Creative Writing vocabulary list

**Allegory:** A narrative technique in which the characters are portrayed as things or concepts in order to convey a message. Usually used for satirical or political purposes.

**Alliteration:** A series of words in a sentence all beginning with the same sound. For example: Sing a song of six-pence.

**Ambiance:** The feeling or mood of a particular scene or setting.

**Ambiguity:** Allows for two or more simultaneous interpretations of a word, phrase, action, or situation, all of which can be supported by the context of a work.

**Analogy:** A comparison of two unlike things, used to explain or illustrate a concept.

**Antagonist:** The main character or force in a fiction that tries to stop the protagonist (the hero or heroine of the story) from achieving his/her goal.

**Anthology:** A collection of short stories written by various authors, compiled in one book or journal.

**Antonyms:** Words which are opposites in meaning. For example – come and go, clean and dirty, good and bad, etc.

**Assignment:** A piece of writing that a writer has been assigned to write by an editor or publisher for a pre-determined fee.

**Assonance:** Repetition of internal vowel sounds in nearby words that do not end the same, used to emphasize important words in a line. For example – asleep under a tree.

**Autobiography:** The writer’s own life story.

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**Autobiography:** The writer’s own life story.

**Biography:** A life story of someone other than the writer’s.

**Characterization:** The author’s expression of a character’s personality through the use of action, dialogue, thought, or commentary.

**Cliché:** An overused expression.

**Climax:** The moment of greatest intensity in a story, usually the point where the central character/protagonist faces and deals with the consequences of all his/her actions.

**Denotation:** The exact meaning of a word, without the feelings or suggestions that the word may imply.

**Denouement:** The final outcome of the main complication of a story or play. It usually occurs after the climax and reveals all the secrets and misunderstandings connected to the plot.

**Dialogue:** The words spoken by the characters of a story.

**Diction:** A writer’s choice of words, phrases, sentence structures, and figurative language, which combine to help create meaning.

**Didactic:** Instructional or informative literature.

**Double Entendre:** A phrase that can be interpreted in two different ways

**Electronic Submission:** Submission made through electronic means – that is, e-mail or computer disks.

**Euphemism:** A phrase used in place of something disagreeable or upsetting. For example – “passed out” for “fainted”.

**Euphony:** Smooth and musically pleasant language.

**E-zine:** Electronic magazine. A magazine published online.

**Fair Use:** Reproduction of short excerpts from a copyrighted work for educational or review purposes. This does not infringe upon the writer’s copyrights.

**Fees:** Money paid to the writer for his/her services.

**Fiction**: Fiction is literature in the form of prose, especially short stories and novels that describes imaginary events and people.

**Figures of Speech:** Ways of using language that deviate from the literal meanings of words in order to suggest additional meanings or effects.

**First Electronic Rights:** The rights to publish a piece of writing electronically (online) for the first time. Once the rights have been assigned, the work cannot be published in another electronic medium, however reprint rights can be sold.

**First Print Rights:** The rights anywhere in the world to a piece of writing in the medium it’s published in.

**Flash Fiction:** A piece of fiction written in less than 500 words.

**Flat Fee:** Money paid to the author for his or her work in one lump sum. The author does not receive any royalty after this payment.

**Formatting:** The manner in which a manuscript is prepared and presented.

**Genre:** The type or category of writing – like mystery, science fiction, romance, fantasy, etc.

**Ghostwriter:** A writer who is paid to write for someone else. A ghostwriter does not get a byline or any credit. Usually celebrities hire ghostwriters and then sell the book under their own names.

**Guidelines:** Instructions for submitting work to a publication

**High Concept:** A storyline that can easily be described in one sentence and seems to be especially unique and commercially viable.

**Hook:** A narrative trick in the lead paragraph of a work that grabs the attention of the readers and keeps them reading.

**Homographs:** Words which are spelled alike but are different in origin, meaning, or pronunciation. For example – fair (the adjective meaning beautiful or not dark) and fair (the noun meaning a periodical gathering with sales, shows and entertainment).

**Homonyms:** Words that are spelled and pronounced alike but have different meanings. For example – pool (of water) and pool (the game).

**Hyperbole:** Deliberate exaggeration. Short form is “hype”.

**Imagery:** Collection of images in a literary work, used to evoke atmosphere or mood.

**Irony:** When a person, situation, statement, or circumstance is not what it seems to be, but the exact opposite.

**Jargon:** Mode of speech familiar only to a group or profession. For example – medical jargon or technical jargon.

**Journal:** A diary or record of events, feelings, and thoughts usually recorded by date.

**Limerick:** A light, humorous style of fixed form poetry, usually of five lines and a subject matter which is silly.

**Logline:** One sentence description of a screenplay or TV script.

**Loop Writing:** A type of writing that helps you develop your thinking. Stories, dialogues, prejudices, etc are written that take off from a word, phrase, or paragraph in some informal writing. Later you think about how you can use this loop writing to discover another point of view by bringing in relevant personal experiences.

**Metaphor:** A figure of speech that makes a comparison between two unlike things, without using the word like or as. For example – Life is a brief candle. (Macbeth)

**Motif:** A recurring object, concept, or structure in a work of literature. A motif may also be two contrasting elements in a work, such as good and evil.

**Myth:** A story that attempts to explain events in nature by referring to supernatural causes, like gods and deities. Usually passed on from generation to generation.

**Narrative:** A collection of events that tells a story, which may be true or not, placed in a particular order.

**Non-fiction**: Non-fiction is prose writing that is based on facts, real events and real people, such as biography or history.

**Novel:** A work of fiction consisting of 45,000 words or more.

**Novella/Novelette:** Short works of fiction consisting of between 7,500 and 40,000 words.

**Onomatopoeia:** The use of words that resemble the sound they denote. For example – hiss or buzz.

**Outline:** A point form or list of short sentences that describe the action or major ideas in a written work.

**Parable:** A brief and often simple narrative that illustrates a moral or religious lesson.

**Paradox:** A statement that initially appears to be contradictory but then, on closer inspection, turns out to make sense.

**Paraphrase:** A prose restatement of the central ideas of a poem, in your own language.

**Parody:** A humorous imitation of another, usually serious, work.

**Payment:** What an editor pays a writer for his work.

**Permission:** A fee paid by anyone who wants to reprint part of a book for uses like - excerpts of the book appearing in an anthology; teachers reproducing all or part of the story for class use; or another writer using more than 50 words from the book in a published article. The publisher handles permissions for the author, and splits the proceeds.

**Persona:** In literature, the persona is thenarrator, or the storyteller, of a literary work created by the author.

**Personification:** A form of writing where human characteristics are attributed to non-human things.

**Plagiarism:** Presenting another author’s works or words as your own.

**Plot:** The main events of a story.

**Point of View:** The angle from which the writer writes a piece, particularly in fiction.

**Prefix:** An auxiliary syllable that attaches to the beginning of a root word to change the meaning of the word. For example: marital, *pre*marital.

**Premise:** The question or problem that is the basic idea of a story.

**Proofreading:** Close reading of the work to look for mistakes in language use.

**Proposal:** Summary of a proposed book, usually non-fiction.

**Protagonist:** The main character or hero of a story whose actions and goal drive the plot forwards.

**Pseudonym:** An alias used by a writer desiring not to use his or her real name. Also known as “pen name”.

**Public Domain:** Any material that can be freely used by the public, and does not come under the protection of a copyright, trademark, or patent.

**Pun:** A play on words that relies on a word’s having more than one meaning or sounding like another word.

**Query:** A one page letter pitching an article or a book idea to an editor. It usually consists of a catchy introduction, a bit of background on the topic, and a synopsis of the writer’s credits.

**Satire:** The literary art of ridiculing a folly or vice in order to expose or correct it.

**Self-publishing:** A branch of publishing in which the author publishes his own works, cutting out the middlemen and raking in all the profits himself. With the advent of computers and desktop publishing programs, this approach has become increasingly viable.

**Sentence Fragment:** A sentence that is missing the subject, the verb, or both.

**Serial:** A publication that appears periodically, such as magazines, newspapers, or newsletters

**Setting:** The total environment for the action of a fictional work.

**Short Short:** Fiction under 1,000 words.

**Short Story:** Fiction under 7,500 words.

**Simile:** Comparing two different things using the words ‘like’ or ‘as’. For example – The water was cold as ice.

**Simultaneous Submission:** To send a submission to more than one publisher/agent at one time. This is unacceptable to some, okay to others.

**Story World**: A story world describes when and where your story will take place. It can include details of the environment, government, people and life styles.

**Submission Guidelines:** The guidelines given by the editor or the publisher for submitting queries or completed manuscripts to the publication.

**Subplot:** The secondary action of a story, complete and interesting in its own right, that reinforces or contrasts with the main plot.

**Symbol:** A word that on the surface is its literal self but which also has another meaning or even several meanings.

**Synonyms:** Words which have the same or almost the same meaning. For example – happy and glad.

**Synopsis:** Brief summary of a story, manuscript, or book, told in present tense prose which is usually two to three paragraphs in length.

**Syntax:** The ordering of words into meaningful verbal patterns such as phrases, clauses, and sentences.

**Theme:** The central meaning or dominant idea in a literary work. It is the unifying point around which the plot, characters, setting, point of view, symbols, and other elements of a work are organized.

**Tone:** The author’s implicit attitude toward the reader or the people, places, and events in a work as revealed by the elements of the author’s style.

**Understatement:** The opposite of hyperbole, understatement (or litotes) refers to a figure of speech that says less than is intended

**Voice:** The style, tone, and method of writing with which an author composes a work.

**Word Count:** The estimated number of words in a manuscript.

**Writer’s Block:** The inability to write for some period of time. It can be the inability to come up with good ideas to start a story, or extreme dissatisfaction with all efforts to write.

**Writer’s Guidelines:** A set of guidelines to which a publication wants its writers to adhere.