Literacy Terms

A

allegory (AL-eh-GOR-ee): a narrative that serves as an extended metaphor. Allegories are written in the form of fables, parables, poems, stories, and almost any other style or genre. The main purpose of an allegory is to tell a story that has characters, a setting, as well as other types of symbols, that have both literal and figurative meanings. The difference between an allegory and a symbol is that an allegory is a complete narrative that conveys abstract ideas to get a point across, while a symbol is a representation of an idea or concept that can have a different meaning throughout a literary work (*A Handbook to Literature*). One well-known example of an allegory is Dante's *The Divine Comedy*. In *Inferno*, Dante is on a pilgrimage to try to understand his own life, but his character also represents every man who is in search of his purpose in the world (*Merriam Webster Encyclopedia of Literature*). Although Virgil literally guides Dante on his journey through the mystical inferno, he can also be seen as the reason and human wisdom that Dante has been looking for in his life. See *A Handbook to Literature*, *Merriam Webster's Encyclopedia of Literature*. **Machella Caldwell, Student, University of North Carolina at Pembroke**

alliteration (a-LIT-uh-RAY-shuhn): a pattern of sound that includes the repetition of consonant sounds. The repetition can be located at the beginning of successive words or inside the words. Poets often use alliteration to audibly represent the action that is taking place. For instance, in the *Inferno*, Dante states: "I saw it there, but I saw nothing in it, except the rising of the boiling bubbles" (261). The repetition of the "b" sounds represents the sounds of bubbling, or the bursting action of the boiling pitch. In addition, in Sir Phillip Sidney's *Astrophel and Stella*, the poet states: "Biting my truant pen, beating myself for spite" (Line 13). This repetition of the "t" sound represents the action of the poet; one can hear and visualize his anguish as he bites the pen. Also in *Astrophel and Stella*, the poet states, "Oft turning others' leaves, to see if thence would flow, / Some fresh and fruitful showers upon my sunburn'd brain" (7-8). Again, the poet repeats the "fr" sounds to emphasize the speaker's desire for inspiration in expressing his feelings. Poets may also use alliteration to call attention to a phrase and fix it into the reader's mind; thus, it is useful for emphasis. Therefore, not only does alliteration provide poetry or prose with a unique sound, it can place emphasis on specific phrases and represent the action that is taking place. See *A Handbook to Literature*, *Literature: An Introduction to Fiction, Poetry, and Drama*. **Stacey Ann Singletary, Student, University of North Carolina at Pembroke**

allusion (a-LOO-zhuhn): a reference in a literary work to a person, place, or thing in history or another work of literature. Allusions are often indirect or brief references to well-known characters or events. Specific examples of allusions can be found throughout Dante's *Inferno*. In a passage, Dante alludes to the Greek mythological figures, Phaethon and Icarus, to express his fear as he descends from the air into the eighth circle of hell. He states:

I doubt if Phaethon feared more - that time
he dropped the sun-reins of his father's chariot
and burned the streak of sky we see today -

or if poor Icarus did - feeling his sides
unfeathering as the wax began to melt,
his father shouting: "Wrong, your course is wrong" (Canto XVII: 106-111).

Allusions are often used to summarize broad, complex ideas or emotions in one quick, powerful image. For example, to communicate the idea of self-sacrifice one may refer to Jesus, as part of Jesus' story portrays him dying on the cross in order to save mankind (Matthew 27:45-56). In addition, to express righteousness, one might allude to Noah who "had no faults and was the only good man of his time" (Genesis 6:9-22). Furthermore, the idea of fatherhood or patriarchial love can be well understood by alluding to Abraham, who was the ancestor of many nations (Genesis 17:3-6). Finally, Cain is an excellent example to convey banishment, rejection, or evil, for he was cast out of his homeland by God (Genesis 4:12). Thus, allusions serve an important function in writing in that they allow the reader to understand a difficult concept by relating to an already familiar story. See *A Handbook to Literature*, *Literature: An Introduction to Fiction, Poetry, and Drama*. **Stacey Ann Singletary, Student, University of North Carolina at Pembroke**

antagonist (an-TAG-uh-nist): a character in a story or poem who deceives, frustrates, or works again the main character, or protagonist, in some way. The antagonist doesn't necessarily have to be an person. It could be death, the devil, an illness, or any challenge that prevents the main character from living "happily ever after." In fact, the antagonist could be a character of virtue in a literary work where the protagonist represents evil. An antagonist in the story of Genesis is the serpent. He convinces Eve to disobey God, setting off a chain of events.that leads to Adam and Eve being banished from paradise. In the play *Othello* by William Shakespeare, the antagonist is Iago. Throughout the play, he instigates conflicts and sows distrust among the main characters, Othello and Desdemona, two lovers who have risked their livelihood in order to elope. Iago is determined to break up their marriage due to his suspicions that Othello has taken certain liberties with his wife. See *Benet's Reader's Encyclopedia*. **Victoria Henderson, Student, University of North Carolina at Pembroke**

aside (uh-SIDE): an actor's speech, directed to the audience, that is not supposed to be heard by other actors on stage. An aside is usually used to let the audience know what a character is about to do or what he or she is thinking. For example, in *Othello*, Iago gives several asides, informing the audience of his plans and how he will try to achieve his goals. Asides are important because they increase an audience's involvement in a play by giving them vital information pertaining what is happening, both inside of a character's mind and in the plot of the play. See *A Handbook to Literature*, *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms*, *Merriam Webster's Encyclopedia of Literature*. **Dawn Oxendine, Student, University of North Carolina at Pembroke**

B

ballad (BAL-uhd): a narrative folk song. The ballad is traced back to the Middle Ages. Ballads were usually created by common people and passed orally due to the illiteracy of the time. Subjects for ballads include killings, feuds, important historical events, and rebellion. For example, in the international ballad "Lord Randall," the young man is poisoned by his sweetheart, and in "Edward," the son commits patricide. A common stylistic element of the ballad is repetition. "Lord Randall" illustrates this well with the phrase at the end of each verse: "…mother, mak my bed soon, for I'm sick at the heart and I fain wad lie down." *A Handbook to Literature* notes the ballad occurs in very early literature in nearly every nation. Therefore, in addition to being entertaining, ballads can help us to understand a given culture by showing us what values or norms that culture deemed important. See *A Handbook to Literature*, *Benet's Reader's Encyclopedia*, *Merriam-Webster's Encyclopedia of Literature*, *The Book of Ballads*. **Monica Horne, Student, University of North Carolina at Pembroke**

C

character (KARE-ec-ter): a person who is responsible for the thoughts and actions within a story, poem, or other literature. Characters are extremely important because they are the medium through which a reader interacts with a piece of literature. Every character has his or her own personality, which a creative author uses to assist in forming the plot of a story or creating a mood. The different attitudes, mannerisms, and even appearances of characters can greatly influence the other major elements in a literary work, such as theme, setting, and tone. With this understanding of the character, a reader can become more aware of other aspects of literature, such as symbolism, giving the reader a more complete understanding of the work. The character is one of the most important tools available to the author. In the ballad "Edward," for instance, the character himself sets the tone of the ballad within the first stanza. After reading the first few stanzas, one learns that Edward has murdered his father and is very distraught. His attitude changes to disgust and finally to despair when he realizes the consequences he must face for his actions. An example of the attitudes and personalities of characters determining the theme is also seen in the book of Genesis. The proud personality of Cain and the humble personality of Abel help create the conflict for this story. Cain and Abel were brothers, possibly twins, who displayed intense sibling rivalry. God was not pleased with Cain's offerings, but found pleasure in Abel's offerings. Provoked by God's displeasure with him, Cain murdered his own brother out of jealousy. **Victoria Henderson, Student, University of North Carolina at Pembroke**

connotation (KAH-nuh-TAE-shun): an association that comes along with a particular word. Connotations relate not to a word's actual meaning, or denotation, but rather to the ideas or qualities that are implied by that word. A good example is the word "gold." The denotation of gold is a malleable, ductile, yellow element. The connotations,

however, are the ideas associated with gold, such as greed, luxury, or avarice. Another example occurs in the Book of Genesis. Jacob says: "Dan will be a serpent by the roadside, a viper along the path, that bites the horse's heels so that its rider tumbles backward" (Gen 49:17). In this passage, Dan is not literally going to become a snake. However, describing Dan as a "snake" and "viper" forces the reader to associate him with the negative qualities that are commonly associated with reptiles, such as slyness, danger, and evil. Dan becomes like a snake, sly and dangerous to the riders. Writers use connotation to make their writing more vivid and interesting to read. See *A Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Theory*. **Jennifer Lance, Student, University of North Carolina at Pembroke**

couplet (KUP-let): a style of poetry defined as a complete thought written in two lines with rhyming ends. The most popular of the couplets is the heroic couplet. The heroic couplet consists of two rhyming lines of iambic pentameter usually having a pause in the middle of each line. One of William Shakespeare's trademarks was to end a sonnet with a couplet, as in the poem "Shall I Compare Thee to a Summer's Day":

So long as men can breathe or eyes can see,
So long as lives this, and this gives life to thee.

By using the couplet Shakespeare would often signal the end of a scene in his plays as well. An example of a scene's end signaled by a couplet is the end of Act IV of *Othello*. The scene ends with Desdemona's lines:
Good night. Good night. Heaven me such uses send.
Not to pick bad from bad, but by bad mend.
See *A Handbook to Literature*, *Benet's Reader's Encyclopedia*, *Mirriam-Webster's Encyclopedia of Literature*, *Literature: An Introduction to Fiction, Poetry, and Drama*. **Monica Horne, Student, University of North Carolina at Pembroke**

D

denotation (DEE-no-TAE-shuhn): the exact meaning of a word, without the feelings or suggestions that the word may imply. It is the opposite of "connotation" in that it is the "dictionary" meaning of a word, without attached feelings or associations. Some examples of denotations are:
1. **heart**: an organ that circulates blood throughout the body. Here the word "heart" denotes the actual organ, while in another context, the word "heart" may connote feelings of love or heartache.
2. **sweater**: a knitted garment for the upper body. The word "sweater" may denote pullover sweaters or cardigans, while "sweater" may also connote feelings of warmness or security.
Denotation allows the reader to know the exact meaning of a word so that he or she will better understand the work of literature. See *Literature: An Introduction to Fiction, Poetry, and Drama*, *A Glossary of Literary Terms*, *A Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Theory*, *Webster's Dictionary*. **Shana Locklear, Student, University of North Carolina at Pembroke**

denouement (day-noo-mon): literally meaning the action of untying, a denouement is the final outcome of the main complication in a play or story. Usually the climax (the turning point or "crisis") of the work has already occurred by the time the denouement occurs. It is sometimes referred to as the explanation or outcome of a drama that reveals all the secrets and misunderstandings connected to the plot. In the drama *Othello,* there is a plot to deceive Othello into believing that his wife, Desdemona, has been unfaithful to him. As a result of this plot, Othello kills his wife out of jealousy, the climax of the play. The denounement occurs soon after, when Emilia, who was Desdemona's mistress, proves to Othello that his wife was in fact honest, true, and faithful to him. Emilia reveals to Othello that her husband, Iago, had plotted against Desdemona and tricked Othello into believing that she had been unfaithful. Iago kills Emilia in front of Othello, and she dies telling Othello his wife was innocent. As a result of being mad with grief, Othello plunges a dagger into his own heart. Understanding the denouement helps the reader to see how the final end of a story unfolds, and how the structure of stories works to affect our emotions. See *Encyclopedia of Literature*, Miriam Webster. **Shelby Locklear, Student, University of North Carolina at Pembroke**

dialogue (di-UH-log): The conversation between characters in a drama or narrative. A dialouge occurs in most works of literature. For example, many ballads demonstrate a ocnversation between two or more characters. In the

anonymous ballad, "Sir Patrick Spens", we are able to observe the dialogue between Sir Patrick Spens and his mirry men. In the verses 21-24, "Mak hast, mak haste, my mirry men all, Our guid schip sails the morne: O say na sae, my master deir, for I feir a deadlie storme," dialogue can be seen. According to *A Handbook of Literature*, dialogue serves several functions in literature. It moves the action along in a work and it also helps to characterize the personality of the speakers, which vary depending on their nationalities, jobs, social classes, and educations. It also gives literature a more natural, conversational flow, which makes it more readable and enjoyable. By showcasing human interaction, dialogue prevents literature from being nothing more than a list of descriptions and actions. Dialogue varies in structure and tone depending on the people participating in the conversation and the mood that the author is trying to maintain in his or her writing. See *A Handbook to Literature,The American Heritage Dictionary*. **Ramon Gonzalez, Student, University of North Carolina at Pembroke**

didactic (di-DAK-tik): refers to literature or other types of art that are instructional or informative. In this sense *The Bible* is didactic because it offers guidance in moral, religious, and ethical matters. It tells stories of the lives of people that followed Christian teachings, and stories of people that decided to go against God and the consequences that they faced. The term "didactic" also refers to texts that are overburdened with instructive and factual information, sometimes to the detriment of a reader's enjoyment. The opposite of "didactic" is "nondidactic." If a writer is more concerned with artistic qualities and techniques than with conveying a message, then that piece of work is considered to be nondidactic, even if it is instructive. See *Encyclopedia of Literature*, *Benet's Readers Encyclopedia*. **Jennifer Baker, University of North Carolina at Pembroke**

dramatic monologue (dra-MA-tik mon'-O-lôg): a literary device that is used when a character reveals his or her innermost thoughts and feelings, those that are hidden throughout the course of the story line, through a poem or a speech. This speech, where only one character speaks, is recited while other characters are present onstage. This monologue often comes during a climactic moment in a work and often reveals hidden truths about a character, their history and their relationships. Also it can further develop a character's personality and also be used to create irony. The most famous examples of this special type of monologue can be found within the poems of Robert Browning, poem such as "My Last Duchess," "The Bishop Orders his Tomb," and "Andrea Del Santo". Browning's use of dramatic monologue has a special effect on his works. The revelations of his characters not only develop themselves, but they also create settings within the monologues with their use of vivid imagery. In Browning's works, the characters almost seem to take control of the story line, creating a poem of their own. Other authors whose works included dramatic monologues are Robert Frost and T.S. Elliot. See *A Reader's Companion to World Literature*. **Jacob Gersh, Student, University of North Carolina at Pembroke**

E

elegy (EL-e-je): a type of literature defined as a song or poem, written in elegiac couplets, that expresses sorrow or lamentation, usually for one who has died. This type of work stemmed out of a Greek work known as a "elegus," a song of mourning or lamentation that is accompanied by the flute. Beginning in the 16th century, elegies took the form we know today. Two famous elegies include Thomas Gray's "Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard" and Walt Whitman's "When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloom'd". Gray's elegy is notable in that it mourned the loss of a way of life rather than the loss of an individual. His work, which some consider to be almost political, showed extreme discontent for strife and tyranny set upon England by Oliver Cromwell. This work also acted as an outlet for Gray's dissatisfaction with those poets who wrote in accordance with the thoughts and beliefs of the upper class. In his elegy, Gray mourned for his country and mourned for its citizens. Whitman, inspired by the assassination of Abraham Lincoln, wrote his elegy in its classic form, showing sorrow for the loss of an individual. See *A Reader's Companion to World Literature*, and *Dictionary of World Literature*.

epigram (ep-e-gram): a short poem or verse that seeks to ridicule a thought or event, usually with witticism or sarcasm. These literary works were very popular during the Renaissance in Europe in the late 14th century and the Neoclassical period, which began after the Restoration in 1660. They were most commonly found in classic Latin literature, European and English literature. In Ancient Greek, an epigram originally meant a short inscription, but its meaning was later broadened to include any very short poems. Poems that are meditative or satiric all fall into this category. These short poems formulated from the light verse species, which concentrated on the tone of voice and the attitude of the lyric or narrative speaker toward the subject. With a relaxed manner, lyricists would recite poems

to their subjects that were comical or whimsical. Samuel Taylor Coleridge (1771-1834), an English poet, essayist and critic, constructed an epigram to show humor in Romanticism. His thoughts, "On a Volunteer Singer", compares and contrasts the death of swans with that of humans:

Swans sing before they die- 'twere no bad thing
Should certain people die before they sing!

The ballad, "Lord Randall" illustrates a young man who set off to meet his one true love and ends up becoming "sick at heart" with what he finds. The young man later arrives home to his family about to die and to each family member he leaves something sentimental. When asked what he leaves to his true love, he responds:
I leave her hell and fire…
This epigram tried to depict what happens to love gone sour. Epigrams have been used throughout the centuries not only to criticize but also to promote improvement. See *Benet's Reader's Encyclopedia*, *Webster's Third New International Dictionary* (unabridged), and *A Glossary of Literary Terms*. **Melanie P. Stephens, Student, University of North Carolina at Pembroke**

F

figurative language (fig-YOOR-a-tive LAN-gwije): a type of language that varies from the norms of literal language, in which words mean exactly what they say. Also known as the "ornaments of language," figurative language does not mean exactly what it says, but instead forces the reader to make an imaginative leap in order to comprehend an author's point. It usually involves a comparison between two things that may not, at first, seem to relate to one another. In a simile, for example, an author may compare a person to an animal: "He ran like a hare down the street" is the figurative way to describe the man running and "He ran very quickly down the street" is the literal way to describe him. Figurative language facilitates understanding because it relates something unfamiliar to something familiar. Some popular examples of figurative language include a simile and metaphor. See *A Handbook to Literature*, *A Dictionary of Literary Terms* and *Literary Theory*, and *A Glossary of Literary Terms*. **Charla Cobbler, Student, University of North Carolina at Pembroke**

flashback (flash-BAK): "an interruption of the chronological sequence (as of a film or literary work) of an event of earlier occurrence" (Merriam, 288). A flashback is a narrative technique that allows a writer to present past events during current events, in order to provide background for the current narration. By giving material that occurred prior to the present event, the writer provides the reader with insight into a character's motivation and or background to a conflict. This is done by various methods, narration, dream sequences, and memories (Holman et al, 197). For example, in the Book of Matthew, a flashback is used when Joseph is the governor of Egypt. Upon seeing his brothers after many years, Joseph "remembered his dreams" of his brothers and how they previously sold him into slavery (NIV, 69). Another example would be the ballad of "The Cruel Mother." Here, a mother is remembering her murdered child. As she is going to a church, she remembers her child born, grow, and die. Later she thinks back to further in her past to remember how her own mother was unkind to her (Kennedy et al, 626-627). Arthur Miller's "Death of a Salesman" uses flashback to relate Willy Loman's memories of the past. At one point, Willy is talking with his dead brother while playing cards with Charley, reliving a past conversation in the present. This shows a character that is mentally living in the present with the memories and events of the past (Roberts et al, 1232). By understanding flashbacks, the reader is able to receive more details about the current narration by filling in the details about the past. **Melanie Stephens, Student, University of North Carolina at Pembroke**

G

genre (ZHAHN-ruh): a type of literature. We say a poem, novel, story, or other literary work belongs to a particular genre if it shares at least a few conventions, or standard characteristics, with other works in that genre. For example, works in the Gothic genre often feature supernatural elements, attempts to horrify the reader, and dark, foreboding settings, particularly very old castles or mansions. Edgar Allan Poe's short story "The Fall of the House of Usher" belongs to the Gothic genre because it takes place in a gloomy mansion that seems to exert supernatural control over a man who lives in it. Furthermore, Poe attempts to horrify the reader by describing the man's ghastly face, the

burial of his sister, eerie sounds in the house, and ultimately the reappearance of the sister's bloody body at the end of the story. Other genres include the pastoral poem, epic poem, elegy, tragic drama, and bildungsroman. An understanding of genre is useful because it helps us to see how an author adopts, subverts, or transcends the standard practices that other authors have developed. See *A Handbook to Literature*, *Benet's Reader's Encyclopedia*. **Mark Canada, English professor, University of North Carolina at Pembroke**

Gothic (goth-IK): a literary style popular during the end of the 18th century and the beginning of the 19th. This style usually portrayed fantastic tales dealing with horror, despair, the grotesque and other "dark" subjects. Gothic literature was named for the apparent influence of the dark gothic architecture of the period on the genre. Also, many of these Gothic tales took places in such "gothic" surroundings. Other times, this story of darkness may occur in a more everyday setting, such as the quaint house where the man goes mad from the "beating" of his guilt in Edgar Allan Poe's "The Tell-Tale Heart." In essence, these stories were romances, largely due to their love of the imaginary over the logical, and were told from many different points of view. This literature gave birth to many other forms, such as suspense, ghost stories, horror, mystery, and also Poe's detective stories. Gothic literature wasn't so different from other genres in form as it was in content and its focus on the "weird" aspects of life. This movement began to slowly open may people's eyes to the possible uses of the supernatural in literature. **Jerry Taylor, Student, University of North Carolina at Pembroke**

H

hyperbole (hi-per-bo-lee): an extravagant exaggeration. From the Greek for "overcasting," hyperbole is a figure of speech that is a grossly exaggerated description or statement. In literature, such exaggeration is used for emphasis or vivid descriptions. In drama, hyperbole is quite common, especially in heroic drama. Hyperbole is a fundamental part of both burlesque writing and the "tall tales" from Western America. The conscious overstatements of these tales are forms of hyperbole. Many other examples of hyperbole can be found in the romance fiction and comedy genres. Hyperbole is even a part of our day-to-day speech: 'You've grown like a bean sprout' or 'I'm older than the hills.' Hyperbole is used to increase the effect of a description, whether it is metaphoric or comic. In poetry, hyperbole can emphasize or dramatize a person's opinions or emotions. Skilled poets use hyperbole to describe intense emotions and mental states. Othello uses hyperbole to describe his anger at the possibility of Iago lying about his wife's infidelity in Act III, Scene III of Shakespeare's play *Othello*:
If thou dost slander her and torture me,
Never pray more; abandon all remorse;
On horror's head accumulate;
Do deeds to make heaven weep, all earth amazed;
For nothing canst thou to damnation add
Greater than that.
In this passage, Othello is telling Iago that if he is lying then Othello will have no pity and Iago will have no hope for salvation. Adding horrors with still more horrors, Othello is describing his potential rage. Othello even declares that the Earth will be confounded with horror at Othello's actions in such a state of madness. See *A Glossary of Literary Terms* , *A Handbook to Literature*. **Andy Stamper, Student, University of North Carolina at Pembroke**

I

irony (i-RAH-nee): a literary term referring to how a person, situation, statement, or circumstance is not as it would actually seem. Many times it is the exact opposite of what it appears to be. There are many types of irony, the three most common being verbal irony, dramatic irony, and cosmic irony. Verbal irony occurs when either the speaker means something totally different than what he is saying or the audience realizes, because of their knowledge of the particular situation to which the speaker is referring, that the opposite of what a character is saying is true. Verbal irony also occurs when a character says something in jest that, in actuality, is true. In *Julius Caesar*, Marc Antony's reference to Brutus being an honorable man is an example of verbal irony. Marc Antony notes all of the good deeds Julius Caesar did for his people while, more than once, he asks the rhetorical question, "Did this in Caesar seem ambitious?" Antony uses this rhetorical question to try to convince his audience that Caesar is not ambitious, presenting Brutus as a dishonorable man because of his claim that Caesar was ambitious. Dramatic irony occurs

when facts are not known to the characters in a work of literature but are known by the audience. In The Gospel According to St. John, the Pharisees say of Jesus, "Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?" This is dramatic irony for the reader already knows, according to the author, that Jesus is the Savior of the world and has already done much good for the people by forgiving their sins and healing the sick and oppressed. The Pharisees are too blinded to see what good actually has come out of Nazareth. Cosmic irony suggests that some unknown force brings about dire and dreadful events. Cosmic irony can be seen in Shakespeare's *Othello*. Iago begs his wife to steal Desdemona's handkerchief so he can use this as conclusive proof that Cassio is having an affair with Desdemona. At the end of the play, when Othello tells Iago's wife about the handkerchief, she confesses that Iago put her up to stealing it. Iago winds up being at Cassio's mercy. The very handkerchief Iago thought would allow him to become lieutenant and bring Cassio to ruins was the handkerchief that brought Iago to ruins and exalted Cassio even higher than his position of lieutenant. Irony spices up a literary work by adding unexpected twists and allowing the reader to become more involved with the characters and plot. See *A Handbook to Literature*, *The Elements of Fiction Writing: Characters and Viewpoint*. **Robert Bean, Student, University of North Carolina at Pembroke**

J

K

L

lyric (LEER-ick): a lyric is a song-like poem written mainly to express the feelings of emotions or thought from a particular person, thus separating it from narrative poems. These poems are generally short, averaging roughly twelve to thirty lines, and rarely go beyond sixty lines. These poems express vivid imagination as well as emotion and all flow fairly concisely. Because of this aspect, as well as their steady rhythm, they were often used in song. In fact, most people still see a "lyric" as anything that is sung along to a musical instrument. It is believed that the lyric began in its earliest stage in Ancient Egypt around 2600 BC in the forms of elegies, odes, or hymns generated out of religious ceremonies. Some of the more note-worthy authors who have used the lyric include William Blake, William Wordsworth, John Keats, and William Shakespeare-who helped popularize the sonnet, another type of lyric. The importance of understanding the lyric can best be shown through its remarkable ability to express with such imagination the innermost emotions of the soul. See *The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language*. **Jerry Taylor, Student, University of North Carolina at Pembroke**

M

metaphor (met-AH-for) [from the Gk. *carrying one place to another*]: a type of figurative language in which a statement is made that says that one thing is something else but, literally, it is not. In connecting one object, event, or place, to another, a metaphor can uncover new and intriguing qualities of the original thing that we may not normally notice or even consider important. Metaphoric language is used in order to realize a new and different meaning. As an effect, a metaphor functions primarily to increase stylistic colorfulness and variety. Metaphor is a great contributor to poetry when the reader understands a likeness between two essentially different things. In his *Poetics*, Aristotle claims that for one to master the use of metaphor is "…a sign of genius, since a good metaphor implies an intuitive perception of the similarity in dissimilars" (*The Poet's Dictionary*). A metaphor may be found in a simple comparison or largely as the image of an entire poem. For example, Emily Dickinson's poem "My Life had stood – a Loaded Gun" makes use of a series of comparisons between the speaker and a gun. Dickinson opens the work with the following: "My Life had stood – a Loaded Gun - / In corners – till a Day / The Owner passed – identified - / And carried me away". Of course, the narrator is not really a gun. The metaphor carries with it all the qualities of a "Loaded Gun". The speaker in the poem is making a series of comparisons between themselves and the qualities of a gun. The narrator had been waiting a long time before their love found them. The narrator loves her fellow so desperately that she feels as a protective gun that would kill anyone wishing to harm him. To this effect, Dickinson writes, "To foe of His – I'm deadly foe –." Dickinson's poem ends up being one extended comparison through the use of metaphor between herself and a gun with "…but the power to kill." See *A Handbook to Literature*, *The Poet's Dictionary*, or *A Glossary of Literary Terms* (7th edition). **Andy Stamper, Student, University of North Carolina at Pembroke**

metonymy (me-TAH-nah-me): a figure of speech which substitutes one term with another that is being associated with the that term. A name transfer takes place to demonstrate an association of a whole to a part or how two things are associated in some way. This allows a reader to recognize similarities or common features among terms. It may provide a more common meaning to a word. However, it may be a parallel shift that provides basically the same meaning; it is just said another way. For example, in the book of Genesis 3:19, it refers to Adam by saying that "by the sweat of your brow, you will eat your food." Sweat represents the hard labor that Adam will have to endure to produce the food that will sustain his life. The sweat on his brow is a vivid picture of how hard he is working to attain a goal. Another example is in Genesis 27:28 when Isaac tells Jacob that "God will give you...an abundance of grain and new wine." This grain and wine represents the wealth that Jacob will attain by stealing the birth right. These riches are like money that is for consumption or material possessions to trade for other goods needed for survival. Furthermore, in the play *Othello,* Act I Scene I features metonymy when Iago refers to Othello as " the devil" that "will make a grandsire of you." This phrase represents a person that is seen as deceitful or evil. An understanding of metonymy aids a reader to see how an author interchanges words to further describe a term's meaning. See *A Handbook to Literature*; *Literature: An Introduction to Fiction, Poetry, and Drama*; *Literature: An Introduction to Fiction, Poetry, and Drama*; or *Merriam Webster Collegiate Dictionary*. **Melanie Stephens, Student, University of North Carolina at Pembroke**

motif (moh-TEEF): a recurring object, concept, or structure in a work of literature. A motif may also be two contrasting elements in a work, such as good and evil. In the Book of Genesis, we see the motif of separation again and again throughout the story. In the very first chapter, God separates the light from the darkness. Abraham and his descendants are separated from the rest of the nation as God's chosen people. Joseph is separated from his brothers in order that life might be preserved. Another motif is water, seen in Genesis as a means of destroying the wicked and in Matthew as a means of remitting sins by the employment of baptism. Other motifs in Genesis and Matthew include blood sacrifices, fire, lambs, and goats. A motif is important because it allows one to see main points and themes that the author is trying to express, in order that one might be able to interpret the work more accurately. See *A Handbook to Literature*, *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms.* **Robert Bean, Student, University of North Carolina at Pembroke**

myth (mith): any story that attempts to explain how the world was created or why the world is the way that it is. Myths are stories that are passed on from generation to generation and normally involve religion. M.H. Abram refers to myths as a "religion in which we no longer believe." Most myths were first spread by oral tradition and then were written down in some literary form. Many ancient literary works are, in fact, myths as myths appear in every ancient culture of the planet. For example you can find them in ethnological tales, fairy tales as well as epics. A good example of a myth is The Book of Genesis, which recounts tales of the creation of the universe, the Earth and mankind. See *A Glossary to Literary Terms, Webster's Encylopedia of Literature.* **Becky Davis, Student, University of North Carolina at Pembroke**

N

narrative (na-RAH-tiv): a collection of events that tells a story, which may be true or not, placed in a particular order and recounted through either telling or writing. One example is Edgar Allen Poe's "The Tell-Tale Heart." In this story a madman resolves to kill his landlord because he fears the man's horrible eye. One night he suffocates the landlord and hides the body beneath the floorboards of the bedroom. While fielding questions from the police in the bedroom where the body is hidden, the madman thinks he hears the heart of the victim beating beneath the floorboards. Scared that the police hear the heartbeat too, the madman confesses. This is a narrative because of two things, it has a sequence in which the events are told, beginning with murder and ending with the confession, and it has a narrator, who is the madman, telling the story. By understanding the term "narrative," one begins to understand that most literary works have a simple outline: the story, the plot, and the storyteller. By studying more closely, most novels and short stories are placed into the categories of first-person and third-person narratives, which are based on who is telling the story and from what perspective. Other important terms that relate to the term "narrative," are "narrative poetry," poetry that tells a story, and "narrative technique" which means how one tells a story.

narrative poem (nar-RAH-tiv po-EM): a poem that tells a story. A narrative poem can come in many forms and styles, both complex and simple, short or long, as long as it tells a story. A few examples of a narrative poem are epics, ballads, and metrical romances. In western literature, narrative poetry dates back to the Babylonian epic of Gilgamesh and Homer's epics the Iliad and the Odyssey. In England and Scotland, storytelling poems have long been popular; in the late Middle Ages, ballads-or storytelling songs-circulated widely. The art of narrative poetry is difficult in that it requires the author to possess the skills of a writer of fiction, the ability to draw characters and settings briefly, to engage attention, and to shape a plot, while calling for all the skills of a poet besides. See *A Handbook of Literature* and *Literature: An Introduction to Fiction, Poetry, and Drama*. **Melissa Houghton, Student, University of North Carolina at Pembroke**

narrator (nar-RAY-ter): one who tells a story, the speaker or the "voice" of an oral or written work. Although it can be, the narrator is not usually the same person as the author. The narrator is one of three types of characters in a given work, (1) participant (protagonist or participant in any action that may take place in the story), (2) observer (someone who is indirectly involved in the action of a story), or (3) non participant (one who is not at all involved in any action of the story). The narrator is the direct window into a piece of work. Depending on the part of the character of the narrator plays in the story, the narrator may demonstrate bias when presenting a piece of work. In the Book of Matthew, the narrator Matthew, probably presented some bias when giving his accounts of the events that took place during that time. See *Introduction to Literature*, *A Handbook to Literature*. **Heather Cameron, Student, University of North Carolina at Pembroke**

O

P

parable (PAIR-uh-buhl): a brief and often simple narrative that illustrates a moral or religious lesson. Some of the best-known parables are in the Bible, where Jesus uses them to teach his disciples. For example, in "The Parable of the Good Seed," a farmer plants a garden. As the farmer sleeps, someone sows weeds in his field to destroy the farmer's crops. However, when he learns of his misfortune, he does not demolish his entire garden just to remove the weeds. The farmer waits patiently until harvest time and gathers his wheat after the weeds have first been collected and destroyed. The lesson to be learned in this parable is to not be quick to annihilate evil; it will in deserving time receive its punishment. Some other parables in the Bible are "The Parable of the Prodigal Son" and "The Parable of the Mustard Seed." See *The Encyclopedia of Literature*, *A Handbook to Literature*. **Starlet Chavis, Student, University of North Carolina at Pembroke**

persona (per-SO-na): In literature, the persona is the narrator, or the storyteller, of a literary work created by the author. As *Literature: An Introduction to Fiction, Poetry, and Drama* puts it, the persona is not the author, but the author's creation--the voice "through which the author speaks." It could be a character in the work, or a fabricated onlooker, relaying the sequence of events in a narrative. Such an example of persona exists in the poem "Robin Hood and Allin a Dale," in which an anonymous character, perhaps one of Robin's "merry men," recounts the events of the meeting and adventures of Robin Hood and Allin a Dale. After telling of their initial introduction in the forest, the persona continues to elaborate on their quest to recover Allin's true love from the man she is about to marry. Robin and his entourage succeed and then proceed to marry her and Allin a Dale. The persona's importance is recognized due to the more genuine manner in which the events of a story are illustrated to the reader—with a sense of knowledge and emotion only one with a firsthand view of the action could depict. See *A Handbook to Literature*, *Merriam-Webster's Encyclopedia of Literature*, *Literature: An Introduction to Fiction, Poetry, and Drama*. **Stephanie White, Student, University of North Carolina at Pembroke**

personification {PER-son-E-fih-ka-shEn): A figure of speech where animals, ideas or inorganic objects are given human characteristics. One example of this is James Stephens's poem "The Wind" in which wind preforms several actions. In the poem Stephens writes, "The wind stood up and gave a shout. He whistled on his two fingers." Of course the wind did not actually "stand up," but this image of the wind creates a vivid picture of the wind's wild actions. Another example of personification in this poem is "Kicked the withered leaves about….And thumped the branches with his hand." Here, the wind is kicking leaves about, just like a person would and using hands to thump branches like a person would also. By giving human characteristics to things that do not have them, it makes these

objects and their actions easier to visualize for a reader. By giving the wind human characteristics, Stephens makes this poem more interesting and achieves a much more vivid image of the way wind whips around a room. Personification is most often used in poetry, coming to popularity during the 18th century. **Jennifer Winborne, Student, University of North Carolina at Pembroke**

point of view (point ov veww): a way the events of a story are conveyed to the reader, it is the "vantage point" from which the narrative is passed from author to the reader. The point of view can vary from work to work. For example, in the *Book of Genesis* the objective third person point of view is presented, where a "nonparticipant" serves as the narrator and has no insight into the characters' minds. The narrator presents the events using the pronouns he, it, they, and reveals no inner thoughts of the characters. In Edgar Allan Poe's short story "The Cask of Amontillado" the first person point of view is exhibited. In this instance the main character conveys the incidents he encounters, as well as giving the reader insight into himself as he reveals his thoughts, feelings, and intentions. Many other points of view exist, such as omniscient (or "all knowing") in which the narrator "moves from one character to another as necessary" to provide those character's respective motivations and emotions. Understanding the point of view used in a work is critical to understanding literature; it serves as the instrument to relay the events of a story, and in some instances the feelings and motives of the character(s). See *A Handbook to Literature*, *Literature: An Introduction to Fiction, Poetry, and Drama*. **Stephanie White, Student, University of North Carolina at Pembroke**

protagonist (pro-TAG-eh-nist) A protagonist is considered to be the main character or lead figure in a novel, play, story, or poem. It may also be referred to as the "hero" of a work. Over a period of time the meaning of the term protagonist has changed. The word protagonist originated in ancient Greek drama and referred to the leader of a chorus. Soon the definition was changed to represent the first actor onstage. In some literature today it may be difficult to decide who is playing the role of the protagonist. For instance, in *Othello*, we could say that Iago is the protagonist because he was at the center of all of the play's controversy. But even if he was a main character, was he the lead character? This ambiguity can lead to multiple interpretations of the same work and different ways of appreciating a single piece of literature. See *Merrian Webster Encyclopedia of Literature*, *Benet's Readers Encyclopedia of Literature*. **Khalil Shakeel, Student, University of North Carolina at Pembroke**

Q

R

rhyme (rime): repetition of an identical or similarly accented sound or sounds in a work. Lyricists may find multiple ways to rhyme within a verse. End rhymes have words that rhyme at the end of a verse-line. Internal rhymes have words that rhyme within it. Algernon C. Swinburne (1837-1909), a rebel and English poet, used internal rhymes in many of his Victorian poems such as "sister, my sister, O fleet sweet swallow." There are cross rhymes in which the rhyme occurs at the end of one line and in the middle of the next; and random rhymes, in which the rhymes seem to occur accidentally in no specific combination, often mixed with unrhymed lines. These sort of rhymes try to bring a creative edge to verses that usually have perfect rhymes in a sequential order. Historically, rhyme came into poetry late, showing in the Western world around AD 200 in the Church Latin of North Africa. Its popularity grew in Medieval Latin poetry. The frequently used spelling in English, r*h*y*m*e , comes from a false identification of the Greek word "rhythmos." Its true origin comes from Provencal, which is a relation to Provence, a region of France. The traditional Scottish ballad, "Edward," uses end rhymes to describe what he has done with his sword and property:
And what wul ye doe wi' your towirs and your ha'
That were sae fair to see, O?
Ile let thame stand tul they doun fa'
Rhyme gives poems flow and rhythm, helping the lyricist tell a story and convey a mood. See *A Handbook to Literature*, *Benet's Reader's Encyclopedia*, *Webster's Third New International Dictionary* (unabridged), *A Glossary of Literary Terms*. **Nancy Bullard, Student, University of North Carolina at Pembroke**

rhyme scheme (rime skeem): the pattern of rhyme used in a poem, generally indicated by matching lowercase letters to show which lines rhyme. The letter "a" notes the first line, and all other lines rhyming with the first line.

The first line that does not rhyme with the first, or "a" line, and all others that rhyme with this line, is noted by the letter "b", and so on. The rhyme scheme may follow a fixed pattern (as in a sonnet) or may be arranged freely according to the poet's requirements. The use of a scheme, or pattern, came about before poems were written down; when they were passed along in song or oral poetry. Since many of these poems were long, telling of great heroes, battles, and other important cultural events, the rhyme scheme helped with memorization. A rhyme scheme also helps give a verse movement, providing a break before changing thoughts. The four-line stanza, or quatrain, is usually written with the first line rhyming with the third line, and the second line rhyming with the fourth line, abab. The English sonnet generally has three quatrains and a couplet, such as abab, cdcd, efef, gg. The Italian sonnet has two quatrains and a sestet, or six-line stanza, such as abba, abba, cde, cde. Rhyme schemes were adapted to meet the artistic and expressive needs of the poet. Henry Howard Surrey is credited with introducing the sonnet form to England. This form differed from the Italian form because he found that there were fewer rhyming words in English than there were in Italian.

Shall I compare thee to a summer's day?
Thou art more lovely and more temperate.
Rough winds do shake the darling buds of May.
And summer's lease hath all too short a date.

Excerpt from Shakespeare's "Sonnet XVIII", rhyme scheme: a b a b.
See *Benet's Reader's Encyclopedia*, *Dictionary of Literary Terms*, *A Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Theory*, Microsoft Encarta Encyclopedia 2000. **Nancy Bullard, Student, University of North Carolina at Pembroke.**

S

setting (set-ting): the time, place, physical details, and circumstances in which a situation occurs. Settings include the background, atmosphere or environment in which characters live and move, and usually include physical characteristics of the surroundings. Settings enables the reader to better envision how a story unfolds by relating necessary physical details of a piece of literature. A setting may be simple or elaborate, used to create ambiance, lend credibility or realism, emphasize or accentuate, organize, or even distract the reader. Settings in the *Bible* are simplistic. In the book of Genesis, we read about the creation of the universe and the lives of the descendants of Adam. Great detail is taken in documenting the lineage, actions, and ages of the characters at milestones in their lives, yet remarkably little detail is given about physical characteristics of the landscape and surroundings in which events occurred. In Genesis 20, we learn that because of her beauty, Sarah's identity is concealed to prevent the death of her husband, Abraham. Yet, we have no description of Sarah or Abraham's hair, eye or skin color, height, weight, physical appearance, or surroundings. Detailed settings that were infrequent in some ancient writings like the Bible are common in today's literature. In recent literature, settings are often described in elaborate detail, enabling the reader to vividly envision even imaginary characters and actions like the travels of Bilbo Baggins in *The Hobbit* by J.R.R. Tolkien. Settings have a way of drawing the reader into a piece of literature while facilitating understanding of the characters and their actions. Understanding the setting is useful because it enables us to see how an author captures the attention of the reader by painting a mental picture using words. See *Literature, An Introduction to Reading and Writing*. **Kate Endriga, Student, University of North Carolina at Pembroke**

simile (sim-EH-lee): a simile is a type of figurative language, language that does not mean exactly what it says, that makes a comparison between two otherwise unalike objects or ideas by connecting them with the words "like" or "as." The reader can see a similar connection with the verbs resemble, compare and liken. Similes allow an author to emphasize a certain characteristic of an object by comparing that object to an unrelated object that is an example of that characteristic. An example of a simile can be seen in the poem "Robin Hood and Allin a Dale":

With that came in a wealthy knight,
Which was both grave and old,
And after him a finikin lass,
Did shine like glistening gold.

In this poem, the lass did not literally glisten like gold, but by comparing the lass to the gold the author emphasizes her beauty, radiance and purity, all things associated with gold. Similarly, in N. Scott Momaday's simple poem, "Simile." he says that the two characters in the poem are like deer who walk in a single line with their heads high with their ears forward and their eyes watchful. By comparing the walkers to the nervous deer, Momaday emphasizes their care and caution. See *A Handbook to Literature* or *Literature: An Introduction to Fiction, Poetry, and Drama*. **Crystal Burnette, Student, University of North Carolina at Pembroke**

short story (short store-ey): a prose narrative that is brief in nature. The short story also has many of the same characteristics of a novel including characters, setting and plot. However, due to length constraints, these characteristics and devices generally may not be as fully developed or as complex as those developed for a full-length novel. There are many authors well known for the short story including Edgar Allan Poe, Sherwood Anderson and Ernest Hemingway. According to the book *Literary Terms* by Karl Becksonand Arthur Ganz, "American writers since Poe, who first theorized on the structure and purpose of the short story, have paid considerable attention to the form" (257). The written "protocol" regarding what comprises a short versus a long story is vague. However, a general standard might be that the short story could be read in one sitting. NTC's *Dictionary of Literary Terms* quotes Edgar Allan Poe's description as being 'a short prose narrative, requiring from a half-hour to one or two hours in its perusal' (201). Please refer to *Literary Terms* by Karl Beckson and Arthur Ganz and NTC's *Dictionary of Literary Terms* by Kathleen Morner and Ralph Rausch for further information. **Susan Severson, Student, University of North Carolina at Pembroke**

slant rhyme (slänt rime) is also known as near rhyme, half rhyme, off rhyme, imperfect rhyme, oblique rhyme, or pararhyme. A distinctive system or pattern of metrical structure and verse composition in which two words have only their final consonant sounds and no preceding vowel or consonant sounds in common. Instead of perfect or identical sounds or rhyme, it is the repetition of near or similar sounds or the pairing of accented and unaccented sounds that if both were accented would be perfect rhymes (stopped and wept, parable and shell). Alliteration, assonance, and consonance are accepted as slant rhyme due to their usage of sound combinations (spilled and spoiled, chitter and chatter). By not allowing the reader to predict or expect what is coming slant rhyme allows the poet to express things in different or certain ways. Slant rhyme was most common in the Irish, Welsh and Icelandic verse and prose long before Henry Vaughn used it in English. Not until William Butler Yeats and Gerald Manley Hopkins began to use slant rhyme did it become regularly used in English. Wilfred Owen was one of the first poets to realize the impact of rhyming consonants in a consistent pattern. A World War I soldier he sought a powerful means to convey the harshness of war. Killed in action, his most famous work was written in the year prior to his death.

Now men will go content with what we spoiled
Or, discontent, boil bloody, and be spilled,
They will be swift with the swiftness of the tigress.
None will break ranks, though nations trek from progress.
Courage was mine, and I had mystery,
Wisdom was mine, and I had mastery:
To miss the march of this retreating world
Into vain citadels that are not walled.

See *Benet's Reader Encyclopedia, Handbook to Literature, Literature: An Introduction to Fiction, Poetry, and Drama*. **Michael Prevatte, Student, University of North Carolina at Pembroke**

sonnet (sonn-IT): a sonnet is a distinctive poetic style that uses system or pattern of metrical structure and verse composition usually consisting of fourteen lines, arranged in a set rhyme scheme or pattern. There are two main styles of sonnet, the Italian sonnet and the English sonnet. The Italian or Petrarchan sonnet, named after Petrarch (1304-1374) a fourteenth century writer and the best known poet to use this form, was developed by the Italian poet Guittone of Arezzo (1230-1294) in the thirteenth century. Usually written in iambic pentameter, it consists first of an octave, or eight lines, which asks a question or states a problem or proposition and follows the rhyme scheme a-b-b-a, a-b-b-a. The sestet, or last six lines, offers an answer, or a resolution to the proposed problem, and follows the rhyme scheme c-d-e-c-d-e.

When I consider how my light is spent
Ere half my days, in this dark world and wide,
And that one talent which is death to hide
Lodged with me useless, though my soul more bent
To serve therewith my Maker, and present
My true account, lest he returning chide;
"Doth God exact day-labor, light denied?"
I fondly ask; but Patience to prevent
That murmur, soon replies, "God doth not need
Either man's work or his own gifts; who best
Bear his mild yoke, they serve him best. His state
Is kingly. Thousands at his bidding speed
And post o'er land and ocean without rest:
They also serve who only stand and wait."
John Milton, "When I Consider How My Light Is Spent"

The sonnet was first brought to England by Thomas Wyatt and Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey, in the sixteenth century, where the second sonnet form arose. The English or Shakespearean sonnet was named after William Shakespeare (1564-1616) who most believed to the best writer to use the form. Adapting the Italian form to the English, the octave and sestet were replaced by three quatrains, each having its own independent rhyme scheme typically rhyming every other line, and ending with a rhyme couplet. Instead of the Italianic break between the octave and the sestet, the break comes between the twelfth and thirteenth lines. The ending couplet is often the main thought change of the poem, and has an epigrammatic ending. It follows the rhyme scheme a-b-a-b, c-d-c-d, e-f-e-f, g-g.

Shall I compare thee to a summer's day?
Thou art more lovely and more temperate:
Rough winds do shake the darling buds of May,
And summer's lease hath all to short a date:
Sometime too hot the eye of heaven shines,
And often is his gold complexion dimm'd:
And every fair from fair sometime declines,
By chance, or nature's changing course, untrimm'd.
By thy eternal summer shall not fade
Nor lose possession of that fair thou owest;
Nor shall Death brag thou wandered in his shade,
When in eternal lines to time thou growest:
So long as men can breathe, or eyes can see,
So long lives this, and this gives life to thee.

Shakespeare, Sonnet XVIII. See *Benet's Readers Encyclopedia*, *Handbook to Literature*, *Literature: An Introduction to Fiction, Poetry, and Drama*. **Michael Prevatte, Student, University of North Carolina at Pembroke**

symbol (sim-bol): a symbol is a word or object that stands for another word or object. The object or word can be seen with the eye or not visible. For example a dove stands for Peace. The dove can be seen and peace cannot. The word is from the Greek word symbolom. All language is symbolizing one thing or another. However when we read the book of Genesis it talked about a few symbols. In the story of Adam and Eve when Eve ate the apple, the apple stood for sin. Another reading Cain and Able. The two brothers stood for good and evil, humility and pride. Cain pulled Able to the fields and killed him. In this it is a hidden symbol. It is showing that Cain stands for the bad and Able stands for the good. See *The Encyclopedia of Literature* and *A Handbook to Literature*. **Misty Tarlton, Student, University of North Carolina at Pembroke**

T

theme (theem): a common thread or repeated idea that is incorporated throughout a literary work. A theme is a thought or idea the author presents to the reader that may be deep, difficult to understand, or even moralistic.

Generally, a theme has to be extracted as the reader explores the passages of a work. The author utilizes the characters, plot, and other literary devices to assist the reader in this endeavor. One theme that may be extracted by the reader of Mark Musa's interpretation of Dante's *The Divine Comedy* Volume I: *Inferno* is the need to take account of one's own behavior now, for it affects one's condition in the afterlife. One example of this theme can be found in Canto V - "...when the evil soul appears before him, it confesses all, and he [Minos], who is the expert judge of sins, knows to what place in Hell the soul belongs: the times he wraps his tail around himself tells just how far the sinner must go down" (7-12). In addition, Dante's use of literary techniques, such as imagery, further accentuates the theme for the consequences of not living right, for he describes "the cries and shrieks of lamentation" (III:22), "…the banks were coated with a slimy mold that stuck to them like glue, disgusting to behold and worse to smell" (XVIII:106-108) and many other terrifying examples of Hell. In truly great works of literature, the author intertwines the theme throughout the work and the full impact is slowly realized as the reader processes the text. The ability to recognize a theme is important because it allows the reader to understand part of the author's purpose in writing the book. See *Literature: An Introduction to Fiction, Poetry and Drama*, *NTC's Dictionary of Literary Terms*, and *Literary Terms: A Dictionary*. **Susan Severson, Student, University of North Carolina at Pembroke**

U

unreliable narrator (un-re-LIE-ah-bel nar-ra-AY-tor): one who gives his or her own understanding of a story, instead of the explanation and interpretation the author wishes the audience to obtain. This type of action tends to alter the audience's opinion of the conclusion. An author quite famous for using unreliable narrators is Henry James. James is said to make himself an inconsistent and distorting "center of consciousness" in his work, because of his frequent usage of deluding or deranged narrators. They are very noticeable in his novella *The Turn of the Screw*, and also in his short story, "The Aspern Papers." *The Turn of the Screw* is a story based solely on the consistency of the Governess's description of the events that happen. Being aware of unreliable narrators are essential, especially when you have to describe the characters and their actions to others, since the narrator, unreliable as they are, abandons you without the important guidance to make trustworthy judgments. See *The Turn of the Screw* and *A Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Theory*. **Starlet Chavis, Student, University of North Carolina at Pembroke**

V

W

X

Y

Z