

Literary & Rhetorical Devices

Device	Definition	Example	Function
<u>Allegory</u>	A device that conveys meaning through symbols, actions, characters, and setting. Although it uses symbols, it is different from symbolism. An allegory is a complete narrative which involves characters, and events that stand for an abstract idea or an event. A symbol is an object that stands for another object giving it a particular meaning. Unlike allegory, symbolism does not tell a story.	In <i>The Lord of the Flies</i> , Golding uses the characters to convey his feelings about leadership, order, civilization, control, and culture.	Used to tell a story with the purpose of teaching an idea and a principle or explaining an idea or principle. It is used to preach some kind of a moral lesson.
<u>Alliteration</u>	The practice of beginning several consecutive or neighboring words with the same sound.	“The twisting trout twinkled below.”	Creates a memorable phrase, draws attention, reinforces meaning, and creates unity. Causes the reader to read at a faster pace—creates a sense of urgency/speed.
<u>Allusion</u>	A reference to a mythological, literary, or historical person, place, thing	“He met his Waterloo.” (Alludes to the defeat of Napoleon at the battle of Waterloo.)	Lends authority to an idea. Makes an association with something the reader knows. Creates emotion in the audience because of that association.
<u>Apostrophe</u>	A form of personification in which the absent or dead are spoken to as if present and the inanimate, as if animate. These are all addressed directly.	“Milton! Thou should’s’t be living at this hour.”	Conveys extreme emotion.
<u>Archetype</u>	Also known as universal symbol, may be a character, a theme, a symbol or even a setting.	The hero, hero’s journey, battle of good and evil, light, dark, red, white, black, etc.	Archetypes, which have a common and recurring representation in a particular human culture or entire human race, shape the structure and function of a literary work.
<u>Assonance</u>	The repetition of accented vowel sounds in a series of words	“cry” and “side” (vowel sound: long i)	Provides a subtle phonemic (sound) unity rather than more obvious rhyming sounds. Can help create a mood and accelerate the musical effect within a poem.
<u>Connotations of Diction</u>	Individual words within a passage that carry cultural and emotional associations or meanings in addition to their literal meanings or denotations (also called “heavy diction” “heavy connotations”)	“hiss” “swarm” “slither”	Adds additional meaning to a piece of writing. Creates emotional associations in the audience. Establishes the speaker’s attitude.
<u>Dramatic Irony</u>	Situations in which the audience knows more about the situations, the causes of conflicts, and their resolutions before the leading characters or actors.	In <i>Romeo and Juliet</i> when the audience knows Juliet isn’t dead, but Romeo doesn’t.	Creates intense suspense and humor. Emphasizes, embellishes, and conveys emotions and moods more effectively.
<u>Euphemism</u>	Polite, indirect expressions that replace words and phrases considered harsh and impolite, or which suggest something unpleasant.	“kick the bucket” is a euphemism that describes the death of a person. Many organizations use the term “downsizing” for the distressing act of “firing” its employees.	Allows writers to discuss a subject indirectly that otherwise might not published due to strict social censorship, such as for reasons of religious fanaticism, political theories, sexuality, and death. A useful tool that

			allows writers to write figuratively about the difficult issues.
<u>Foil Character</u>	A character that shows qualities that are in contrast with the qualities of another character	Jack is a foil character to Ralph in <i>Lord of the Flies</i>	Highlights the traits of the other character.
<u>Foreshadowing</u>	An advance hint of what is to come later in the story.	A writer may use character dialogues to hint at what may occur in the future. In addition, any event or action in the story may throw a hint to the readers about future events or actions. Even a title of a work or a chapter title can act as a clue that suggests what is going to happen.	Creates an atmosphere of suspense in a story, so that the readers are interested to know more.
<u>Hyperbole</u>	A deliberate, extravagant, and often outrageous exaggeration.	"The shot heard' round the world."	Can be used for either serious or comic effect. Provokes a response, casts something in a strong light.
<u>Imagery</u>	Consists of words or phrases a writer uses to represents persons, objects, actions, feelings, and ideas descriptively by appealing to the senses. Can utilize figurative language and diction with strong connotations.	"The slope of the bars of honey-colored sunlight decreased; they slid up the bushes, passed over the green candle-like buds, moved up toward the canopy, and darkness thickened under the trees."	Illustrates an idea, a feeling, or the particular qualities of something.
<u>Juxtaposition</u>	A poetic and rhetorical device in which normally unassociated ideas, words, or phrases are placed next to one another.	A "good" character next to an "evil" character. Something light next to something dark. Something big next to something small. Something loud next to something quiet.	Creates an effect of surprise and wit or suspense. Emphasizes differences between objects/persons/etc.
<u>Metaphor</u>	A comparison of two unlike things not using "like" or "as"	"Time is money"	Creates new meaning for an object/idea. Creates an emotional response in the audience. Helps the audience understand or imagine something they are unfamiliar with.
<u>Mood</u>	The atmosphere of a literary work that evokes a certain emotion or feeling from the audience.	Established through: Diction, imagery (description of setting), figurative Language/Literary Devices (simile, metaphor, personification, etc.), theme (the message/lesson of the story), tone.	It evokes various emotional responses in readers and thus ensures their emotional attachment to the literary piece they read. Once the readers are emotionally stirred, they fully comprehend the message that the writer tries to convey to them.
<u>Onomatopoeia</u>	A word which imitates the natural sound of a thing.	"boom" "bang" "click" "hiss"	Creates a sound effect that mimics the thing described, making the description more expressive and interesting. Can also effect the mood of a scene or add imagery.
<u>Oxymoron</u>	Two opposite ideas joined to create an effect.	"Loving hate" "Heavy lightness" "Bright smoke" "Cold fire" "Sick health"	Produces a dramatic effect, provokes thought, emphasis through contrast.
<u>Paradox</u>	A statement that appears contradictory, illogical, impossible, or absurd, but has a	"I must be cruel to be kind." "I am nobody." "I can resist anything but temptation." "What a pity that	Makes a reader think over an idea in an innovative way. Can also communicate a tone of irony.

	coherent meaning that reveals a hidden truth.	youth must be wasted on the young.”	
<u>Personification</u>	A kind of metaphor that gives inanimate objects or abstract human ideas human characteristics	“The wind cried in the dark.” “Justice died that day.”	Creates new meaning for an object/idea. Creates an emotional response in the audience. Helps the audience understand or imagine something they are unfamiliar with.
<u>Repetition</u>	A deliberate use of any element of language more than once—sound, word, phrase, sentence, grammatical pattern, or rhythmical pattern.	“If you think you can do it, you can do it.”	Draws reader’s attention. Emphasizes an idea or the importance of something.
<u>Simile</u>	A comparison of two unlike things using “like” or “as”	“Love is as delicate as a rose.”	Creates new meaning for an object/idea. Creates an emotional response in the audience. Helps the audience understand or imagine something they are unfamiliar with.
<u>Situational Irony</u>	A situation that ends up in quite a different way than what is generally anticipated.	In “The Return,” the main character expects people to give him a hero’s welcome. Instead, he gets whispers and discomfort.	Adds meaning to a situation.
<u>Symbolism/ Symbol</u>	When an object representing another gives an entirely different meaning that is much deeper and more significant.	Context is essential to understanding a symbol, as “a chain” may stand for “union” as well as “imprisonment.” You must understand when, where, and how it is used. The audience also may read symbols differently depending on their culture and prior knowledge.	Gives a writer freedom to add double levels of meanings to his work: a literal one that is self-evident, and the symbolic one whose meaning is far more profound than the literal.
<u>Tone</u>	The speaker’s or narrator’s attitude towards the subject.	Established through: Diction, imagery (description of setting), figurative language/literary devices (simile, metaphor, personification, etc.), theme (the message/lesson of the story)	Decides how the readers read a literary piece, and how they should feel while they are reading it. It stimulates the readers to read a piece of literature in a serious, comical, spectacular, or distressing manner. In addition, tone lends shape and life to a piece of literature because it creates a mood.