English 10 - Literary Terms

Directions: Review all definitions. Be able to apply these definitions to examples.

Group 1
1. Antagonist - A character in conflict with the main character in a piece of literature; not always the bad guy.
2. Climax - The high point of the plot; the whole story will lead up to this central moment of greatest narrative tension
3. Conflict - Opposition or tension between forces (man versus man, man versus nature, man versus society, man versus himself, man versus fate, man versus technology)
4. Denouement - The same thing as the resolution or ending of a story
5. Falling action - The part of a story’s plot that takes place after the climax and leads to the resolution
6. Mood - The atmosphere or emotional reaction generated by the author’s choice of words in a literary work
7. Point of View - The perspective from which a narrative is told
8. Protagonist - The central character in a narrative; not always the good guy.
9. Rising action - The part of a plot that leads to the climax
10. Setting - The time and place of a work
11. Theme – a message that the reader could glean from the overall story; it is something that the author wants the reader to learn or at least be aware of. A theme is also not one word, like love. A theme must take a stand about an issue – love sucks, love is what makes the world go ‘round, or it is better to have loved and lost than never to have loved at all.
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Group 2
1. **Alliteration** - Repetition of an initial consonant sound in poetry
   Sally the snake slithered slowly.
2. **Irony** - A striking discrepancy between what is expected and what actually exists or occurs
   a. **Dramatic Irony** - The audience or reader knows an important fact that the character does not know (For example: In *Aladdin*, Jafar is tricked into the lamp and captured)
   b. **Verbal Irony** – Saying the opposite of what is meant. This often sounds like sarcasm. Ex. On a rainy day someone says, “Boy, it sure is a beautiful day.”
   Note: There will be an example of dramatic irony and verbal irony on the quiz.
3. **Imagery** – Descriptive language that appeals to the senses in order to create a specific effect. From *Fahrenheit 451*, “He strode in a swarm of fireflies…the flapping pigeon-winged books died on the porch and lawn of the house.”
4. **Metaphor** - Speaking of one thing in terms of another living thing so as to imply a comparison between the two without using the words *like* or *as*. From *F451*, “…this great python spitting its venomous kerosene upon the world.”
5. **Onomatopoeia** - Words that sounds like sounds or sound like the thing or phenomenon they describe: boom, bang, crash.
6. **Paradox** - A seeming contradiction which is nonetheless true
   Ex. From John Steinbeck’s essay “America and Americans”: Americans are very proud to be Americans; however, many of these same Americans are quick to criticize the American government.
7. **Personification** - Imparting human or lifelike characteristics to an inanimate object: The sun is smiling down on us
8. **Simile** - Comparison of two unlike objects that uses the words *like* or *as*. Your love is like a red rose. <3
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9. **Symbol** - A thing that represents an idea; an image, object, or action with another (larger and more important) meaning than itself. Ex. In “Noah’s Ark”, God gives Noah a rainbow that represents their covenant to never flood the earth again.

**Oxymoron** - A fusion of two contradictory ideas: *jumbo shrimp, civil war, or government intelligence*

Group 3

10. **Pun** – A figure of speech in which two words which sound alike or resemble one another are substituted or interchanged for some comic effect: “*Two antennas met on a roof, fell in love and got married. The ceremony wasn’t much, but the reception was excellent*”

11. **Hyperbole** – Exaggeration for comic or dramatic effect. “*My sister wears so much makeup she broke a chisel last night trying to take it off.*”

12. **Allusion** - A reference to a well-known person or group of people, place, or piece of literature or film. Ex. Judas Iscariot betrayed Jesus Christ, identifying him to soldiers. Somebody who betrays his or her friend is called a Judas. “*I'm not going to leave that Judas alone with my boss while we're competing for the same promotion.*”

13. **Eponym** - When a name stands for an idea or concept: *Romeo = romantic, Satan = evil, Bill Gates = rich, nerdy dude*

14. **Illusion** - A misleading image which causes misinterpretation, a mirage or hallucination

15. **Analogy** - A comparison of two things which are essentially unlike but have similar properties: “Writing a book of poetry is like dropping a rose petal down the Grand Canyon and waiting for the echo.” Don Marquis or, at its simplest form: "MTV is to music as KFC is to chicken.”

16. **Apostrophe** - A speaker directly addresses an absent person or personified concept: **The Sun Rising: John Donne**

   *Busy old fool, unruly sun/ Why dost thou thus/ Through windows, and through curtains call on us?*

17. **Anachronism** - Something that doesn’t belong in particular time and place. Ex. The character Jack in the movie, *The Titanic*, mentions about his ice-fishing on the lake Wissota near Chippewa Falls, Wisconsin. The mention of the lake
however is anachronistic because the lake is a man-made reservoir constructed five years after the Titanic tragedy actually took place.

18. **Assonance** - The repetition of vowel sounds in a line or lines of poetry: From the **molten-golden notes**/ And an in tune/ What a liquid ditty **floats**

19. **Theme** - A message that the reader could glean from the overall story; it is something that the author wants the reader to learn or at least be aware of. A theme is also not one word, like love. A theme must take a stand about an issue – love sucks, love is what makes the world go ‘round, or it is better to have loved and lost than never to have loved at all.

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**Group 4**

20. **Epiphany** - A sudden realization of a previously hidden truth or concept; a “eureka” moment

21. **Foil** - A character whose personality traits are contrasted with those of another character; usually a minor character who “sets off” a major character: Enkidu to Gilgamesh to “absorb his energies”

22. **Flashback** - A plot trick in which the forward-moving flow of the plot is interrupted to show what happened before as if the story were taking the reader back in time to show previous events

23. **Foreshadowing** - A plot trick in which the author hints to the reader suggesting or implying what will happen next

24. **Character** - A person in a story. There are basically two types:
   a. **Static character** - A character who stays the same and does not change
   b. **Dynamic character** - A character whose personality undergoes significant change

25. **Pseudonym** - Literally, “false name” – made-up name chosen by an author, artist, or celebrity. Snoop Dogg’s real name is Calvin Broadus; Eminem’s real name is Marshall Mathers.

26. **Motif** - A recurring theme or verbal pattern in a single text or a number of different texts. For example, the motif of fragmentation (of a family, for instance) could come from several symbols that appear in a book: shattered glass, an unfaithful spouse, a runaway (pet, teen, car)

27. **Euphemism** - The substitution of a pleasant word or term for one considered impolite, blunt, or offensive: “passed away” instead of “died”

28. **Stereotype** - An oversimplified conception of a person or group, a cliché idea about a group or race: all blondes are dumb, all women with glasses are smart
29. **Cliché** – A saying or phrase or idea which becomes so widely repeated that it becomes boring and meaningless. Ex. “Live and learn” and “What goes around comes around.”

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**Group 5**

30. **Anthology** - A collection of selected literary pieces
31. **Autobiography** - A story of a person’s life written by that person
32. **Biography** - A story of a person’s life written by someone else
33. **Essay** - A factual prose composition dealing with one subject
34. **Genre** - The distinct type or category into which a literary work can be grouped
35. **Novel** - An extended fictional prose narrative
36. **Poetry** - Concentrated writing with condensed images and focused language which makes heavy use of imagery and/or other devices such as meter, rhythm, and sound to create an emotional effect
37. **Prose** - Written work which is not a poem
38. **Short story** - A fictional prose work with (usually) one central character and one major conflict; it is usually brief (5000-10,000 words) and can be read in a single setting
39. **Tragedy** - A serious word featuring a protagonist whose downfall is brought about because of his tragic flaw (a serious personality problem; usually hubris: excessive pride or self-confidence, arrogance)
40. **Satire** - A type of literature which makes fun of people’s or society’s vices or hypocrisies so as to drive home an underlying point about human nature
41. **Myth** - An ancient tale created to explain natural phenomena or religious conflicts within a society
42. **Allegory** - A type of literary work with two or more levels of meaning (literal and symbolic); the characters stand for ideas or concepts
43. **Anecdote** - A short history of a humorous or interesting incident; secret or undivulged particulars of history of biography
44. **Farce** - A play containing very broad humor, slapstick, mistaken identities, missed connections, and other oft-used tricks to get laughs
45. **Parable** - A brief story that allegorically provides a moral or illustrates a central truth, usually religious or spiritual in nature
46. **Free verse** - Poetry written without the use of rhyme or a regular metrical pattern
47. **Fable** - A short allegorical story that teaches one important moral or lesson and uses animals to dramatize the lesson being taught
48. **Plagiarism** - Copying someone’s words or ideas and putting them into one’s own work without giving credit to source
Group 7
49. **Aside** - A statement delivered by an actor to the audience; other characters on stage do not hear of this
50. **Connotation** - The implied meaning of a word, how a word “feels”
51. **Denotation** - The literal or dictionary meaning of a word
52. **Couplet** - A pair of rhyming lines
53. **Refrain** - A group of words repeated at intervals in a poem or song, usually at the end of a stanza
54. **Chorus** - A character in classical drama who observes and comments upon other characters’ actions
55. **Soliloquy** - A speech given by an actor while alone onstage (as opposed to a monologue, which is a long character’s hidden thoughts or inner conflict)
56. **Verisimilitude** - The appearance of realism or truth in writing; writing which is “true to life”
57. **Malapropism** - A humorous misuse of the language in which an incorrect word takes the place of a correct word for comic effect: *Lead the way and we’ll precede*
58. **Cacophony** - Pronounced “kuh-KAW-fo-nee” this word means “harsh, discordant, or grating sounds
59. **Naturalism** - A literary movement that valued the literal, unvarnished depiction of real life in all of its sordid depravity and harshness.

60. **Realism** - A literary and artistic movement that valued presenting life as it really is, but without some of the sordidness and harshness of naturalism.

61. **Classicism** - A literary movement that modeled itself on the ideals of ancient Greece, valuing clear logical expression of thoughts, controlled emotion, order, and structure.

62. **Romanticism** - A literary and artistic movement that valued imagination, beauty, the rights of individuals, the attractiveness of pastoral life, and the corruption of cities or society.

63. **Dirge** - A poem lamenting death, sometimes sung at a funeral.

64. **Elegy** - A poem lamenting death written in a very specific poetic form.

65. **Carpe diem** - Latin for “seize the day” - that is, live and party now because life is too short to sit around.

66. **Deus ex machina** – Literally, “the god from the machine.” A literary trick involving some event or person occurring or appearing at the last minute to save a character from death or to provide a solution to a seemingly insoluble problem, usually used by authors who have painted themselves into a corner by devising a plot problem that cannot be solved with any realistic device.
67. **Inversion** - Transposition or switching of a sentence’s normal word order, often in order to rhyme or for poetic effect: *I knew him not* instead of *I did not know him*

68. **Litotes** - A figure of speech in which an affirmative is expressed by negation of its opposite, an understatement: *This is no small problem*

69. **Archetype** - An original model or type after which other similar things are patterned; a classic