Freshman 1st Semester Lit. Terms  ~~~ 2011-2012

denotation: the precise, literal meaning of a word
connotation: the feelings or images associated with a word; the secondary meaning of a word
synonym: a word that has the same or similar meaning as another word
antonym: a word opposite in meaning to another word
homophone: words pronounced the same but different in meaning
thesis: a concise statement that guides an essay; the argument that an essay writer is trying to prove
topic sentence: a sentence that expresses the main idea of a paragraph

conflict: the struggle between opposing forces
internal conflict: a character’s struggle against or within himself or herself.
external conflict: a character’s struggle against nature or against another character
plot: the arranged sequence of events in a narrative or drama
exposition: the revelation of characters, setting and other background information normally at the beginning of a narrative
rising action: the series of events leading up to the climax or turning point
climax: the moment of highest intensity in a story
falling action: the series of events following the climax that begin to resolve the conflicts
resolution (denouement): the final unwinding or resolving of the conflicts
setting: the general time, place and surroundings of a literary work
scene: the specific place an event occurs; the subdivision of an act in a play

classification: a person in a literary work
dynamic (character): a character who changes during the course of a story
static (character): a character who does not change during the course of a story
round (character): a complex character with many personality traits
flat (character): a character lacking depth with few personality traits
protagonist: the main character of a literary work
antagonist: the character or opposing force who causes conflict for the main character
point of view: the vantage point or opinion from which a story is told
third person point of view: a narrator outside the story relates action using pronouns such as "he" or "she."
first person point of view: when a narrator from within the story relates the action using “I” throughout
second person point of view: author uses “you” and “your” speaking directly to the reader

symbol: anything, usually something concrete, that stands for something else, usually something abstract
metaphor: an implied analogy in which one thing is imaginatively and directly compared to or identified with another, dissimilar thing
allusion: A passing reference to historical or fictional characters, places, or events, or to other works that the writer assumes the reader will recognize.
personification: A figure of speech in which human characteristics are attributed to animals, plants, inanimate objects, natural forces or abstract ideas
imagery: figurative language that appeals to the five senses and creates “pictures in words”
simile: A figure of speech that uses “like,” “as,” or “as if” to compare two different objects
hyperbole: an obvious exaggeration or overstatement to create emphasis
irony: the difference between reality (what happens) and appearance (what is expected)
genre: a type or category of literary work
allegory: a story in which characters, events, and settings have a secondary meaning beneath the surface of the text
novel: lengthy fictional narrative that imitates real life
novella: a short novel that usually represents a single major event
short story: a short fictional narrative (500-15,000 words) usually limited to few characters and a single incident
poetry: literature written in verse where language is arranged to create a specific emotional response
theme: the central dominating and repeating idea, the “message” implicit in a story
mood: the emotional attitude or feeling that a writer creates
foreshadowing: hints or clues in a story about what is to come
flashback: an interruption in the story to provide prior knowledge

2nd Semester Literary Terms

epic: a long narrative poem narrating the adventures of a hero important to a nation or race
drama: a literary work written in dialogue to be preformed before an audience
tragedy: a serious narrative which presents the downfall of the main character and his/her unhappy end
comedy: a literary work that aims to amuse or entertain, usually having a happy ending
sonnet: a fourteen line lyric poem written in iambic pentameter
situational irony: the contrast between what is expected and what actually occurs
verbal irony: a figure of speech in which there is a contrast between what is said and what is actually meant
dramatic irony: a situation in literature in which the audience/reader understands/knows something the characters do not
limited point of view: author uses only the thoughts and feelings of a single character
omniscient point of view: narrator stands outside the story and is all-knowing
foil: a character whose traits directly contrast with another
epic pattern/heroic cycle: the separation, initiation, and return an epic hero experiences
Homeric simile (epic simile): a lengthy, elaborate simile

*oxymoron: a figure of speech in which two contradictory words or phrases are combined
*epithet: a adjective phrase applied to a person or thing to emphasize a quality (Homeric epithet: a compound adjective used repeatedly—“rosy-fingered dawn”)
*hubris: Greek word for pride or insolence
*in medias res: “in the middle of things”
*stock character: a character who represents a stereotype

*Just in case you wanted to use them!