Literary Concepts for Semester 1 Final Exam

Poetry

**ALLITERATION   The repetition of consonant sounds in words that are close to one another.**

**ALLUSION   A reference to a statement, person, place, event, or thing that is known from literature, history, religion, mythology, politics, sports, science, or popular culture.**

ANALOGY   A comparison of two things to show that they are alike in certain respects. Writers often make analogies to show how something unfamiliar is like something well-known or widely experienced. For example, people often draw an analogy between creating a work of art and giving birth to a child.

**ASSONANCE   The repetition of similar vowel sounds followed by different consonant sounds in words that are close together.**

BALLAD   A song or songlike poem that tells a story. Most ballads have a regular pattern of rhythm and rhyme, and they use simple language with a great deal of repetition. Ballads generally have a refrain—lines or words that are repeated at regular intervals. They usually tell sensational stories of tragedy, adventure, betrayal, revenge, and jealousy. Folk ballads are composed by anonymous singers and are passed down orally from generation to generation before they are written down (often in several different versions). “Lord Randall” (Collection 2) is an example of a folk ballad. The typical ballad stanza is a quatrain with the rhyme scheme *abcb.* The first and third lines have four stressed syllables, and the second and fourth lines have three. The number of unstressed syllables in each line may vary, but often the meter is primarily iambic.

CARPE DIEM   **A Latin phrase that literally means “seize the day”—that is, “make the most of present opportunities.”**

CONCEIT   A fanciful and elaborate figure of speech that makes a surprising connection between two seemingly dissimilar things. A conceit may be a brief metaphor, or it may form the framework of an entire poem. Two particularly important types of conceits are the Petrarchan conceit and the metaphysical conceit.

**CONNOTATIONS   All the meanings, associations, or emotions that have come to be attached to a word.**

**CONSONANCE   The repetition of final consonant sounds after different vowel sounds.**

**COUPLET   Two consecutive lines of poetry that rhyme.**

**DENOTATION   The literal, dictionary definition of a word.**

**DICTION   A writer’s or speaker’s choice of words.**

**IAMBIC PENTAMETER   A line of poetry made up of five iambs.** An **iamb** is a metrical foot, or unit of measure, consisting of an unstressed syllable followed by a stressed syllable

**IMAGERY   Language that appeals to the senses**

**METAPHOR   A figure of speech that makes a comparison between two seemingly unlike things without using a connective word such as** like, as, than, **or *resembles.***

An extended metaphor is a metaphor that is extended, or developed, over several lines of writing or even throughout an entire poem.

**PARADOX   An apparent contradiction that is actually true.**

**PASTORAL   A type of literature that depicts country life in idyllic, idealized terms.**

**PERSONIFICATION   A kind of metaphor in which a nonhuman or nonliving thing or quality is talked about as if it were human or had life.**

**REFRAIN   A repeated word, phrase, line, or group of lines.**

**RHYME   The repetition of accented vowel sounds and all sounds following them in words that are close together in a poem.**

**SIMILE   A figure of speech that makes a comparison between two seemingly unlike things by using a connective word such as** like, than, **or *resembles.***

**SONNET   A fourteen-line lyric poem, usually written in iambic pentameter, that has one of several rhyme schemes.**

**SPEAKER   The imaginary voice, or persona, assumed by the author of a poem.**

**STANZA   A group of consecutive lines in a poem that form a single unit.**

**SYMBOL   A person, place, thing, or event that stands both for itself and for something beyond itself.**

**THEME   The central idea or insight about human experience revealed in a work of literature.**

Reflections and Satires and Essays: Concepts and Vocabulary

Metaphysical conceits are especially complex and clever figures of speech that make surprising connections between two seemingly dissimilar things; an analytical and psychological investigation of love and life. In “A Valediction Forbidding Mourning,” Donne uses a compass to discuss the marriage, as well as the North star. In “Meditation 17,” Donne creates a series of comparisons which build human consciousness and human connectedness through his discussion of the bell, the book, the treasure, and the continent.

**EPIC   A long narrative poem that relates the great deeds of a larger-than-life hero who embodies the values of a particular society.**

A mock epic is a comic narrative poem, written in dignified language, that parodies the serious epic genre by treating a trivial subject in a lofty, grand manner. This is seen in Pope’s “The Rape of the Lock,” Voltaire’s *Candide* and Cervantes’ *Don Quixote*.

A **satire** is any piece of writing designed to make its readers feel critical—of themselves, of their fellow human beings, of their society. Some are humorous, while others intend to use humor to portray their indignation and their anger at human vices and crimes. It is one of the oldest literary forms, with formal satire existing in Greek and Roman literature. François-Marie Arouet, better known by his pen name, Voltaire, is remembered chiefly for his lifelong fight against injustice. As a satirist, philosopher, historian, dramatist, and poet, Voltaire continually criticized the wastefulness of war, the intolerance of organized religion, and indifference to the plight of the poor. He used exaggeration, understatement, warped logic, improbable situations and ridiculous names in his satire.

Parody is a mocking imitation of a writer’s style or the style of a particular genre. Pope’s “The Rape of the Lock” parodies the epic style. Cervantes’ *Don Quixote* mocks chivalric romances.

**FOIL   A character who sets off another character by strong contrast.**

IRONY   A contrast or discrepancy between expectation and reality—between what is said and what is really meant, between what is expected and what really happens, or between what appears to be true and what really is true.

Verbal irony occurs when a writer or speaker says one thing but really means something quite different—often the opposite of what he or she has said. If you tell your friend that you “just love being kept waiting in the rain,” you are using verbal irony.

**Situational irony** occurs when what actually happens is the opposite of what is expected or appropriate.

**Dramatic irony** occurs when the audience or the reader knows something important that a character in a play or story does not know.

**TONE   The attitude a writer takes toward the reader, a subject, or a character.** Tone is conveyed through the writer’s choice of words and details.

Hyperbole/Exaggerations: **A figure of speech that uses exaggeration to express strong emotion or create a comic effect.**

Understatement: **A figure of speech that consists of saying less than what is really meant or saying something with less force than is appropriate.**

**WIT    A quality of speech or writing that combines verbal cleverness with keen perception, especially of the incongruous.**

Rhetorical Question: asks a question for which an answer is not expected

Argument by Analogy: writer points out a parallel between two subjects or situations in order to make a point

Historical allusion: writer cites a person, a place, or an event from history that related to the topic at hand

Repetition or restatement: writer repeats the main idea in different ways

Counterargument: writer anticipates the audience’s objections or concerns and openly addresses them

Appeal to authority: writer cites the opinions of experts on the subject

Illustrative anecdote or example: writer uses a brief story or cites a particular case in order to support his or her point.

Tone: attitude a writer takes toward the reader or toward his or her topic

Connotations: use of words which has associated and emotions that have come to be attached to a word through usage

Persuasive Argument: state a position, clarify position, offer supporting argument and conclude by restating the position or make recommendations or judgments based upon it.

ANECDOTE   A brief and sometimes witty story that focuses on a single interesting incident or event, often in order to make a point or teach a moral lesson. Sometimes an anecdote reveals the character of a famous person. Taoists, Zen Buddhists, and Sufis, among others, use anecdotes to convey indirectly the teachings of their philosophies.

Of Studies

Discourse: speech

Affectation: artificial behavior designed to impress others

Diligence: care, carefulness

Impediment: obstacle, stumbling block

Parallelism (parallel structure): repetition of words, phrases, or sentences that have a similar grammatical structure.

Paradox: a seeming contradiction that can be true

Axioms: adages which contain nuggets of wisdom; do not argue or explain but merely make positive statements (i.e. affirm a belief)

Pope’s Heroic Couplets

Antithesis: parallel structure to present a balanced contrast (Give me liberty or Give me Death)

Heroic Couplets: two rhyming lines of iambic pentameter

**APHORISM   A concise, sometimes witty saying that expresses a principle, truth, or observation about life.**