

**ENGLISH DEPARTMENT**  
**Glossary of Common Literary Terms**

**Allegory:** an allegory is a narrative in which the characters often stand for abstract concepts. An allegory generally teaches a lesson by means of an interesting story.

**Alliteration**

**Connotation:** the associations, images, or impressions carried by a word, as opposed to the word's literal meaning.

**Consonance:** the close repetition of identical consonant sounds before and after differing vowel sounds.

**Convention:** In general, an accepted way of doing things.

**Denotation:** the precise, literal meaning of a word, without emotional associations or overtones.

**Denouement:** the final unraveling or outcome of the plot in drama or fiction during which the

**Irony:** a contrast between appearance and actuality:

**Verbal** irony: a writer says one thing, but means something entirely different.

**Situational** irony: occurs when something happens that is entirely different from what is expected.

**Dramatic** irony: occurs when the reader knows information that the characters do not.

**Literal:** A word for word interpretation for what is written or said.

**Metaphor**

**Protagonist:** the central character in a story; the one upon whom the actions center. The protagonist faces a problem and must undergo some conflict to solve it.

**Pun:** A form of wit, not necessarily funny, involving a play on a word with two or more meanings.

**Resolution:** the final unwinding, or resolving of the conflicts and complications in the plot.

**Rhyme scheme:** the pattern of end rhyme in a poem.

**Rising Action:** That part of the plot that leads through a series of events of increasing interest and power to the climax or turning point. The rising action begins with an inciting moment, an action or event that sets a conflict of opposing forces into motion.

**Satire:** a literary technique in which foolish ideas or customs are ridiculed for the purpose of improving society.

**Setting:** the time and place in which the action of a story occurs.

**Simile:** a figure of speech in which two seemingly unlike things are compared. The comparison is made explicit by the use of a word or phrase such as: like, as, than, similar to, resembles, or seems—as in: He was strong as a bull.

**Soliloquy:** A dramatic convention in which a character in a play, alone on stage, speaks his or her