

Literary Elements—Short Definitions

1. alliteration		1. repetition of beginning consonant sounds in words in proximity
2. allusion		2. a reference to a historical or literary person, place, or event which the reader is assumed to be familiar
3. assonance		3. similar vowel sounds in stressed syllables in words that don't rhyme
4. colloquial		4. the use of slang or informalities in speech and writing
5. connotation		5. the emotional or suggestive meaning of a word
6. denotation		6. the dictionary meaning of a word
7. dialect		7. a form of language spoken by people in a certain group or region
8. diction		8. The choice and arrangement of words and phrases in a work
9. hyperbole		9. obvious, intentional exaggeration
10. idiom		10. an expression whose meaning cannot be understood from the literal meaning of the individual words
11. imagery		11. words or phrases that create vivid sensory images
12. irony		12. the use of words to convey a meaning that is the opposite of its literal meaning
13. metaphor		13. a comparison between two unlike things stating one is the other
14. onomatopoeia		14. words which sound like their meaning
15. oxymoron		15. two contradictory terms or ideas that are used together
16. personification		16. giving inanimate objects characteristics of life
17. shift		17. a change in tone, mood, setting, or characterization that affects the movement of the selection
18. setting		18. the time and place of the action
19. simile		19. a comparison between 2 unlike things using <i>like</i> or <i>as</i>
20. symbol		20. any object, happening, person, or place that stands not only for itself but also for something else such as an idea
21. theme		21. the main idea or message the author expresses about life
22. tone		22. the attitude a writer takes toward a subject
23. understatement		23. the deliberate playing down of an emotion, thought, judgment, or situation