

Shakespeare Literary Terms

Drama-a story written to be acted for an audience

Tragedy-a play, novel, or other narrative that depicts serious and important events in which the main character comes to an unhappy end

Prologue-a short introduction at the beginning of a play that gives a brief overview of the plot

Sonnet-fourteen-line lyric poem that is usually written in iambic pentameter and that has one of several rhyme schemes (Shakespearean-3 four-line units or quatrains, followed by a concluding two-line unit, or couplet; abab cdcd efef gg)

Prose-direct, unadorned form of language, written or spoken, in ordinary use

Chorus-a group who says things at the same time

Anachronism-event or detail that is inappropriate for the time period

Verbal irony-a writer or speaker says one thing, but really means something completely different

Dramatic irony-the audience or reader knows something important that a character in a play or story does not know

Monologue-a speech by one character in a play

Soliloquy-an unusually long speech in which a character who is on stage alone expresses his or her thoughts aloud

Foil-character who is used as a contrast to another character; writer sets off/intensifies the qualities of 2 characters this way

Oxymoron-a combination of contradictory terms (EX: jumbo shrimp)

Aside-words that are spoken by a character in a play to the audience or to another character but that are not supposed to be overheard by the others onstage

Pun-a play on the multiple meanings of a word, or on two words that sound alike but have different meanings

Comic relief-humor added that lessens the seriousness of a plot

Static character-character who does not change much in the course of a story

Dynamic character-character who changes as a result of the story's events

Blank ("unrhymed"-no rhyme at the end of lines) Verse-poetry written in unrhymed iambic pentameter ("pent"=5; "meter"=measure); each line of poetry contains 5 iambs, or metrical feet, that consist of an unstressed syllable followed by a stressed syllable

Couplet-two consecutive lines of poetry that rhyme; couplets often signal the EXIT of a character or end of a scene