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-YY
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

**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