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Mr. Williams' Honors English IV Classroom



HENG4

Literary Devices Handbook

Writers use different techniques or methods to add interest and details to their stories, essays, poems and other writings. The use of figurative language, writing techniques, and literary devices in any passage creates a better picture of the situation and helps the reader understand and visualize the topic. To be an astute reader, one must be able to interpret the literary devices being used by the writer.

Alliteration:

the repetition of beginning consonant sound of words.

The chocolate chip cookie was crunchy.

Allegory:

Individual works that represent a larger global idea.

The Pilgrim's Progress symbolizes the Christian journey.

Synonyms are: fables and parables; an extended metaphor

Apostrophe:

a digression in the form of an address to someone not present, or to a personified object or idea.

"O Death, where is thy sting?"

Allusion:

a reference to a well-known person, place, thing, or event that the writer assumes the reader will be familiar with.

She swooped in to help with Herculean strength.

Assonance:

the repetition of vowel sounds within words.

I fly high when I dream of my lover.

Ambiguity:

expression of an idea in words that may be interpreted in more than one way.

Amplification:

figure of speech using restatement for emphasis.

Why, why does this always happen to me?!

Antecedent Action:

Events that precede the starting point of the piece of literature.

Analogy:

comparison of apparently or largely dissimilar objects to reveal similarities.

Pets are like plants. If you give them lots of care and attention, they grow strong and healthy. If you neglect them, they become weak and sickly.

Anecdote:

a brief story used to illustrate or make a point.

Aphorism:

a terse statement of known authorship which expresses a general truth or moral principle.

Aside:

A dramatic convention by which an actor directly addresses the audience but it is not supposed to be heard by the other actors on the stage.

Ballad:

a poem that tells a story, often meant to be performed out loud.

Bathos:

an unsuccessful attempt at profundity, resulting in ridiculous or humorous effect.

Bombast:

inflated or extravagant expression.

The boy is definitely the worst behaved child in the world.

Blank Verse:

A poem written in unrhymed verse; unrhymed iambic pentameter.

Cacophony:

Harsh, dissonant sounds in recited poetry. It is deliberately used by the poet to bring reader's attention to the content (syn. Dissonance); (**Ant. Euphony**)

Caesura:

A break in poetic rhythm and structure. It usually ushers in the turn or shift in the work.

Cacophony:

Harsh, dissonant sounds in recited poetry. It is deliberately used by the poet to bring reader's attention to the content; opposite of euphony.

Cliche:

a timeworn and commonplace expressions; trite description.

My love is tried and true.

Consonance:

the repetition of consonant sounds anywhere within words, not just at the beginning. Usually there is a break in the sequence of sounds.

The chocolate chip chookie was chunchy.

Colloquialism:

Current everyday expressions used by the public.

Denouement:

Final unfolding of plot; resolution or outcome.

Dialogue:

Discourse or conversation between characters.

Diatribes:

bitter argument, accusation, or harangue.

Dramatic Monologue:

In literature, the occurrence of a single speaker saying something to a silent audience. A dramatic monologue is written to reveal both the situation at hand and the character herself.

Doggerel:

Unimportant or bad poetry; It is considered of little literary value.

Dead Metaphor:

overused figure of speech drained of its original power to evoke analogy.

Epithet:

Characterizing word or phrase used with or in place of name, usually a disparaging abusive term.

The old, blind mongoose of a man didn't know how to treat people.

Euphemism:

Less offensive, more agreeable words and expressions that substitute other more harsh words.

The slow-witted girl stood speechless in front of the class.

Eye Dialect:

Use of misspellings to convey character's poor education or humorous dialectal pronunciations.

Elegy:

Song, poem, or speech lamenting one who is dead.

Epic:

Literary work recounting deeds of legendary hero; this work usually deals with an important theme.

Extended Metaphor:

A metaphor developed at great length, occurring frequently in or throughout a work.

Eye Dialect:

use of misspellings to convey character's poor education or humorous dialectal pronunciations.

Euphony:

The pleasant, mellifluous presentation of sounds in a literary work.

Flashback:

A technique in which a writer interrupts a story to go back and explain an earlier event.

Fable:

A brief tale designed to illustrate a moral lesson. Often the characters are animals as in the fables of Aesop.

Free Verse:

Unrhymed Poetry with lines of varying lengths, and containing no specific metrical pattern.

Foil:

One character serving as a direct opposite or contrast to another.

Becky Sharp and Amelia Sedley in *Vanity Fair* by W.M.Thackeray

God and Satan in Milton's *Paradise Lost*.

Foreshadowing:

Hints or clues that a writer uses to suggest what will happen in the story.

Hyperbole:

Extreme exaggerate or overstatement used for effect.

No one in the world understands me.

Homily:

literary device found in writings that tend to involve moral or spiritual advice.

Idiom:

Words used in a special way that may be different from their actual meaning.

Speak up! What? Cat's got your tongue?

Irony:

an implied discrepancy between what is said and what is meant. Verbal, situational, and dramatic are some of its types.

- *verbal irony* is when an author says one thing and means something else.
- *dramatic irony* is when an audience perceives something that a character in the literature does not know.
- *Situational irony* is a discrepancy between the expected result and actual results.

The portly man, called Slim by his friends, never made it to the party.

The trash can stood in the midst of the swarming garbage.

Imagery:

the use of words to represent things, actions, or ideas by sensory details and descriptions. These sensory details describe, arouse emotions, and create atmosphere.

Invective: emotional violent, verbal denunciation or attack using strong, abusive language.

Juxtaposition: Putting two words, ideas, or graphics together to create a new, often ironic meaning.

Oh, the joys of winter blizzards!

Lampoon: a harsh satire directed against an individual.

Metaphor: Figure of speech that compares two things **without using** like or as.
Thievery is the disease that eats at the heart of society.

Metonymy: Figure of speech in which the name of a subject is substituted by a name closely related to it.
The pen is mightier than the sword.
Words and writing are much more effective than fighting and violence.

Monologue: Long speech given by one individual; dramatic soliloquy. It usually gives insight to the individual situation or thoughts.

Motif: the repetition or variations of an image or idea in a work which is used to develop the theme or characters.

Onomatopoeia: The use of a word whose sound makes you think of its meaning.

The **dripping** of the water made it intolerable to sleep.

Ode:

A poem in praise of something, usually divine, or expressing some noble idea.

Oxymoron:

Two words with opposite meanings put together for a special effect.

Jumbo shrimp, old news, pretty ugly.

Personification:

giving human qualities to animals, objects, or ideas.

The low-hanging clouds ran and hid behind the mountains; the sun had come out to play.

Paradox:

A statement that is true even though it seems to be saying two different or opposite things.

The more free time I have, the less I get done.

Pun:

A statement that has a dual meaning that comes off as comical at times.

The fisherman smelled something funny when he walked into the room and everyone had stopped talking.

Paraenesis: written piece of work that contains advice.

Purple Prose: excessively affected or sentimental writing intended to manipulate reader's feelings.

Repetition: repeated words or phrases, usually in the beginning or at the end of lines, in an attempt to emphasize importance of the line or idea.

Sarcasm:
A statement that says one thing but the opposite is meant

Shift:
A place in a poem/short story where structure, theme, or ideas change. Words, space, or punctuation sometimes usher this change. Also, known as **turn** or **volta**.

Simile:
Figure of speech that compares two things **using** the word **like** or **as**.
The ice cubes glistened like little diamonds in my glass.

Satire:
Mode of writing that ridicules as it criticizes the foibles and follies of society without necessarily finding a solution; It is usually funny or harsh and outlandish.
Jonathon Swift's "A Modest Proposal"
Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*
W.M. Thackeray's *Vanity Fair*

Suspense:
Use of uncertainty and anxiety to build excitement. It uses the element of anticipation.

Synecdoche:
Using a part of something to represent the whole.
"All hands on deck!" is frequently used by mariners.
Hands represent the whole person/sailor.

Soliloquy:
In drama, a moment when a character is alone and speaks his or her thoughts aloud.

Symbol:
using an object or action that means something more than its literal meaning, usually an idea.
A white dove usually represents freedom.

The apple/fruit in the Adam and Eve story indicates the sin of man and his defiance to his creator.

Understatement: The opposite of *exaggeration*. By using very calm language, an author can bring special attention to an object or idea. This is usually done ironically which brings about a humorous and emphatic response.
These hot red peppers may make your mouth tingle a bit.

Wit: intellectually amusing language that indicates the speaker's verbal prowess in creating ingenious and perceptive remarks. It uses terse language that makes a pointed statement.
Most sitcoms, *Pride and Prejudice*, for example, are characterized by this.

Villanelle:
is nineteen lines long, consisting of five tercets and one concluding quatrain.