

LITERARY DEVICES

Literary Device	Definition	Simplified Definition or Example
Allegory	Work that symbolizes or represents an idea or event; used to convey a political or spiritual meaning.	
Alliteration	Repetition of the same or similar consonant sounds in succession.	
Allusion	Indirect reference to a person, place, thing, event, or idea.	
Anthropomorphism	Interpretation of a non-human animal, event, or object as embodying human qualities or characteristics.	
Colloquialism	Informal piece of dialogue or turn of phrase used in everyday conversation	
Diction	Word choice and speaking style of a writer or character	
Epiphany	Moment of sudden realization or insight by a character	
Foreshadowing	Hinting at future or subsequent events to come to build tension in a narrative	
Hyperbole	Statement that is obviously and intentionally exaggerated	
Idiom	Figure of speech that is indecipherable based on the words alone, but which has metaphorical or symbolic meaning	
Imagery	Compilation of sensory details which enables the reader to visualize the event	
Irony	The opposite of what is expected to happen. This can occur in language, in situations, or in the behavior of characters.	
Simile	Comparison between objects, events, or people, which uses "like" or "as"	

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Juxtaposition	Ideas, people, images, or object placed next to one another to highlight their differences and similarities	
Metaphor	Exact comparison between two unrelated things; used for dramatic or poetic effect; does not use “like” or “as”	
Mood	General feeling the narrator evokes in the reader through the atmosphere, descriptions, and other features	
Onomatopoeia	Word that is closely associated or identical to the sound it describes	
Oxymoron	Pairing of seemingly contradictory terms used to convey emphasis or tension	
Paradox	Apparent contradiction that, upon further unraveling, may contain truth; used for effect on the reader	
Personification	Attribution of human characteristics to something nonhuman, or the representation of an abstract quality in human form; differs from anthropomorphism in that anthropomorphism involves non-humans displaying literal human traits and being capable of human behavior	
Satire	Phrase or entire work that uses irony to critique behaviors, events, people, or vices	
Symbolism	Something used to represent a larger concept or idea	
Synecdoche	Instance of a part representing a whole or vice versa	
Tone	Speaker or narrator’s attitude toward the subject of the piece; distinct from mood in that it is not used to evoke a particular feeling in the reader	