
Glossary of Literary Terms

Adjectival phrase A phrase that modifies a noun or a pronoun. Infinitive phrases (He gave his permission *to paint the wall*), prepositional phrases (I sat next to a boy *with red hair*), and participial phrases (His voice, *cracked by fatigue*, sounded eighty years old) can all be used as adjectival phrases. See **Adjective**

Adjective A word that describes somebody or something. *Old, white, busy, careful, and horrible* are all adjectives. Adjectives either come before a noun, or after linking verbs (*be, seem, look*). See **Adverb, Noun, Verb, Adjectival phrase**

Adverb A word that modifies a verb, an adjective, or another adverb. An adverb tells how, when, where, why, how often, or how much. Adverbs can be cataloged in four basic ways: time, place, manner, and degree. See **Adjective, Noun, Verb, Adverbial phrase**

Adverbial phrase A phrase that modifies a verb, an adjective, or another adverb. Infinitive phrases (The old man installed iron bars on his windows *to stop intruders*) or prepositional phrases (The boys went *to the fair*) can be used as adverbial phrases. See **Adverb**

Allegory A story in which people, things, and actions represent an idea or generalization about life; allegories often have a strong moral or lesson. See **Symbol, Symbolism**

Alliteration The repetition of initial consonant sounds in words. For example, *rough and ready*.

Allusion A reference in literature, or in visual or performing arts, to a familiar person, place, thing, or event. Allusions to biblical figures and figures from classical mythology are common in Western literature.

Archetype An image, a descriptive detail, a plot pattern, or a character type that occurs frequently in literature, myth, religion, or folklore and is, therefore, believed to evoke profound emotions.

Argumentation A speech or writing intended to convince by establishing truth. Most argumentation begins with a statement of an idea or opinion, which is then supported with logical evidence. Another technique of argumentation is the anticipation and rebuttal of opposing views. See **Persuasion, Persuasive writing**

Aside A dramatic device in which a character speaks his or her thoughts aloud, in words meant to be heard by the audience but not by the other characters. See **Soliloquy**

Assonance The repetition of vowel sounds without the repetition of consonants. For example, *lake* and *fake*. See **Consonance**

Ballad A poem in verse form that tells a story. See **Poetry, Refrain**

Character A person who takes part in the action of a story, novel, or a play. Sometimes characters can be animals or imaginary creatures, such as beings from another planet.

Glossary of Terms

Characterization/Character development The method a writer uses to develop characters. There are four basic methods: (a) a writer may describe a character's physical appearance; (b) a character's nature may be revealed through his/her own speech, thoughts, feelings, or actions; (c) the speech, thoughts, feelings, or actions of other characters can be used to develop a character; and (d) the narrator can make direct comments about a character.

Chorus In ancient Greece, the groups of dancers and singers who participated in religious festivals and dramatic performances. In poetry, the refrain. See also **Refrain**.

Clause A group of related words that has both a subject and a predicate. For example, '*because the boy laughed.*' See **Phrase**

Cliché A trite or stereotyped phrase or expression. A hackneyed theme, plot, or situation in fiction or drama. For example, '*it rained cats and dogs.*'

Climax The high point, or turning point, in a story—usually the most intense point near the end of a story. See **Plot, Conflict, Rising action, Resolution**

Cognates Words having a common linguistic origin. For example, *café* and *coffee* derive from the Turkish, *kahve*.

Conflict In narration, the struggle between the opposing forces that moves the plot forward. Conflict can be internal, occurring within a character, or external, between characters or between a character and an abstraction such as nature or fate. See **Plot, Climax, Exposition, Rising action, Resolution**

Connotation The attitudes and feelings associated with a word. These associations can be negative or positive, and have an important influence on style and meaning. See **Denotation**

Consonance The repetition of consonant sounds within and at the ends of words. For example, *lonely afternoon*. Often used with assonance, alliteration, and rhyme to create a musical quality, to emphasize certain words, or to unify a poem. See **Assonance, Alliteration, Rhyme**

Controlling image A single image or comparison that extends throughout a literary work and shapes its meaning. See **Extended metaphor, Metaphor**

Denotation The literal or dictionary definition of a word. Denotation contrasts with connotation. See **Connotation**

Denouement See **Resolution**

Description The process by which a writer uses words to create a picture of a scene, an event, or a character. A description contains carefully chosen details that appeal to the reader's senses of sight, sound, smell, touch, or taste. See **Narration, Exposition, Persuasion**

Glossary of Terms

Dialect A particular variety of language spoken in one place by a distinct group of people. A dialect reflects the colloquialisms, grammatical constructions, distinctive vocabulary, and pronunciations that are typical of a region. At times writers use dialect to establish or emphasize settings as well as to develop characters.

Dialogue Conversation between two or more people that advances the action, is consistent with the character of the speakers, and serves to give relief from passages essentially descriptive or expository. See **Description, Exposition, Drama**

Diction An author's choice of words based on their correctness, clearness, or effectiveness. See **Style, Imagery**

Digraph Two successive letters that make a single sound. For example, the *ea* in *bread*, or the *ng* in *sing*.

Diphthong Speech sound beginning with one vowel sound and moving to another vowel sound within the same syllable. For example, *oy* in the word *boy*.

Discourse Formal, extended expression of thought on a subject, either spoken or written. See **Rhetoric**

Drama/Dramatic literature A play; a form of literature that is intended to be performed before an audience. Drama for stage is also called theatre. (See Massachusetts Arts Framework) In a drama, the story is presented through the dialogue and the actions of the characters. See **Script**

Edit Replace or delete words, phrases, and sentences that sound awkward or confusing, and correct errors in spelling, usage, mechanics, and grammar. Usually the step before producing a final piece of writing. See **Revise**

Epic A long narrative that tells of the deeds and adventures of a hero or heroine. See **Poetry, Hero/Heroine**

Epigraph A quotation on the title page of a book or a motto heading a section of a work, suggesting what the theme or central idea will be.

Epithet An adjective or phrase used to express the characteristic of a person or thing in poetry. For example, '*rosy-fingered dawn*.'

Essay A brief work of nonfiction that offers an opinion on a subject. The purpose of an essay may be to express ideas and feelings, to analyze, to inform, to entertain, or to persuade. An essay can be formal, with thorough, serious, and highly organized content, or informal, with a humorous or personal tone and less rigid structure. See **Exposition, Non-narrative nonfiction**

Exposition/Expository text Writing that is intended to make clear or to explain something using one or more of the following methods: identification, definition, classification, illustration, comparison, and analysis. In a play or a novel, exposition is that portion that helps the reader to understand the background or situation in which the work is set. See **Description, Narration, Persuasion**

Glossary of Terms

Extended metaphor A comparison between unlike things that serves as a unifying element throughout a series of sentences or a whole piece. An extended metaphor helps to describe a scene, an event, a character, or a feeling. See **Controlling image, Metaphor**

Fable A short, simple story that teaches a lesson. A fable usually includes animals that talk and act like people. See **Folktale, Traditional narrative**

Fairy tale A story written for, or told to, children that includes elements of magic and magical folk such as fairies, elves, or goblins. See **Folktale, Traditional narrative**

Falling action In the plot of a story, the action that occurs after the climax. During the falling action conflicts are resolved and mysteries are solved. See **Narration, Exposition, Rising action, Climax, Resolution**

Fiction Imaginative works of prose, primarily the novel and the short story. Although fiction draws on actual events and real people, it springs mainly from the imagination of the writer. The purpose is to entertain as well as enlighten the reader by providing a deeper understanding of the human condition. See **Exposition/Expository text, Nonfiction, Informational text, Novel, Short story**

Figurative language Language that communicates ideas beyond the ordinary or literal meaning of the words. See **Simile, Metaphor, Personification, Hyperbole**

Figure of speech Literary device used to create a special effect or feeling, often by making some type of comparison. See **Hyperbole, Metaphor, Simile, Understatement**

Fluency Automatic word recognition, rapid decoding, and checking for meaning.

Folktale A short narrative handed down through oral tradition, with various tellers and groups modifying it, so that it acquired cumulative authorship. Most folktales eventually move from oral tradition to written form. See **Traditional narrative, Tall tale**

Foreshadowing A writer's use of hints or clues to indicate events that will occur in a story. Foreshadowing creates suspense and at the same time prepares the reader for what is to come.

Genre A category of literature. The main literary genres are fiction, nonfiction, poetry, and drama.

Gerund A verb form that ends in -ing and is used as a noun. For example, '*Cooking is an art.*'

Grammar The study of the structure and features of a language. Grammar usually consists of rules and standards that are to be followed to produce acceptable writing and speaking.

Hero/Heroine A mythological or legendary figure often of divine descent who is endowed with great strength or ability. The word is often broadly applied to the principal male or female character in a literary or dramatic work. See **Protagonist**

Glossary of Terms

Heroic couplet Two rhyming lines written in iambic pentameter. The term “heroic” comes from the fact that English poems having heroic themes and elevated style have often been written in iambic pentameter. See **Iambic pentameter, Poetry, Meter**

Homograph One of two or more words spelled alike but different in meaning and derivation or pronunciation. For example, the noun *conduct* and the verb *conduct* are homographs. See **Homonym, Homophone**

Homonym One of two or more words spelled and pronounced alike but different in meaning. For example, the noun *quail* and the verb *quail*. See **Homograph, Homophone**

Homophone One of two or more words pronounced alike but different in meaning or derivation or spelling. For example, the words *to*, *too*, and *two*. See **Homonym, Homograph**

Hyperbole An intentional exaggeration for emphasis or comic effect.

Iambic pentameter A metrical line of five feet or units, each made up of an unstressed then a stressed syllable. For example, *‘I have thee not, and yet I see thee still.’* (Macbeth, II.1.44) See **Meter, Poetry**

Idiom A phrase or expression that means something different from what the words actually say. An idiom is usually understandable to a particular group of people. For example, using *‘over his head’* for *‘doesn’t understand.’*

Image/Imagery Words and phrases that create vivid sensory experiences for the reader. Most images are visual, but imagery may also appeal to the senses of smell, hearing, taste, or touch. See **Style, Sensory detail**

Imaginative/Literary text Fictional writing in story, dramatic, or poetic form. See **Informational/Expository text**

Improvisation A work or performance that is done on the spur of the moment, without conscious preparation or preliminary drafts or rehearsals. See **Drama**

Independent clause Presents a complete thought and can stand alone as a sentence. For example, *‘When she looked through the microscope, she saw paramacia.’* See **Subordinate clause, Sentence**

Infinitive A verb form that is usually introduced by *to*. The infinitive may be used as a noun or as a modifier. For example, an infinitive can be used as a direct object (*The foolish teenager decided to smoke*); as an adjective (*The right to smoke in public is now in serious question*); or as an adverb (*It is illegal to smoke in public buildings*). See **Verb**

Informational/Expository text Nonfiction writing in narrative or non-narrative form that is intended to inform. See **Imaginative/Literary text**

Internal rhyme Rhyme that occurs within a single line of poetry. For example, in the opening line of Eliot’s *Gerontion*, *‘Here I am, an old man in a dry month,’* internal rhyme exists between *‘an’* and *‘man’* and between *‘I’* and *‘dry’*. See **Rhyme, Poetry**

Glossary of Terms

Irony The contrast between expectation and reality. This incongruity has the effect of surprising the reader or viewer. Techniques of irony include hyperbole, understatement, and sarcasm.

See **Hyperbole, Understatement**

Jargon Language used in a certain profession or by a particular group of people. Jargon is usually technical or abbreviated and difficult for people not in the profession to understand.

Literacy The ability to read, write, speak, and understand words.

Main character See **Protagonist**

Main idea In informational or expository writing, the most important thought or overall position. The main idea or thesis of a piece, written in sentence form, is supported by details and explanation. See **Theme, Thesis**

Metaphor A figure of speech that makes a comparison between two things that are basically different but have something in common. Unlike a simile, a metaphor does not contain the words *like* or *as*. For example, in the *evening of life*. See **Figurative language, Figure of speech, Simile**

Meter In poetry, the recurrence of a rhythmic pattern. See **Iambic pentameter**

Monologue See **Soliloquy**

Mood The feeling or atmosphere that a writer creates for the reader. The use of connotation, details, dialogue, imagery, figurative language, foreshadowing, setting, and rhythm can help establish mood. See **Style, Tone**

Moral The lesson taught in a work such as a fable; a simple type of theme. For example, *'Do not count your chickens before the are hatched'* teaches that one should not number one's fortunes or blessings until they appear. See **Theme**

Myth A traditional story passed down through generations that explains why the world is the way it is. Myths are essentially religious, because they present supernatural events and beings and articulate the values and beliefs of a cultural group.

Narration Writing that relates an event or a series of events; a story. Narration can be imaginary, as in a short story or novel, or factual, as in a newspaper account or a work of history. See **Description, Exposition, Persuasion**

Narrator The person or voice telling the story. The narrator can be a character in the story or a voice outside the action. See **Point of view**

Nonfiction Writing about real people, places, and events. Unlike fiction, nonfiction is largely concerned with factual information, although the writer shapes the information according to his or her purpose and viewpoint. Biography, autobiography, and news articles are examples of nonfiction. See **Fiction**

Glossary of Terms

Non-narrative nonfiction Nonfiction written to inform, explain, or persuade that does not use narrative structure to achieve its purpose.

Noun A word that is the class name of something: a person, place, thing, or idea. See **Adjective, Adverb, Verb**

Novel An extended work of fiction. Like a short story, a novel is essentially the product of a writer's imagination. Because the novel is much longer than the short story, the writer can develop a wider range of characters and a more complex plot. See **Fiction, Short story**

Onomatopoeia The use of a word whose sound suggests its meaning, as in *clang, buzz, twang*.

Onset The part of the syllable that precedes the vowel. For example, /h/ in *hop*, and /sk/ in *scotch*. Some syllables have no onset, as in *un* or *on*. See **Rime**

Oral Pertaining to spoken words. See **Verbal**

Overstatement See **Hyperbole**

Palindrome A word, phrase, or sentence that reads the same backward or forward. For example, *Able was I ere I saw Elba*.

Paradox A statement that seems to contradict itself, but, in fact, reveals some element of truth. A special kind of paradox is the oxymoron, which brings together two contradictory terms. For example, *cruel kindness* and *brave fear*.

Parallel structure The same grammatical structure of parts within a sentence or of sentences within a paragraph. For example, the following sentence contains parallel infinitive phrases: *He wanted to join the swim team, to be a high diver, and to swim in relays*.

Parody Imitates or mocks another work or type of literature. Like a caricature in art, parody in literature mimics a subject or a style. Its purpose may be to ridicule, to broaden understanding of, or to add insight to the original work.

Participle A verb form ending in -ing or -ed. A participle functions like a verb because it can take an object; a participle functions like an adjective because it can modify a noun or pronoun. For example, in *a glowing coal* and *a beaten dog*, *glowing* and *beaten* are participles.

Pastoral A poem presenting shepherds in rural settings, usually in an idealized manner. The language and form are artificial. The supposedly simple, rustic characters tend to use formal, courtly speech, and the meters and rhyme schemes are characteristic of formal poetry. See **Poetry, Epic**

Personification A form of metaphor in which language relating to human action, motivation, and emotion is used to refer to non-human agents or objects or abstract concepts: *The weather is smiling on us today; Love is blind*. See **Metaphor, Figure of speech, Figurative language**

Glossary of Terms

Perspective A position from which something is considered or evaluated; standpoint.
See **Point of view**

Persuasion/Persuasive writing Writing intended to convince the reader that a position is valid or that the reader should take a specific action. Differs from exposition in that it does more than explain; it takes a stand and endeavors to persuade the reader to take the same position.
See **Description, Exposition, Narration**

Phonemic awareness/Phonological awareness Awareness that spoken language consists of a sequence of phonemes. This awareness is demonstrated, for example, in the ability to generate rhyme and alliteration, and in segmenting and blending component sounds.
See **Phoneme, Phonics**

Phoneme The smallest unit of speech sound that makes a difference in communication.
For example, *fly* consists of three phonemes: /f/-/l/-/i/.

Phonetic Representing the sounds of speech with a set of distinct symbols, each denoting a single sound. See **Phonics**

Phonics The study of sounds. The use of elementary phonetics in the teaching of reading.
See **Phonetic**

Phrase A group of related words that lacks either a subject or a predicate or both. For example, *by the door* and *opening the box*. See **Clause**

Plot The action or sequence of events in a story. Plot is usually a series of related incidents that builds and grows as the story develops. There are five basic elements in a plot line: (a) *exposition*; (b) *rising action*; (c) *climax*; (d) *falling action*; and (e) *resolution or denouement*.
See **Climax, Conflict, Exposition, Falling action, Resolution, Rising action**

Poetry An imaginative response to experience reflecting a keen awareness of language. Its first characteristic is rhythm, marked by regularity far surpassing that of prose. Poetry's rhyme affords an obvious difference from prose. Because poetry is relatively short, it is likely to be characterized by compactness and intense unity. Poetry insists on the specific and the concrete. See **Prose, Meter**

Point of view The vantage point from which a story is told. In the first-person or narrative point of view, the story is told by one of the characters. In the third-person or omniscient point of view, the story is told by someone outside the story. See **Perspective**

Prefix A word part that is added to the beginning of a base word that changes the sense or meaning of the root or base word. For example, *re-*, *dis-*, *com-* are prefixes. See **Suffix, Root**

Prose Writing or speaking in the usual or ordinary form. Prose becomes poetic when it takes on rhythm and rhyme. See **Poetry**

Protagonist The main character or hero of a story. See **Hero/Heroine**

Glossary of Terms

Pun A joke that comes from a play on words. It can make use of a word's multiple meanings or a word's rhyme.

Refrain One or more words repeated at intervals in a poem, usually at the end of a stanza, such as the last line of each stanza in a ballad. Used to present different moods or ideas, as in Poe's, '*Nevermore*'. See also **Chorus**.

Resolution Also called *denouement*, the portion of a play or story where the problem is solved. The resolution comes after the climax and falling action and is intended to bring the story to a satisfactory end.

Revise To change a piece of writing in order to improve it in style or content. As distinct from editing, revising often involves restructuring a piece rather than simply editing for word choice, grammar, or spelling. See **Edit**

Rhetoric The art of effective expression and the persuasive use of language. See **Discourse**

Rhyme scheme In poetry, the pattern in which rhyme sounds occur in a stanza. Rhyme schemes, for the purpose of analysis, are usually presented by the assignment of the same letter of the alphabet to each similar sound in the stanza. The pattern of a Spenserian stanza is *ababbcbcc*.

Rhythm The pattern of stressed and unstressed syllables in a line of poetry. Poets use rhythm to bring out the musical quality of language, to emphasize ideas, to create mood, to unify a work, or to heighten emotional response.

Rime The vowel and any consonants that follow it. For example, in *scotch*, the rime is /och/. See **Onset**

Rising action The events in a story that move the plot forward. Rising action involves conflicts and complications, and builds toward the climax of the story. See, **Conflict, Climax, Exposition, Falling action**

Root (Root word) A word or word element to which prefixes and suffixes may be added to make other words. For example, to the root *graph*, the prefix *di-* and the suffix *-ic* can be added to create the word, *digraphic*. See **Prefix, Suffix**

Rubric An authentic (close to real world) assessment tool for making scoring decisions; a printed set of guidelines that distinguishes performances or products of different quality. See **Scoring guide**

Rule of three (See Learning Standard 16.8) The number three (3) recurs especially in folk literature and fairy tales. For example, *three characters, three tasks, repetition of an event three times*.

Satire A literary technique in which ideas, customs, behaviors, or institutions are ridiculed for the purpose of improving society. Satire may be gently witty, mildly abrasive, or bitterly critical and often uses exaggeration for effect.

Glossary of Terms

Scoring guide List of criteria for evaluating student work. See **Rubric**

Script The text of a play, motion picture, radio broadcast, or prepared speech that includes dialogue and stage directions.

Sensory detail See **Imagery, Style**

Sentence A group of words expressing one or more complete thoughts.

Setting The time and place of the action in a story, play, or poem.

Short story A brief fictional work that usually contains one major conflict and at least one main character.

Simile A comparison of two unlike things in which a word of comparison (often *like* or *as*) is used. For example, '*She stood in front of the altar, shaking like a freshly caught trout.*' (*Maya Angelou*) See **Metaphor**

Soliloquy A speech in a dramatic work in which a character speaks his or her thoughts aloud. Usually the character is on the stage alone, not speaking to other characters and perhaps not even consciously addressing the audience. (If there are other characters on the stage, they are ignored temporarily.) The purpose of a soliloquy is to reveal a character's inner thoughts, feelings, and plans to the audience.

Sonnet A poem consisting of fourteen lines of iambic pentameter. See **Iambic pentameter, Poetry**

Standard English conventions The widely accepted practices in English punctuation, grammar, usage, and spelling that are taught in schools and employed by educated speakers and writers. See **Standard written English**

Standard written English The variety of English used in public communication, particularly in writing. It is the form taught in schools and used by educated speakers. It is not limited to a particular region and can be spoken with any accent. See **Standard English conventions**

Stanza A recurring grouping of two or more verse lines in terms of length, metrical form, and, often, rhyme scheme. See **Poetry, Rhyme scheme, Verse**

Style The particular way a piece of literature is written. Not only what is said but how it is said, style is the writer's unique way of communicating ideas. Elements contributing to style include word choice, sentence length, tone, figurative language, and use of dialogue. See **Diction, Imagery, Tone**

Subordinate (dependent) clause A clause that does not present a complete thought and cannot stand alone as a sentence. For example, '*The boy went home from school because he was sick.*' See **Independent clause, Sentence**

Glossary of Terms

Suffix A word part that is added to the ending of a root word and establishes the part of speech of that word. For example, the suffix *-ly* added to *immediate*, a noun, creates the word, *immediately*, an adverb or adjective. See also **Prefix, Root**

Symbol A person, place, or object that represents something beyond itself. Symbols can succinctly communicate complicated, emotionally rich ideas.

Symbolism In literature, the serious and extensive use of symbols. See **Symbol**

Synonym A word that has a meaning identical with, or very similar to, another word in the same language. For example, in some situations, *right* is a synonym of *correct*.

Syntax The way in which words are put together to form constructions, such as phrases or sentences.

Tall tale A distinctively American type of humorous story characterized by exaggeration. Tall tales and practical jokes have similar kinds of humor. In both, someone gets fooled, to the amusement of the person or persons who know the truth. See **Traditional narrative, Folktale**

Theme A central idea or abstract concept that is made concrete through representation in person, action, and image. No proper theme is simply a subject or an activity. Like a thesis, theme implies a subject and predicate of some kind—not just *vice* for instance, but some such proposition as, “*Vice seems more interesting than virtue but turns out to be destructive.*” Sometimes the theme is directly stated in the work, and sometimes it is given indirectly. There may be more than one theme in a given work. See **Main idea, Thesis, Moral**

Thesis An attitude or position taken by a writer or speaker with the purpose of proving or supporting it. Also used for the paper written in support of the thesis. See **Theme, Main idea**

Tone An expression of a writer’s attitude toward a subject. Unlike mood, which is intended to shape the reader’s emotional response, tone reflects the feelings of the writer. Tone can be serious, humorous, sarcastic, playful, ironic, bitter, or objective. See **Mood, Style**

Topic The meaning a literary work refers to, stated in a phrase or word. For example, in Flaubert’s *Madame Bovary*, the topic is “dissatisfaction with reality.” See **Theme**

Traditional narrative The knowledge and beliefs of cultures that are transmitted by word of mouth. It consists of both prose and verse narratives, poems and songs, myths, dramas, rituals, fables, proverbs, riddles, and the like. Folk literature exists side by side with the growing written record. See **Folktale, Tall tale**

Transformation (See Learning Standard 16.8) The change of a character in appearance or form by magic. For example, Cinderella was transformed by her godmother after midnight.

Trickster tale Story relating the adventures of a mischievous supernatural being much given to capricious acts of sly deception, who often functions as a cultural hero or symbolizes the ideal of a people.

Glossary of Terms

Understatement A technique of creating emphasis by saying less than is actually or literally true. Understatement is the opposite of hyperbole or exaggeration, and can be used to create humor as well as biting satire. See **Hyperbole**

Verb A word, or set of words, that expresses action or state of being.

Verbal A word that is derived from a verb and has the power of a verb, but acts like another part of speech. Like a verb, a verbal may take an object, a modifier, and sometimes a subject; but unlike a verb, a verbal functions like a noun, an adjective, or an adverb. Three types of verbals are gerunds, infinitives, and participles. Also, pertaining to words, either written or spoken. See **Oral**

Verse A unit of poetry such as a stanza or line. See **Poetry, Stanza**

Voice Indicates whether the subject is acting or being acted upon. Active voice indicates that the subject is acting—doing something. (Benjamin Franklin discovered the secrets of electricity.) Passive voice indicates that the subject is being acted upon (The secrets of electricity were discovered by Benjamin Franklin). Also, a writer's unique use of language that allows a reader to perceive a human personality in his or her writing. The elements of style that determine a writer's voice include sentence structure, diction, and tone. The term can also be applied to the narrator of a selection. See **Diction, Tone**