

## AP English Language and Composition

## KEY TERMINOLOGY

Here are some key literary terms to know and use in your essays. Your book includes examples on pages 95–102.

- 1 **Allegory** — narrative with multiple levels of meaning  
**Alliteration** — sequential repetition of similar initial sound  
**Allusion** — a literary, historical, religious, or mythological reference  
**Anaphora** — repetition of words at start of successive clauses  
**Antithesis** — juxtaposition of sharply contrasting ideas in balanced/parallel words
- 2 **Aphorism** — concise statement designed to make a point/illustrate commonly held belief  
**Apostrophe** — address to something inanimate  
**Assonance** — repetition of identical/similar vowel sounds  
**Asyndeton** — style where conjunctions are omitted  
**Attitude** — tone, voice/mood of writing
- 3 **Begging the question** — ploy where the arguer sidesteps question/conflict, evading/ignoring question  
**Canon** — that which has been accepted as authentic  
**Claim** — an assertion of something as fact  
**Colloquial** — ordinary language, vernacular  
**Conceit** — prolonged comparison of two unlikely things
- 4 **Connotation** — meaning suggested by a word, apart from its denotation, or explicit definition  
**Consonance** — repetition of two or more consonants  
**Convention** — accepted manner, model, or tradition  
**Deductive reasoning** — argument in which specific statements/conclusions are drawn from general principles: movement from general to specific.  
**Dialect** — language and speech idiosyncrasies of a specific area, region, group of people
- 5 **Diction** — specific word choice to persuade or convey tone  
**Didactic** — containing instructive purpose or a lesson  
**Elegy** — poetic lament upon death of particular person  
**Epistrophe** — repetition of a phrase at the end of sentences  
**Epitaph** — praise for a dead person, usually on a headstone
- 6 **Ethos** — appeal of text to credibility and character of writer  
**Eulogy** — speech or prose in praise of a deceased person  
**Euphemism** — kinder way to give unpleasant information  
**Expository** — explains its own meaning or purpose  
**Extended metaphor** — series of comparisons within a piece of writing
- 7 **Figurative language/figure of speech** — levels of meaning expressed through personification, metaphor, hyperbole, irony, oxymoron, litote, etc.  
**Genre** — type or class of literature  
**Homily** — sermon, talk, lecture on moral or spiritual life
- 8 **Hyperbole** — overstatement using exaggerated language  
**Imagery** — use of figurative language to evoke a feeling/idea, describe an object
- 9 **Inductive reasoning** — argument in which general conclusions are drawn from specific facts  
**Inference** — conclusion or proposition arrived at by considering facts/observations/data  
**Irony** — contrast between what is stated and what is meant  
**Jargon** — specialized/technical language of a trade, profession, or similar group  
**Juxtaposition** — location of one thing adjacent to another
- 10 **Litote** — figure of speech that emphasizes its subject by conscious understatement  
**Metaphor** — one thing pictured as if it were something else, suggesting likeness; an implied comparison  
**Metonymy** — figure of speech in which an attribute/feature is used to name/designate something  
**Mood** — feeling/ambience resulting from tone and writer/narrator's attitude/point of view  
**Narrative** — mode of discourse that tells a story based on sequences of connected events, usually chronological
- 11 **Onomatopoeia** — word that sounds like what it describes  
**Oxymoron** — figure of speech combining two apparently contradictory elements, often humorous  
**Paradox** — seemingly contradictory statement  
**Pathos** — element in literature that stimulates pity or sorrow  
**Personification** — giving human qualities to abstract idea/nonhuman object
- 12 **Point of view** — relation of narrator/author to subject  
**Prose** — ordinary form of written language, not poetry  
**Realism** — describing nature/life without idealization  
**Rebuttal/refutation** — countering of anticipated arguments  
**Rhetorical question** — question asked for stylistic effect, answer not expected  
**Rhetoric** — the art of using words to persuade
- 13 **Sarcasm** — verbal irony in which “praise” is actually critical  
**Satire** — literary work that ridicules human failings  
**Simile** — direct comparison, usually using *like* or *as*  
**Style** — distinctive manner of expression  
**Symbolism** — element of literary work that figuratively stands for something else  
**Synecdoche** — when a part is used to signify a whole  
**Syntax** — sentence structure  
**Theme** — central or dominant idea or focus of a work  
**Tone** — attitude literary work takes toward its subject/theme  
**Voice** — source of the words of the story