

# LITCRIT CONCEPTS VOL 2: TERMS

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*We are a small company that listens! If you have any questions or if there is an area that you would like fully explored, let us hear from you. We hope you enjoy this product and stay in contact with us throughout your academic journey.*

~ President Hexco Inc., Linda Tarrant

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## **Preface: What This Guide Is and Isn't**

Welcome to Lit Crit Concepts, Volume 2: Literary Terms. I was once in your shoes (many, many, many, many years ago), and now, as a writer for Hexco, I am in the trenches with you every year, studying the reading selections and *The Handbook* to prepare for the year of UIL Literary Criticism. I study so I can create materials to help you in the contest, and in your understanding of literature. I mean, you could have signed up for Number Sense or Kazoo Acrobatics, but you chose Literary Criticism, so I have to assume you are interested in literature!

Here's the rub, as Hamlet says. It can be difficult to tackle *The Handbook*. It is a whole lot of information, and while it is great—and it *is* great; I use it all the time in my career as a writer for educational publishers—it is hard to navigate. The alphabetical format is super-simple if you know exactly what you need to study, but what if you don't? What if you don't know what is basic knowledge, and what is advanced? Or how to group information and fit it together so it makes sense, and so you can actually remember it for the test? The last thing I want is to have your youthful spirit crushed by something as fun as literature. So, I put together guides to *The Handbook*, sort of like study notes to give you a better way to structure all that information. If you're an über-nerd, let me put it this way: Let's play *The Divine Comedy*! You be Dante, and I'll be Beatrice, your guide and commentator through Heaven (*The Handbook*). We won't have anyone be Virgil because he is the guide through Purgatory and the Inferno, and *The Handbook* certainly isn't either of those.

This volume covers literary terms, as they is presented in *The Handbook* and only in *The Handbook*. That's where your test questions are drawn, so why muddle things by adding other sources? Where I have found discrepancies or areas of confusion in *The Handbook*, I have told you so. That way, you shouldn't run into any surprises on any tests. If there is a matter of some debate, and you might read something different somewhere else, I have noted that, too. Keep in mind that this volume is *not* meant to be comprehensive, and it should definitely not replace your study of *The Handbook* itself. There are sections or topics that are merely summarized here, but you know where to go find more. I have used the same terminology and names, so looking something up in *The Handbook* will be easy. In some cases, like describing all the different kinds of stanzas, I have been intentionally concise because it helps you see similarities and differences if I stick to the basics. When you are ready, you have a solid foundation to go read more about the specifics. Also, in the interest of your time and your school's budget, I had to make some hard choices about what to include and what to omit. Sorry, young padawan.

A word on notation. As you read, if you see something in SMALL CAPS, that means there is an entry on that topic either in this volume or in the Literary Terms volume. If you see something that is Capitalized in the Middle of a Sentence, that means there is an entry on that topic in *The Handbook*. The simple notation is to point you to more information if you need it.

That's it! I really hope you find this helpful and encouraging as you study this year. We would love your feedback, so please feel completely free to email us at Hexco and let us know what you like and don't like. And, hey--Good luck in the contest!

–Jennifer Bussey

## Nonfiction

### Types

**AUTOBIOGRAPHY** – A life story told by the person himself or herself. It is usually personal (as opposed to a "tell-all") and reflective in nature. The first important one was Lord Herbert's.

**BIOGRAPHY** – A life story told by someone other than the subject. In 1683, Dryden was the first to use the word. Important biographies in literary history include Asser's 893 *Life of Alfred the Great* (first account resembling a biography), Roper's *Life of Sir Thomas More* (first English biography), and Boswell's *Life of Johnson*.

Hagiography—Life story of a saint

**DIARY** – Journal, day-by-day record of a person's life and experiences. Personal, and usually—but not always—intended solely for personal use, and not for publication. Most famous diary in English: Samuel Pepys' (events from 1660-1669). Important English diarists: Swift, Evelyn, Waugh. Important American diarists: Sewall, Byrd, Nin. In some cases, fiction writers use the diary format to tell a partial or whole story.

**EPISTLE** – A letter, especially a formal letter written to a person or group far away; not chatty, but with a definite purpose. The term is most often used in reference to the epistles of the New Testament.

Epistolary Literature—Prose (usually) written in part or in whole by using a letter format.  
(*Example: Richardson's Pamela is an example of an epistolary novel*)

**ESSAY** – According to *The Handbook*, "Classifying the *essay* has eluded human skill." An essay is prose written on a chosen topic; can be formal or informal. Formal essays are serious, goal-driven, and organized. Informal essays are personal, humorous, rambling and free, and incomplete handling of the topic (not authoritative). Well-known essayists: Bacon, Lamb, Montaigne, Steele, Addison, Orwell, Huxley, Arnold, Vidal, Sontag, Mailer, Alice Walker, Buckley, Jr., and Hunter S. Thompson, Jr.

**Quiz: Poetry**

(answers are not necessarily in preceding pages, but they are in this volume somewhere; answers in back)

1. Make an acrostic for the word "acrostic" and a mesostich for the word "mesostich." It may seem silly, but it will really help you remember both terms.
2. Create a list of simple diagrams to help you remember the following terms: aubade, complaint, epithalamium, and lament. For instance, you could write the word "aubade" with the sun rising over it.
3. Name three kinds of poems originally intended for oral presentation.
4. What are two very complicated, regimented types of poems?
5. Poems that are complete on their own, but written to complement one another, are called \_\_\_\_\_ poems.
6. Why is there no persona in Confessional Poetry?
7. Match the couplet with its description on the right. (It has been a long time since you did one of these matching exercises, I'll bet!)

closed couplet	in iambic pentameter
open couplet	second line incomplete, requires subsequent line(s)
distich	rhyming, contain complete idea, usually iambic pentameter
heroic couplet	one line of dactylic hexameter, one in pentameter; honors the dead
elegiac	two successive lines with similar form
8. What master of the dramatic monologue is credited as possibly inventing the form?
9. The list below are examples of what form?  
Old English poem *The Wanderer*, Gray's *Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard*, Whitman's *When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloom'd*. and Milton's "Lycidas"

### **Literary Terms Miscellany**

#### ARISTOTLE'S QUALITIES OF A LITERARY WORK:

- Ethos—Moral character of the speaker revealed in words; how the speaker or writer goes about affecting the audience or reader. In Renaissance criticism, "ethos" was interchangeable with "character."
- Pathos—From Greek root for feeling, *pathos* is what makes a reader or audience member respond emotionally to a work. Usually, the emotion evoked is sorrow.
- Mythos—Plot

BELLES-LETTRES – Imaginative writing and literature, like drama, poetry, essays, and fiction, as opposed to scientific or intellectual writing.

*CARPE DIEM* – "Seize the day." This is a popular theme in poetry, but also appears in other genres. It began with Horace, really found its groove in 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> English love poetry, and remains alive and well today. (*Example: Marvell's To His Coy Mistress*)

CENSORSHIP – Determining a work's appropriateness, and exerting rules about it. Censorship can be at a personal level, a community level, or an authoritative level exercised by officials. We usually think of censorship as actions such as keeping certain books out of a library, but it can also be monitoring correspondence during wartime or in prisons.

COMEDY – Originally, a comedy was a nondramatic, less formal (than TRAGEDY) work with a happy ending. Comedy is light and amusing, but not devoid of substance, plot, or characterization. Making sharp distinctions between comedy and other styles is ultimately impossible, however.

- Comedy of Humours – Realistic humor in which the comedy derives from the characters being developed around a particular "humour," or characteristic.
- Comedy of Intrigue/Comedy of Situation – The comedy derives from one or more characters manipulating the situation. Plot-driven instead of character-driven or background-driven
- Comedy of Manners – Realistic, often satirical comedy during the Restoration. The same style appears in other eras because of its depiction of the highly mannered, sophisticated, fake members of society.
- Comedy of Morals – Comedy that uses mockery to try to right a wrong

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- Comic Relief—A scene or statement that introduces humor into an otherwise serious story or part of a story. Comic relief gives the reader or audience member a little bit of emotional relief from intensity, sadness, or anxiety produced by the story.
- High Comedy – Serious, appeals to the intellect and avoids sentimentality and emotion
- Low Comedy – "elemental comedy," no intellectual appeal, includes: fighting, burlesque, trickery, drunkenness, crude jokes, etc.
- Black Humor – Relying on the morbid, dark, or absurd for humor. Sometimes, this includes harsh emotions such as anger or anxiety. Death is a common theme in black humor. Authors and playwrights who draw from this well include Heller, Pynchon, Vonnegut, Grass, Albee, Pinter, and Ionesco.

COMPOSITION, FOUR CHIEF TYPES:

- Exposition—Explains
- Argumentation—Establish truth or falseness
- Description—Picturing a scene or setting
- Narration—Recounts events; two kinds: simple (factual account) and narrative with plot (organized more like a story)

CONVENTION – Anything related to style, structure, genre, etc., that has reached the point of being an accepted norm in its area of literature. It can be the rules that define a sonnet—those are the conventions of the sonnet. It can be the stock characters in drama—those are conventional characters.

DIDACTICISM – Teaching in a work; didactic works have a purpose to provide guidance about moral, ethical, or religious issues. Because literature is fundamentally expressive, it can be difficult to distinguish between didactic writing and non-didactic writing. The debate rages on!

DYSTOPIA VS UTOPIA – Dystopia is a "bad place." The term describes an imaginary world where tendencies, habits, or trends are extended to the worst outcomes. This type of setting is usually futuristic, appearing in science fiction, fantasy, and horror.

FANCY – Synonymous with "imagination" until the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Now, thanks to Coleridge, it means logical, power, "mode of Memory emancipated from the order of time and space," whereas imagination is superior, being organic and creative.