A kenning is a literary device in which a poetic phrase substitutes for a noun. In the best kennings, one element of the phrase will create a striking, unexpected comparison. Often used in Anglo-Saxon poetry, and especially in Beowulf, a kenning provides powerful imagery that would help the audience focus on the words of the scop (pronounced “shope”), or poet telling the story. A kenning also allows the scop some variety, so words don’t become overused. Finally, Anglo-Saxon poetry depended heavily on alliteration, and some kennings provided additional alliteration. Here are examples:

*sky candle* (the sun)  *battle sweat* (blood)  *giver of gold* (king)
*swan road* (sea)  *light of battle* (sword)  *earth hall* (burial mound, barrow)
*stout hearted* (brave)  *helmet bearers* (warriors)  *storm of swords* (battle)

When we translate these kennings from Anglo-Saxon, they lose some of their poetic quality because the sound changes. For example, the alliteration may disappear.

Part A.) Listed below are some modern kennings. Can you find examples of striking imagery, alliteration, consonance, rhyme, and assonance among them? Can you identify the concept each kenning represents?

_The following Kennings: represent _______________________________._

1. (example) **gas guzzler**: a big car, or an old car that is expensive to drive because it uses a lot of gasoline.

2. headhunter:

3. muffin top:

4. rug rat:

5. land line:

6. eye candy:

7. cancer stick:

8. idiot box:
Part B.) Consider carefully how you could creatively rename each of the following through the use of the kenning technique.

1. teacher:
2. telephone:
3. firemen:
4. musician:
5. hamburgers:
6. football:
7. poptarts:
8. music:
9. love:
10. computer:

Part C.) Write a paragraph about yourself. Include FOUR kennings in place of descriptive words for the things which describe you or that you like to do.