

## LITERARY DEVICES

*These are techniques that writers use to enhance their writing. Literary devices are not necessary, but they add depth and meaning to text. A writer may use many or only a few of these in a work.*

1. **Alliteration:** The repetition of initial consonant sounds used especially in poetry to emphasize and link words as well as to create pleasing, musical sounds. Example—the fair breeze blew, the white foam flew.
2. **Allusion:** A reference to a well-known person, place, event, literary work, or work of art to enrich the reading experience by adding meaning.
3. **Archetype:** An archetype is a reference to a concept, a person or an object that has served as a prototype of its kind. An archetype an original idea that is used over and over again in literature. Archetypes are literary devices that employ the use of a famous concept, person or object to convey a wealth of meaning. Archetypes are immediately identifiable and even though they run the risk of being overused, they are still the best examples of their kind.
  - a. Example: Romeo and Juliet are an archetype of eternal love and a star-crossed love story.
4. **Characterization:** Techniques a writer uses to create and develop a character. There are two types:
  - a. Direct: When the author directly TELLS you what a character looks like, who they are.
  - b. Indirect: When the author SHOWS you who a character is by indirect methods. Use the acronym STEAL to remember these techniques:
    - i. Speech
    - ii. Thoughts and Emotions
    - iii. Effect on Others
    - iv. Actions
    - v. Looks
5. **Dialect:** Speech that reflects pronunciation, vocabulary, and grammar typical of a geographical region.
6. **Flashback:** Interruption of the chronological (time) order to present something that occurred before the beginning of the story.
7. **Figurative Language:** Language that has meaning beyond the literal meaning; also known as “figures of speech.”
  - a. Simile: comparison of two things using the words “like” or “as,” e.g. “Her smile was as cold as ice.”
  - b. Metaphor: comparison of two things essentially different but with some commonalities; does not use “like” or “as,” e.g. “Her smile was ice.”
  - c. Hyperbole: a purposeful exaggeration for emphasis or humor.
  - d. Personification: human qualities attributed to an animal, object, or idea, e.g. “The wind exhaled.”
8. **Free Verse:** Poetry that does not conform to a regular meter or rhyme scheme. Poets who write in free verse try to reproduce the natural rhythms of spoken language.

## REFERENCE: GLOSSARY

9. **Foreshadowing:** Important hints that an author drops to prepare the reader for what is to come, and help the reader anticipate the outcome.
10. **Imagery:** Words or phrases that appeal to the reader's senses.
11. **Humor:** The quality of a literary or informative work that makes the character and/or situations seem funny, amusing, or ludicrous.
12. **Irony:** A technique that involves surprising, interesting, or amusing contradictions or contrasts. Verbal irony occurs when words are used to suggest the opposite of their usual meaning. An irony of situation is when an event occurs that directly contradicts expectations.
  - a. Verbal Irony: What is being said is the opposite of what is meant.
  - b. Irony of Situation: When the thing that happens is not what is expected.
  - c. Dramatic Irony: When the reader knows more about the situation than the characters do.
13. **Literal Language:** Language that means exactly what it says.
14. **Mood:** The emotional atmosphere of a given piece of writing.
15. **Motif:** A theme or pattern that recurs in a work.
16. **Onomatopoeia:** The use of words that imitate sounds. Examples would be *hiss*, *buzz*, *swish*, and *crunch*.
17. **Paradox:** A seeming contradiction. For example, "It was the best of times. It was the worst of times."  
– A Tale of Two Cities.
18. **Personification:** Giving inanimate object human characteristics. For example, "The angry flames raced and jumped, impatient to reach the victim."
19. **Point of View:** Perspective from which the story is told
  - a. First-person: narrator is a character in the story; uses "I," "we," etc.
  - b. Third-person: narrator outside the story; uses "he," "she," "they"
  - c. Third-person limited: narrator tells only what one character perceives
  - d. Third-person omniscient: narrator can see into the minds of all characters.
20. **Pun:** The use of a word in a way that plays on its different meanings. For example, "Noticing the bunch of bananas, the hungry gorilla went ape."
21. **Satire:** Writing that comments humorously on human flaws, ideas, social customs, or institutions in order to change them
22. **Style:** The distinctive way that a writer uses language including such factors as word choice, sentence length, arrangement, and complexity, and the use of figurative language and imagery.
23. **Suspense:** A feeling of excitement, curiosity, or expectation about what will happen.
24. **Symbol:** Person, place, or thing that represents something beyond itself, most often something concrete or tangible that represents an abstract idea.

## LITERARY CHARACTER TYPES

1. **Major or central characters:** Those characters that are vital to the development and resolution of the conflict. In other words, the plot and resolution of conflict revolves around these characters.
2. **Minor characters:** Characters that serve to complement the major characters and help move the plot events forward.
3. **Dynamic:** A dynamic character is a person who **changes over time**, usually as a result of resolving a central conflict or facing a major crisis. Most dynamic characters tend to be central rather than peripheral characters, because resolving the conflict is the major role of central characters.
4. **Static:** A static character is someone who **does not change over time**; his or her personality does not transform or evolve.
5. **Round:** A rounded character is anyone who has a **complex personality**; he or she is often portrayed as a conflicted and contradictory person.
6. **Flat:** A flat character is the opposite of a round character. This literary personality is notable for one kind of personality trait or characteristic.
7. **Stock:** Stock characters are those types of characters who have become **conventional or stereotypical** through *repeated use* in particular types of stories. Stock characters are instantly recognizable to readers or audience members (e.g. the femme fatale, the cynical but moral private eye, the mad scientist, the geeky boy with glasses, and the faithful sidekick). Stock characters are normally one-dimensional flat characters, but sometimes stock personalities are deeply conflicted, rounded characters.
8. **Protagonist:** The protagonist is the central person in a story, and is often referred to as the story's main character. He or she (or they) is faced with a conflict that must be resolved. The protagonist may not always be admirable (e.g. an anti-hero); nevertheless s/he must command involvement on the part of the reader, or better yet, empathy.
9. **Antagonist:** The antagonist is the character(s) (or situation) that represents the opposition against which the protagonist must contend. In other words, the antagonist is an obstacle that the protagonist must overcome.
10. **Anti-Hero:** A major character, usually the protagonist, who lacks conventional nobility of mind, and who struggles for values not deemed universally admirable
11. **Foil:** A foil is any character (usually the antagonist or an important supporting character) whose personal qualities contrast with another character (usually the protagonist). By providing this contrast, we get to know more about the other character.
12. **Symbolic:** A symbolic character is any major or minor character whose very existence represents some major idea or aspect of society.