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| 1. abstract | a typically complex style in writing that discusses intangible questions like good and evil, and seldom uses examples to support its points | 16. apostrophe | an address to someone not present, or to a personified object or idea |
| 2. academic | as an adjective describing style, this word means dry and theoretical writing; when a piece of writing seems to be sucking all the life out of its subject with analysis | 17. archaism | the use of deliberately old-fashioned language, sometimes used to create a feeling of antiquity |
| 3. accent | in poetry, refers to the stressed portion of a word | 18. aside | a speech (usually just a short comment) made by an actor to the audience, as though momentarily stepping outside of the action on stage |
| 4. aesthetic, aesthetics | can be used as an adjective meaning "appealing to the senses," as a noun meaning a coherent sense of taste, or as a plural meaning the study of beauty | 19. aspect | a trait or characteristic |
| 5. allegory | a story in which each aspect of the story has a symbolic meaning outside the tale itself, as seen in many fables | 20. assonance | the repeated use of vowel sounds, as in "Old King Cole was a merry old soul" |
| 6. alliteration | the repetition of the initial consonant sounds; consonant clusters coming closely cramped and compressed--no coincidence | 21. atmosphere | the emotional tone or background that surrounds a scene |
| 7. allusion | a reference to another work or famous figure; can be topical or popular (topical referring to a current event and popular referring to something from popular culture) | 22. ballad | a long, narrative poem, usually in very regular meter and rhyme; typically has a naive folksy quality, a characteristic that distinguishes it from epic poetry |
| 8. anachronism | "misplaced in time," such as when an actor playing Brutus in Julius Caesar forgets to take off his wristwatch | 23. bathos | when writing strains for grandeur it can't support and tries to elicit tears from every little hiccup |
| 9. analogy | a comparison usually involving two or more symbolic parts and employed to clarify an action or a relationship | 24. black humor | the use of disturbing themes in comedy |
| 10. anecdote | a short narrative | 25. bombast | pretentious, exaggeratedly learned language, such as when one tries to be eloquent by using the largest, most uncommon words |
| 11. antecedent | the word, phrase, or clause that a pronoun refers to or replaces | 26. burlesque | a broad parody, one that takes a style or a form, such as a tragic drama, and exaggerates it into ridiculousness |
| 12. anthropomorphism | when inanimate objects, animals, or natural phenomena are given human characteristics, behavior, or motivation in literature | | |
| 13. anticlimax | occurs when an action produces far smaller results than one had been led to expect; frequently comical in nature | | |
| 14. antihero | a protagonist who is markedly unheroic: morally weak, cowardly, dishonest, or any number of other unsavory qualities | | |
| 15. aphorism | a short and usually witty saying, such as: "'Classic'? A book which people praise and don't read." --Mark Twain | | |

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| 1. cacophony | in poetry, using deliberately harsh, awkward sounds | 22. doggerel | crude, simplistic verse, often in sing-song rhyme, of which limericks are a kind |
| 2. cadence | the beat or rhythm of poetry in a general sense, for example iambic pentameter | 23. dramatic irony | when the audience knows something that the characters in the drama do not |
| 3. canto | a section division in a long work of poetry; divides a long poem into parts the way chapters divide a novel | 24. dramatic monologue | when a single speaker in literature says something to a silent audience |
| 4. caricature | a portrait (verbal or otherwise) that exaggerates a facet of personality | | |
| 5. catharsis | the "cleansing" of emotion an audience member experiences, having lived (vicariously) through the experiences presented on stage | | |
| 6. chorus | in drama, the group of citizens who stand outside the main action on stage and comment on it | | |
| 7. classic | can mean typical or an accepted masterpiece | | |
| 8. coinage | a new word, usually one invented on the spot; the technical term is "neologism" | | |
| 9. colloquialism | a word or phrase used in everyday conversational English that isn't a part of accepted "schoolbook" English | | |
| 10. complex | suggests that there is more than one possibility in the meaning of words (image, idea, opposition); not "dense" | | |
| 11. conceit | a startling or unusual metaphor; a metaphor developed and expanded upon over several lines | | |
| 12. connotation | everything else besides its literal meaning that a word suggests or implies | | |
| 13. consonance | the repetition of consonant sounds within words rather than at their beginnings | | |
| 14. controlling image | when a metaphor/image dominates and shapes the entire work | | |
| 15. couplet | a pair of lines that end in rhyme | | |
| 16. decorum | when writing (or a character's speech) is styled according to social station, and in accordance with the occasion | | |
| 17. denotation | the literal meaning of a word | | |
| 18. dense | suggests that there is more than one possibility in the meaning of words (image, idea, opposition); not "complex" | | |
| 19. diction | the author's choice of words | | |
| 20. dirge | a song for the dead; its tone is typically low, heavy, and melancholy | | |
| 21. dissonance | the grating of incompatible sounds | | |

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| 1. elegy | a type of poem that meditates on death or morality in a serious, thoughtful manner | 22. interior monologue | a term from novels and poetry, not dramatic literature; refers to the writing that records the mental talking that goes on inside a character's head |
| 2. elements | the basic techniques of each genre of literature | 23. inversion | switching the customary order of elements in a sentence or phrase |
| 3. enjambment | the continuation of a syntactic unit from one line or couplet of a poem to the next with no pause | 24. irony | an undertow of meaning, sliding against the literal meaning of the words; or, more crudely, a statement that means the opposite of what it seems to mean |
| 4. epic | a very long narrative poem on a serious theme in a dignified style | | |
| 5. epitaph | lines that commemorate the dead at their burial place | | |
| 6. euphemism | a word or phrase that takes the place of a harsh, unpleasant, or impolite reality | | |
| 7. euphony | when sounds blend harmoniously | | |
| 8. explicit | to say or write something directly and clearly | | |
| 9. farce | today we use the word to refer to extremely broad humor, but writers of earlier times used it as a more neutral term meaning a funny play or comedy | | |
| 10. feminine rhyme | lines rhymed by their final two syllables | | |
| 11. first person narrator | a narrator who is a character in the story and tells the tale from his or her point of view | | |
| 12. foil | a secondary character whose purpose is to highlight the characteristics of a main character, usually by contrast | | |
| 13. foot | the basic rhythmic unit of a line of poetry; formed by a combination of two or three syllables, either stressed or unstressed | | |
| 14. foreshadowing | an event or statement in a narrative that suggests, in miniature, a larger event that comes later | | |
| 15. free verse | poetry written without a regular rhyme scheme or metrical pattern | | |
| 16. genre | a subcategory of literature | | |
| 17. gothic | a sensibility that first showed up in the middle of the eighteenth century; involves mysterious gloomy castles, weird screams from the attic, etc | | |
| 18. hubris | the excessive pride or ambition that leads to the main character's downfall | | |
| 19. hyperbole | exaggeration or deliberate overstatement | | |
| 20. implicit | to say or write something that suggests or implies but never says it directly or clearly | | |
| 21. in medias res | Latin for "in the midst of things" | | |

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| 1. lament | a poem of sadness or grief over the death of a loved one or over some other intense loss |
| 2. lampoon | a satire |
| 3. loose sentence | a sentence complete before its end |
| 4. lyric | a type of poetry that explores the poet's personal interpretation of and feelings about the world; when used to describe a tone it refers to a sweet, emotional melodiousness |
| 5. masculine rhyme | a rhyme ending on the final stressed syllable |
| 6. means, meaning | what makes sense, what's important; can be literal, which is concrete and explicit, or emotional |
| 7. melodrama | a form of cheesy theater in which the hero is very, very good, the villain mean and rotten, and the heroine oh-so-pure |
| 8. metaphor | a comparison or analogy that states one thing is another |
| 9. metaphysical conceit | a startling or unusual metaphor, or a metaphor developed and expanded upon over several lines, but reserved for metaphysical poems only |
| 10. metonym | a word that is used to stand for something else that it has attributes of or is associated with |
| 11. nemesis | the protagonist's archenemy or supreme and persistent difficulty |
| 12. neologism | a new word, usually one invented on the spot; the technical term for coinage |
| 13. objectivity | an impersonal or outside view of events |
| 14. omniscient narrator | a third-person narrator who sees, like God, into each character's mind and understands all action going on |
| 15. onomatopoeia | words that sound like what they mean |
| 16. opposition | a pair of elements that contrast sharply; not necessarily "conflict" but rather a pairing of images whereby each becomes more striking and informative because it's placed in contrast to the other one |
| 17. oxymoron | a phrase composed of opposites; a contradiction |

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| 1. parable | a story that instructs, like a fable or an allegory |
| 2. paradox | a situation or statement that seems to contradict itself, but on closer inspection, does not |
| 3. parallelism | repeated syntactical similarities used for effect |
| 4. paraphrase | to restate phrases and sentences in your own words; to rephrase |
| 5. parenthetical phrase | a phrase set off by commas that interrupts the flow of a sentence with some commentary or added detail |
| 6. parody | the work that results when a specific work is exaggerated to ridiculousness |
| 7. pastoral | a poem set in tranquil nature, or even more specifically, one about shepherds |
| 8. pathos | when the writing of a scene evokes feelings of dignified pity and sympathy |
| 9. periodic sentence | a sentence that is not grammatically complete until it has reached its final phrase |
| 10. persona | the narrator in a non-first-person novel; the shadow-author |
| 11. personification | giving an inanimate object human qualities or form |
| 12. plaint | a poem or speech expressing sorrow |
| 13. point of view | the perspective from which the action of a novel (or narrative poem) is presented |
| 14. prelude | an introductory poem to a longer work of verse |
| 15. protagonist | the main character of a novel or play |
| 16. pun | the usually humorous use of a word in such a way to suggest two or more meanings |
| 17. refrain | a line or set of lines repeated several times over the course of a poem |
| 18. requiem | a song of prayer for the dead |
| 19. rhapsody | an intensely passionate verse or section of verse, usually of love or praise |
| 20. rhetorical question | a question that suggests an answer |

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| 1. satire | attempts to improve things by pointing out people's mistakes in the hope that once exposed, such behavior will become less common | 20. unreliable narrator | when the first-person narrator is crazy, a liar, very young, or for some other reason not entirely credible |
| 2. simile | just like a metaphor but softens the full-out equation of things, often, but not always, by using like or as | 21. utopia | an idealized place; imaginary communities in which people are able to live in happiness, prosperity, and peace |
| 3. soliloquy | a speech spoken by a character alone on stage | 22. zeugma | the use of a word to modify two or more words, but used for different meanings |
| 4. stanza | a group of lines in verse, roughly analogous in function to the paragraph in prose | | |
| 5. stock characters | standard or clichéd character types: the drunk, the miser, the foolish girl, etc | | |
| 6. stream of consciousness | like first-person narration but, instead of the character telling the story, the author places the reader inside the main character's head and makes the reader privy to all of the character's thoughts as they scroll through her consciousness | | |
| 7. subjective | a treatment that uses the interior or personal view of a single observer and is typically colored with that observer's emotional responses | | |
| 8. subjunctive mood | a grammatical situation that involves the words "if" and "were"; it is a hypothetical situation, a kind of wishful thing | | |
| 9. suggest | to imply, infer, indicate | | |
| 10. summary | a simple retelling of what you've just read | | |
| 11. suspension of disbelief | the demand made of a theater audience to accept the limitations of staging and supply the details with imagination; also, the acceptance on an audience's or reader's part of the incidents of plot in a play or story | | |
| 12. symbolism | a device in literature where an object represents an idea | | |
| 13. syntax | the ordering and structuring of words | | |
| 14. technique | the methods, the tools, the "how-she-does-it" ways of the author | | |
| 15. theme | the main idea of the overall work; the central idea | | |
| 16. thesis | the main position of an argument | | |
| 17. tragic flaw | the weakness of character in an otherwise good (or even great) individual that ultimately leads to his demise | | |
| 18. travesty | a grotesque parody | | |
| 19. truism | a way-too-obvious truth | | |