

Honors Academy English 11 Rhetorical Devices

Students should be familiar with the following list of terms.

Abstract Language: describes ideas and qualities, rather than observable or specific things

Ad Hominem: attack on one's opponent, rather than the opponent's argument

Alliteration: repetition of initial consonant sounds in words

Allusion: indirect reference to famous events or characters from history, literature, or mythology

Ambiguity: event or situation that may be interpreted in more than one way; intentional vagueness

Anaphora: repetition of a word or phrase at the beginning of two or more sentences in a row

Apostrophe: address to the dead as though they were living; to the inanimate as if animate; to the absent as if present

Argumentation: exploring a problem by examining all sides of it; persuasion through reason

Assumption: when details are not stated but must be inferred by the reader

Asyndeton: series of words separated by commas without conjunctions

Balance: construction in which both halves of the sentence have the same length and importance

Causal Relationship: one thing results from another

Chiasmus: arrangement of repeated thoughts in the pattern XY-YX

Cliché: expression so often used its freshness and originality have worn off

Colloquial Diction: everyday usage that may contain terms accepted in a group but not universally acceptable

Concrete Language: describes specific, observable things rather than ideas or qualities

Connotation: emotions associated with a word

Consonance: repetition of consonant sounds; not limited to the first letter of words

Conventional: following traditional techniques of writing

Cumulative: sentence that begins with the main idea and expands on that idea with a series of details

Denotation: dictionary definition of a word

Digression: temporary departure from the main subject in speaking or writing

Discursive Structure: organization used in an argument or essay

Elegy: formal poem lamenting the death of a particular person

Elliptical: deliberate omission of words implied by context

Enthymeme: syllogism (logical argument) in which the major premise is unstated but meant to be understood

Epithet: adjective used to point out a characteristic of a person or thing

Ethos: appeals to the audience's sense of morals or principles

Euphemism: mild word used to substitute an unpleasant or offensive word

Figurative Language: words that are inaccurate literally, but describe by calling to mind sensations or responses that the thing described evokes

Foreshadowing: method used to build suspense by providing hints of what is to come

Formal Diction: used in serious books and lofty discourse

Freight Train: sentence consisting of three or more short independent clauses joined by conjunctions

Generalization: basing a claim upon an isolated example or asserting that a claim is true rather than probable

Genre: major category into which a literary work fits

Hyperbole: overstatement or exaggeration of facts

Idiom: use of words or grammatical construction peculiar to a given language, or an expression that cannot be translated literally into a second language

Imagery: use of language to represent sense experience

Informal Diction: found in relaxed but polite and cultivated conversation

Inversion: word order that places a modifier or verb before the subject

Logos: appeals to the audience's sense of logic and reasoning

Loose Sentence: main clause comes first, followed by dependent grammatical units

Metaphor: implied comparison that states one thing *is* another

Mood: atmosphere or feeling created by a literary work

Motif: frequently recurring character, incident, or concept in a work of literature

Narrative Structure: chronological organization used to convey a story

Negative-Positive: sentence that begins by stating what is not true and then ending by stating what is true

Onomatopoeia: word whose sound suggests its meaning

Oxymoron: paradox that combines terms normally seen as opposites

Parallelism: similarity of structure in a pair or series of related words, phrases, or clauses

Parenthesis: insertion of some verbal unit in a position that interrupts the normal flow of the sentence

Pathos: appeals to the audience's emotions

Pedantic: scholarly academic writing that borders on lecturing

Periodic Sentence: main clause comes last, preceded by dependent grammatical units

Personification: attribution of human qualities to inanimate objects or abstract concepts

Polysyndeton: sentence that uses "and" or another conjunction (with no commas) to separate items in a series; X and Y and Z

Red Herring: when an author raises an irrelevant issue to draw attention away from the real issue

Rhetoric: art of effective communication, especially persuasive discourse

Rhetorical Criticism: analyzes the techniques employed in a literary work to impose the author's view on the reader

Rhetorical Question: question used to emphasize a point; no answer is expected

Sarcasm: verbal irony that uses insincere praise to express bitter and caustic disapproval

Satire: used to arouse laughter at targets such as people or groups to expose human folly

Simile: a comparison using "like" or "as"

Situational Irony: contrast between what is normally expected and what actually occurs

Slang: newly coined words that are not yet part of a formal usage

Stream of Consciousness: writing technique that uses frequent illogical and incoherent digressions to reproduce the raw flow of consciousness

Structure: organization or arrangement of various elements in a work

Style: arrangement of words in a manner that expresses the author's individuality and his or her intent

Syllepsis: grammatical construction in which one word relates to two words in very different ways

Syllogism: format of a formal argument that consists of a major premise, minor premise, and conclusion

Synesthesia: one sensory experience is described in terms of another sensory experience

Syntax: manner in which words are joined to make phrases, clauses, and sentences

Theme: main idea that the author expresses in a literary work

Thesis: claim or position that a writer must strive to prove effectively and thoroughly

Tone: attitude of the speaker of a work of literature

Verbal Irony: what is said is the opposite of what is meant

Voice: total "sound" or "feel" of a writer's style that is present behind characters, narrators, and personae of literature

Wit: intellectual humor that suggests the speaker's verbal power in creating ingenious and perceptive remarks

Zeugma: writer uses one word to govern several successive words or clauses

AP English 12 Terms to Know

As well as knowing the 11th grade list, AP 12 students should be familiar with the following terms upon the start of the school year.

Absurd: idea stemming from Existentialism that human beings, cut off from their roots, live in meaningless isolation in an alien universe

Allegory: symbolic story that has a second meaning beneath the surface one

Anachronism: placement of an event, person, thing out of its proper place in time

Antithesis: juxtaposition of two contrasting ideas

Archetype: a universal symbol; a stereotype of literature

Auditory Imagery: use of language to represent an experience pertaining to sound

Catharsis: cleansing release of unhealthy emotions namely pity and fear

Comic Relief: humor in the serious action of a tragedy; enriches the quality of the work

Dialect: A way of speaking by definable groups of people from a particular geographic region, economic group, or social class

Didactic: literature designed to teach or instruct

Dramatic Irony: reader or audience knows more about the events of a story than the character in the story

Dramatic Structure: organization used in plays that consists of a series of scenes, each of which is presented in vivid detail

Empathy: reader understands closely what the character is feeling

Epiphany: a life-changing realization, in a tragedy, the hero's realization of self-blame for his downfall

Existentialism: A body of ethical thought, current in the 19th and 20th centuries, centering about the uniqueness and isolation of individual experience in a universe indifferent or even hostile to man, regarding human existence as unexplainable, and emphasizing man's freedom of choice and responsibility for the consequences of his acts

Grotesque: bizarre, incongruous, ugly, unnatural, or abnormal

Gustatory Imagery: use of language to represent an experience pertaining to taste

Hamartia: the hero's internal flaw that brings about his downfall in a tragedy

Hubris: a common hamartia meaning excessive pride

Juxtaposition: placement of two things side by side for the purposes of examination

Kinesthetic Imagery: use of language to represent an experience pertaining to the movement of muscles, joints, or tendons

Metonymy: designation of one thing with something closely associated with it

Modernism: A period of literature that lasted from c. 1914-1965. Influenced heavily by the works of Freud and Jung, it is writing marked by a strong and conscious break with tradition

Olfactory Imagery: use of language to represent an experience pertaining to smell

Paradox: statement that appears to be contradictory yet expresses a truth when viewed from another angle

Parody: comic imitation of another work often for ridicule

Pun: play on words that utilizes a word's multiple meanings

Realism: faithful representation of reality to make a story more believable

Symbol: character, object, or event in literature that represents something larger than itself

Synecdoche: figure of speech in which a part of something is used to represent the whole

Tactile imagery: use of language to represent an experience pertaining to touch

Visual Imagery: use of language to represent an experience pertaining to sight