

## Writer's Style and Literary Devices Tools for Writing

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## Writer's Style and Literary Devices Tools for Writing

- **Alliteration:** repetition of consonant (non-vowel) sounds at the beginning of the words, used for emphasis and for musical (lyrical) quality.
  - *“Say to them,/ Say to the down-keepers, / The sun-slappers,/The self-soilers...”* from *“Speech to the Young”* by Gwendolyn Brooks
- **Allusion:** Reference to well-known cultural or historical person or event.
  - She looked at him as if he were the serpent offering the apple.
- **Analogy:** comparing two situations to explain one of them better.
  - *The girl in “Checkouts” liked grocery shopping like some people like to drive on long, country roads.*
- **Anecdote:** Short true story included to support ideas.
- **Dialect:** a form of language spoken in a particular place featuring unique pronunciation, vocabulary, and grammar.
  - *To speak to a group of people, someone from the southern United States might use “y’all” while someone from the North might say, “you’sе guys.”*
- **Dialogue:** conversation between two or more people as a feature in a book or movie.
- **Dialect:** conversation between two or more people as a feature in a book or movie.
- **Extended metaphor:** takes the basic metaphor of comparing two things with a common link, but continues with a series of things.
  - *Life is a river, racing through time. At some point, there are rapids, pulling you under, etc.*
- **Figurative Language:** Expressions that are not literally true to create original descriptions.
  - *“The captain looked up to see a blanket of white coming down the river...It turned out to be a sea of white feathers...”* from *Undaunted Courage*, Stephen Ambrose
  - *Ambrose*
- **Formal vs. colloquial language:** Considering the type of language to use to impact meaning. Formal, academic language or colloquial, everyday language.
  - *“So boy, don’t you turn back...”* “Mother to Son” Langston Hughes
- **Hyperbole:** an extreme exaggeration.
  - *His very entrails seemed to be coming out of his mouth.*
  - *My dog rules my entire world and I am but his pooper scooper.*
- **Idiom:** an expression whose meaning is different than the literal meaning.
  - *Does the cat have your tongue?*

- **Imagery/Sensory Details**: words or phrases that help the reader see, hear, taste, feel or smell what an author or poet is describing.
  - *“Life for me ain’t been no crystal stair. //It’s had tacks in it, /And splinters, /And boards torn up...”* from “Mother to Son” Langston Hughes
- **Irony**: a contrast between what happens and what was expected to happen.
  - *An ironic twist in “Incident in a Rose Garden” is when Death is after the younger Master rather than the elderly Gardener.*
- **Juxtaposition**: the author places a person, concept, place, idea or theme parallel to another. The purpose of juxtaposing two directly or indirectly related entities close together in literature is to highlight the contrast between the two and compare them. the truth is exaggerated for comedic effect.
  - *S. E. Hinton juxtaposed the greasers and the Socs so the reader can see how similar they really are.*
- **Metaphor**: a comparison between two things with a common link.
  - *School is a prison, and I am incarcerated.*
- **Mood**: a feeling that the literary work gives the **reader**.
  - *The mood of a horror novel would be scary.*
- **Motivation**: what drives the actions and/or feelings of the character.
- **Reaction**: how a character responds to a situation.
  
- **Heritage/tradition/attitudes and beliefs** how one’s background shapes his/her writing
- **Onomatopoeia**: Words that mirror sounds.
  - *“the hum of a thousand bees” or “the click of the door in the nighttime”*
- **Parallelism**: Parallel structure means using the same pattern of words to show that two or more ideas have the same level of importance. This can happen at the word, phrase, or clause level.
  - *Crying, laughing, cursing, falling. These are what love can mean.*
- **Personification**: giving a nonhuman object, a human quality.
  - *My alarm clock kept yelling at me to get out of bed.*
- **Point of View Choice**: What p.o.v. is the poem or story told from. What impact does that narrator have on the message or meaning?
  - *“Mother to Son” is Langston Hughes using a mother to impart advice on a son with a deeper meaning to his larger African-American audience. “Black Woman” is from the point of view of a mother. Also, think about first-person point of view, how “we” could be speaking of a group to include the audience.*
- **Pun**: the usually humorous use of a word in such a way as to suggest two or more of its meanings or the meaning of another word similar in sound.
  - *When a clock is hungry it goes back four seconds.*
- **Repetition**: Repeating of lines, words or phrases for effect or emphasis.

- *“Rage, rage against the dying of the light.”*
- **Rhyme/rhythm**: The lines, words or phrases either rhyme or produce a beat or rhythm.
  - *“This is not water running here*
  - *These thick rebellious streams,*
  - *That hurtle flesh and bone past fear*
  - *Down alleyways of dreams” “Harlem Wine”, Countee Cullen*
- **Satire**: the use of humor, irony, exaggeration, or ridicule to expose and criticize people's stupidity or vices, particularly in the context of contemporary politics and other topical issues
- **Sentence Length, type and structure**: Varying the length of sentences for effect or emphasis.
  - *Simple, compound, complex, compound-complex, run-on, fragment, declarative, interrogative, imperative, exclamatory*
  - *“...And places with no carpet on the floor-bare.”*  
*“Mother to Son” Langston Hughes*
- **Simile**: a comparison between two things with a common link using “like” or “as”.
  - *Her voice was as shrill as a cat being forced to take a bath.*
- **Symbolism**: a person, place, object or action that stands for something beyond itself.
  - *The scarlet letter symbolized Hester’s sin and secret.*
- **Theme**: the message or universal truth that comes from the story, poem or novel. Themes usually center around power, relationships, conflict, patterns, order, systems, change, and/or structure.
- **Thought-shots**: the author spends time inside a character’s head to reveal a significant detail or character trait.
- **Tone**: the writer’s **attitude or approach** to the topic of the literary work.
  - *Dylan Thomas’s tone in “Do Not Go Gentle into That Good Night” is one of anger and passion.*
- **Voice**: An author’s or narrator’s distinctive style or manner of expression, revealing his/her personality.