

E

elegy

An elegy is a poem written in memory of a dead person, traditionally someone who has died young (or at least before his time) and has been thereby unable to fulfill his or her great promise. In standard form, the elegy includes the following:

- Someone who is dead and worthy of being mourned
- A mourner to write the piece
- Traditionally, the dead person is someone of great potential who has died without the chance to fulfill his or her potential (usually meaning someone who has died young)
- The writer attempts to come to terms with the evident injustice of the premature death or the life unfulfilled
- The writer may question God or the nature of the universe
- Traditionally, the scene includes a picture of pastoral Nature, as a reference to the natural order of the world and of the peace and harmony of the natural world
- In the resolution of the poem, the narrator comes to terms with Life, God, and the workings of Nature.

Major elegies include

- John Milton's "Lycidas," written to the memory of drowned fellow student Edward King. Milton was not as close to the student as could be supposed by the poem. Some critics suggest that he was more interested in demonstrating his poetic talent than in dealing with his own grief; other evidence suggests he was fulfilling a social obligation in providing a memorial piece for a dead classmate.
- Thomas Gray's "Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard," a different sort of piece, as it is written to the memory of all the anonymous humans who have lived their lives with humility and grace, minding their own business and completing their quiet trek heavenward; he ends the piece with the epitaph of the narrating ghost, which may be his own desired epitaph, asking to be remembered only as they are remembered.
- Percy Bysshe Shelley's "Adonais," written to the memory of John Keats, who died tragically young (of tuberculosis) and who Shelley falsely believed died of heartbreak over the critical reception accorded his poetry.
- Walt Whitman's "When Lilacs Last By the Dooryard Bloomed," written in memory of Abraham Lincoln, who was assassinated before completing his task of reuniting the United States and bringing peace and reconciliation; Lincoln was certainly not a young man, but he died with his task not completed.
- Alfred Lord Tennyson's "In Memoriam," written to the memory of his friend Arthur Henry Hallam and demonstrating Tennyson's struggle to maintain religious faith in 'scientific' Victorian England.
- Robert Lowell's "Quaker Graveyard at Nantucket," dedicated to his cousin, Warren Winslow, who was lost at sea in World War II; Lowell attempts to

make his peace with ‘the war of all against all’: man fights Nature (the sea); man fights man (by surrogate, through men hunting whales in the poem); and Nature fights (or destroys) man. Lowell ends the poem by coming to terms with “the rainbow of His [God's] will.

Contemporary elegies include:

- Marilyn Hacker’s “Elegy for Janis Joplin” which offers that radical twentieth century notion that females can be figures of great potential (and of great accomplishment, as those who have enjoyed Janis Joplin’s rich, raw music can attest).
- Lawrence Ferlinghetti’s “Assassination Raga” which offers a headlong plunge into grief, providing a direct emotional response to the assassination of Robert Kennedy (1968), with deep connections to Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.’s assassination earlier the same year and the assassination of President John F. Kennedy in 1963.

elements

By the time of Plato, the notion that four or five elements were the basic building blocks of the world was fairly common, with each of these elements having been identified as the primal element by one or another earlier thinker. That the four correspond to the four states of matter and the fifth is spirit is a point of some literary importance. Metaphoric links to the four elements can be found throughout Western literature. The table lists the five elements, an early philosopher who emphasized each, and some of the standard metaphoric correspondences.

Element & state	thinker	Associated with
Water - liquid	Thales of Miletus	The repeating cycle (cloud to river to sea to cloud); fertility (water for growth); blood (the liquid of life); sweat; a feminine element, its associations correspond to the Cup, or vessel -- the receptacle.
Air - gas	Anaximenes of Miletus	Changeability; carrier of messages (from the spoken word; note the expression “in the air”); a masculine element associated with the Sword (the wind that “cuts like a knife”)
Earth - solid	Democritus	Mother Earth; fertility; stability; solidity; that which does not change; a feminine element whose characteristics are those of the nurturing mother.
Fire - plasma	Heraclitus	Change; impermanence; “heat” and anger; destruction (destructive change); passion; the masculine element of change, be it by growth (the “spark of life”) or destruction (the consuming fire).
Aether - spirit	Anaximander of Miletus	Spirit; the Divine Realms; the ‘aery beyond’; Anaximander's aether was based on the simple notion that the primal substance would not be one of the elements found on earth, but would encompass them; the nineteenth century aether as the fabric of space is likewise not something we would term spirit. However,

		references to “things ethereal” are references to the spirit or to ephemeral realms beyond.
--	--	---

empirical

that which can be demonstrated by physical evidence; the reference can be to any physically demonstrable item, it most often refers to evidence gathered by controlled observation or by experiment. Empirical evidence would include physical artifacts, statistics, and items determinable by direct mathematical calculation. It would not include eyewitness testimony or other verbal accounts, all of which exist through the subjective filter of an individual. Neither would it include mathematical projections, modeling, or probability statements, all of which are beyond the direct confines of the initial data and represent **deductive reasoning**.

The reliability of empirical evidence is generally measured by the conditions under which it is collected, with laboratory evidence ranking high and uncorroborated eyewitness claims ranking quite low on the reliability scale. Almost all contemporaries except professional skeptics accept the basic validity of empirical evidence, and rank it as more reliable than evidence offered through reason, intuition, or revelation. Some societies hold different notions of reliability: the Classical Greeks apparently preferred reason to empirical evidence, as “the senses lie”; some religious groups hold either authority or revelation as the supreme arbitrators of truth.

It can be empirically determined that I ate breakfast this morning, as I left dirty dishes and toast crumbs behind. There is, so far as I can determine, no empirical evidence in existence regarding the content of my dreams last night though empirical evidence that I did dream (that I experienced REM sleep) can be easily gathered.

English Language (basic varieties)

Old English

- A Germanic tongue, spoken in England before the Norman Conquest (1066) and spoken by many Englishmen (particularly commoners) for some generations afterward. *Beowulf* is the best known example of Old English writing.

Middle English

- The English language as it was spoken in the 13th. and 14th. Centuries. The language is a direct antecedent to our own, as the French and Germanic elements have been well-mixed. There is considerable variety within the language, as both *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* and Geoffrey Chaucer's writings, such as *The Canterbury Tales*, were composed in Middle English at approximately the same time. The former is difficult for the modern to read, the latter can, in general terms, be easily understood by a twenty-first century reader.

Modern English

- The English language as it was spoken from Elizabethan times forward possesses enough uniformity to fit under the single label, ‘Modern English.’

However, there are important differences between the language of William Shakespeare's *Hamlet* and King James's commissioned *Bible* (Elizabethan English, with the latter including deliberate archaisms to make the language appear more 'high'), that of John Milton's *Paradise Lost* (late seventeenth century), that of Samuel Johnson's *The Rambler* (Eighteenth Century English), that of Charles Dickens's *Great Expectations* (Victorian English) and that of Virginia Woolf's *To the Lighthouse* (Contemporary English). We can observe even more shifts in contemporary language, from the influx of technical terms ('hard drive,' 'ipad'), the reduction of regional dialects, and the shift to informal (both speaking and 'messaging') language. One might reasonably divide modern English into the categories:

- **Contemporary English** The language we speak and read, with some variation between American and British versions: (ex. *judgment* is the preferred American spelling; *judgement* is the British spelling. Americans ascend buildings in *elevators*; British use *lifts*.)
- **Victorian English** Few differences from contemporary English, but Victorians exhibit a tendency to more complex sentence structure; also and obviously, modern technical terms were lacking.
- **18th. Century English** We see a few more differences in word meanings. "Pretend," for example, does not imply either falsehood or fantasy as used in the opening pages of *Moll Flanders*. Spelling is standardized and much like our own, at least in the edited versions of works we utilize. The development of the dictionary and Samuel Johnson's production of the first dictionary assembled by modern principles brought tremendous stability to the language.
- **Shakespearean English (Elizabethan)** The language is much like ours. However, spelling is often irregular and there is significantly more variety in word meanings. The fact that items appeared in print, thanks to the spread of use of the printing press (movable type press invented by Gutenberg in 1455) as well as the increase in general literacy (occasioned by that same printing press) served to regularize the language. Still, we almost always use texts with edited punctuation and spelling. There was little or no concern with uniform spelling and little consistency in punctuation in sixteenth century writing. Multiple spellings of the same word were used by single authors, in single pieces of writing.

Enlightenment

the European turn to secular values and philosophical rationality that followed the end of the great religious wars of the Reformation. Enlightenment thinking is characterized by figures ranging from Voltaire and the French Philosophes to Goethe to an array of British and American scientific thinkers.

English Enlightenment thinkers included John Locke (the *Tabula Rosa*) whose treatises on government justified the English Glorious Revolution of 1688 and

provided inspiration for Thomas Jefferson's *Declaration of Independence*. American literary figures directly associated with the Enlightenment include Jefferson (essayist as well as politician and planter) Benjamin Franklin (publisher and satirist as well as scientist and politician), poet Philip Freneau, and essayist Thomas Paine. While Freneau's poetry is mostly Romanticist, Jefferson's *Notes on Virginia*, Franklin's *Autobiography*, and Paine's *Age of Reason* all directly reflect Enlightenment era aesthetics as well as values.

ennui

acute boredom, synonymous with a loss of all sense of purpose in life. Nathanael West's Homer Simpson in *The Day of the Locust* is representative of a class of lost souls, just waiting to die. Simpson passes his days sitting, nearly comatose, watching a lizard lie in wait for flies, just as the mass of humans who share his characteristics wander about waiting for death, either their own or the titillating death of some celebrity.

T.S. Eliot's "The Hollow Men" stand as husks of men without purpose, scarecrow men whose heads are "stuffed with straw." Eliot's hollow men appear representative of the souls of the "Lost Generation," as members of the post-World War I generation were dubbed. Likewise, they may be identified with the "best [who] lack all conviction" in William Butler Yeats's apocalyptic "Second Coming."

epic

a long narrative poem, generally with a historical / historical-mythic theme. While epic poetry is, historically, a major genre, the epic poem has been supplanted by the novel and by film in the modern literary canon. Early epics were part of the oral tradition, rhyme and rhythm a mimetic device as well as a means to create pleasing sounds, but epic poetry remained a distinguished genre as writers found the means to record their words on clay, parchment, and paper.

The Old English *Beowulf* is the English language contribution to the genre of *The Iliad*, *The Odyssey* (both initially oral poems) and *The Aeneid* (consciously composed by Virgil in imitation of Homer's classics). Moderns, perhaps errantly, think of epic poetry as largely a 'Classical' genre.

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow wrote the historical epics "Evangeline" and "Song of Hiawatha." For a time in the nineteenth century, Longfellow's epics outsold the poetry of Alfred Lord Tennyson in England. Tennyson produced his own epic, in the form of his *Idylls of the King*. Fellow Victorian Robert Browning produced the massive (and obscure) piece of epic poetry, *The Ring and the Book*. Currently Longfellow's poetry is nearly ignored. His loss of popularity can, at least in part, be traced to the modern loss of interest in the epic – moderns seem to prefer the direct prose of the novel. Browning's epic is seldom seen outside graduate lit classes and Tennyson's retains attention largely because its subject, Arthurian lore, remains always in fashion. Far more contemporaries are familiar with Homer and Virgil than more recent examples of the genre.

epigram

a short, witty poem, usually satiric.

"To err is human;
To forgive – necessary"

offers a sarcastic reworking of a standard, clichéd homily in a brief couplet.

epiphany

a moment of great insight; a moment when life and the Universe appear to make sense, be purposeful, and have axiological significance (significance in terms of truth, beauty, or values). The epiphany is generally depicted as a brief, passing moment which serves to permanently change the ideals, goals, or outlook of the one who has experienced it.

In James Joyce's *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* the hero has a moment of epiphany while watching a young woman swimming. Flannery O'Connor regularly ends her stories with her characters experiencing painful moments of moral epiphany. Tom Joad communicates, rather than experiences, his epiphany in John Ford's movie of *The Grapes of Wrath* just before he steps off into the rising sun. Lisa Alther mocks the concept by having a succession of characters repeatedly experience "having the scales fall from their eyes" – to little or no good permanent effect – in a pop novel called *Kinflicks*.

Willy Loman experiences a moment of epiphany at the end of the second act of Arthur Miller's *Death of a Salesman*. Loman, however, receives a flawed insight, one which propels him to his suicide. Miller, in that regard, follows the Classic tragic model, as Oedipus's moment of insight, at the end of Sophocles's *Oedipus Rex*, leads him to blind himself.

Allen Ginsberg's depiction of his moment of epiphany in "Sunflower Sutra" makes for rather more pleasant reading as he simultaneously communicates his enlightenment and mocks his own moment of understanding. The reader witnesses both sincerity and irony as s/he visualizes the narrator (Ginsberg) waving a dead sunflower in the face of a headachy, hung-over Jack Kerouac.

epistolary

written as a series of letters, most often refers to a novel written in such a fashion. Notable epistolary novels include Samuel Richardson's *Pamela* and *Clarissa Harlowe* and Fyodor Dostoyevsky's *Poor Folk*. Richardson's *Clarissa Harlowe* includes such an array of letters that the reader finds him or herself imaging the characters constantly scribbling on some eighteenth century version of a clipboard, the protagonist and antagonist both writing away even while the latter is physically forcing himself on the former.

Alice Walker's *The Color Purple* offers a modern revival of the genre, as the book consists of protagonist Celie's letters to her absent sister.

estates (Medieval)

the three 'estates' or social classes are standard divisions of medieval society: representatives of the Church are members of the First Estate; members of the nobility constitute the Second Estate; everyone else is a commoner, part of the Third Estate. These classifications should not be confused with contemporary social classes. Members of the Church are referred to first, because of their 'heavenly' connection, not because of the realities of power or prestige. The Pope had both (but was a political figure deeply enmeshed in the thoroughly corrupt sphere of international political intrigue); a Cardinal or Bishop would have had both; an English village priest would have had less than a well-off common landholder (gentry). In general terms in England, the hereditary aristocracy

(royalty and nobles, including knights) would have held political power, bowing only (and only when necessary) to the Pope and the Archbishop. Thomas a Becket, Chaucer's "holy blissful martyr," was slain as a result of a Church / King confrontation. Commoners had limited political power: prosperous burghers and knights of the shire (gentry not nobility, men like Chaucer's Franklin) were, by definition, lumped with ploughmen. In reality, moneyed commoners had substantial power and influence, even though that power and influence was limited in interactions with the institution of the Church or in direct interactions with members of the nobility.

Only men counted – a woman was the property of her family. Thus, the social position of an unmarried woman was that of her father (or brother or uncle, if her father were deceased); that of a married woman was that of her husband; that of an independent widow problematic – she was, at least supposedly, under the disposition of her son or her brother. Chaucer's Wife of Bath appears otherwise – she is outside her sphere and behaving as her scandalous self.

A woman entering a convent joined the First Estate, but as a silent member, entering the world of service to God (though a wealthy or aristocratic widow or 'dedicated daughter' could buy her way into a position of religious power, like Chaucer's Prioress). For a woman without worldly power, the convent offered a harsh existence, preferable only to life without a husband – and might stand as an existence chosen for unmarried or 'inconvenient' daughters against their will. Few commoners of a lower station would have found their way into a convent had they desired, for, again, the place was generally bought by gifts to the church. Those who somehow did become 'wed to Christ' would have found themselves servants within the convent hierarchy (exceptions would have been the insane or possessed persons who drew attention as religious mystics, though I suspect most of them came from higher in the class structure). Women of powerful families, however, might flout the rules of the convent as easily as Chaucer's Prioress.

The aristocratic social position was hereditary, with the requisite property and title passing to each eldest son with the younger sons retaining nobility, but not the higher titles. Thus second sons were often bought (yes, their positions acquired by exchanges of money and favors) into the Church, where those of influential families carried great advantage in the political intrigues of the Church.

estates satire

a genre of medieval literature in which the social order is analyzed. Members of the three hierarchical divisions of society may be portrayed, with proper examples of the divisions' individual representatives and analysis of their social functions and morality. Some such satires were more didactic invectives than satires.

Geoffrey Chaucer's "General Prologue" to *The Canterbury Tales*, is genuine satire filled with rich, controlled irony. Chaucer offers a full range of representatives of the clergy and commoners, with the Knight and his son, minor nobility, as the lone representatives of the Second Estate and the functional top of the social ladder. A few of his characters, the Parson, the Plowman, and the Knight (provided we do not question his being at multiple battles taking place at the same time), stand as worthy examples; the rest are all too true to the realities of their

professions. Beneath seeming courtesy and incredulity, Chaucer lets his reader know that the Monk is a man whose interests are in secular pleasures rather than things religious, the Prioress a vain and silly woman, the Guildsmen social climbers, and the rest, likewise, human in their vices and weaknesses. Part of the overarching satire, offering implicit criticism of the Roman Catholic Church though not its Christian message, is that the Knight is far more religious in his outlook than any member of the clergy save the village Parson.

ethos

used in rhetorical instruction to refer to the devices used by the writer to establish credibility and the resultant believability of the piece. The writer may establish credibility by demonstrating his/her own credentials, supporting her/his argument with the words of acknowledged experts, and by writing in a measured, appropriate tone. By aiming for a high level of ethos, a writer draws reasonable, thoughtful readers toward his/her point of view. A writer who deliberately works against such standards by heavily utilizing illegitimate argumentative techniques may experience great success in rousing the ignorant, but does a grave disservice to truth, reason, and intellectual discourse.

euphemism

a word or phrase substituted for a more explicit one, designed to soften the ‘harsh reality’ of an obscene, ugly, or otherwise undesirable action or event. “He’s in a better place,” referring gently to someone’s having died, is satirized delightfully in Henry James’s “Daisy Miller” as young Randolph Miller notes that his father is in a better place – it is only after a bit of explanation that protagonist Winterbourne realizes the man is alive, well, and at work in Schenectady, which young Randolph believes infinitely superior to the rich watering holes of Europe. In both conversation and literature, the number of euphemisms accorded to excretory acts and sex acts may be exceeded only by the number of salacious terms associated with the same acts. The suggestion that women ‘glow’ rather than ‘perspire’ (men perspire) or ‘sweat’ (day laborers and horses sweat) is an example that is as funny as it is mild.

euphony

utilization of smoothly flowing, harmonious patterns of words. Just as cacophony “creaks across the soul” (from Emily Dickinson’s “I Felt a Funeral ...”), euphony soothes and softens like “fresh and fruitful showers” (from Sir Philip Sidney’s *Astrophil and Stella*, Sonnet One). The “Whispered words of wisdom” provide appropriate euphony as well as **alliteration** to The Beatles’ “Let It Be.”

evidence

the material and factual items that can be used to support a claim. In the sciences I would support a claim by reference to artifacts, facts and statistics. I might offer a claim that woolly mammoths lived in North America 30,000 years ago by presenting skeletons and dating the physical remnants through radio-carbon dating and topographical analysis. In literature I would support a claim by reference to the words of the writer, also offering appropriate evidence that I was working with those words in context. My evidence that Charles Dickens believed in individual empathy rather than

deliberate ‘charity’ would include the contrast he creates between Esther Summerson and Mrs. Pardiggle in *Bleak House*. My evidence for Esther Summerson’s status as a model of goodness would begin with an analysis of her name (Esther – Star, symbol of hope; Summerson – the Summer Sun nurturing life) and include such Christ-like behavior as drawing Mrs. Jellyby’s ragamuffin children to her.

Secondary items used as evidence would include expert testimony – the claims offered by those highly knowledgeable in a given field. Thus, in a discussion of Climate Change I would refer to the words of an acknowledged and degreed climatologist; in literature I would seek the words of a tenured scholar or an esteemed critic.

example

a single item, instance, or event which is used to represent a class of similar items, instances, or events. An example is normally concrete and must have similar relevant characteristics to those of most members of the group of items it purports to represent.

Ndamukong Suh, by virtue of his size and physical attributes, is an appropriate example of a football lineman. For the same reasons, he is not an appropriate example of the average airline passenger despite logging a sizable number of flying miles annually.

Charles Dickens’s *Oliver Twist* is a good example of a Victorian novel, sharing general structural, stylistic, and thematic characteristics with the creations of George Eliot, Anthony Trollope, and a host of others as well as most of his own novels. Dickens’s *Hard Times*, however, would be a less representative example, as that short, almost allegorical piece is a different sort of novel, for all its many virtues not like either Dickens’s work or that of his contemporaries.

exemplum

in medieval literature, an instructional or didactic tale; a tale (often prose) which offers an overt moral.

Geoffrey Chaucer’s “The Pardoner’s Tale” is a verse exemplum against greed or covetousness with his narrator, the Pardoner’s, own motivations providing the tale its extra dimension of irony.

existentialism

a school of philosophy which emphasizes the subjective nature of knowledge, especially moral knowledge. An existentialist would hold that a person must choose his/her own ends while working with inherently and irremediably incomplete knowledge. ‘Success’ and ‘failure’ must be judged by fealty to one’s own standards rather than external signs.

The emphasis on self has led some to define existentialism as beginning with the confrontation of the question of existence (living) or suicide. While that definition has more than a little validity, it is an incomplete one – Socrates was *not* an existentialist.

Existentialism exists at the crossroads of empiricism and skepticism, making it a tenable philosophy for modern mystics (religious and secular), skeptics, and adamant atheists. Existentialist philosophers and literary figures include French atheists Albert Camus and Jean Paul Sartre, conservative Dutch Protestant Søren

Kierkegaard, the Russian Orthodox Fyodor Dostoyevsky, Jewish mystic Martin Buber, adamant atheist Frederick Nietzsche (“God is dead”), and Nazi apologist Martin Heidegger.

Camus's heroes, such as the doctor in *The Plague*, attain their stature by working against impossible odds in a universe which offers no lasting rewards. Camus explains his philosophy in the essay “The Myth of Sisyphus,” as he accords the status of hero to a man who, aware of the hopelessness of his task, continues to push the same rock up the same hill to watch it roll to the bottom through all eternity. Accused by some critics of promoting a “Catholicism without God,” Camus suggests a moral war against an immoral universe.

Dostoyevsky's protagonist Raskilnakov, in *Crime and Punishment*, attains enlightenment by repudiating his nihilism and accepting simple faith and his mother church. The mystic brother in *The Brothers Karamazov* finds peace while the nihilist brother, for all his good intentions, is forever frustrated. Those who seek a rational or objective purpose in life, whether the nihilist Karamazov brother or the frustrated killer of Camus's *The Stranger*, inevitably fail at their goals and at life itself.

The protagonist of Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man* attains existential self-awareness, and with it true cultural understanding, in his rejection of all the false goals that have been laid before him. Ellison's hero reaches self-awareness (a literal en-‘light’-enment in his illuminated cellar) only by rejecting the identity offered by figures ranging from representatives of Booker T. Washington to followers of Karl Marx and accepting, instead, the emotional reality found in Louis Armstrong and the Blues.

expurgated

when a literary work is ‘cleansed’ of material that may be deemed ‘morally harmful’ or ‘erroneous,’ it may be classified as expurgated. The ‘cleansing’ may be the removal of scatological or sexually explicit passages, similar to **bowdlerizing**. An expurgated *Gulliver's Travels* would not include the depiction of a scientist inflating a dog by attaching a bellows to its excretory orifice; neither would it likely include Gulliver putting out a Lilliput fire by urinating on it. The ‘cleansing’ may also refer to removal of scenes or passages from a diary or set of memoirs because living relatives find them offensive or because they compromise the good name of the subject. Sigmund Freud's memoirs and letters were long available only in variously expurgated form. The ‘errors’ so corrected may very likely be the truth.

F

fable

a brief story told for the purpose of conveying a lesson; the fable is always a didactic piece.

Many feature animals taking on human roles and learning human lessons: “The Tortoise and the Hare”; “The Fox and the Grapes.” *Aesop's Fables* are obvious examples. James Thurber's mock-fable “The Unicorn in the Garden” is a delightful variation despite being marred by Thurber's rampant sexism. Joel

Chandler Harris's 'Uncle Remus' tales are likewise fables, borrowed [stolen] from the mixed African and American folklore of Southern Blacks. The **trickster** figure, Br'er Rabbit, sometimes knows more than is good for him, such as when he almost meets his match in the baby made of tar created by Br'er Fox and Br'er Bear.

fabliau

a short, comic tale in verse, the genre is usually associated with medieval tales; the fabliau's concerns are usually bawdy, its action realistic, and its characters members of the middle or lower classes.

Geoffrey Chaucer's "The Miller's Tale" is probably the classic example in the English language, with several such tales, including more scandalous ones, appearing in *The Canterbury Tales*. "The Miller's Tale" hinges on a scheme by a clerk to bed his landlord's young wife, includes a scatologically-placed kiss and a serious misuse of a hot fireplace poker, and culminates in embarrassment for all the characters – and laughter for the tale's audience.

fact

an event or occurrence which has been empirically observed or demonstrated. A fact is differentiated from a **theory** in that the theory attempts to account for patterns of action or future actions while a fact states only what has already been demonstrated.

Some facts: The earth revolves around the sun (mathematically demonstrated and physically observed); organisms mutate and their offspring have the potential to inherit the mutations (demonstrated by laboratory observations and real world observations of various simple organisms, particularly disease-causing organisms, as well as long-term observations of such species as dogs, horses, humans, and Ernest Hemingway's seven-toed cats); the Spanish Armada sailed in 1588 (demonstrated by records of the Spanish government, the English government, and various individuals involved in the English-Spanish hostilities, as well as by artifacts from the Spanish fleet).

fairy tale

a structured story from the European oral tradition, generally containing supernatural elements and generally originally told among family or to children. The structure is generally that of a standard narrative, with adventures or quests very common themes. Supernatural figures in fairy tales may be good (Cinderella's fairy godmother) or evil (the giant in "Jack and the Beanstalk"). Other supernatural elements, from magic beans ("Jack and the Beanstalk") to talking animals ("Puss in Boots") abound. Heroes are often children ("Hansel and Gretel") or **unpromising heroes** (the miller's third son in "Puss in Boots"; "The Brave Little Tailor"). The atmosphere may include gothic elements, but the tales are not preponderantly gothic. Virtue is normally rewarded and evil punished (Cinderella marries the handsome prince and her evil stepsisters and stepmother receive their due punishment), with some, but not all, fairy stories offering an overt moral. More often, 'good' people simply prosper, after overcoming arduous trials, whether or not their success is entirely justified (the miller's spinning daughter in "Rumpelstiltskin" prospers despite her father's initial deception causing the trial). Tricksters are tricked rather than rewarded, despite any aid they

give the protagonist (Rumpelstiltskin not only does not get the baby; he tears himself in half in anger as the story ends).

Major collectors, promulgators, and editors of fairy tales include the Brothers Grimm (Germany), Charles Perrault (France), and Andrew Lang (the English language *Blue Fairy Book*, *Pink Fairy Book* and sundry others). Contemporary children are often told bowdlerized versions of well-known fairy tales, as the originals often include extreme violence and a crude and brutal sense of justice.

farce

that subset of comedy in which the world is turned upside-down; characters treat the language literally rather than accurately ('Ernest' becomes a 'good name' in Oscar Wilde's play "The Importance of Being Earnest"); behavior is impulsive and the consequences silly; logic loses all sway and suspension of disbelief is stretched to its limit. Jack is blamed by Lady Bracknell for 'losing' his parents, the loss being a literal, physical separation; the occasion of the loss is Miss Prism's confusing the baby (Jack) with a novel manuscript, and leaving the baby in a handbag at Worthing station. Jack's ward accepts a wedding proposal from a person who does not exist (Jack's younger brother Ernest) until arriving at Jack's estate in the form of the disreputable Algie, Jack's London friend from his own double-life (in which Jack is Ernest). Wilde's play and the various Marx Brothers movies stand among the finest examples of farce (the viewer of "Animal Crackers" is required to imagine an elephant wearing Colonel Spalding's pajamas); the efforts of countless forgotten burlesque comedians (for examples see the on-stage comic acts in the film "The Night They Raided Minsky's") stand as less memorable excursions into the genre.

Faustian (from legends associated with alchemist Johann Faustus)

Faustian literature normally includes an explicit appearance by the devil or one of his minions and includes a figure (the protagonist) making a formal deal with the devil. Faustian literature derives directly from German tales of Johann Faustus, a historical alchemist who, by legend, is said to have sold his soul to the devil in exchange for secret knowledge. Faustian protagonists barter their souls for knowledge, wealth, power, or the fulfillment of lifelong dreams.

Early protagonists reap their just reward (hell); Goethe's *Faust*, however, was rewarded with heaven for fulfilling the role Goethe's deity accorded humans. Recent (mid-nineteenth century forward) Faustian protagonists often escape their just due, as moderns have come to the opinion that Old Scratch can be outwitted. (Before taking on the King of Lawyers, one might be advised to consult the term *hubris* as well as give attention to the host of genie stories that sometimes parallel Faustian stories. I would note the dream interpretation offered Ahab by one of Satan's lesser minions, Fedallah, in Herman Melville's *Moby Dick*. Everything Fedallah promises comes to pass, leaving Ahab in a far different state than he envisions from Fedallah's promises.)

Variations of the original Faust tales include the Lutheran *Urfaustbook*, Christopher Marlowe's *The Tragical History of Dr. Faustus*, Goethe's *Faust*, and such late medieval fare as morality plays and puppet shows.

Later Faustian stories include Washington Irving's "The Devil and Tom Walker," in which an old miser gets his due; Stephen Vincent Benet's "The Devil and

Daniel Webster” in which Webster unconvincingly out-argues the King of Lawyers and saves one Jabez Stone from hell; and *The Year the Yankees Lost the Pennant*, a novel in which the hero, Joe Hardy, trades his soul to Old Scratch for a winning season for the 1958 Washington Senators baseball team.

Richard Garnett’s Pope Sylvester II outmaneuvers Lucifer by means of his prescient Enlightenment virtue and intelligence in the light satire “The Demon Pope.” Nathaniel Hawthorne’s “Ethan Brand” may (or may not) have brought forth the devil from his lime kiln in his tale. Legends hold that blues guitarist Robert Johnson sold his soul to the devil at a crossroads in exchange for his musical talent. (He is the model for Tommy in the film “O Brother, Where Art Thou?”) One “Johnny” out-fiddled the devil in a contest to win a golden fiddle in the Charlie Daniels song, “The Devil Went Down to Georgia.” (Old Scratch is a fiddle player – see Thomas Hardy’s “The Fiddler of the Reels” and Manley Wade Wellman’s ‘Silver John’ tales for a hint of Old Scratch’s folk attributes.)

Flying Dutchman

a sailing craft supposedly seen in storms off the Cape of Good Hope, sails full but sailing against the wind, often in the sky rather than on the water. This ghost ship sails as a result of its captain’s vow to round the Cape, despite storms, even if it might take him forever. The vow has doomed him, or his ghostly shade, to sail forever, battling those same winds through eternity. Sighting the ship is a very bad omen, as shipwreck and death will inevitably follow. At least two novels (Frederick Marryat’s *The Phantom Ship* for one), numerous stories (ranging from a Washington Irving tale to a Carl Barks “Uncle Scrooge” comic book tale), and a Wagner opera have been written based on the legend.

folklore

stories, beliefs, and sometimes customs that make up a long-standing oral tradition. Folklore would include beliefs in the faerie folk ranging from Robin Goodfellow stealing milk from the family cow, to the Elven Queen seducing “True Thomas,” to the fear of elven changelings that led an Irish family to murder a female family member (recounted by William Butler Yeats). Folklore would include the stories of the three murders that Robert Burns incorporated into “Tam O’Shanter,” the legend of the ghost used by Washington Irving in “The Legend of Sleepy Hollow,” and stuff of the many tales traditionally told around a campfire. Folklore would include curious little superstitions, like that followed by those who put out milk for the Brownies, and greater patterns of oral beliefs, like those which underlie the faerie world of the Green Knight in “Sir Gawain and the Green Knight.” Folklore tells us that Old Scratch was a fiddle player (see Thomas Hardy’s “Fiddler of the Reels” for one metaphoric use of that belief) and that faeries have an aversion to iron.

The nineteenth century British developed a fascination with folklore and the surviving oral tradition, with the amateur anthropological excursions of a range of folklore societies discovering a host of traditional beliefs and inadvertently creating many more. A fascination with traditional music sent many young musicians into the American South and the Appalachians in the 1960’s (trailing in the footsteps of researcher Alan Lomax [1915-2002], seeking the ‘roots’ of the

diverse trains of regional music, from blues singers like Leadbelly, to bluegrass, to Celtic ballads, to Woody Guthrie and original ‘folk music’). While modern folklorists generally accept that folklore derives from a range of local sources and may reflect localized belief systems, many nineteenth century British folklorists were convinced that folk beliefs were the remnant of some pervasive earlier culture. Margaret Murray (early twentieth century) produced books and an *Encyclopedia Britannica* article claiming that witchcraft was the remnant of a wide-spread ancient European religion, a dualistic religion worshipping a Great God and a primal Goddess. Folklore influences can be found in the poetry of the late nineteenth century, with A.C. Swinburne’s “Hertha” among his poems directed to some great mother goddess whose vestiges he found in folklore as well as Classical myth.

foreshadowing

setting the scene or otherwise preparing the reader for a later plot event; foreshadowing serves to make surprises more plausible and establishes coherence in characters and actions. Foreshadowing may range from the simple mention of the cellar door through which the intruder may enter to meticulous, carefully veiled hints establishing relationships between characters.

The revelation that Lady Deadlock is the mother of Esther Summerson in Charles Dickens’s *Bleak House* is heavily foreshadowed, rendering the relationships among the various characters plausible. From a later perspective, the reader sees the results of Lady Deadlock’s youthful indiscretions interlock with Esther’s early life like two sections of an elaborate jigsaw puzzle being brought together.

The very light foreshadowing of the Count’s reappearance in Henry Fielding’s *Jonathan Wild*, however, reminds us that we are reading a satire and not a realistic piece. Fielding appears out to strike our sense of humor, not to establish any **suspension of disbelief**.

The complete absence of appropriate foreshadowing, particularly when coupled with an indifference to logical progression, renders an event and sometimes an entire novel unbelievable. Likewise, inappropriate foreshadowing – the irrational interjection of an element into the plot for future convenience – detracts from believability. A discerning reader cannot look at Philip Pullman’s *Golden Compass* trilogy without seeing the heavy hand of its writer intruding into the action (see also **deus ex machina**).

found poetry

poetry created by bringing order to a non-poetic item (a snatch of prose, a list of titles, or the like, as appropriated from an outside source) thereby creating something that appears to hold meaning. At its best, found poetry offers apt irony, as random items lose their randomness and appear as comments on each other.

“New uses for old things: / Healthy foods that cost under \$1” is a pair of CNN headlines that happened to appear in that order, but connecting the two into a couplet suggesting ‘old food’ creates a taste (well, an unpleasant taste) of irony.

free indirect discourse

a variation of third person narration in which the perspective of the authorial persona alternates with the perspective of a character (usually the protagonist). In Eudora Welty’s *The Optimist’s Daughter*, some of the action and character

motivation is described through the eyes of Welty's third person omniscient narrator; other action and explication is that seen through the mind of the title character, the daughter. Welty obscures moments of physical action (the wife's shaking the Optimist to death – if that's what she does) by describing the scene only as witnessed by the daughter; likewise, she offers the daughter's judgment of many of the human interactions that compose the novel, but not all of them. At other moments the narrative voice appears the objective, outside one.

free verse

verse written without adherence to a particular rhyme scheme or metric structure. Free verse, while free of metric structure, is not without any structure, but rather builds on its own patterns and melodies. American directions in free verse are often highly influenced by the simultaneously introspective and panoramic style of Walt Whitman, though many other patterns have emerged since.

Langston Hughes' free verse reads with a clear, musical quality ("The Negro Speaks of Rivers") and Walt Whitman and Allen Ginsberg's free verse generally follows a consistent structural pattern within the context of a given poem ("Crossing Brooklyn Ferry"; "A Supermarket in California"). While one associates those Whitman and Ginsberg examples with long, extended lines, the structure of Carl Sandberg's "Chicago" moves back and forth between short dynamic lines and long, grammatically elaborate lines.

Freudian criticism

criticism based on the psychological theories of Sigmund Freud, where human behavior is triggered by the interaction of the *id* (the human's instinctual self, completely unrestrained), the *ego* (the conscious or self-aware portion of the human personality), and the *superego* (societal mores and pressures taking the form of the conscience). A prominent element of Freudian criticism is the suggestion that most or all metaphors have a sexual referent.

A Freudian would see Coyote in the Native American Trickster tales as representing the *id*. George attempts to take the place of Lenny's absent *ego* (integrated awareness) in John Steinbeck's *Of Mice and Men*, mediating between the impulsive Lenny (pure *id*) and judgmental society (the oppressive and condemning *superego*).

The suggestion that Emily Dickinson's "Narrow fellow in the grass" has phallic connotations is Freudian. A Freudian might also be inclined to discuss the phallic significance of Mary Poppins' umbrella; the Freudian would note the clue to sexual identity offered by Viola/Cesario's admission that she is not a master of sword-play in *Twelfth Night*; and the Freudian would explore the womb-like comfort of the near-cave in which Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man* has taken up residence, and might take up the ambivalence inherent in identifying 'the womb' and 'the tomb.'