**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.

**ambiguity –** The multiple meanings, either intentional or unintentional, of a word, phrase, sentence, or passage.

**analogy –** A similarity or comparison between two different things or the relationship between them. An analogy can explain

something unfamiliar by associating it with or pointing out its similarity to something more familiar. Analogies can also

make writing more vivid, imaginative, or intellectually engaging.

**antecedent –** The word, phrase, or clause referred to by a pronoun. The AP language exam occasionally asks for the antecedent of

a given pronoun in a long, complex sentence or in a group of sentences. A question from the 2001 AP test as an example

follows:

“But it is the grandeur of all truth which *can* occupy a very high place in human interests that it is never

absolutely novel to the meanest of minds; **it** exists eternally, by way of germ of latent principle, in the lowest as

in the highest, needing to be developed but never to be planted.”

The antecedent of “it” (bolded) is...? [answer: “all truth”]

**antithesis –** the opposition or contrast of ideas; the direct opposite.

**aphorism –** A terse statement of known authorship which expresses a general truth or a moral principle. (If the authorship is

unknown, the statement is generally considered to be a folk proverb.) An aphorism can be a memorable summation of the

author’s point.

**apostrophe –** A figure of speech that directly addresses an absent or imaginary person or a personified abstraction, such as liberty

or love. It is an address to someone or something that cannot answer. The effect may add familiarity or emotional

intensity. William Wordsworth addresses John Milton as he writes, “Milton, thou shouldst be living at this hour: /

England hath need of thee.” Another example is Keats’ “Ode to a Grecian Urn,” in which Keats addresses the urn itself:

“Thou still unravished bride of quietness.” Many apostrophes imply a personification of the object addressed.

**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.