery**: word or sequence of words representing a sensory experience (visual, auditory, olfactory, tactile, and gustatory)

*Example*: “bells knelling classes to a close” (auditory)

**irony**: a contradiction of expectation between what is said and what is meant (verbal irony) or what is expected in a particular circumstance or behaviour (situational), or when a character speaks in ignorance of a situation known to the audience or other characters (dramatic)

*Example*: “Time held me green and dying / Though I sang in my chains like the sea”

**onomatopoeia**: the use of words to imitate the sounds they describe

*Example*: “crack” or “whir”

**slant rhyme** (off rhyme, half rhyme, imperfect rhyme): rhyme formed with words with similar but not wholly identical sounds

*Example*: barn / yard

**synesthesia**: an attempt to fuse different senses by describing one in terms of another

*Example*: the sound of her voice was sweet

**symbol**: an object or action that stands for something beyond itself

*Example*: white = innocence, purity, hope