

Literary Terminology as seen in *Romeo and Juliet*

Allusion--a reference to a famous historical or fictional person, event, or work.

Example: *"Immoderately she weeps for Tybalt's death,
And therefore I have little talked of love;
For Venus smiles not in a house of tears."--Paris*

Aside--a dramatic convention in which the character "whispers" a remark which the audience hears, but the other actors are not supposed to hear.

Example: *Balthasar: I will be gone, sir, and not trouble you.
Romeo: So shalt thou show me friendship. Take thou that.
Live, and be prosperous; and farewell, good fellow.
Balthasar: (Aside) For all this same, I'll hide me hereabout. His
looks, I fear, and his intents I doubt.*

Blank Verse - Poetry written in unrhymed iambic pentameter

Comic Relief--a humorous scene inserted into an otherwise serious drama. Such a comic interruption is included by the author to provide a break in the emotional intensity of the drama and, by contrast, to heighten the seriousness of the tragedy that follows.

Example: *At the end of Act IV, Scene 5, the conversation between Peter and the musicians is comic relief. It is meant to relieve the audience's tension after the grief-filled scene in which Juliet's body is discovered.*

Couplet - two rhymed lines. In Shakespeare's plays, a couplet usually signals to the audience the end of a scene.

Dramatic Irony--this occurs when the audience of a play, or the reader of a work of literature, knows something that a particular character does not know.

Example: *"Beauty's ensign yet
is in thy lips and in thy cheeks,
and death's pale flag
is not advanced there.
Ah, dear Juliet,
Why art thou yet so fair?" - Romeo* Romeo mistakenly
assumes that Juliet
is dead.

Epithet - Adjective or descriptive phrase that is regularly used to characterize a person, place, or thing.

Example: *Romeo! Madman! Passion! Lover!*

Foil--a character whose personality or actions are in striking contrast to those of another character. By using a foil, a writer highlights the other character's traits or mood. Shakespeare frequently uses a foil to emphasize the qualities of a character.

Example: *In Act I, Scene I, Mercutio's merry mood, jokes, and teasing make him a foil for Romeo who is depressed and full of self-pity.*

Iambic Pentameter - A line of poetry that contains five iambs (combination of stressed and unstressed syllables).

Metaphor - a figure of speech which is a comparison between two unlike things that have something in common. It is a subtle comparison suggesting one item is another.

Example: *"Love is a smoke made with the fume of sighs;
Being purged, a fire sparkling in lovers' eye;
Being vexed, a sea nourished with lovers' tears."*

Oxymoron - a figure of speech consisting of two apparently contradictory terms, such as "noiseless noise," "brutal kindness," or "happy pain"

Example: *"Parting is such sweet sorrow" -- Juliet*

Parallel - a character that has almost identical qualities to another character in the text

Example: *Paris and Romeo are young, rich, handsome, and related to the Prince. In addition, both love Juliet.*

Personification - a figure of speech in which human qualities are given to an object, animal, or idea

Example: *"Death is my son-in-law, Death is my hear;
My daughter he hath wedded." - Capulet*

Pun - a play on the multiple meanings of words

Example: *"An old hare hoar,
and an old hare hoar,
Is very good meat in Lent.
But a hare that is a hoar,
Is too much for a score
When it hoars ere it be spent."--Mercutio* Mercutio uses the insulting puns hare, a rabbit or prostitute, and hoar, old.

Simile - a figure of speech which makes a comparison using the terms "like," "as," "than," or "resembles" between two unlike things that have something in common

Example: *"How silver-sweet sound lover's tongues by night,
Like softest music to attending ears."*

Soliloquy--a speech that a character gives when he or she is alone. Its purpose is to let the audience know what the character is thinking.

Example: *Juliet's soliloquy in lines 1-31 of Act II, Scene 5.*

Tragedy --

- Protagonist (hero) is of noble birth
- Protagonist (hero) has tragic flaw
- Hero causes his own tragedy
- Play ends in death and/or violence