

This list of terms is divided into four categories, corresponding to the four sections of the close reading exercise (E2): Structural, Linguistic, Semantic, and Cultural.

I. STRUCTURAL

rhyme scheme

- The formalized consonance of syllables, represented in an abstract notation: e.g. AA, BB, CC for couplets. Blank verse has no rhyme scheme; that is the meaning of 'blank.'

Master, go on; and I will follow thee
To the last gasp, with truth and loyalty.
From seventeen years till now almost four-score
Here lived I, but now live here no more.
At seventeen years many their fortunes seek,
But at fourscore it is too late a week;
Yet fortune cannot recompense me better
Than to die well and not my master's debtor. (*As You Like It*, 2.3)

line length

- The number of syllables—not only words—in a line of poetry.
In Shakespeare's verse the convention is ten syllables per line, but different passages (e.g. songs) will have shorter or longer lines. When one or more lines are significantly different in length to those around it/them, Shakespeare is often suggesting something about the meaning of the line(s), or the character speaking them.

If thou rememberest not the slightest folly
That ever love did make thee run into,
Thou hast not loved;
Or if thou hast not sat as I do now,
Wearing thy hearer in thy mistress' praise,

Thou hast not loved;
 Or if thou hast not broke from company
 Abruptly, as my passion now makes me,
 Thou hast not loved.

(*As You Like It*, 2.4)

enjambment (French for ‘striding over’)

• A sentence or statement that spans more than one verse line.

Lines exhibiting enjambement do not end with grammatical breaks, and their sense is incomplete without the following line(s).

Such lines are commonly referred to as run-on lines and are distinguished from **end-stopped** lines. The meaning of an end-stopped line, in which a grammatical pause marked by punctuation and the physical end of the line coincide, is complete in itself.

The following lines, from *The Winter’s Tale*, are enjambed:

“I am not prone to weeping, as our sex
 Commonly are; the want of which vain dew
 Perchance shall dry your pities; but I have
 That honourable grief lodged here which burns
 Worse than tears drown.”
 (Hermione, 2.1.110-14)

Whereas, in contrast, the lines from *Romeo & Juliet* are all end-stopped:

“A glooming peace this morning with it brings.
 The sun for sorrow will not show his head.
 Go hence, to have more talk of these sad things.
 Some shall be pardon’d, and some punished.”
 (Prince, 5.3.304-07)

caesura

• A break or pause in a line of poetry, dictated by the natural rhythm of the language and/or enforced by punctuation. A line may have more than one caesura, or none at all.

If near the beginning of the line, it is called the **initial** caesura; near the middle, **medial**; near the end, **terminal**. The commonest is the medial.

“To be, or not to be: that is the question:”

(*Hamlet*, 3.1.58)

structure & distinct phases

• These are not technical terms. They refer simply to the stages through which a text progresses. You can describe a text's stages by considering its sentences or clauses (parts of sentences) and thinking about their relationships. Where does the text start, and where does it end? What stages come in between those bookends? Do they work together, saying similar things? Are there oppositions, reversals, hesitations?

If the text is an argument, for example, does it make a claim at the beginning and then back it up with evidence? Or use evidence/examples to build toward a claim?

II. LINGUISTIC**diction**

• (1) Narrowly defined, a speaker's (or author's) word choice.

• (2) More broadly defined, the general type or character of language used in speech or in a work of literature.

In the second, broader sense, diction is typically divided into two components: **vocabulary** and **syntax**.

Vocabulary encompasses the degree of difficulty, complexity, abstractness, formality, and currency of words used, as well as their etymology or origin (native or foreign, Latinate or Germanic, and so on).

Syntax refers to the arrangement — the ordering, grouping, and placement — of words within a phrase, clause or sentence.

Poetic diction refers specifically to the choice and phrasing of words suitable for verse.

double meaning/double entendre

• a French phrase for ‘double meaning’, adopted in English to denote a pun in which a word or phrase has a second, usually sexual, meaning, as in Elizabethan uses of the verb ‘die’ referring both to death and to orgasm.

“Come, where is this young gallant that is so desirous to lie* with his mother earth?”

(*As You Like It*, 1.2.191-92)

[*to fall to the ground. Echoing biblical descriptions of the body’s return to the earth at death and punning on “lie with” as slang for “have sexual relations with”]

pun

• A figure of speech which involves a play upon words that capitalizes on a similarity in spelling and/or pronunciation between words that have different meanings. Alternatively, a pun may employ one word that has multiple meanings.

One of the earliest types of wordplay, the pun is widespread in many literatures and gives rise to a fairly universal form of humour. Puns are often intended humorously, but not always. A pun form known as *antiphrasis* involves a reply to earlier words used in a different sense.

This example occurs in *Cymbeline* (II, i):

CLOTEN: Would he had been one of my rank!

LORD: To have smell’d like a fool.

Rosalind uses the same joke with Touchstone in *As You Like It* (1.2). Touchstone is a wellspring of punning humour:

For my part, I had rather bear with you than bear you. Yet I should bear no cross if I did bear you, for I think you have no money in your purse. (2.4.10-12)

Hamlet is not quite so funny:

A little more than kin and less than kind. (*Hamlet*, 1.2.65)

tension

• (1) Generally, the balance or equilibrium between opposing elements in a literary work, especially a poem, that provoke our interest in its outcome. Tensions could include: good/evil; nature/culture; or feminine/masculine.

• (2) As used by New Critic Allen Tate in “Tension in Poetry” (1938), the totality of, or interrelation between, what he defined as the two types of meaning in a poem: “extension” (concrete, denotative meaning) and “intention” (abstract, metaphorical meaning). New Critics as well as other types of critics applied the term **tension** to “conflict structures,” that is, binary oppositions, or contrary pairs of qualities, such as abstract/concrete, general/particular, and structure/texture.

Dramatic tension and inner struggle are central to the plot in *Hamlet*:

“The time is out of joint. O cursed spite, / That ever I was born to set it right!”
(1.5.189-90)

syntax

• The ways in which words and clauses are ordered and connected so as to form sentences; or the set of grammatical rules governing such word-order.

Syntax is a major determinant of literary style: while simple English sentences usually have the structure ‘subject-verb-object’ (e.g. Romeo killed Tybalt), poets often distort this syntax through inversion, while even prose writers can exploit elaborate syntactic structures such as the periodic sentence.

repetition

• An essential unifying element in nearly all poetry and much prose.

It may consist of sounds, particular syllables and words, phrases, stanzas, metrical patterns, ideas, allusions and shapes. Thus **refrain**, **assonance**, **rhyme**, internal rhyme, **alliteration** and **onomatopoeia** are frequent in repetition.

Two examples from *As You Like It*:

“O, wonderful, wonderful, and most wonderful wonderful, and yet again wonderful, and after that out of all hooping!” (Celia, 3.2.186-88)

“O, thou didst then never love so heartily!

If thou rememb’rest not the slightest folly

That ever love did make thee run into,

Thou hast not loved.

Or if thou hast not sat as I do now,

Wearing thy hearer in they mistress' praise,

Thou hast not loved.

Or if thou hast not broke from company

Abruptly as my passion now makes me,

Thou hast not loved.

O, Phoebe, Phoebe, Phoebe!" (Silvius, 2.4.30-40)

interruption

- The sudden breaking off of an utterance before it is completed, usually in moments of emotion.

It seems quite a colloquial and natural feature in speech, but in earlier literature and drama it would be rare.

Consider Hamlet's emotional response to his mother's remarriage:

Heaven and earth,

Must I remember? Why, she would hang on him

As if increase of appetite had grown

By what it fed on; and yet, within a month—

Let me not think on't — Frailty, thy name is woman— (*Hamlet*, 1.2.142-46)

parallelism

- The arrangement of similarly constructed clauses, sentences, or verse lines in a pairing or other sequence suggesting some correspondence between them. The effect of parallelism is usually one of balanced arrangement achieved through repetition of the same syntactic forms.

Where the elements arranged in parallel are sharply opposed, the effect is one of **antithesis**.

In a more extended sense, the term is applied to correspondences between larger elements of dramatic or narrative works, such as the relation of subplot to main plot in a play.

“. . . no sooner met but they looked; no sooner looked but they loved; no sooner loved but they sighed; no sooner sighed but they asked one another the reason; no sooner knew the reason but they sought the remedy . . .” (*As You Like It*, 5.2.31-35)

antithesis (from the Greek ‘opposition’)

- A rhetorical figure in which two ideas are directly opposed. For a statement to be truly antithetical, the opposing ideas must be presented in a grammatically parallel way, thus creating a perfect rhetorical balance.

“The fool doth think he is wise, but the wise man knows himself to be a fool.” (*As You Like It*, 5.1.31-32)

For happy wife, a most distressed widow;
 For joyful mother, one that wails the name;
 For queen, a very caitiff, crown'd with care;
 For one being sued to, one that humbly sues;
 For one that scorn'd at me, now scorn'd of me. (*Richard III*, 4.4.98-102)

alliteration (from the Latin ‘repeating and playing upon the same letter’)

- A figure of speech in which consonants, especially at the beginning of words, or stressed syllables, are repeated.

“O, such a day

So fought, so followed, and so fairly won” (*2 Henry IV*, 1.1.20-21).

Two examples from *As You Like It*:

“That is another simple sin in you, to bring the ewes and the rams together, and to offer to get your living by the copulation of cattle; to be bawd to a bell-wether, and to betray a she-lamb . . .” (*Touchstone*, 3.2.75-78)

“Finds tongues in trees, books in the running brooks, Sermons in stones, and good in everything.” (*Duke Senior*, 2.1.16-17)

When *s* is the repeated sound, the result is said to be **sibilant**.

Alliteration is a very old device in English verse—older than rhyme—and is common in verse generally. It is used occasionally in prose. In Old English poetry alliteration was a continual and essential part of the metrical scheme and until the late Middle Ages was often used thus.

assonance

- The repetition of identical or similar vowel sounds in neighbouring words.

It is distinct from **rhyme** in that the final consonants differ although the vowels or diphthongs match: sweet dreams, hit or miss.

“Sometime too hot the eye of heaven shines.” (Sonnet 18)

Alliteration refers to repeated *consonants*, and **assonance** to repeated *vowels*.

euphony (Greek ‘sweetness of sound’)

- A pleasing smoothness of sound, perceived by the ease with which the words can be spoken in combination.

The pleasurable impression achieved may be due as much or more to the images evoked as to any inherent musicality in the sounds; calling a passage euphonious thus necessarily involves a *subjective* judgement.

Euphony is the opposite of **cacophony**, or discordant sounds.

“My bounty is as boundless as the sea,
My love as deep. The more I give to thee
The more I have, for both are infinite.” (*Romeo & Juliet*, 2.1.175-77)

dissonance

- Harshness of sound and/or rhythm, either inadvertent or deliberate.

The term is nearly equivalent to **cacophony**, but tends to denote a lack of harmony between sounds rather than the harshness of a particular sound in isolation.

“Thrice the brinded cat hath mewed / Thrice and once the hedge-pig whined.”
(First and Second Witch, *Macbeth*, 4.1.1-2)

onomatopoeia (from the Greek for ‘name-making’)

- Wording that seems to signify meaning through sound effects.

Onomatopoeic words, such as *hiss* and *sizzle*, ostensibly imitate the sounds they represent; onomatopoeic passages more broadly suggest an association between sound and meaning.

“At first the infant,
Mewling and puking in the nurse’s arms;” (*As You Like It*, 2.7)

“It was a lover and his lass,
 With a hey, and a ho, and a hey nonino,
 That o'er the green corn-field did pass
 In the spring time, the only pretty ring time,
 When birds do sing, hey ding a ding, ding:
 Sweet lovers love the spring.” (*As You Like It*, 5.3.16-21)

III. SEMANTIC

simile

• A figure of speech (more specifically a **trope**) that compares two distinct things by using words such as *like* or *as* to link them together.

Simile is distinguished from **metaphor**, another trope that associates two distinct things, but without the use of a connective word. To say “That child is like a cyclone” is to use a simile, whereas to say “That child is a cyclone” is to use a metaphor. In either case, the cyclone is the **vehicle**, the image used to represent the child, which is the **tenor**, or subject of the figure.

Two examples from *As You Like It*:

“I can suck melancholy out of a song as a weasel sucks eggs.”
 (Jaques, 2.5.10-11)

“Then the whining schoolboy, with his satchel
 And shining morning face, creeping **like** snail
 Unwillingly to school”
 (Jaques, 2.7.146-48)

An **epic**, or **Homeric simile** is an extended and elaborate simile in which the vehicle is described at such length that it nearly obscures the tenor.

metaphor (from the Greek ‘carrying from one place to another’)

• A figure of speech, in which one thing, idea, or action is referred to by a word or expression normally denoting another thing, idea or action, so as to suggest some common quality shared by the two.

The use of metaphor to create new combinations of ideas is a major feature of poetry, although it is quite possible to write poems without metaphors.

In *As You Like It*, Orlando compares trees to books, and tree bark to pages of the books:

“O Rosalind, these trees shall be my books,
And in their barks my thoughts I'll character.” (3.2.5-6)

Metaphors are more compressed versions of **similes**, and are sometimes more complex for us to understand.

Much of our everyday language is also made up of metaphorical words and phrases that pass unnoticed as ‘dead’ metaphors, like the *branch* of an organization. But Shakespeare often takes common, conventional, or ‘dead’ metaphors and gives them a new twist or elaboration. So Hamlet thinks about the implication of the common image of death as sleep:

To die—to sleep.

To sleep, perchance to dream—ay, there's the rub:

For in that sleep of death what dreams may come ...

Must give us pause. (*Hamlet*, 3.1.64-68)

A **mixed metaphor** is one in which the combination of qualities suggested is illogical or ridiculous, usually as a result of trying to apply two metaphors to one thing.

personification

• A figure of speech or trope, like metaphor, by which animals, abstract ideas, or inanimate things are referred to as if they were human, as in Sir Philip Sidney's line: “Invention, Nature's child, fled stepdame Study's blows.”

In drama, the term is sometimes applied to the impersonation of non-human things and ideas by human actors.

“Time travels in divers paces with divers persons. I'll tell you who Time ambles withal, who Time trots withal, who Time gallops withal and who he stands still withal.” (*As You Like It*, 3.2.299-302)

Personification, known in Greek as *prosopopoeia*, is common in everyday speech: “time flies,” “chair legs.”

It is common in most ages of poetry, particularly in the 18th century.

It has a special function as the basis of **allegory**.

A **pathetic fallacy** is a limited form of personification, in which human traits and emotions are attributed to inanimate nature. Compared to personification in general, the pathetic fallacy is narrower in scope, since it applies only to inanimate nature rather than anything non-human, and its ‘humanizing’ characterization is typically less sustained.

paradox (from the Greek ‘beside/beyond opinion’)

- Originally a paradox was merely a view that contradicted accepted opinion. By about the middle of the 16th century, the word had acquired its now-commonly accepted meaning: an apparently self-contradictory, even absurd statement which, on closer inspection, is found to contain a truth reconciling the conflicting opposites.

Two examples from *As You Like It*:

“Sweetest nut hath sourest rind”
(Touchstone, 3.2.106)

“I do desire we may be better strangers.”
(Orlando, 3.2.251)

Some paradoxes cannot be resolved into truths, remaining flatly self-contradictory, e.g. “Everything I say is a lie.”

A paradox formed by the juxtaposition of two opposite or contradictory words (rather than by a complete statement) is an **oxymoron**. Consider Romeo’s lament in *Romeo and Juliet*, a long series of oxymorons:

O brawling love! O loving hate! ...
O any thing, of nothing first create!
O heavy lightness! serious vanity!
Misshapen chaos of well-seeming forms!
Feather of lead, bright smoke, cold fire, sick health!
Still-waking sleep, that is not what it is! (1.1.176-81)

IV. CULTURAL

tone

- The attitude of the author toward the reader, audience, or subject matter of a literary work. An author’s tone may be serious, playful, mocking, and so forth.

The term is now often used to mean ‘tone of voice,’ a difficult-to-determine characteristic of discourse through which writers (and each of us in our daily conversations) reveal a range of attitudes towards everything from the subject at hand to those being addressed.

Hamlet's disregard for the body of Polonius is cheeky, flippant, and morbid:

"But indeed, if you find him not this month, you shall nose him as you go up the stairs into the lobby." (*Hamlet*, 4.3.34-36)

Tone is sometimes equated with **voice**, particularly in the sense of a creative authorial voice that pervades and underlies literary work.

Although the terms tone and **atmosphere** may both be equated with mood, their meanings differ. Unlike **tone**, which refers to the author's attitude, **atmosphere** refers to the general feeling created for the reader or audience by a work at a given point.

perspective/point of view

• The position or vantage-point from which the events of a text seem to be observed and presented to us.

The chief distinction usually made between points of view is that between **third-person** narratives and **first-person** narratives.

A third-person narrator may be omniscient, and therefore show an unrestricted knowledge of the story's events from outside or 'above' them; but another kind of third-person narrator may confine our knowledge of events to whatever is observed by a single character or a small group of characters, this method being known as 'limited point of view'.

A first-person narrator's point of view will normally be restricted to his or her partial knowledge and experience, and therefore will not give us access to other characters' hidden thoughts.

Many modern authors also have used 'multiple points of view', in which we are shown the events from the positions of two or more different characters.

mood

• Defined by some critics as synonymous with **atmosphere**, by others as synonymous with **tone**, and by still others as synonymous with both. Mood is probably closer to atmosphere than to tone, but, as a general term, it can be correctly applied to either. One could say that an author creates a somber mood, thereby using it as a synonym for atmosphere; one could also say that an author's mood is somber, thereby using it as a synonym for tone.

Shakespeare uses dialogue to establish mood and setting in *Hamlet*:

"Tis bitter cold, / And I am sick at heart." (Francisco, 1.1.6-7)

implied reader / audience

• The person(s) to whom a text is addressed; the intended audience of a speech. These qualities of a text often have a direct influence on verbal style.

For instance, when Touchstone confronts William in *As You Like It* 5.1, he uses vocabulary to intimidate him, and to impress Audrey with his learning.

Another example from the same play is Phoebe's declaration of love to 'Ganymede,' in the letter that Silvius carries:

"He that brings this love to thee
Little knows this love in me;" (4.3)

apostrophe: (from the Greek 'turning away')

• A figure of speech in which a thing, a place, an abstract quality, an idea, a dead or absent person, is addressed as if present and capable of understanding.

Blow, blow, thou winter wind!
Thou art not so unkind
As man's ingratitude. (*As You Like It*, 2.7.175-77)

O grim-look'd night! O night with hue so black!
O night, which ever art when day is not!
O night, O night, alack, alack, alack ... (*A Midsummer Night's Dream*, 5.1.168-70)

In classical rhetoric, the term could also denote a speaker's turning to address a particular member or section of the audience.

The apostrophe is one of the conventions appropriate to the ode and to the elegy.

The poet's invocation of a muse in epic poetry is a special form of apostrophe.

irony (from the Greek 'dissimulation')

• A subtly humorous perception of inconsistency, in which an apparently straightforward statement or event is undermined by its context so as to give it a very different significance.

At its simplest, as in **verbal irony**, it involves a discrepancy between what is said and what is really meant, as in its crude form, sarcasm.

Cross-dressing provides ample opportunity for ironic statements:

“. . . I thank God I am not a woman, to be touched with so many giddy offences as he hath generally taxed their whole sex withal.” (Rosalind, 3.2.335-38)

The more sustained **structural irony** in literature involves the use of a naïve or deluded hero or unreliable narrator, whose view of the world differs widely from the true circumstances recognized by the author and readers; literary irony thus flatters its readers' intelligence at the expense of a character (or fictional narrator).

A similar sense of detached superiority is achieved by **dramatic irony**, in which the audience knows more about the character's situation than the character does, foreseeing an outcome contrary to the character's expectations, and thus ascribing a sharply different sense to some of the character's own statements; in tragedies, this is called **tragic irony**.

The term **cosmic irony** is sometimes used to denote a view of people as the dupes of a cruelly mocking fate.

symbol (from the Greek verb *symbollein*, 'to throw together' and its noun *symbolon*, 'mark', 'emblem', 'token' or 'sign')

- An object, animate or inanimate, which represents or 'stands for' something else.

“Now Hercules be thy speed,* young man!” (Rosalind, *As You Like It*, 1.2.201)

[*may Hercules bring you luck. Hercules' name is synonymous with physical strength.]

“There's rosemary, that's for remembrance. Pray, love, remember. And there is pansies; that's for thoughts.*” (Ophelia, *Hamlet*, 4.5.173-74)

[*Ophelia, recalling each flower's symbolic meaning, distributes them to Laertes, Gertrude, and Claudius.]

A symbol differs from an **allegorical sign** in that it has a real existence, whereas an allegorical sign is arbitrary. It can be an action or a gesture, and in literature it is used to combine an image with a concept (words themselves are a kind of symbol).

allegory (from the Greek *allegoria*, 'speaking otherwise')

- A story or visual image with a second distinct meaning partially hidden behind its literal or visible meaning.

The principal technique of allegory is **personification**, whereby abstract qualities are given human shape — as in public statues of Liberty or Justice.

In written narrative, allegory involves a sustained, continuous parallel between two (or more) levels of meaning in a story, so that its persons and events correspond to their equivalents in a system of ideas or a chain of events external to the tale.

In *As You Like It*, Oliver tells the story of his rescue by Orlando (4.3) in supposedly factual terms, or as an event that really happened. But it contains so many symbols (the ancient oak, the “green and gilded snake,” the lioness) that it could be construed as an allegory—specifically, as a quasi-Biblical story of good defeating evil, and mankind overpowering nature.

An allegory may be conceived as a **metaphor** that is extended into a structured system. Many critics consider the allegory to be an **extended metaphor** and, conversely, consider metaphors — which involve saying one thing but meaning another — to be ‘**verbal allegories**’. Famous examples are John Bunyan’s *Pilgrim’s Progress* and Milton’s *Paradise Lost*.

allusion

• Usually an implicit reference, perhaps to another work of literature or art, to a person or an event.

It is often a kind of appeal to a reader to share some experience with the writer. When using allusions, a writer tends to assume an established literary tradition and an ability on the part of the audience to ‘pick up’ the reference. An allusion enriches the work by association, and gives it depth.

There are many allusions in *As You Like It*:

“There is sure another flood toward, and these couples are coming to the ark.*” (Jaques, 5.4.35-36)

[*Alluding to a biblical account in Genesis 7:2 in which pairs of male and female animals shelter on Noah’s ark to escape the flood that covers the earth.]

“They say many young gentlemen flock to him every day and fleet the time carelessly as they did in the golden world.*” (Charles, 1.1.111-13)

[*Alluding to the classical myth of an earlier world of perpetual spring, abundance, and ease from which humankind had degenerated (Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 1). This golden world was often identified with a pastoral life.]