

Vocabulaire de la littérature

A. La Poésie

une strophe - a stanza or verse

un vers - a line of poetry

un pied - a poetic "foot" which equals a syllable in French

une diérèse - the splitting of a vowel combination like *ieu* to create an extra syllable for purposes of rhythm

la coupe - a natural break in a line of poetry

la césure - a special name for the "coupe" after the 6th syllable in a classical Alexandrin

un hémistiche - a half-line -- 6 syllables in an alexandrin

un Alexandrin - a 12 syllable line -- the classical French form

Ex: Nous lui laissons un maître, il le doit ménager.

Qu'il ait de ses aïeux un souvenir modeste:

Il est du sang d'Hector, mais il en est le reste:

(Racine, *Andromaque* V, i, vers 1120-22)

un enjambement -- when a part of the idea of a line continues over to the next line. The part on the second line is called "le rejet."

Ex. Demain, dès l'aube, à l'heure où blanchit la campagne

Je partirai. Vois-tu je sais que tu m'attends.

(Hugo, "Demain, dès l'aube")

le rythme - rhythm

la rime - rhyme

rime suffisante: one vowel and one consonant rhyme.

Ex. horizon/ gazon

rime pauvre : only one vowel in common

Ex. perdu / plus

rime riche : at least two vowels or two consonants in common. Ex. récente / puissante.

arbre/ marbre

rime féminine: word ends in a mute -e. Ex. propices / délices.

rime masculine: ends with anything except mute -e.

rime plate: aabbcc

rime croisée: abab

rime embrassée: abba

le genre - genre

l'épopée - epic

le sonnet

l'ode

l'élégie

B. Le Théâtre

la tragédie

la comédie

la farce

un acte

une scène

la scène -- the stage

une représentation -- a performance
le personnage -- a character
les spectateurs, le public
le héros -- the hero
l'héroïne -- the heroine
le dramaturge -- the playwright
le récit -- the recitation of an event (usually off-stage)
le monologue
le dialogue
le discours -- a speech
les règles -- the rules of construction of a neo-Classical (17-18th century play)
les trois unités: the chief rule of classical theater, they are the unity of action (l'unité d'action), of place (l'unité de lieu) and of time (l'unité de temps).
 L'unité d'action: only one plot, with no secondary actions to distract from that main plot.
 L'unité de lieu: the action must take place in a single spot. This often means that major action must take place off-stage, and often the single place is the antechamber of a palace, where people might reasonably meet.
 L'unité de temps: the action must take place within a 24 hour period.

These three unities were summed up by the 17th c. critic Boileau:

"Qu'en un lieu, qu'en un jour, un seul fait accompli
 Tienne jusqu'à la fin le théâtre rempli"
 (Boileau, Art Poétique, chant III)

La bienséance -- "tastefulness," a sense of what is fitting. In tragedy, for instance, the language should be noble as befits noble characters. The rule of Bienséance also dictated that violence, vulgarity, excessive passion, etc. remain off-stage to avoid offending the audience.

la vraisemblance -- verisimilitude, or how realistic and believable one finds a given action.

C. La Prose

le roman - novel
le conte - short story
le roman à clef -- a novel based upon real people or events thinly disguised.
la satire
le roman picaresque - novel relating the adventures of a "picaro" (Sp) who wanders about à la *Don Quixote*.
le roman de mœurs - novel of manners -- prefigures the realist novel
le roman à lettres - epistolary novel
l'auteur, l'écrivain - writer
le romancier - novelist
le récit - the narrative

More literary vocabulary is available in the book by James Redfern in Cole Library reference section.