# Literary Devices

## CHARACTER DEVICES

**Character** (individual [person, god, animal, alien], object, or force)

**Protagonist** (the primary, and most sympathetic, character)

**Antagonist**

**Confidante**

**Foil**

**Narrator**

**Tragic Hero**

**Characterization** (methods for developing character: Actions, <u>Dialogue</u>, Direct Narrator Exposition, Commentary from Other Characters, Changes [one who changes is *dynamic*; one who does not is *static*], Dimensions [a character who fits a stereotype is called flat, stock or one-sided; one who breaks a stereotype is called complex, rounded or multidimensional], <u>Tags</u> [unique gestures, speech patterns or other background details]).


## COMPARATIVE DEVICES (FIGURES OF SPEECH)

**Allusion**

**Anagram**

**Analogy**

**Anthropomorphism** (*Laughing hyena*. Attaching human traits to inanimate objects. See Pathetic Fallacy)

**Catachresis** (mixed metaphors or misapplication of a word or phrase: *"It hit me like a lightbulb."*)

**Didactic Simile/Parable** (a morally instructive comparative)

**Emblem** (tangible object used to symbolize a moral or spiritual quality: *"Jesus took bread . . . and said, Take, eat, this is my body"* --Matt. 26:26)

**Extended Metaphor**

**Euphemism**

**Hyperbole** (extreme exaggeration: *"Mom, I'm starving!"*)

**Irony** (a discrepancy between words/actions and truth. *Sarcasm* is a form of verbal irony)

**Juxtaposition**

**Litotes** (*"He was not unliked"*)

**Metaphor**

**Metonymy** (a symbolic term substituted for the intended one: *"the pen is mightier than the sword"* rather than *"Ideas are more influential than war victories."*)

**Oxymoron** (*open secret, sweet sorrow*)

**Paradox** (*"He that findeth his life shall lose it: and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it."* -- Matt.10:39)

**Parallel Construction**

**Paronomasia** (a pun)

**Pathetic Fallacy** (*Cruel wind.* Attaching emotion to nature. See Personification)

**Personification** (*Blind Justice.* Attaching human traits to intangibles. See Anthropomorphism)

**Prolepsis** (an anachronism: *"Patton met with the troops offline."*)

**Pun**

**Sarcasm**

**Simile**

**Stereotype**

**Synecdoche** (Using a part to stand for the whole: *"Lend a hand"*)

**Synesthesia** (conflating the senses: *"a painful green," "a malodorous sight"*)

**Synesis** (deliberately ungrammatical syntax: *"The group were of two opinions"* or *"If anyone calls, tell them I'm out)*

**Type** (a shadow whose substance, or antitype, is in the future: *"The first man is of the earth, earthy: the second man is the Lord from heaven."* --1 Cor. 15:47)

**Understatement**


<span style="color:red">**GENRES**</span>

**Adventure**

**Allegory** (narrative or object that is an elaborate metaphor)

**Analogue** (Writing that is similar in some aspect to another)

**Anthology**

**Autobiography**

**Bildungsroman** (a subgenre of coming-of-age)

**Biography**

**Burlesque**

**Children's Fiction**

**Comedy**

**Coming-of-Age Story**

**Didactic** (designed to teach or moralize)

**Drama**

**Dystopian** (where people live dehumanized, fearful lives. *Blade Runner, Lord of the Flies*)

**Epistolary** (*Screwtape Letters*)

**Eschatology** (End of the World. *Martian Chronicles, Left Behind* series)

**Fable/Apologue** (Having animals or inanimate objects as characters. *Animal Farm*)

**Fantasy**

**Farce** (*Comedy of Errors, Importance of Being Earnest*)

**Feminist**

**Fescennine** (ribald, obscene)

**Framed Tale** (*The Book of One Thousand and One Nights, Canterbury Tales, Spoon River Anthology*)

**Gothic** (*Dracula*)

**Historical Fiction** (Clavell, Michener)

**Mystery** (including Crime, Detective, and Police)

**Historic Regional** (L'Amour, Twain

**Horror**

**Mystery**

**Myth**

**New Journalism** (nonfiction novels)

**New Regional** (Western [Terry Tempest Williams] Southern)

**Non-Fiction**

**Novel** (a long, complex prose narrative)

**Parody** (Weird Al)

**Pastoral** (with conventionalized or idealized rural characters)

**Professional Fiction** (Legal, Medical, Corporate, Journalism -- the Grisham/Hailey/Cook genre)

**Religious Fiction** (generally Christian fiction aimed at a Christian audience; but less often, fiction about the lives of religious people that is aimed at a general audience, cf *My Name Is Asher Lev, The Haj, Fiddler on the Roof*, Card's *Saints*)

**Roman à clef** (*Valley of the Dolls*)

**Romance** (Marvelous adventures of chivalric heroes. *Lord of the Rings, Beowulf*)

**Saga** (*Roots, The Thornbirds*)

**Satire** (attacking by making a thing look ridiculous. Lewis' *The Screwtape Letter*, Swift's *A Modest Proposal*, Wolfe's *A Man in Full*)

**Scriptural Exegesis** (Midrash, *The Red Tent*, Card's *The Memory of Earth* series, *The Satanic Verses*)

**Short Story** (*Thurber Carnival, The Long Valley*)

**Speculative/Science Fiction**

**Suspense**

**Tragedy** (Fatal flaw of noble protagonist causes disaster. *King Lear, Of Mice and Men*)

**Utopian** (where characters live idealized political or social lives. Lewis' *Till We Have Faces*, Augustine's *The City of God*)

**Young Adult** (L'Engle's *A Wrinkle in Time*, Randle's *The Only Alien on the Planet*)


## LINGUISTIC DEVICES

**Alliteration**

**Amplification**

**Anacoluthon** (abrupt change within a sentence to a second grammatical construction: *"I asked her, why did she smoke?"*)

**Anadiplosis** (Repeating the final words of a phrase at the beginning of the following phrase)

**Anaphora** (Repeating the exact wording at the beginning of each clause or phrase)

**Anastrophe** (Inversion: *"Matter too soft a lasting mark to bear"*)

**Antimetabole** (repeating and transposing words or ideas. *"Ask not what your country can do for you; ask what you can do for your country."* See Chiasmus, below)

**Aposiopesis** (breaking off mid-sentence, overcome with emotion)

**Archaism** (archaic usage or style)

**Assonance** (repetition of vowel sounds: *"dance with ants in your pants"*)

**Asyndeton** (a Brachylogy that omits conjunctions)

**Brachylogy** (laconism, condensed expression, usually involving the omission of the second occurrence of a grammatical element)

**Cacophony**

**Caesura** (natural pause)

**Consonance** (Like assonance, but using consonants rather than vowels: *"silky slithering snake"*)

**Diacope** (Sustained repetition: *"Words, words, more words, no matter from the heart"*)

**Ellipsis**

**Enumeratio** (Enumerating or listing elements -- parts, causes, effects, or consequences)

**Epizeuxis** (Immediate repetition: *"O dark, dark, dark, amid the blaze of noon."*)

**Epanalepsis** (Repeating the beginning word of a clause or sentence at the end)

**Euphony** (Opposite of cacophony)

**Hendiadys** (using conjunction rather than modifier [*"nice and warm"* for *"nicely warm"*] or repetition for effect: *"And if Satan rise up against himself, and be divided, he cannot stand, but hath an end"* --Mark 3:26)

**Hysteron-Proteron** (illogical or abnormal order: *"my joy and pride"*)

**Hyperbaton** (Changing word order for emphasis: *"Him I love"*)

**Hypozeuxis** (opposite of Zeugma: *I ate and I drank while I worked.*)

**Monosyllablism**

**Onomatopoeia**

**Pleonasm** (wordiness)

**Polysyllablism**

**Polysyndeton** (connecting elements in a list with successive conjunctions)

**Portmanteau** (Combining words or sounds to make new words: *"'Twas brillig and the slithy toves"*)

**Rhythm**

**Synchysis** (confusing arrangement of words: See *Hello Kitty*. An extreme form of Anastrophe)

**Syllepsis** (a kind of Zeugma: *"She stole my heart and my wallet"*)

**Tautology** (*"soda pop," "bless and sanctify"*)

**Zeugma** (a Brachylogy involving combining and rearranging: *"Senators, Congressmen, Mr. President, thank you for coming."*)


## PLOTTING DEVICES

**Act**

**Climax**

**Complication**

**Conclusion**

**Conflict** (two types: internal [man v. self, man v. idea] and external [man v. man; man v. nature])

**Denouement/Resolution** (where all is explained)

**Falling Action** (events following the climax)

**Inciting Incident**

**Rising Action**

**Scene**

**Type** (Climactic [M. Knight Shyamalan movies], Episodic [*GWTW, Thorn Birds*], Non-sequitor [*Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance*])


## RHETORICAL DEVICES

**Anecdote**

**Apologue** (narrative, usually intended to convey a moral or a useful truth)

**Aphorism/Apothegm**

**Apophasis** (stating something while seeming to deny it)

**Aporia** (purporting to be in doubt about a question)

**Apostrophe** (addressing an object, force, or absent character as though it could hear: *"O Death, Where Is Thy Sting?"*)

**Aside**

**Asteismus** (responding to a certain word and throwing it back to the speaker with an unexpected twist)

**Commoratio** (dwelling on or returning to one's strongest argument)

**Dialogue**

**Eclogue** (dialogue between shepherds)

**Epilogue**

**Epitrope** (leaving the hearer to supply meaning)

**Eulogy**

**Hypallage**

**Interior Monologue**

**Monologue** (addressed to a second person)

**Narration**

**Occulatatio** (concealment of a subject by passing over it)

**Paraprosdokian** (surprise ending of a phrase or series: *enie, meenie, minie, curly*)

**Periphrasis** (a circumlocution)

**Praeteritio** (insinuating with pretended reluctance, often malicious: *"I can't imagine the president doing that. But we don't know and it would be nice to know."* --Howard Dean, Dec. 2003)

**Prologue**

**Rhetorical Questions**

**Soliloquy**

**Sophism**

**Stichomythia** (dialogue delivered in alternating lines, as in an argument)

**Stream of Consciousness**


## STORY DEVICES

**Ambiguity**

**Antithesis** (opposition or contrast of words or ideas)

**Archetype** (original pattern or model of which all things of the same type are representations or copies)

**Conflict**

**Deus Ex Machina** (improbable development that solves story problem)

**Dramatic Irony** (audience knows; character doesn't)

**Exposition** (introduction of character, setting, and premise)

**Flashback**

**Foreshadowing**

**Imagery**

**Inference**

**Mood** (the emotional state the author creates in the reader)

**Motif** (recurring feature)

**Narrative Hook** (arousing a reader's curiosity and encouraging further reading)

**Narrator** (omniscient, limited, fallible, infallible, present, absent, intrusive, unobtrusive)

**Peripeteia** (sudden, unexpected reversal of circumstances or situation)

**Plot** (Story is *what* happens; Plot is *how* it happens)

**Point of View** (first-person, second-person, third-person)

**Setting** (a story's time and location)

**Situational Irony** (Opposite of what was expected)

**Stream-of-Consciousness**

**Style**

**Suspense**

**Symbolism**

**Theme** (Insight about life that a writer wishes to express; longer works have multiple themes)

**Tragic Devices** (Catastrophe, Catharsis, Fatal Flaw)


## STYLE DEVICES

**Degree of Formality**

**Diction** (colloquial, dialectic, educated, formal, slangy, terse, wordy)

Figurative Language

Grammatical Structure

Organization

Rhythm

Sentence Length

Structure

**Tone** (affectionate, angry, bitter, detached, humorous)

Voice

**Word Choice**


<span style="color:red">**POETIC DEVICES**</span>

**Antistrophe** (alternating stanzas in contrasting metrical form)

**Arsis** (longer or accented part of a foot)

**Caesura** (Mid-line break created by a mark of punctuation)

**Canto** (a "chapter" of a long poem)

**Chiasmus** (*"Whoever sheds the blood of man by man shall his blood be shed."* -- Gen.9:6)

**Conceit**

**Couplet**

**Diction**

**Duble [Double] Meters** (two beats per foot: **Trochee**/trochaic [*'prob*-lem, *'ap*-ple] **Iamb**/iambic [sug-*'gest*] **Spondee**/spondaic [hard unaccented: *pen-guin*] **Pyrrhic** [soft unaccented: *in the*])

**End-Stop** (opposite of Enjambment: "*I never saw a purple cow,...*")

**Enjambment** (running a sentence or thought over into the next couplet or line)

**Epithet**

**Foot** (a unit of meter)

**Ictus** (stress, downbeat when poetry is set to music)

**Meter** (Monometer, Dimeter, Trimeter, Tetrameter, Pentameter, Hexameter, Heptameter, Octameter)

**Prosody** (elaborate scansion)

**Rhyme**

**Rhyme Scheme** (aabb, abab, abba...)

**Scansion** (the analysis of verse to show its meter)

**Stanza** (Group of verses: Monostich, Couplet, Tercet/Triplet, Quatrain, Cinquain, Sestet/Hexastich, Heptastich, and Octave)

**Strophe**

**Triple Meters** (three beats per foot: **Dactyl**/dactylic ['*mur*-mur-ing], **Amphibrach** [am-'*bi*-tious], **Anapest**/anapestic [in-ter-'*rupt*], **Amphimacer** ['*twen*-ty-'*two*])

**Verse** (Single line of poetry)


## POETIC GENRES

**Aubade**

**Ballad**

**Blank Verse** (unrhymed iambic pentameter)

**Carpe Diem**

**Conceit** (elaborate, usually intellectually ingenious poetic comparison or image)

**Concrete Poetry** (poem that visibly resembles the object it describes)

**Dramatic Poem**

**Elegy**

**Epic**

**Epigram** (short, witty poem)

**Epode** (classical prosody)

**Fabliau/Fabliaux** (comic, bawdy tale told in verse)

**Georgic** (celebrating rural business -- farming, plowing, etc.)

**Haiku**

**Limerick**

**Lyric Poem**

**Narrative Poem**

**Ode** (Aeolic, Horatian, Pindaric)

**Pastoral**

**Saga**

Sonnet

**Vers Libre** (Free Verse)


<span style="color:red">**BOOK FORMATS**</span>

**Codex/Codices** (bound books)

**Colophon** (mod. title page, or publisher's logo)

**Dissertation, Duodecimo** (popular paperback size)

**Folio** (typical coffee-table book size)

**Hardback/Hardbound**

**Leaves** (newspaper size)

**Mass-Market Paperback** (sold in airports, supermarkets, drugstores)

**Mechanical Binding** (spiral-bound, comb-bound, coil-bound, double-loop-wire-bound)

**Octavo** (typical textbook size)

**Pages** (tabloid size)

**Perfect-bound**

**Quarto** (typical unabridged dictionary size)

**Saddle-stitch Binding**

**Scroll**

**Sheets/signatures** (open/unfolded newspaper size)

**Softback**

**Trade** (distributed through retail bookstores and libraries)

# POETIC LITERARY TERMS

**Personification** is one of the most commonly used and recognized literary devices. It refers to the practice of attaching human traits and characteristics with inanimate objects, phenomena and animals.

**Simile** are one of the most commonly used literary devices; referring to the practice of drawing parallels or comparisons between two unrelated and dissimilar things, people, beings, places and concepts. By using similes a greater degree of meaning and understanding is attached to an otherwise simple sentence. The reader is able to better understand the sentiment the author wishes to convey. Similes are marked by the use of the words 'as' or 'such as' or 'like'.

**Alliteration** is a literary device where words are used in quick succession and begin with letters belonging to the same sound group. Whether it is the consonant sound or a specific vowel group, the alliteration involves creating a repetition of similar sounds in the sentence. Alliterations are also created when the words all begin with the same letter. Alliterations are used to add character to the writing and often add an element of 'fun' to the piece..

**Symbolism** is literary device that contains several layers of meaning, often concealed at first sight, and is representative of several other aspects/ concepts/ traits than those that are visible in the literal translation alone. Symbol is using an object or action that means something more than its literal meaning.

**Metaphors** are one of the most extensively used literary devices. A metaphor refers to a meaning or identity ascribed to one subject by way of another. In a metaphor, one subject is implied to be another so as to draw a comparison between their similarities and shared traits. The first subject, which/who is the focus of the sentences is usually compared to the second subject, which is used to convey/carry a degree of meaning that is used to characterize the first. The purpose of using a metaphor is to take an identity or concept that we understand clearly (second subject) and use it to better understand the lesser-known element (the first subject).

**Hyperbole** is a literary device wherein the author uses specific words and phrases that exaggerate and overemphasize the basic crux of the statement in order to produce a grander, more noticeable effect. The purpose of hyperbole is to create a larger-than-life effect and overly stress a specific point. Such sentences usually convey an action or sentiment that is generally not practically/ realistically possible or plausible but helps emphasize an emotion.

**Imagery** In literature, one of the strongest devices is imagery wherein the author uses words and phrases to create "mental images" for the reader. Imagery helps the reader to visualize and therein more realistically experience the author's writings. The usage of metaphors, allusions, descriptive words and similes amongst other literary forms in order to "tickle" and awaken the readers' sensory perceptions is referred to as imagery. Imagery is not limited to only visual sensations, but also refers to igniting kinesthetic, olfactory, tactile, gustatory, thermal and auditory sensations as well.

**Allusion** is a figure of speech whereby the author refers to a subject matter such as a place, event, or literary work by way of a passing reference. It is up to the reader to make a connection to the subject being mentioned.

**Satire**

**Foreshadowing**

**Flashback**

**Irony**