

Literary Device Examples

ALLUSION: a brief and indirect reference to a person, place, thing or idea of historical, cultural, literary or political significance. It does not describe in detail the person or thing to which it refers. It is just a passing comment and the writer expects the reader to possess enough knowledge to spot the allusion and grasp its importance in a text.

EXAMPLES:

- The rise in poverty will unlock the Pandora box of crimes. – “Pandora box” an allusion to Greek Mythology.
 - “This place is like a Garden of Eden.” – It is a biblical allusion.
 - “Hey! Guess who the new Newton of our school is?” – “Newton”, here means a genius student, alludes to a famous scientist.
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ALLITERATION: a stylistic device in which a number of words occur close together in a series, having the same first consonant sound.

EXAMPLES:

- But a better butter makes a batter better.
 - A big bully beats a baby boy.
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SIMILE: a figure of speech that makes a [comparison](#), showing similarities between two different things using the words “like” or “as.”

EXAMPLES:

- Our soldiers are as brave as a lion.
 - Her cheeks are red like a rose.
 - He is as funny as a monkey.
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FLASHBACK: a technique that permits the writer to interrupt the current story with past events to provide background or context to the current events.

When I went out of the drawing room, first thing that came into view in the open corridor way was the picture of my brother. [I just got the point why my mother used to see that portrait hours after he was killed in the WWII, and she left only when she saw any one of us coming to her.] I just heard steps and when I looked back, there was nothing that I could see. It was just a feeling of the past.

Sentence enclosed in brackets is a flashback. It has interrupted the current event in form of a sudden thought giving us an insight into the past of the narrator.

➔ OVER ➔

METAPHOR: a comparison between two unlike things that continues throughout a series of sentences in a paragraph or lines in a poem. Like a simile, but does not use the words “like” or “as.”

- Their soldiers were lions.
 - My boss is a bear.
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PERSONIFICATION: a figure of speech in which a thing, an idea or an animal is given human attributes.

- Look at my car. She is a beauty, isn't it so?
 - The wind whispered through dry grass.
 - The flowers danced in the gentle breeze.
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IDIOM: an expression that is not meant to be interpreted literally.

- Every cloud has a silver lining. (Not literally.)
 - It's raining cats and dogs.
 - Your behavior is driving me up the wall.
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MOOD: a literary element that evokes certain feelings or vibes in readers through words and descriptions. Usually, mood is referred to an atmosphere of a literary piece, as it creates an emotional situation that surrounds the readers.

- Charles Dickens creates a calm and peaceful mood in his novel “Pickwick Papers”:

“The river, reflecting the clear blue of the sky, glistened and sparkled as it flowed noiselessly on.”

- Emily Bronte in “Wuthering Heights” creates two contrasting moods through two contrasting settings. The events of the narrative takes place in two neighboring houses: Wuthering Heights and Thrushcross Grange. A depressing mood is created whenever Wuthering Heights is described. For example, in chapter 12 the narrator says:

“There was no moon, and everything beneath lay in misty darkness: not a light gleamed from any house, far or near all had been extinguished long ago: and those at Wuthering Heights were never visible...”

➔ OVER ➔

CONNOTATION: refers to the meaning implied by a word that does not necessarily have anything to do with the actual meaning of the word. Words may have positive or negative connotation that depends upon social, cultural and personal experiences of individuals. For example, the words childish, childlike and youthful have the same denotative but different connotative meanings. Childish and childlike have a negative connotation as they refer to an immature behavior of a person. Whereas, Youthful implies that a person is lively and energetic.

- A dog connotes shamelessness or an ugly face.
 - A dove implies peace or gentility.
 - Home suggests family, comfort and security.
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FORESHADOWING: a literary device in which a writer gives an advance hint of what is to come in the later in the story.

Example: Charles Dickens in “Great Expectations” uses description of weather in chapter 39 to foreshadow the momentous changes in “Pip’s” life and outlook:

“Stormy and wet, stormy and wet; and mud, mud, mud, deep in all the streets. Day after day, a vast heavy veil had been driving over London from the East, and it drove still, as if in the East there were an Eternity of cloud and wind. So furious had been the gusts, that high buildings in town had had the lead stripped off their roofs; and in the country, trees had been torn up, and sails of windmills carried away; and gloomy accounts had come in from the coast, of shipwreck and death. Violent blasts of rain had accompanied these rages of wind, and the day just closed as I sat down to read had been the worst of all.”

The above lines are Pip’s observation on the weather before Magwitch’s arrival. It is a foreshadowing as well as a representation of Pip’s inner chaos. Just as the angry winds leaves a trail of destruction in London, Magwitch’s disclosure opens a path of destruction in Pip’s life.

MOTIF: an object or idea that repeats itself throughout a literary work. A motif can be seen as an image, sound, action or other figures that have a symbolic significance and contributes toward the development of [theme](#).

EXAMPLE:

****** A motif in *My Brother Sam is Dead* is loyalty, as it has been mentioned several times already throughout the novel.

IMAGERY: using figurative language to represent objects, actions and ideas in such a way that it appeals to our physical senses.

EXAMPLES:

- *It was dark and dim in the forest.* – The words “dark” and “dim” are visual images.
- *The children were screaming and shouting in the fields.* - “Screaming” and “shouting” appeals to our sense of hearing.
- *He whiffed the aroma of brewed coffee.* – “whiff” and “aroma” evoke our sense of smell.
- *The girl ran her hands on a soft satin fabric.* – The idea of touch in this example appeal to our sense of touch.