

**DRAKE
ENGLISH DEPARTMENT
HANDBOOK**

**Sir Francis Drake High School
San Anselmo, CA
2005**

“The act of composition, or creation, disciplines the mind; writing is one way to go about thinking, and the practice and habit of writing not only drain the mind but supply it, too.”

-William Strunk, Jr.

The *Drake English Department Handbook* was compiled by Sheila Bennett-Newton, Barbara Kurita-Ditz, Cathy Sarkisian, and Ellen Strempek, with suggestions from members of the Drake English Department.

The *Handbook* was edited by Cathy Sarkisian.

Drake English Department Handbook
Second Edition

c. 2004 Department of English, Sir Francis Drake High School
1327 Sir Francis Drake Boulevard
San Anselmo, CA 94960

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important skills you will learn in high school.

GUIDELINES FOR WRITING AN ESSAY

1. A good INTRODUCTION engages the reader's attention, provides necessary information (including the title and author, if you are writing about a piece of literature), and states your THESIS. The thesis is a statement of the controlling idea of your essay. It should present a limited *subject* and a defensible *opinion* about the subject.

Thesis examples:

Twain uses his naïve narrator, Huck, to make ironic statements about greed, hypocrisy, and racism in society.

Biotechnology as presented in *Brave New World* is immoral because it attempts to reduce diversity in the human species and denies the importance of human love.

The Industrial Revolution created more economic opportunity than hardship for the working class in London.

2. The TOPIC SENTENCES, or first sentences of each body paragraph, should make CLAIMS related to your thesis and provide transitions from the preceding paragraphs. Topic sentences should introduce claims in the order suggested by the wording of your thesis.
3. Each claim you make in a topic sentence must be followed by a paragraph that contains CONTEXT (information which explains the source or circumstances of your evidence), EVIDENCE (such as quotations, paraphrased information, facts, examples, statistics, anecdotes, etc.), and COMMENTARY (explanation of how this evidence proves the claim and, therefore, helps further develop the thesis).

If it takes more than one paragraph to sufficiently support a claim, your topic sentences should make clear whether you are still arguing a previous claim, or are introducing a new one.

Note: *The key to writing a good essay is to keep your thesis in mind constantly as you make claims, give context, cite evidence, and offer commentary.*

4. The CONCLUSION is the last impression you leave with the reader. A good conclusion not only reflects the thesis, but also extends its ideas and stimulates further thought. It should leave the reader with an answer to the question: so what?

*Consistency and neatness
contribute to a successful essay.*

FORMATTING YOUR PAPERS

1. Provide a heading and a title on your papers, as shown:

<p>Frank Drake Period 2 September 1, 2005</p> <p>Steinbeck's California</p> <p>Though long ago converted into tourist destinations, remnants of the sights, sounds, and smells that John Steinbeck must have known when he wrote his famous novel, <i>Cannery Row</i>, still exist.</p>
--

2. Do not underline, italicize, or use quotation marks on the title of your own paper.
3. When referring to published works, italicize (or underline, if handwritten) titles of novels, films and other major works, but use quotation marks for poems, short stories, articles, and sections or chapters of larger works.
4. Double space to allow room for editing and comments.
5. Leave one-inch margins at the top, bottom, and sides of your essays.
6. Indent each paragraph by ten spaces.
7. Use 12-point, Times New Roman font for typed papers. Use blue or black ink for handwritten papers.
8. Use one side of a page only.

*When you refer to the works of others,
you must give credit for their words and ideas*

CITING SOURCES

Proper crediting of your sources requires the use of two methods of citation:

- **Parenthetical citations** within your text that give abbreviated references to sources
- A **Works Cited page** that gives full information about your sources.

PARENTHETICAL CITATIONS

1. When you use evidence in your essay, give the source's *author* and *page* number in parenthesis immediately following the information. If the evidence is a quotation, put the citation *after the quotations marks, but before end punctuation*.

Examples:

Noted sociologists report that divorce rates are decreasing (Godwin 58).

Although mythology is often considered literature, "a large part of Greek myth is politico-religious history" (Graves 17).

2. When quoting from a poem, give line numbers instead of page numbers in the parenthesis and use a slash mark (with a space on either side) to indicate line breaks.

Example:

The famous words "Whose woods these are I think I know / His house is in the village though" (Frost 1-2) begin a poem that is deceptively simple.

3. When quoting from a play by William Shakespeare or other classic drama, give the title of the play, then the act, scene, and line numbers in parenthesis.

Example:

The young prince assures his friend that "There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio / Than are dreamt of in your philosophy" (*Hamlet* I.v.166-7).

4. If your essay uses *only one source*, give the title and author of that source in the introduction, then omit the author's last name from parenthetical citations.

Example:

R.P. McMurphy is a huge presence in Ken Kesey's popular novel *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*. When McMurphy arrives, the narrator reports, "He sounds big" (16).

WORKS CITED

[The Works Cited page appears at the end of your paper and lists sources alphabetically by author's last name (or by title if there is no author or editor named). Double space between citations and indent the second and subsequent lines of each by ten spaces.]

Examples (In your paper, alphabetize list and omit headings):

ONE AUTHOR:

Frazier, Charles. *Cold Mountain*. New York: Atlantic Monthly Press, 1997.

TWO OR THREE AUTHORS:

Miller, Judith, Stephen Engelberg, and William Broad. *Germs: Biological Weapons and America's Secret War*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 2001.

EDITOR OR COMPILER:

Lewis, David Levering, ed. *The Portable Harlem Renaissance Reader*. New York: Viking, 1994.

WORK IN AN ANTHOLOGY:

Ungerleider, Steven. "Teen Steroid Abuse Is a Growing Problem." *Performance Enhancing Drugs*. Ed. Haley, James. Farmington Hills, MI: Greenhaven Press, 2003. 41-44.

GENERAL ENCYCLOPEDIA OR DICTIONARY:

Shelby, Lon R. "Castle." *World Book Encyclopedia*. 2000.

MAGAZINE ARTICLE:

Alder, Jerry. "Mad Cow: What's Safe Now?" *Newsweek*, 12 January 2004: 43-48.

NEWSPAPER ARTICLE:

Upshaw, Jennifer. "San Rafael Plan Update On Track." *Marin Independent Journal*, 26 January 2004: C3.

INTERVIEW:

Finch, Atticus. Personal [telephone or e-mail] interview. 6 April 2004.

DATABASE (SIRS OR EBSCO MAGAZINE ARTICLE SEARCH)

Anderson, Christopher. "Heartbreak in the Tropics." *U.S. News & World Report* 15 March 2004: EBSCO MAS Online. Sir Francis Drake Library, San Anselmo, CA. 6 April 2004 <<http://search.epnet.com/>>

WEBSITE:

Tesler, Pearl and Paul Doherty. *Skateboard Science*. 1996. Exploratorium. 7 April, 2004
www.exploratorium.edu/skateboarding/trick/html

Note: *For more detailed information, please consult the Drake Library, or the Modern Language Association style guidelines.*

*Sew the words of your quotations
seamlessly into your own prose.*

INCORPORATING QUOTATIONS

1. While introductions and conclusions sometimes start or finish with quotations for effect, do not begin or end a *body* paragraph with a quotation. A body paragraph must begin with a topic sentence that makes a claim before providing context, the quoted text, and commentary.

<p>When using quotations as evidence in an essay, remember “CCQC:” Claim, Context, Quotation, Commentary.</p>
--

Example (quoting from *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* by Mark Twain):

Huck’s naïve perspective is reinforced by Jim’s poor view of his own worth [**Claim**]. After Jim obtains his freedom by running away [**Context**], he says, “Yes; en I’s rich now, come to look at it. I owns mysef, en I’s wuth eight hund’d dollars” (61) [**Quotation**]. Huck’s untroubled acceptance of these words raises the reader’s outrage at the demeaning nature of slavery [**Commentary**].

2. Gracefully incorporate quotations into your writing either by quoting full sentences from the text, or imbedding quoted fragments into your own sentences. Here are some examples.

Use of a statement and a colon to introduce a quote:

At the end of the chapter, Huck takes a significant step toward recognizing Jim’s humanity: “I didn’t do him no more mean tricks, and I wouldn’t done that one if I’d ‘a’ know it would make him feel that way” (111).

Use of a speaking verb and a comma to introduce a quote:

Huck is not trying to be funny when he says, “Sometimes I wish we could hear of a country that’s out of kings” (199).

Use of a quoted fragment:

Ironically, the most moral act Huck commits causes him to believe that he’ll “go to hell” (273) for doing it.

Note: Do not introduce quotations by saying: “The following quotation shows . . .”

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3. Use bracketed ellipses (three dots) to indicate omitted words. Use brackets around a word that was changed or added to the quotation for clarity.

Example:

In searching his conscience, Huck remembers Jim “standing my watch on top of his’n [. . .] and how good he always was” (272); consequently, Huck cannot bring himself to turn in a man that he realizes is his friend.

Example:

“Why, [Jim] didn’t look like he was dead, he looked considerable more than that” (180), Huck comments.

4. If the punctuation of the quotation is a question mark or an exclamation point, include it within the quotation marks.

Example:

As part of his plan, Huck asks, “Can you spell, Buck?” (128).

5. Quote the text carefully, using the exact spelling, capitalization, and grammar, even if it is wrong. You may indicate that the mistake is not yours by using “[sic].”

Example:

Huck notices the chameleon capabilities of the King: “I never knowed [sic] how clothes could change a body before” (203).

6. If a quotation is longer than four prose lines or three verse lines, indent it on both sides by ten spaces into a “block” quote. Do not use quotation marks, and maintain double spacing. (In this case, put the page or line numbers in parenthesis *after* the end punctuation.)

Example:

Huck is uncomfortable with his contradictory feelings and struggles internally.

So we poked along back home, and I warn’t feeling so brash as I was before, but kind of ornery, and humble, and to blame, somehow –

though I hadn't done nothing. But that's always the way; it don't make no difference whether you do right or wrong, a person's conscience ain't got no sense, and just goes for him anyway. (294)

Unfortunately, Huck hasn't learned to trust his conscience.

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*If in doubt, always credit
your sources to avoid plagiarism.*

DEPARTMENT POLICY ON PLAGIARISM

DEFINITION: According to the Modern Language Association (MLA), which dictates style and guidelines for research papers, "Using someone else's ideas or phrasing and representing those ideas or phrasing as your own, either on purpose or through carelessness, is a serious offense known as *plagiarism*."

HOW TO AVOID PLAGIARISM? Give credit!

1. When taking notes, write down information about the source you are using right away.
2. When paraphrasing, read whole sections at a time, then look away from the text and put the ideas in your own words. List the source of this information in your bibliography.
3. If you want to use another writer's exact phrases or sentences, put them in quotation marks, give his or her name and page number in a parenthetical citation, and include the source on your Works Cited page (see pages 3-6 of this Handbook).
4. Do not cut and paste internet material into a word processing program unless you include information about the source material along with it. Printed internet material is *not* exempt from citation rules.
5. Any ideas or words that are not your own or are not *common knowledge* must be cited. This includes: written or spoken material of any length, original theories or ideas (even if not repeated word for word), facts, statistics, graphs, drawings, photos, lab results—basically any material you borrow from another source.

POLICY: School policy outlines consequences for intentionally plagiarizing an assignment:

First incident: A zero on submitted work, notification of the assistant principal and counselor, notification of parent/guardian, and a written contract in which the student commits to ethical practices and is informed of further consequences.

Second incident: A zero on submitted work, conference with the assistant principal, teacher, parent/guardian, and a two-day school suspension.

Third incident: A three-day school suspension, semester failure in the class in which the plagiarism occurs, and referral to SARB, which may result in a transfer to the community continuation school.

In the case of plagiarism on a major assignment such as a culminating semester project, the student will immediately fail the course.

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*The department has identified seven errors
that should be eliminated from student writing.*

SERIOUS GRAMMAR ERRORS

1. RUN-ON (r-o) **Note:** *A run-on sentence has at least two parts, either one of which can stand alone, but the two parts have been fused together instead of properly connected. When only a comma is used between the parts, the error is a type of run-on sentence known as a COMMA SPLICE.*

Wrong: Robert Louis Stevenson wrote *Treasure Island*, it is probably one of the best-known novels about a pirate.

Right: Robert Louis Stevenson wrote *Treasure Island*. It is probably one of the best-known novels about a pirate.

--or, better yet . . .

Robert Louis Stevenson wrote *Treasure Island*, probably one of the best-known novels about a pirate.

2. FRAGMENT (frag.)

Wrong: Keeping the location of the island a secret.

Right: Keeping the location of the island a secret was not difficult for Jim Hawkins.

Wrong: When Captain Flint buried the treasure.

Right: When Captain Flint buried the treasure, he planned on reclaiming it.

3. AGREEMENT (agr.)

SUBJECT-VERB

Wrong: The repetition of threats convince Jim to watch for the one-legged sailor.

Right: The repetition of threats convinces Jim to watch for the one-legged sailor.

PRONOUN-ANTECEDENT

Wrong: Each character has their share of adventure.

Right: The characters all have their share of adventure.

4. TENSE SHIFT (t.)

Wrong: Captain Smollett disliked treasure voyages and resents not being in charge.

Right: Captain Smollett disliked treasure voyages and resented not being in charge.

5. FAULTY PRONOUN REFERENCE (f.r.)

Wrong: When Jim met Captain Silver, he demonstrated his integrity.

Right: When Jim met Captain Silver, the boy demonstrated his integrity.

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6. FAULTY PARALLELISM (//)

Wrong: Jim Hawkins was mature beyond his years, trustworthy in matters of life and death, and he outsmarted men twice his age.

Right: Jim Hawkins was mature beyond his years, trustworthy in matters of life and death, and smarter than men twice his age.

7. MISPLACED MODIFIER (m.m.) or DANGLING MODIFIER (d.m.)

MISPLACED MODIFIER

Wrong: Although only a small boy, the captain expected Jim to do a man's share of the work.

Right: The captain expected Jim, although only a small boy, to do a man's share of the work.

DANGLING MODIFIER

Wrong: When discussing pirates, John Silver is often remembered.

Right: When discussing pirates, students will often remember John Silver.

COMMON EDITING MARKS

awkward = awk.

punctuation = punc.

confusing = ?

repetitious = rep.

generalization = gen.

spelling = sp.

give example = ex.

slang = sl.

grammar = gram.

take out = ,

incomplete = inc.

topic sentence = t.s.

indent = The . . transition weak or unclear = trans.
insert = ^ upper case = u
invert order = order invert wordy = w.
lower case = L word choice = w.c.
new paragraph = word order = w.o.

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Using commas well will significantly improve the quality of your writing.

BASIC COMMA RULES

1. Use a comma before a coordinating conjunction in a compound sentence.

Examples:

The pirates scrambled up the hill, and Captain Silver's parrot flew high above them.
The parrot looked for his master, but Captain Silver was far down the hill.

2. Use a comma after an introductory clause, phrase, or word.

Examples:

When they reached the crest of the hill, they discovered a skeleton instead of a treasure.
Over the course of history, pirates have inspired fear and admiration.
Fortunately, their villainy is a thing of the past.

3. Use commas to set off interrupting words in a sentence.

Example:

The author, Robert Louis Stevenson, heard stories about pirates as a boy.

4. Use commas to separate elements in a series.

Example:

Captain John Silver possessed a long memory, a cunning mind, and a way with swords.
(**Note:** The comma before "and" is optional.)

5. Use a comma between more than one modifier that is modifying the same word.

Examples:

Transporting goods by sea was a tedious, dangerous business.
Pirates are mysterious, infamous, colorful figures in the history of civilization.

6. Use commas when introducing or attributing dialogue.

Examples:

He blurted out, “I love a good adventure story.”
“I just love,” he exclaimed, “a good adventure story.”
“I love a good adventure story,” he concluded.

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*Good punctuation goes beyond
the use of commas and periods.*

OTHER PUNCTUATION RULES

1. Use a semicolon to join closely related independent clauses (sentences).

Example: He knew who owned the land; everyone did.

2. Use a semicolon before and a comma after conjunctive adverbs such as “however” and “therefore” when joining two independent clauses.

Examples:

Pirates were thieves and murderers; however, they were considered heroes.
Silver had admirable qualities; therefore, it is difficult to think of him as a criminal.

3. Use a colon to introduce a list or definition.

Examples:

Authors often name three traditional qualities of a hero: strength, honesty, and humility.
A possible definition of a modern hero is this: a likeable guy.

4. Use a hyphen in compound words.

Examples: bird’s-eye view two-year-old child twenty-three students

5. Use a dash (two hyphens) to indicate a break or an abrupt change in thought.

Example:

The antihero is a protagonist who disappoints—though we often forgive him because he reminds us of ourselves.

6. Use an exclamation point for extra emphasis.

Example: Do not overuse exclamation points!

7. Use an ellipsis (three periods with a space before and after each) to mark omitted words.

Example: He thought, “The boat . . . too far . . . not going to make it.”

8. Use an apostrophe in a contraction or to show possession, but *not* in a pronoun that is already possessive.

CONTRACTIONS:	it’s late	don’t go	it wouldn’t work
SHOWING POSSESSION:	a man’s hat	Ulysses’ sword	the girls’ coats
POSSESSIVE PRONOUNS:	I like its color	the book is theirs	the house is ours

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*Check your work carefully for spelling errors;
do not depend entirely on the computer to do it for you.*

SPELLING LISTS

TWENTY COMMONLY MISSPELLED WORDS

a lot	believe	friend	receive	therefore
all right	completely	judgment	separate	tomorrow
anyway	definitely	necessary	sophomore	Wednesday
appearance	doesn’t	really	surprise	writing

CONFUSING HOMOPHONES AND SOUND-ALIKES

already / all ready	flea /flee	learn/ teach
assistance /assistants	flew /flu/ (flue)	lesson /lessen
bare /bear	four /for/ (fore)	loose /lose /loss
belief /believe	fourth /forth	medal /metal
blue /blew	fowl /foul	moan /mown
buy /by	gate /gait	minor /miner
cell /sell	guilt /gilt	need /kneed/knead
ceiling /sealing	great /grate	new /knew
cellar / seller	grown /groan	night /knight
cent /sent /scent	hair /hare	not /knot
choose /chose	stair / stare	no /know
clothes /cloths	fair /fare	of/have
coma /comma	hear /here	pail /pale
costume/custom	heal/ heel	pair /pear /(pare)
course /coarse	heard /herd	presents /presence
dew /due /do	hole / whole	prey /pray
dear /deer	hose/ hoes /whores	quiet /quite
die /dye	hour /our	reed / read
earn /urn	in/inn	red / read
feet /feat	its /it’s	ring /wring

road /rode /rowed
role /roll
seem /seam
serf /surf
shown /shone
sour /soar
sole /soul
some /sum

sweet /suite
tail /tale
than /then
their / there / they're
threw / through / though
too /two / to
vary /very
way /weigh

wait /weight
wander /wonder
weather / whether
week /weak
with / which / witch
whose /who's
your /you're

ADDITIONAL WORDS FOR SOPHOMORES

aid / aide
allowed /aloud
all together / altogether
alter / altar
bail / bale
breath / breadth
cereal / serial
chord / cord
core / corps / corpse
colonel / kernel
dual / duel
desert / desert / dessert
envelop / envelope
farther / further

fur / fir
foreword / forward
hail/ hail / hale
lead / led / lead
lie / lay / lye
maybe / may be
might / mite
morn / mourn
peace / piece
plane / plain / pane/ pain
poor / pour / pore
quiet / quite
quotation / quote
rain/ rein /reign

raise / raze
real / very/ really
ring / wring
seen / scene
shone / shown
throne / thrown
sit / set
straight / strait
though/ through/ threw
wade / weighed
waist / waste
where / wear / ware
write / right

ADDITIONAL WORDS FOR JUNIORS

advice / advise
affect / effect
accept / except
aisle / isle /I'll
allusion / illusion
allude / elude
alley / alleys / ally / allies
ark / arc / arch
assent / ascent
beside / besides
born / borne
bridal / bridle
capital / capitol

complement/ compliment
conscience / conscious
continuous / continual
current / currant
dependant / dependent
device / devise
formally / formerly
heroine / heroin
hew / hue
idol / idle
load/ lode
later / latter / ladder
lightening / lightning

moral/ morale
past / passed
principal / principle
sight / cite / site
slight / sleight
statue / statute
stayed / staid
stationary / stationery
troop / troupe / trough
vain / vane / vein
wave / waive
wholly / holy / holly

ADDITIONAL WORDS FOR SENIORS

adverse / averse
adapt / adopt

aggravate / aggregate
amoral / immoral

annual / perennial
beer / bier

biannual / biennial
birth / berth
cannon / canon
canvas / canvass
sensor/ censor / censure
climactic / climatic
continuous / contiguous
counsel / consul / council
councilor / counselor
decent / descent / dissent /
disinterested /uninterested
elicit / illicit

eminent / imminent
faint / feint / feigned
freeze / frieze
healthy / healthful
immigrate / emigrate
imply / infer
ingenious / ingenuous
irrelevant / irreverent
instance / instants
liable / libel
liable / likely
lay / laid / lei

loath / loathe
minor / miner
oral / verbal
percent / percentage
personal / personnel
physical / fiscal
precede / proceed
precedence / presidents/
precedents
prophecy / prophesy/
prophet / profit
respectively /respectfully

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*Most short stories and novels
share these common characteristics.*

ELEMENTS OF FICTION

exposition background information about characters and setting that, in a traditional plot, is provided before the action begins, but also can occur anywhere in the work.

setting the time and place in which a work of fiction occurs.

character a person (or sometimes an animal) who appears in the plot. Characters can be flat or dynamic, stereotyped or complex. A *stock character* is a familiar or conventional character, such as the clever servant or the cruel stepmother, who appears often in works of fiction. A *foil* is a character who, through contrast, underscores the personality traits of another character

protagonist the main character; sometimes called the *hero* or the *heroine*

antagonist the character who challenges or opposes the protagonist

characterization the process by which an author reveals a character's personality. There are five main methods of characterization: a writer may provide details about a character's (1) appearance, (2) actions, (3) speech and thoughts, and (4) relations with other characters. The writer also may provide (5) direct statements about the character's personality. Methods 1-4 are called *indirect characterization* because the reader must infer the character's personality from the details that the writer provides; method 5 is called *direct characterization*. A writer may use any or all of the five methods of characterization.

plot the series of events in a work of fiction that moves from a beginning to an end and centers around a *conflict*. Usually plot events are told in *chronological order*, although *flashbacks* sometimes interrupt the time sequence. Traditionally, the plot opens with *exposition*, introduces a *conflict*, rises to a *climax*, and finally falls to a *resolution*, or *denouement*. Some fiction does not follow this traditional plot outline; for example, a work of fiction may open in the middle of the action, or *in medias res*.

conflict the struggle between opposing forces in the plot. A conflict may be external, such as: human vs. human, human vs. nature, human vs. society, or human vs. a supernatural force like fate. Or the conflict may be internal, such as: self vs. self. A work of fiction may have more than one conflict.

rising action the events between the introduction of the conflict and the climax

climax or **turning point** the point of highest intensity in the plot, often where the protagonist faces the conflicting force for the last, decisive time.

falling action the events following the climax, including the denouement.

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denouement in French, literally, the “untying of the knot,” or the resolution of the plot. It is the untangling of any misunderstandings or solving of any mysteries the plot has introduced.

foreshadowing hinting at events to come. Foreshadowing helps create suspense.

flashback a scene or an event that interrupts a plot’s chronological order and tells about an event in the past.

point of view the relationship between the writer and the subject matter that is conveyed by the narrator.

first person point of view the narrator uses first person pronouns (I, me, etc.) and is a character in the story.

second person point of view a rare narrative technique where the narrator addresses the reader directly, using the pronoun “you.”

third person omniscient point of view the narrator uses third person pronouns (he, she, etc.) and is all-knowing and all-seeing, in other words able to describe events in the past, present or future, and reveal the thoughts of many of the characters.

third person limited point of view the narrator uses third person pronouns (he, she, etc.), but limits description to things only one character can observe, and provides the thoughts of only that one character.

unreliable narrator a narrator who gives misleading or untrue information due to insanity, naiveté, confusion, or inexperience. An unreliable narrator opens the possibility that the author’s opinion, or reality, or both, might be quite different from the narrator’s viewpoint.

theme the central idea in a work of fiction—often a general observation about life or aspect of human experience, such as the alienation an artist experiences, or the animal instincts inherent in civilized human beings, etc. Themes are sometimes stated, but more often implied or suggested. A work can have more than one theme.

moral the lesson a work of fiction is intending to teach, for instance: “honesty is the best policy.” A moral is most often found in a fable or parable.

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Writers and readers use common terminology to discuss literature.

LITERARY TERMS

acronym a word formed from the first or first few letters of a series of words, e.g. NATO, from North Atlantic Treaty Association.

allegory a work of fiction in which most of the characters, settings, and events stand for something larger than themselves.

alliteration the repetition of consonant sounds at the beginning of words, e.g. “lucky lady.”

allusion a brief, indirect reference to something in history, mythology, current events, or other work of literature that the author assumes the reader will understand, for instance: a character’s weakness is called his “Achilles heel.” Allusions are often footnoted.

ambiguity the intentional use of language that can have more than one meaning

anachronism the appearance of an object, person or event in a piece of literature that is from a time after the intended setting of the work.

anagram a word or phrase made from another by rearranging its letters, e.g. evil / vile

analogy a comparison between something that is difficult to understand and something that is familiar, in order to help the reader comprehend the more difficult concept.

anecdote a short account of an entertaining or interesting incident.

anti-hero a protagonist who has the opposite qualities of a traditional hero.

antithesis opposite ideas expressed in parallel arrangement of words, phrases or clauses. John F. Kennedy used an antithesis when he said: “Ask not what your country can do for you; ask what you can do for your country.”

aphorism a concise, witty saying, e.g. “A penny saved is a penny earned.”

apostrophe a figure of speech in which an absent person or thing is addressed directly. An example is: “O Death, where is thy sting?”

assonance the repetition of vowel sounds anywhere in the words, e.g. “bright lights.”

atmosphere the mood of a literary work, established by details of setting and word choice.

aside a dramatic convention where a character speaks to himself or the audience, but is not heard by other characters on stage.

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autobiography a non-fiction account of a person’s life, written or dictated by that person.

bildungsroman a coming-of-age novel

biography a non-fiction account of a person’s life, written by another person.

blank verse poetry written in unrhymed iambic pentameter. Shakespeare’s plays are written chiefly in blank verse.

colloquial language conversational or informal language

connotation the implied meaning of a word or a phrase, as opposed to its denotation.

consonance repetition of consonant sounds where the vowels before the consonants differ, creating a partial rhyme, e.g. “struts and frets.”

context the words and phrases surrounding a word, or the situation in which a word appears.

denotation the precise dictionary meaning of a word or a phrase, as opposed to its connotation.

deus ex machina in Latin, literally, “god from a machine.” A dramatic convention in which a character is saved at the last moment by some unexpected means. The term comes from instances in classical Greek drama where a god was mechanically lowered onto the stage to save the hero.

dialect a variation of a language spoken in a particular region or by a particular group of people.

dialogue conversation between characters in fiction or drama

diction word choice; the characteristic way in which a writer or a speaker uses words. Three common levels of diction are: formal or high, informal or colloquial, and slang.

double entendre words that have two meanings, especially when one meaning is indecent.

epic a long, narrative poem about a hero, usually written in an exalted style.

epigram a short, witty poem or saying

epigraph a quotation at the beginning of a book or a chapter that makes a relevant point.

epilogue a conclusion added to a novel, play or long poem. The opposite of a prologue.

epitaph a short poem or writing about a dead person, usually inscribed on a gravestone.

epithet a short name or description used to characterize a person or thing, e.g. “Alexander the Great.” Epithets sometimes are abusive.

euphemism mild expression substituted for a blunt one, e.g. “passed away” instead of “died.”

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fable a simple story, usually with animal characters, that teaches a lesson.

fiction narrative writing based on the author’s imagination, rather than on history or fact.

figurative language language that is not meant to be taken literally. Instances of figurative language, called *figures of speech*, often employ comparisons, e.g. similes and metaphors.

frame story a story that has within it another story

free verse poetry which does not use conventional rhythm or rhyme patterns, but follows the natural cadence of speech.

genre a type of literature, for instance: essay, poetry, short story, novel, drama, etc.

haiku a poem consisting of three lines, with five syllables in the first line, seven in the second, and five in the third.

hero in classical literature, a hero possessed godlike qualities of moral and physical strength; in modern literature, however, the hero is often merely a synonym for the protagonist, who may be an ordinary or even flawed character.

hubris the tragic flaw of pride or arrogance that causes the downfall of a hero

hyperbole a figure of speech which uses exaggeration for effect

iambic pentameter a poetic rhythm in which each line contains five unstressed syllables each followed by a stressed syllable.

imagery the use of language that appeals to the senses.

in medias res in Latin, literally, “in the middle of things.” The literary technique of beginning a narrative or drama in the middle of the action, then supplying information concerning the beginning of the action by other means.

irony a figure of speech in which the literal meaning is the opposite of the intended meaning, or there is a difference in what seems to be, and what actually is. In *dramatic irony*, the audience or readers know something the character does not. In *situational irony*, the opposite of what one expects to happen, happens. In *verbal irony*, a character or writer says the opposite of what he means.

juxtaposition the placement of two ideas side by side to create an effect by contrast.

litotes a type of understatement where the negative is used to express the positive, e.g. “no small accomplishment.” When used sarcastically to belittle, also known as **meiosis**.

local color the use of regional details in the speech, setting and characters of a work of fiction.

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malapropism an intentional misuse of a word that sounds similar to another word for comic effect. The term comes from a character in a play by Richard Sheridan named Mrs. Malaprop, who frequently used the wrong words.

melodrama sensational dramatic piece featuring stock characters and high emotions.

metaphor a figure of speech that implies a comparison between two unlike things *without* using “like” or “as,” e.g. “cloud of birds.”

meter the rhythmical pattern created in poetry by using stressed and unstressed syllables. A metrical unit is called a “foot.”

metonymy a figure of speech in which a word or idea is used to replace another word or idea to which it is closely related; a misnaming, e.g. “the Whitehouse announced,” instead of “the President announced.” see also **synecdoche**.

motif a recurring element or theme in a work of fiction

onomatopoeia a figure of speech: words that sound like what they mean, e.g. boom, zip, etc.

paradox a seemingly absurd or contradictory statement that contains some truth. An oxymoron is a paradox of just two words, such as “sweet sorrow.”

personification a figure of speech in which inanimate objects are given living or human characteristics.

picaresque novel a work of fiction featuring the episodic adventures of a traveler.

preface an introduction to a literary work explaining its subject, purpose, and scope.

prologue the opening of a novel, play, or long poem. Unlike the preface, the prologue is part of the literary work.

pseudonym false name or pen name, e.g. Mark Twain.

prose writing that is in sentences, not verse.

pun a play on a word which has more than one meaning, e.g. “the lifeguards agreed to pool their resources.”

realism a movement in literature that stressed honest, vivid representation of life. Naturalism, which stressed the sordid aspects of reality, is a more pessimistic form of realism.

refrain lines repeated at the end of each stanza in a poem.

rhetoric the content, structure, and style of writing. Also, the skill of using persuasive language in a clear and appealing manner.

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rhetorical question a question asked for effect and not expected to be answered because the answer is obvious or not easily given.

satire a literary form that uses humor to criticize or scorn its subject.

simile a figure of speech that makes a direct comparison between two unlike things, usually using the words “like” or “as,” for example: “the dead bird lay like a glove on the floor.”

soliloquy an extended speech made by one character alone on stage, allowing the character to reveal his innermost thoughts and feelings to the audience.

sonnet a fourteen line poem written in iambic pentameter with a specific rhyme scheme.

speaker the voice or persona from which a poem is spoken.

stanza a group of lines in a poem. A poem is divided into stanzas as prose is divided into paragraphs. A two-line stanza is called a couplet; a four-line, a quartet, etc.

stream of consciousness a style of narration which mimics the way the human mind supposedly thinks, not in chronological order, but chaotically.

style the characteristic way in which a writer uses language. Aspects of style include diction (word choice), syntax (sentence structure and length), figurative language, and tone.

symbol a person, a place, or a thing that stands for something larger than itself

synecdoche a figure of speech in which a part represents the whole, or visa versa, e.g. “all hands on deck” or “the ocean crashed onto the beach.” see also **metonymy**.

tone the attitude that a writer displays toward his or her subject, characters, or readers. The tone may be condescending, angry, humorous, or sarcastic, among other things.

understatement the intentionally restrained statement of a truth for rhetorical effect.

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*A writer's style is like
a fingerprint—no two are exactly alike.*

ABOUT STYLE

Style is about HOW something is said, rather than WHAT is being said. It is primarily determined by the author's choice of words (diction) and his or her arrangement of those words into sentences (syntax), but more subtle aspects of style, such as imagery and tone, contribute as well. The following are some of the elements that make up a writer's style:

Diction is an author's choice of words. In fiction, the author must provide the language for his characters (dialogue) and for his narrator (narration). Poets choose words that reflect the essence of an experience or idea. Journalists and essayists must choose which quotations to use from interviews and text, as well as determine the language of their prose. Both writers of fiction and nonfiction choose language that best suits their purpose. This level of language usage may be described by one of these terms:

archaic	slang	technical	conversational
artificial	standard	plain or poetic	connotative or denotative
colloquial	vulgar	figurative or literal	simple or bombastic

Syntax is the arrangement of words into sentences. A good author varies sentence patterns to heighten the effect of style, considering the simplicity or complexity of the words strung together, as well as balance or emphasis. The following vocabulary describes sentence patterns:

simple/complex	balanced	bearing emphasis/stress	juxtaposed
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parallel repetitive	short/long loose	symmetrical layered	varied (beginnings, endings) climactic
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Sensory details are important in building effective description. Incorporating the five senses into your writing can create colorful and meaningful prose or poetry. To discuss an author's use of sensory detail the following vocabulary may be helpful:

vivid verbs	colorful details	compelling	intimate
concrete nouns	word pictures	abstract	evocative
"shows not tells"	precise modifiers	subtle	richly detailed

Figurative language is often deeper and more important than literal language. A figure of speech can convey the an idea or feeling which is so complex and illusive that our language has no exact term for it. Figures of speech also are used for economy or emphasis. Examples are:

metaphor	simile	personification	hyperbole
apostrophe	understatement	synecdoche	symbolism

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Fluency is the movement or flow of ideas. It is achieved when sentences and passages are coordinated so as to move smoothly and forcefully. Terms that describe effective and ineffective fluency are:

coherent	elegant	rhythmic	emphatic
well-linked	graceful	suspenseful	immediate
choppy	rambling	uncontrolled	imbalanced

Clarity and concise language help writing to be clear and logical. Good writers avoid wordiness or repetition. They also avoid using the passive voice except when necessary. Terms that describe clarity of style, and lack of clarity, are:

exact	specific	hard-hitting	concrete
graphic	vivid	logical	concise
muddy	verbose	vague/nebulous	ambiguous
redundant	confusing	flowery	rambling

Tone is the author's attitude toward his subject, characters or reader. It is an important consideration when attempting to evaluate style. If, for instance, the author is being sarcastic or satiric, his or her word choice will be greatly affected. Some terms commonly used to discuss tone are:

ironic	sarcastic	mocking	facetious	impersonal	contemptuous
bitter	pessimistic	objective	witty	satiric	serious
didactic	empathetic	benevolent	elegiac	impartial	moralistic
solemn	derogatory	comic	tragic	optimistic	

Sound or musicality of a piece is hard to define. Read the work aloud to hear the words and the pace working together. Here are some terms to help define what makes a passage “sound” good.

alliteration	parallel structure	rhythm	onomatopoeia	lyrical
consonance	repetition	balance	musical	poetic

Stylistic devices are techniques which add variety and interest to a writer’s work, such as:

flashback	foreshadowing	allusions	point of view
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Period or tradition is the historical time or school of thought a writer chooses or happens to write in. Some classifications include:

Biblical	scientific	modern	journalistic
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Marking up a text will help you understand and analyze its ideas.

ANNOTATING TEXT

Annotating text as you read, whether it is a poem, novel or essay, means “adding useful notes.” It’s a practice that helps you think critically about what you’re reading, almost like having a conversation with the text. As you read, engage the text by **asking questions**, **underlining** key words or phrases, **circling** important words, **commenting** on meaning, **marking** passages you want to revisit, **identifying** the author’s style, or **highlighting** sections that you appreciate or dislike. This active engagement allows you to comprehend and remember more of what you read.

There is no official way to annotate. What’s important is that your marks or abbreviations are legible and make sense to you although your teacher will sometimes provide a specific set of symbols to be used, e.g. POV = point of view CF = conflict TP = turning point

Of course, annotation is easiest if you own the text, but you can use “post-it” notes or make a copy of a poem or important section of text to annotate.

Below is a sample section of an annotated poem. Don’t worry about doing it right. The purpose is to **make the text have more meaning for you**.

The Windhover

I caught this morning morning's minion, king-
dom of daylight's dauphin, dapple-dawn-drawn Falcon, in his riding
Of the rolling level underneath him steady air, and striding
High there, how he rung upon the rein of a wimpling wing
In his ecstasy! then off, off forth on swing,
As a skate's heel sweeps smooth on a bow-bend: the hurl and gliding
Rebuffed the big wind. My heart in hiding
Stirred for a bird,—the achieve of; the mastery of the thing!

--Gerard Manley Hopkins