Literary Term of The Week

Find examples of these literary terms in magazines, newspapers, movies, online, on TV shows, the radio. You can also come up with your own examples!
Teacher Instructions

At the beginning of each week, introduce a new literary term to the students with the included presentation slides. Some of the slides include video clips, images, examples etc. Discuss these with your students.

Have students fill out the appropriate definition in their “Literary Term Booklet” for reference later. They can put the definition in their own words or copy it directly (based on your instruction).

Then post the Literary Term Of The Week poster (page 1 in this document). Underneath, place the appropriate literary term (see page 3-40 in this document).

Students will have that week to find examples of this term in use (movies, TV, novels, magazines, online searching, their own examples etc). Under the posters, students will put their examples (they could be pinned on if it is a bulletin board, or you can use sticky notes!

There are more than enough words here to do two literary terms a week from time to time to challenge your students.

At the end of the week, go over the examples the students came up with. I count this for marks in my class to give students more incentive to participate.
Allegory is a symbolic device in which characters or events in a story represent or symbolize ideas and concepts.

Alliteration is the repetition of an initial consonant sound. This literary term is often used in poetry.
Allusion

An allusion is a figure of speech where the author refers to a subject matter such as a person, place, event, or literary work in a passing reference. It is up to the reader to make a connection to the subject being mentioned.

Anagram

Anagrams are an extremely popular form of literary device wherein the writer jumbles up parts of the word to create a new word. It is a type of wordplay!
Analogy
A comparison between two things for the purpose of explanation or clarification.

Antagonist
The antagonist of a story is a character, group of characters, or institution, that represents the opposition against which the protagonist. In other words, an antagonist is a person or a group of people who oppose the main character(s).
Anti-Hero

In literature, an antihero is a central character who lacks conventional heroic qualities.

Anthropomorphism

Anthropomorphism occurs when a human quality, emotion or ambition is given to a non-human object or being.
Antithesis

An antithesis is used when the writer puts two sentences of contrasting meanings close to one another.

Apostrophe

A figure of speech in which the speaker addresses an object, concept, or person (usually absent) that is unable to respond.
Archetype

An archetype is a concept, a person or an object that has served as universally understood prototype of its kind. Archetypes are immediately identifiable and sometimes overused.

Atmosphere

Atmosphere is created when the setting or scene creates an emotional response in the reader/viewer.
Catharsis

Catharsis is the process of releasing, and thereby providing relief from, strong or repressed emotions. It is usually felt by the audience/reader while exposed to a story that brings about great sorrow, pity, laughter etc.

caricature

A caricature is a simple image showing the features of its subject in a simplified or exaggerated way. In literature, a caricature is a description of a person using exaggeration of some characteristics and oversimplification of others.
Cliché

A cliché or cliche is an expression, idea, or element of work which has become overused to the point of losing its original meaning, even to the point of being trite or irritating.

Cliffhanger

A cliffhanger or cliffhanger ending is a plot device in fiction which features a main character in a precarious or difficult dilemma, or confronted with a shocking revelation at the end of an episode of serialized fiction. A cliffhanger is used to ensure the audience will return to see how the characters resolve the dilemma.
A dynamic or round character goes through change or growth in the story.

A static or flat character remains the same through the story - does not experience change.
The climax is a part of any basic plot line. It is the most exciting or intense part of the plot. Stories build up to the climax.

In a story, conflict is the struggle between opposing forces. There are 4 types of conflict:
**Connotation**

A word that has a connotation has, in addition to its straightforward dictionary meaning, a secondary meaning. A word's connotations can usually be formulated as a series of qualities, contexts, and emotional responses commonly associated with it.

**Dark Comedy**

A black comedy, or dark comedy, is a comic work that uses black humor, which, in its most basic definition, is humor that makes light of otherwise solemn subject matter.
Denotation
The literal or primary meaning of a word, in contrast to the feelings or ideas that the word suggests. It is the dictionary definition of a word.

Dystopia
An imagined setting in which everything is unpleasant or bad. This could be a totalitarian, apocalyptic, or environmentally degraded society.
An epithet is used as a descriptive device. It is usually used to add to a person or places regular name and attribute some special quality to the same. Epithets are remarkable in that they become a part of common usage over time.

The term euphemism is used to refer to the use of a comparatively milder or less harsh form of a negative description instead of its original form. This device is used when writing about matters such as sex, violence, death, crimes and anything "embarrassing".
Flashforward
A literary or cinematic device in which later events interrupt the normal chronological order of a narrative. This device is often used to give important about what may happen later in the plot.

Flashback
A literary or cinematic device in which an earlier event is inserted into the normal chronological order of a narrative. This device is often used to give background information that is important to the plot.
Foil
The term ‘foil’ refers to a literary device where the author creates a character whose primary purpose is to create a contrast to another character by laying emphasis or drawing attention to the differences in character.

Foreshadowing
The literary device foreshadowing refers to the use of words/phrases that give hints to the reader of something that is going to happen without revealing the story or spoiling the suspense. Foreshadowing is used to suggest an upcoming outcome to the story.
**Genre**

A category of artistic composition, as in music or literature, characterized by similarities in form, style, or subject matter.

**Hubris**

Hubris is another way of saying overly arrogant. You can tell the difference of hubris and just regular arrogance or pride by the fact that the character has seemed to allow reality slip away from them. The character portraying hubris has a false belief that they are “untouchable”.
Hyperbole

Hyperbole is an exaggeration in writing that is used for effect.

Idiom

An expression that is peculiar to itself grammatically or cannot be understood from the individual meanings of its elements, but is understood by most people.
Imagery

In literature, one of the strongest devices is imagery, wherein the author uses words and phrases to create “mental images” for the reader using the 5 senses. Imagery helps the reader to visualize, and therein, more realistically experience the author's writings and awaken the readers' sensory perceptions.

Internal Rhyme

In literature the internal rhyme is a practice of forming a rhyme in only one line of verse. An internal rhyme is also known as the middle rhyme because it is typically constructed in the middle of a line to rhyme with the word at the end of the same line.
**Verbal Irony**
Verbal irony (also called sarcasm) occurs when a writer makes a statement in which the actual meaning differs from the meaning that the words appear to express.

**Situational Irony**
Situational irony occurs when the reader is led to believe that one thing will occur but, in fact, the opposite occurs. This can be humorous or tragic.
Dramatic Irony

Dramatic irony occurs when the reader/audience knows something, but the characters within the story do not.

Kenning

The use of Kennings in literature is characteristically related to works in Old English poetry where the author would create a new poetic compound-phrase to describe a familiar person, place, or idea.
Malapropism
Malapropism in literature refers to the practice of misusing words by substituting words with similar sounding words that have different, often unconnected meanings, and thus creating a situation of confusion, misunderstanding and amusement.

Metaphor
A metaphor is an implied comparison is made between two unlike things that actually have something important in common.
Metonymy in literature refers to the practice of not using the formal word for an object/subject and instead referring to it by using another word that is somehow linked to the formal name/word. It is the practice of substituting the main word with a word that is closely linked to it.

Mood is the author's emotional perspective towards the subject of the literary work. It refers to the mental and emotional disposition of the author towards the subject, which in turn lends a particular character or atmosphere to the work.
Motif

A motif is a specific theme that dominates a literary work. Motifs are very noticeable and play a significant role in defining the nature of the story, the course of events and the very fabric of the literary piece.

Nemesis

A nemesis is a bitter enemy, especially one that seems unbeatable.
Onomatopoeia
The term onomatopoeia refers to words that imitate or represent a sound.

Oxymoron
Oxymoron occurs when opposite words are placed together in a manner that actually ends up making sense.
paradox
A seemingly absurd or self-contradictory statement or proposition that when investigated or explained may prove to be well founded or true.

parody
An imitation of the style of a particular writer, artist, or genre with deliberate exaggeration for comic effect.
Pathos

Pathos is used in literature and film. It represents an appeal to the audience's emotions.

Pathetic Fallacy

The pathetic fallacy is the treatment of inanimate objects as if they had human feelings, thought, or sensations. In the discussion of literature, the pathetic fallacy is similar to personification. Pathetic fallacy is most often used to describe weather in a story.
Personification

Personification is one of the most commonly used and recognized literary devices. It refers to the practice of attaching human traits and characteristics with inanimate objects, phenomena and animals.

Plot

The plot usually refers to the sequence of events and happenings that make up a story. There is usually a pattern, unintended or intentional, that threads the plot together.
1st person Point of View
With first person point of view, the story is told by the narrator from his/her point of view. It is easily identified by the use of "I" or "Me".

2nd person Point of View
You use the second-person point of view addresses the reader. The second person uses the pronouns “you,” “your,” and “yours.”
3rd person point of view

With third person point of view, the narrator does not participate in the events of the story and tells the story by referring to all characters and places in the third person with third person pronouns and proper nouns (he, she, they).

Prologue

A prologue is an introduction to a story that usually sets the tone and acts as a bit of a backgrounder or a “sneak peek” into the story. Prologues are typically a narrative ‘spoken’ by one of the characters and not from the part of the author.
**protagonist**
The leading character or a major character in a drama, movie, novel, or other fictional text.

**pun**
A play on words, sometimes on different senses of the same word and sometimes on the similar sense or sound of different words.
Rhyme Scheme

The rhyme scheme is the practice of rhyming words placed at the end of the lines in poetry. Rhyme scheme refers to the order in which particular words rhyme. If the alternate words rhyme, it is an “a-b-a-b” rhyme scheme.

Satire

Satire occurs when a piece of writing is making fun of a human weakness or character flaw. In general, even though satire might be humorous and may “make fun”, its purpose is not to entertain and amuse but actually to derive a reaction of contempt from the reader.
Setting
The setting is the time and place of the events of the story. It basically helps in establishing where and when and under what circumstances the story is taking place.

Simile
Similes are comparisons between two unrelated and dissimilar things using like or as (and sometimes than).
Spoonerism refers to the practice of interchanging the first letters of some words in order to create new words or even to create nonsensical words in order to create a humorous setting. While they are often unintentional and known as a “slip of the tongue”, in literature they are welcomed as witty word-play.

The term stanza refers to a single, related chunk of lines in poetry. It basically refers to one unit or group of lines, which forms one particular section in poetry.
Suspense

Suspense is the intense feeling that an audience goes through while waiting for the outcome of certain events. It basically leaves the reader holding their breath and wanting more information. The amount of intensity in a suspenseful moment is why it is hard to put a reading down.

Symbol

A symbol is an object that represents something else, usually something more meaningful.
Synecdoche

A synecdoche is a literary devices that uses a part of something to refer to the whole.

Theme

The theme of any literary work is the base topic or focus that acts as a foundation for the entire literary piece. The theme links all aspects of the literary work with one another and is basically the main subject.
Tone

The tone of a literary work is the perspective or attitude that the author adopts with regards to a specific character, place or development. Tone can portray a variety of emotions ranging from solemn, grave, and critical to witty, wry and humorous. Tone helps the reader ascertain the writer's feelings towards a particular topic and this in turn influences the reader's understanding of the story.

Tragedy

In literature, the concept of tragedy refers to a series of unfortunate events by which one or more of the literary characters in the story undergo several misfortunes, which finally culminate into a disaster of epic proportions.
Tragic Flaw
The character flaw or error of a tragic hero that leads to a character's downfall.

Understatement
An understatement draws attention to a fact that is already obvious and noticeable in a sarcastic or ironic way. Understating something is akin to exaggerating its obviousness as a means of humor.
A piece of utopian fiction is set in an ideal or perfect community.

Wit is a form of intelligent humour, the ability to say or write things that are clever and usually funny. A wit is a person skilled at making clever and funny remarks.