

# Literary Devices

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**Metaphor:** a figure of speech in which a term is applied to something to which it is not literally applicable in order to suggest a resemblance, as in “She is a rose.” Excluding the possibility that the subject of this sentence is literally a flower, this example suggests that the subject possesses figurative extensions of qualities or attributes of a rose, such as exquisite beauty or perhaps a prickly disposition.

**Simile:** a figure of speech in which two unlike things are explicitly compared. That explicit comparison often takes the form of the word *like* or *as*. To build on the previous example, “she is like a rose.”

**Analogy:** a comparison in which an idea or a thing is compared to another thing that is quite different from it. It aims at explaining that idea or thing by comparing it to something that is familiar. Metaphors and similes are tools used to draw an **analogy**.

**Hyperbole:** an obvious and intentional exaggeration such as, “I read a million books this summer!” This literary device is used for dramatic or comedic effect.

**Allusion:** an indirect reference to a person, place, event, or artistic work. Allusions assume a level of familiarity on the part of the reader with the work, person, or event referenced.

**Euphemism:** the substitution of a mild, indirect, or vague expression for one thought to be harsh, blunt, or offensive. Ex: Break wind, The birds and the bees, etc.

**Paradox:** a statement or proposition that seems self-contradictory or absurd but may in reality express a truth or tension. Ex: Jumbo shrimp, I am nobody, “I must be cruel to be kind” (Shakespeare’s *Hamlet*).

**Oxymoron:** uses contradiction, but is more compressed than a paradox. An oxymoron is a figure of speech that produces an incongruous, seemingly self-contradictory effect, such as in the phrase “cruel kindness” or “to make haste slowly,” or more famously in Shakespeare’s *Romeo and Juliet* when Romeo utters the lines “O loving hate” and “O heavy lightness” in the opening scene.

**Satire:** a technique employed by writers to expose and criticize foolishness and corruption of an individual or a society by using humor, irony, exaggeration or ridicule. It intends to improve humanity by criticizing its follies and foibles. A writer in a satire uses fictional characters, which stand for real people, to expose and condemn their corruption.

**Onomatopoeia:** defined as the formation of a word, as *cuckoo*, *meow*, *honk*, or *boom*, by imitation of a sound made by or associated with its referent.

**Alliteration:** a stylistic device in which a number of words, having the same first consonant sound, occur close together in a series. Ex: Sally sells seashells by the sea shore

**Allegory:** a story in which the characters or developments symbolize real people or events. Ex: George Orwell's *Animal Farm*. C.S. Lewis's *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*.

**Verbal Irony:** the use of words to convey a meaning that is the opposite of its literal meaning. Ex: Saying "How nice!" when something is going terribly wrong.

**Situational Irony:** actions have an effect that is opposite from what was intended, so that the outcome is contrary to what was expected.

**Dramatic Irony:** when a situation is understood by the audience but not grasped by the characters in the play.

**Foreshadowing:** When an author hints at the ending of or at an upcoming event in his/her story without fully divulging.

**Imagery:** using figurative language to represent objects, actions and ideas in such a way that it appeals to our physical senses. (Sight, sound, touch, smell, taste).

**Personification:** the attribution of a personal nature or human characteristics to something nonhuman, or the representation of an abstract quality in human form. Ex: The wind whispered through dry grass; the flowers danced in the gentle breeze; time and tide waits for none; the fire swallowed the entire forest.

**Theme/ Motif:** In a literary work, a **motif** can be seen as an image, sound, action or other figures that have a symbolic significance and contributes toward the development of theme. **Motif** and **theme** are linked in a literary work but there is a difference between them. In a literary piece, a **motif** is a recurrent image, idea or a symbol that develops or explains a **theme** while a **theme** is a central idea or message.

**Symbolism:** Symbolism is the use of symbols to signify ideas and qualities by giving them symbolic meanings that are different from their literal sense. Ex: A dove as a symbol of peace; a rose as a symbol of love; black as symbolizing death

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