**PPACCTS:**  
– plot, perspective/point of view, atmosphere/mood, character, conflict, theme and setting

– plot: rising action, inciting incident, climax, resolution, conclusion

– conflict: character vs. self, character vs. nature, character vs. character, character vs. society

– setting: time, place

– atmosphere: mood, sights, sounds

**Other Terms:**

alliteration: repetition of initial consonant sounds

allusion: references to well-known ideas/other works of literature/historical events

antagonist: character who opposes main character

dramatic irony:audience knows more than the character

first person: narrator in character in story

foreshadowing:hinting that something will happen

hyperbole: exaggeration

metaphor: direct comparison between two unlike things

irony: reversal of expectations

onomatopoeia: sound of word reflects its meaning

pathetic fallacy: human emotion is reflected in nature

personification:giving human qualities to inanimate objects.

Protagonist: main character in story

simile: direct comparison of two unlike things using like or as

symbol: something that represents both itself and something else

tall tale: exaggerated story

theme: main idea of story; cannot be a sentence

third person limited: narrator only knows what character knows

third person omniscient: narrator knows everything

**More Devices**

allegory – The device of using character and/or story elements symbolically to represent an abstraction in addition to the literal meaning. In some allegories, for example, an author may intend the characters to personify an abstraction like hope or freedom. The allegorical meaning usually deals with moral truth or a generalization about human existence.

alliteration – The repetition of sounds, especially initial consonant sounds in two or more neighboring words (as in “she sells sea shells”). Although the term is not frequently in the multiple choice section, you can look for alliteration in any essay passage. The repetition can reinforce meaning, unify ideas, supply a musical sound, and/or echo the sense of the passage.

allusion – A direct or indirect reference to something which is presumably commonly known, such as an event, book, myth, place, or work of art. Allusions can be historical, literary, religious, topical, or mythical. There are many more possibilities, and a work may simultaneously use multiple layers of allusion.

atmosphere – The emotional nod created by the entirety of a literary work, established partly by the setting and partly by the author’s choice of objects that are described. Even such elements as a description of the weather can contribute to the atmosphere. Frequently atmosphere foreshadows events. Perhaps it can create a mood.

connotation – The non-literal, associative meaning of a word; the implied, suggested meaning. Connotations may involve ideas, emotions, or attitudes.

denotation – The strict, literal, dictionary definition of a word, devoid of any emotion, attitude, or color. (Example: the denotation of a knife would be a utensil used to cut; the connotation of a knife might be fear, violence, anger, foreboding, etc.)

extended metaphor – A metaphor developed at great length, occurring frequently in or throughout a work.

figurative language – Writing or speech that is not intended to carry literal meaning and is usually meant to be imaginative and vivid.

figure of speech – A device used to produce figurative language. Many compare dissimilar things. Figures of speech include apostrophe, hyperbole, irony, metaphor, oxymoron, paradox, personification, simile, synecdoche, and understatement.

genre – The major category into which a literary work fits. The basic divisions of literature are prose, poetry, and drama. However, genre is a flexible term; within these broad boundaries exist many subdivisions that are often called genres themselves. For example, prose can be divided into fiction (novels and short stories) or nonfiction (essays, biographies, autobiographies, etc.). Poetry can be divided into lyric, dramatic, narrative, epic, etc. Drama can be divided into tragedy, comedy, melodrama, farce, etc. On the AP language exam, expect the majority of the passages to be from the following genres: autobiography, biography, diaries, criticism, essays, and journalistic, political, scientific, and nature writing. There may be fiction or poetry.

hyperbole – A figure of speech using deliberate exaggeration or overstatement. (The literal Greek meaning is “overshoot.”) Hyperboles often have a comic effect; however, a serious effect is also possible. Often, hyperbole produces irony. The opposite of hyperbole is understatement.

imagery – The sensory details or figurative language used to describe, arouse emotion, or represent abstractions. On a physical level, imagery uses terms related to the five senses: visual, auditory, tactile, gustatory, and olfactory. On a broader and deeper level, however, one image can represent more than one thing. For example, a rose may present visual imagery while also representing the color in a woman’s cheeks and/or symbolizing some degree of perfection. An author may use complex imagery while simultaneously employing other figures of speech, especially metaphor and simile. In addition, this term can apply to the total of all the images in a work. On the AP language exam, pay attention to how an author creates imagery and to the effect of this imagery.

irony/ironic – The contrast between what is stated explicitly and what is really meant, or the difference between what appears to be and what is actually true. Irony is often used to create poignancy or humor. In general, there are three major types of irony used in language: (1) verbal irony – when the words literally state the opposite of the writer’s (or speaker’s) meaning (2) situational irony – when events turn out the opposite of what was expected; when what the characters and readers think ought to happen is not what does happen (3) dramatic irony – when facts or events are unknown to a character in a play or piece of fiction but known to the reader, audience, or other characters in the work.

litotes (pronounced almost like “little tee”) – a form of understatement that involves making an affirmative point by denying its opposite. Litote is the opposite of hyperbole. Examples: “Not a bad idea,” “Not many,” “It isn’t very serious. I have this tiny little tumor on the brain” (Salinger, Catcher in the Rye).

metaphor – A figure of speech using implied comparison of seemingly unlike things or the substitution of one for the other, suggesting some similarity. Metaphorical language makes writing more vivid, imaginative, thought provoking, and meaningful.

mood – The prevailing atmosphere or emotional aura of a work. Setting, tone, and events can affect the mood. Mood is similar to tone and atmosphere.

narrative – The telling of a story or an account of an event or series of events.

onomatopoeia – A figure of speech in which natural sounds are imitated in the sounds of words. Simple examples include such words as buzz, hiss, hum, crack, whinny, and murmur. If you note examples of onomatopoeia in an essay passage, note the effect.

oxymoron – From the Greek for “pointedly foolish,” an oxymoron is a figure of speech wherein the author groups apparently contradictory terms to suggest a paradox. Simple examples include “jumbo shrimp” and “cruel kindness.” This term does not usually appear in the multiple-choice questions, but there is a chance that you might find it in an essay. Take note of the effect that the author achieves with the use of oxymoron.

paradox – A statement that appears to be self-contradictory or opposed to common sense but upon closer inspection contains some degree of truth or validity. (Think of the beginning of Dickens’ Tale of Two Cities: “It was the best of times, it was the worst of times....”)

personification – A figure of speech in which the author presents or describes concepts, animals, or inanimate objects by endowing them with human attributes or emotions. Personification is used to make these abstractions, animals, or objects appear more vivid to the reader.

point of view – In literature, the perspective from which a story is told. There are two general divisions of point of view, and many subdivisions within those.

(1) first person narrator tells the story with the first person pronoun, “I,” and is a character in the story. This narrator can be the protagonist, a secondary character, or an observing character.

(2) third person narrator relates the events with the third person pronouns, “he,” “she,” and “it.” There are two main subdivisions to be aware of:

a. third person omniscient, in which the narrator, with godlike knowledge, presents the thoughts and actions of any or all characters

b. third person limited omniscient, in which the narrator presents the feelings and thoughts of only one character, presenting only the actions of all the remaining characters. In addition, be aware that the term point of view carries an additional meaning. When you are asked to analyze the author’s point of view, the appropriate point for you to address is the author’s attitude.

prose – one of the major divisions of genre, prose refers to fiction and nonfiction, including all its forms. In prose the printer determines the length of the line; in poetry, the poet determines the length of the line.

repetition – The duplication, either exact or approximate, of any element of language, such as a sound, word, phrase, clause, sentence, or grammatical pattern.

satire – A work that targets human vices and follies or social institutions and conventions for reform or ridicule. Regardless of whether or not the work aims to reform human behavior, satire is best seen as a style of writing rather than a purpose for writing. It can be recognized by the many devices used effectively by the satirist: irony, wit, parody, caricature, hyperbole, understatement, and sarcasm. The effects of satire are varied, depending on the writer’s goal, but good satire, often humorous, is thought provoking and insightful about the human condition. Some modern satirists include Joseph Heller (Catch 22) and Kurt Vonnegut (Cat’s Cradle, Player Piano).

symbol/symbolism – Generally, anything that represents itself and stands for something else. Usually a symbol is something concrete -- such as an object, action, character, or scene – that represents something more abstract. However, symbols and symbolism can be much more complex. One system classifies symbols into three categories: (1) natural symbols are objects and occurrences from nature to symbolize ideas commonly associated with them (dawn symbolizing hope or a new beginning, a rose symbolizing love, a tree symbolizing knowledge). (2) conventional symbols are those that have been invested with meaning by a group (religious symbols such as a cross or Star of David; national symbols, such as a flag or an eagle; or group symbols, such as a skull and crossbones for pirates or the scale of justice for lawyers). (3) literary symbols are sometimes also conventional in the sense that they are found in a variety of works and are more generally recognized. However, a work’s symbols may be more complicated, as is the jungle in Heart of Darkness. On the AP exam, try to determine what abstraction an object is a symbol for and to what extent it is successful in representing that abstraction.

theme – The central idea or message of a work, the insight it offers into life. Usually theme is unstated in fictional works, but in nonfiction, the theme may be directly state, especially in expository or argumentative writing.

thesis – In expository writing, the thesis statement is the sentence or group of sentences that directly expresses the author’s opinion, purpose, meaning, or position. Expository writing is usually judged by analyzing how accurately, effectively, and thoroughly a writer has proven the thesis.