

SOME OF THE LITERARY DEVICES

A figure of speech is a literary device in which language is used in an unusual—or "figured"—way in order to produce a stylistic effect.

ALLITERATION

Alliteration is a figure of speech in which the same sound repeats in a group of words, such as the "b" sound in: "Bob brought the box of bricks to the basement." The repeating sound must occur either in the first letter of each word, or in the stressed syllables of those words.

Some additional key details about alliteration:

- ALLITERATION IS THE REPETITION OF SOUNDS, NOT JUST LETTERS.
- ALLITERATIVE WORDS DON'T HAVE TO BE RIGHT NEXT TO EACH OTHER. OTHER WORDS CAN APPEAR BETWEEN THEM.
- ALLITERATION IS FOUND OFTEN IN POETRY AND PROSE, AS WELL AS IN COMMERCIAL WRITING LIKE BRAND NAMES AND MARKETING TAGLINES.

ALLITERATION DOESN'T REQUIRE SEQUENTIAL WORDS

The repeated sounds of alliteration do not have to appear in sequential words, one immediately after another. A phrase can still contain alliteration if the repeated sounds are separated by other words. For instance, the example below is alliterative despite the "a" and "of".

Peter picked a peck of pickled peppers.

ALLITERATION REFERS TO REPEATING SOUNDS, NOT LETTERS

Alliteration isn't just about repeated letters. It's about repeated sounds:

Crooks conspire with the kind king.

This example is alliterative because the "c" and "k" produce the same sound even though they are different letters.

ALLITERATION, FIRST SYLLABLES, AND STRESSED SYLLABLES

Some people believe that alliteration occurs whenever the repeating sounds occur in the first syllable of a word, while others argue that alliteration only occurs when the sounds occur on stressed, or emphasized, syllables. People holding

these two separate views on alliteration would disagree on whether the following two examples are alliterative:

Dan declares that he deserves to debate.

Crooks conspire with the unkind king.

In the first example, the "d" sound clearly occurs in the first syllable of each word, but in three of the words it occurs on an unstressed syllable (de-clares, de-serves, de-bate). In the second example, it occurs in the second syllable of "unkind," but that second syllable is the stressed one: "un-kind."

So which side is right? The short answer is that both definitions of alliteration are currently accepted. But, not so long ago, only the stressed-syllable version of alliteration was considered legitimate. Even today many people who really care about alliteration—poets, for instance—would insist that the stressed syllable viewpoint is correct.

VOWELS CAN ALLITERATE

While alliteration nowadays most often refers to repetition of the sounds of consonant, vowels can alliterate. For instance, "*American alliteration*" is alliterative. That said, "*open octagon*" isn't really alliterative because the "o" makes different sounds in those two words.

Open-> Woh-Pn Octagon-Awk-Toh-Gon

CONSONANT CLUSTERS AFFECT ALLITERATION

Alliteration sticklers may contest that the best use of alliteration takes into consideration how certain combinations of consonants affect the resulting sounds. For instance, they might argue that the example "*Sam speeds with skill through the storm*" is not alliterative because the clusters of "sp," "sk," and "st" have their own distinct sounds and therefore don't alliterate with each other or with a single "s."

ANTITHESIS

Antithesis is a figure of speech that juxtaposes (two things placed side by side as a way of highlighting their differences.) two contrasting or opposing ideas, usually within parallel grammatical structures.

Example is Neil Armstrong's words when he stepped on the moon "*That's one small step for a man, one giant lean for mankind."*

SOME KEY DETAILS ABOUT ANTITHESIS

- 1) Antithesis works best when it is used in conjunction with parallelism (successive phrases that use the same

grammatical structure), since the repetition of structure makes the contrast of the content of the phrases as clear as possible.

- 2) The word "antithesis" has another meaning, which is to describe something as being the opposite of another thing. For example, "love is the antithesis of selfishness." This guide focuses only on antithesis as a literary device.
- 3) The word antithesis has its origins in the Greek word antithenai, meaning "to oppose." The plural of antithesis is antitheses.

APOSTROPHE

Apostrophe is a figure of speech in which a speaker directly addresses someone (or something) that is not present or cannot respond in reality.

The entity being addressed can be an absent, dead, or imaginary person, but it can also be an inanimate object (like stars or the ocean), an abstract idea (like love or fate), or a being (such as a Muse or god).

Example: "O, pardon me, thou bleeding piece of earth."
from Julius Caesar.

ALLUSION

In literature, an allusion is an unexplained reference to someone or something outside of the text.

Writers commonly allude to other literary works, famous individuals, historical events, or philosophical ideas, and they do so in order to layer associations and meanings from these sources onto their own work.

Example : From D H Lawrence's poem The Snake

"And immediately I regretted it.

I thought how paltry, how vulgar, what a mean act!

I despised myself and the voices of my accursed human education.

And I thought of the albatross,

And I wished he would come back, my snake."

Here, Lawrence allusions from "The Rime of Ancient Mariner"

ALLEGORY

An allegory is a work that conveys a hidden meaning—usually moral, spiritual, or political—through the use of symbolic characters and events.

The story of "The Tortoise and The Hare" is a well-known allegory with a moral that a slow and steady approach

(symbolized by the Tortoise) is better than a hasty and overconfident approach (symbolized by the Hare).

An allegory can be either a short one or can even extend as long as a book.

ASSONANCE

Assonance is a figure of speech in which the same vowel sound repeats within a group of words. An example of assonance is: "Who gave Newt and Scooter the blue tuna? It was too soon!".

The above example gives the sound "u".

TO NOTE ABOUT ASSONANCE

- 1) Assonance occurs when sounds, not letters, repeat. In the example above, the "oo" sound is what matters, not the different letters used to produce that sound.
- 2) Assonance does not require that words with the same vowel sounds be directly next to each other. Assonance occurs so long as identical vowel-sounds are relatively close together.
- 3) Assonant vowel sounds can occur anywhere (at the beginning or end, on stressed or unstressed syllables) within any of the words in the group.

ANTIMETABOLE

Antimetabole is a figure of speech in which a phrase is repeated, but with the order of words reversed.

John F. Kennedy's words, "Ask not what **your country can do for you**, ask what **you can do for your country**" is a famous example of antimetabole.

TO NOTE ABOUT ANTIMETABOLE

- 1) Antimetabole comes from a Greek phrase that means, "turning about in the opposite direction," and which sums up the effect of words being repeated in reverse order, sort of like retracing steps on a path.
- 2) The Repeated Phrases of Antimetabole Don't Have to Contain Exactly the Same Words. They need not be symmetrical too.

Example:

Better a witty fool than a foolish wit.

CLIMAX

Climax is a figure of speech in which successive words, phrases, clauses, or sentences are arranged in ascending order of importance.

Climax has the effect of building excitement and anticipation.

The definition of climax includes any use of language that is characterized by a feeling of mounting intensity across successive words, phrases, clauses, or sentences, but it's generally agreed that something is only an example of climax if tension is built over the course of three or more discrete words, phrases, clauses, or sentences.

Example:

Let a man acknowledge his obligations to himself, his family, his country, and his God.

CONSONANCE

Consonance is a figure of speech in which the same consonant sound repeats within a group of words.

TO NOTE

- 1) Consonance occurs when sounds, not letters, repeat.
- 2) Consonance does not require that words with the same consonant sounds be directly next to each other. Consonance occurs so long as identical consonant sounds are relatively close together.
- 3) The repeated consonant sounds can occur anywhere within the words—at the beginning, middle, or end, and in stressed or unstressed syllables.

Example:

"Traffic figures, on July fourth, to be tough."

The above example has repetitive "f" sound.

EPIGRAM

An epigram is a short and witty statement, usually written in verse, that conveys a single thought or observation. Epigrams typically end with a punchline or a satirical twist.

TO NOTE

- 1) Epigrams tend to rhyme because it makes them more memorable, but as with all rules (especially when it comes to poetry) there are exceptions.
- 2) Epigrams often contain an opposition or a contradiction that generate their witty "twist,"

Example: "I can resist everything, but temptation"

HYPERBOLE

Hyperbole is a figure of speech in which a writer or speaker exaggerates for the sake of emphasis. Hyperbolic statements are usually quite obvious exaggerations intended to emphasize a point or create strong impressions, rather than be taken literally.

Example:

"My backpack weighs a ton"

The speaker doesn't actually think the backpack weighs a ton, nor does he or she intend the listener to think so. The backpack-wearer simply wants to communicate, through the use of hyperbole, that he or she is carrying a very heavy load.

"An endless fountain of immortal drink/Pouring unto us from the heaven's brink"

It does not actually mean that happiness is poured from heaven's end. It is an exaggeration.

IMAGERY

Imagery, in any sort of writing, refers to descriptive language that engages the human senses.

"The lake was left shivering by the touch of morning wind."

Here, the senses of the body is invoked.

IRONY

Irony is a literary device or event in which how things seem to be is in fact very different from how they actually are.

KENNING

A kenning is a figure of speech in which two words are combined in order to form a poetic expression that refers to a person or a thing.

"A Nail Biter"- A small child

"A nest maker ", "A worm eater"- Bird

The person or thing to which a kenning refers to is known as the kenning's "referent."

METAPHOR

A metaphor is a figure of speech that compares two different things by saying that one thing is the other.

The comparisons created by metaphor are not meant to be taken literally. Rather, metaphors are figurative—they create meaning beyond the literal meanings of their words.

"Love is a Battlefield"

It does not mean that love is actually a field of battle or that the person actually got a physical injury from love. Instead, they capture how love can be painful, a struggle, even a showdown between opponents.

ONOMATOPOEIA

Onomatopoeia is a figure of speech in which words evoke the actual sound of the thing they refer to or describe.

Onomatopoeia can use real words, made-up words, or just letters used to represent raw sounds (as "Zzzzzz" represents someone sleeping or snoring).

Rain- "Pitter patters", Clock- Tick Tocks

Zzzzz- Snore, Hachooo- Sneeze

PARADOX

A paradox is a figure of speech that seems to contradict itself, but which, upon further examination, contains some kernel of truth or reason.

PERSONIFICATION

Personification is a type of figurative language in which non-human things are described as having human attributes, as in the sentence.

Example:

"Sea waves winked at the sunlight"

The waves are described to be beautiful as if a woman winks at someone.

PUN

A pun is a figure of speech that plays with words that have multiple meanings, or that plays with words that sound similar but mean different things.

"Still ringed with ordeals that she was..."

The above is from Aunt Jennifer's Tigers. It can first mean the wedding ring which her husband ringed to her. It can also mean the society's typecast.

REFRAIN

In a poem or song, a refrain is a line or group of lines that regularly repeat, usually at the end of a stanza in a poem or at the end of a verse in a song.

REPETITION

Repetition is a literary device in which a word or phrase is repeated two or more times.

Figures of speech that employ repetition usually repeat single words or short phrases, but some can involve the

repetition of sounds while others might involve the repetition of entire sentences.

There are many types of repetition, but it is better not to go beyond the scopes.

SIMILE

A simile is a figure of speech that directly compares two unlike things. To make the comparison, similes most often use the connecting words "like" or "as," but can also use other words that indicate an explicit comparison.

*"A breeze blew through the room, blew curtains in at one end and out the other **like pale flags**"*

SYMBOLISM

Symbolism is a literary device in which a writer uses one thing—usually a physical object or phenomenon—to represent something more abstract. A strong symbol usually shares a set of key characteristics with whatever it is meant to symbolize, or is related to it in some other way

Symbolism can be very subtle, so it isn't always easy to identify or understand.

Symbolism can be from 1) Physical objects 2) Characters 3) events.

"In class 10 Ozymandias's statue is a symbol of destructive nature of time."