The Use of "Literary" Terms on English 30 Diploma Exams
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Recently, our Senior English Language Arts team felt the need to review the English 30 Diploma Examinations multiple choice questions with a view to determining how often literary terms were used. Several questions occurred to the team:

(1)	Have the number of terms used on the examinations increased, over time, thereby making the examinations seemingly more difficult?
(2)	How many terms recur, and how often do they recur on the various administrations?
(3)	To what extent is the Part B of the English 30 Examination a "literature" test rather than a reading test?

In our review of the Examinations, the team read through all the Question portions of the January and June administrations from 1984 through 1993. As two teachers, alternating from year to year, read through the exams and called out any items they felt were used as technical vocabulary, a third team member listed the items, one administration at a time. (It should be noted that no rigorous check was used to deal with differences in teacher-reader perceptions although there were discussions about some individual items.)

The resulting selection was not necessarily restricted to those terms that are traditionally thought of as "literary". For example, while the "more literary" items "allusion" and "oxymoron" appear on the list, so do the items "inference" and "excerpt".

The lists were reviewed to determine how often terms recurred. Four groupings were developed based on the following frequency ranges: 100% of all administrations, 75-99% of all administrations, 50-74% of all administrations, 25-49% of all administrations. The table which follows, details the results.

Recurrence of Literary Terms on English 30 Diploma Examinations

frequency	number of terms	terms included
100%	1	irony
75-99%	4	allusion, imagery, metaphor, tone
50-74%	7	context, contrast, mood, paradox, purpose, setting, symbol, theme
25-49%	16	alliteration, analogy, anecdote, character, cliché, conflict, excerpt, foreshadowing, hyperbole, juxtaposition, narrator, personification, simile, speaker, thesis, understatement

A number of conclusions may be drawn from the table:

1. It is very certain that no student is penalized on the exam because of a lack of knowledge of literary or technical terms. While there is a language base that is technical in scope and while it is important in the daily discourse of a Senior English Language Arts class, there is nevertheless not an unfair impediment to progress posed by this language. Our team identified 118 technical or literary terms of which only 28 occur on 25% of all examination administrations. (A complete list appears as an appendix.)

2. The terms used to discuss literature are much broader in scope than those terms traditionally thought of as literary terms.

3. Of those terms appearing on 75% or more of the examination administrations, three (irony, allusion and imagery) are, in our opinion, extremely sophisticated in terms of the difficulty students appear to have in working with the concepts in relation to literature.

4. Terms appearing in the 25-49% category seem to be those terms that are generally less sophisticated, more easily taught and identified

5. On average, 13 items (of those which appeared 25% or more of the time) appeared on each test administration. The number of terms ranged from a low of 8 on the January 1990 paper to a high of 21 on the June 1991 paper. There is no discernible, consistent pattern of increase or decrease in the number of terms appearing from examination to examination over the ten year period.

Overall, the review above, seems to vindicate the efficacy of the examination process in its application to the curriculum.

Appendix

List of Literary and Technical Terms
used on Part B of Diploma Examinations 1984-1994

acronym	connotation	language	purpose
allegory	context	introduction	quatrain
alliteration	contrast	irony	quotation
allusion	couplet	jargon	realism
analogy	description	juxtaposition	repetition
analysis	dialogue	literal meaning	rhetorical
anecdote	didactic	literary device	question
antagonist	dissonance	lullaby	rhyme
antithesis	excerpt	lyric	rhythm
apostrophe	exposition	maxim	satire
archaic language	fantasy	metaphor	setting
aside	figurative	metonymy	sextet
assonance	flashback	monologues	simile
atmosphere	foil	mood	slang
autobiography	foreshadowing	motivation	soliloquy
ballad	humour	mythology	sonnet
cacophony	hyperbole	personification	speaker
character	hypothesis	phrase	stage direction
caricature	illustration	plot	staging
chronology	imagery	point of view	stanza
cliché	imitative	prologue	stock character
colloquial	harmony	prose	suspense
comparison	implies	protagonist	symbol
contrast	inference	proverb	synonym
conflict	information	pun	