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A literary device is a technique or tool writers use to enhance their writing, convey meaning, or evoke emotion through stylistic and structural choices. Some of the most common literary devices are metaphors, which hints
at future events; alliteration, the repetition of initial sounds for effect; and irony, which contrasts expectations with reality. Literary elements and literary techniques are both types of literary techniques are both ty
like euphemisms and allusions used within sentences. Recognizing literary devices improves your ability to appreciate the artistry of a text, understand its deeper meanings, and grasp the author's motives. Use literary devices in your writing sparingly and naturally, choosing moments where they can occur organically to avoid overwhelming or
distracting readers. Whether you're honing your writing skills or preparing for an important English exam, understanding literary devices and how to identify them is essential. These devices have been in use for ages, and as literature itself has developed, so have the devices; there are now entire books devoted to literary devices, techniques, and
related terms. With so many literary devices, knowing how they're used can get confusing. To make things easier, we'll cover some of the most common literary devices below. This comprehensive glossary with definitions and examples will help demonstrate how these devices are used effectively. The AI writing assistant for anyone with work to do
Table of contents What are literary devices? Common literary devices List of literary devices with definitions and examples How to identify literary devices? "Literary devices?" is a broad term for all the techniques, styles, and strategies an author uses to
enhance their writing. With millennia of literature in hundreds of different languages, humankind has amassed many of these writing devices can include general elements that appear repeatedly in a work of literature and the specific treatment of words that are only used once. A literary device is anything
that can take bland writing and turn it into rich, engaging prose. Literary elements vs. literary elements are "big-picture" literary devices that extend throughout the entire work, such as setting, theme, mood, and allegory. Literary
techniques are the literary devices that deal with individual words, phrases, and sentences, such as euphemisms and alliterary devices with definitions and examples Here is an extensive list of literary devices in alphabetical order,
including definitions and examples. 1 Allegory Allegories are narratives that represent something else entirely, like a historical event or significant ideology, to illustrate a deeper meaning. Sometimes, the stories are entirely fabricated and only loosely tied to their source. Other times, the individual characters act as fictional stand-ins for real-life
historical figures. George Orwell's Animal Farm is a famous allegory about the Russian Revolution of 1917. 2 Alliteration Alliteration is the literary technique of using a sequence of words that begin with the same letter or sound for a poetic or whimsical effect. Many of Stan Lee's iconic comic book characters have alliterative names, such as "Peter
Parker," "Matthew Murdock," "Reed Richards," and "Bruce Banner." 3 Allusion An allusion is an indirect reference well-known or famous elements, they can also draw from obscure knowledge, which may go
unnoticed by many readers. The title of Haruki Murakami's novel 1984 is an allusion to George Orwell's novel 1984. The Japanese word for the number nine is pronounced like the English letter Q. 4 Amplification is the technique of embellishing a simple sentence with more details to increase its significance. "A person who has good
thoughts cannot ever be ugly. You can have a wonky nose and a crooked mouth and a double chin and stick-out teeth, but if you have good thoughts it will shine out of your face like sunbeams and you will always look lovely." —Roald Dahl, The Twits 5 Anadiplosis is the repetition of the last word of one clause at the beginning of the next.
"Fear leads to anger. Anger leads to hate. Hate leads to suffering." —Yoda, Star Wars 6 Anagram An anagram is a word puzzle in which the author rearranges the letters in a word or phrase to create a new one. In Silence of the Lambs, the antagonist, Hannibal Lecter, tries to trick the FBI by naming the suspect Louis Friend, which the protagonist
realized was an anagram for "iron sulfide," the technical term for fool's gold. 7 Analogy An analogy compares the universe's entire history with a similarity that may not be obvious. In The Dragons of Eden, Carl Sagan compares the universe's entire history with a similarity that may not be obvious. In The Dragons of Eden, Carl Sagan compares the universe's entire history with a similarity that may not be obvious. In The Dragons of Eden, Carl Sagan compares the universe's entire history with a similarity that may not be obvious. In The Dragons of Eden, Carl Sagan compares the universe's entire history with a similarity that may not be obvious. In The Dragons of Eden, Carl Sagan compares the universe's entire history with a similarity that may not be obvious.
occurred. 8 Anaphora Anaphora Anaphora repeats the same word or phrase at the beginning of successive clauses. "I have a dream ... " in Martin Luther King Jr.'s famous speech 9 Anastrophe is a literary device that involves the deliberate inversion of the typical word or phrase at the beginning of successive clauses. "I have a dream ... " in Martin Luther King Jr.'s famous speech 9 Anastrophe is a literary device that involves the deliberate inversion of the typical word or phrase at the beginning of successive clauses."
sky shimmered the stars." (Instead of "The stars shimmered in the night sky.") 10 Anecdote An anecdote is a short, personal story used to illustrate a point, often prefacing a persuasive essay or speech. During a speech about perseverance, the speaker shared: "When I failed my first math test, I thought I'd never get it. But after weeks of practice, I
aced the next one. That taught me persistence always pays off." 11 Antagonist The antagonist. In the Harry Potter series, Voldemort is the character or force opposing the protagonist. In the Harry Potter series, Voldemort is the character or force opposing the protagonist. In the Harry Potter series, Voldemort is the character or force opposing the protagonist. In the Harry Potter series, Voldemort is the character or force opposing the protagonist.
act human, exhibiting traits such as speech, thoughts, complex emotions, and sometimes even wearing clothes and standing upright. While most fairy tales feature animals that act like humans, the Beauty and the Beast films anthropomorphize household objects like talking clocks and singing teapots, among others. 13 Antimetabole Antimetabole is
the repetition of words in reverse order in successive clauses. "Eat to live, not live to eat." 14 Antithesis Antithesis Antithesis Places two contrasting and polarized sentiments next to each other to accent both. "One small step for man, one giant leap for mankind." —Neil Armstrong 15 Aphorism An aphorism is a concise statement of a principle or truth. "Power
tends to corrupt, and absolute power corrupts absolutely." —Lord Acton 16 Apostrophe are universal symbols, themes, or characters. The "hero's
journey" archetype is seen in The Odyssey. 18 Assonance Assonance is the repetition of vowel sounds in nearby words to create a musical or rhythmic effect, often enhancing mood or tone in writing. "The light of the fire is a sight to admire." (The repeated long i sound in light, fire, sight, and admire creates assonance.) 19 Asyndeton Asyndeton is
the omission of conjunctions between parts of a sentence for dramatic effect. "I came, I saw, I conquered." —Julius Caesar 20 Bathos Bathos is a sudden change in tone from serious to trivial or ridiculous. "He spent his final hour of life doing what he loved most: arguing with his wife." 21 Bildungsroman is a literary genre that focuses
on the psychological and moral growth of the protagonist from youth to adulthood, emphasizing their personal development and quest for identity. Jane Eyre, by Charlotte Brontë, is a classic Bildungsroman that follows Jane's journey from a troubled orphan to a self-assured, independent woman. 22 Cacophony Cacophony refers to harsh, discordant
sounds in writing. Beware the Jubjub bird, and shun The frumious Bandersnatch!" —"Jabberwocky," by Lewis Carroll 23 Catharsis is the emotional release or purification that a reader or audience experiences after a tragic event in literature. In Harper Lee's To Kill a Mockingbird, the audience experiences catharsis when Boo Radley saves
Scout and Jem, revealing his true, benevolent nature and bringing a sense of justice and emotional release after the tension of Bob Ewell's attack. 24 Chiasmus The literary technique of chiasmus takes two parallel clauses and inverts the word order of one to create a greater meaning. "Ask not what your country can do for you; ask what you can do
 for your country." —John F. Kennedy (adapted from Khalil Gibran) 25 Circumlocution is when the writer deliberately uses excessive words, it means to write lengthily and confusingly on purpose. In Lewis Carroll's Alice's Adventures in
Wonderland, the Queen of Hearts gives confusing directions to Alice using long, roundabout phrases instead of straightforward commands. 26 Cliché Cliché refers to an overused phrase, expression, or idea that has lost its originality or impact due to frequent repetition. 27 Cliffhanger A cliffhanger ends a section or story at a suspenseful point. Many
episodes of the TV show Lost end with cliffhangers to build suspense before the next episode. 28 Colloquialism In formal speech, including slang, to make dialogue seem more realistic and authentic. It often incorporates respelling words and adding apostrophes to communicate the pronunciation. In The
Adventures of Huckleberry Finn, Mark Twain uses phrases like "ain't" and "yonder" to portray the characters' dialect and regional background, effectively capturing the voice of the American South. 29 Conceit is an extended metaphor or surprising comparison between two vastly different things, often used to create a striking or thought.
provoking literary effect. In John Donne's poem "A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning," he compasses are two; Thy soul, the fixed foot, makes no show To move, but doth, if the other do." 30 Connotation refers to the implied or emotional
meaning of a word. "Home" often connotes warmth, family, and security. 31 Consonance is characterized by the repetition of consonance sounds in close proximity, typically at the end or middle of words, creating a harmonious or rhythmic effect. "The lumpy, bumpy road seemed endless." 32 Denotation In contrast to connotation,
denotation is a word's literal or dictionary meaning. "Home" means a place of residence rather than connoting warmth, family, and security. 33 Deus ex machina beus ex machina is a plot device where an unexpected and improbable event, character, or object suddenly resolves a seemingly unsolvable conflict or crisis in a story. In The Lord of the
Rings: The Return of the King, by J. R. R. Tolkien, the eagles unexpectedly arrive to rescue Frodo and Sam from Mount Doom after the destruction of the One Ring. 34 Diction Diction refers to word choice and style. Hemingway's concise diction contrasts with Faulkner's elaborate prose. 35 Didactic A didactic story conveys a moral, ethical, or
educational message, often prioritizing instruction over entertainment in the text. Aesop's "The Tortoise and the Hare" is a classic example of a didactic story, teaching the moral lesson that "slow and steady wins the race." 36 Dystopia Dystopia
cautionary tale that highlights the dangers of political, social, or technological trends. George Orwell's 1984 is a quintessential dystopian novel, portraying a totalitarian society where surveillance, propaganda, and thought control suppress individuality and freedom. 37 Elegy Elegy refers to a poem or piece of writing expressing sorrow or
lamentation, typically for someone who has died. It often reflects on themes of loss, mourning, and consolation. Thomas Gray's "Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard" is a classic example of elegy, where he reflects on the lives of the rural working class buried in the graveyard: "The curfew tolls the knell of parting day, The lowing herd wind slowly
o'er the lea, The ploughman homeward plods his weary way, And leaves the world to darkness and to me." 38 Ellipsis involves omitting words or phrases in a sentence, indicated by three dots (...). This allows the reader to fill in the gaps or create a sense of mystery, hesitation, or trailing off in thought or dialogue. "I was thinking ... maybe we
could go somewhere quieter." 39 Epigraph An epigraph is an independent, pre-existing quotation that introduces a piece of work, typically with some thematic or symbolic relevance. "He who makes a beast of himself gets rid of the pain of being a man," a quote from Samuel Johnson, is the epigraph of Hunter S. Thompson's Fear and Loathing in Las
 Vegas, a novel about substance abuse and escapism. 40 Epiphany An epiphany is a character's sudden realization or insight. Pip's realization or insight a characteristic or quality of a person, place, or
 thing. In John Keats's poem "Ode to a Nightingale," the phrase "sunburnt mirth" describes the joyful yet laborious life of rural workers. 42 Euphemism A euphemism is a soft and inoffensive word or phrase that replaces a harsh, unpleasant, or hurtful one for the sake of sympathy or civility, such as "passed away" or "downsizing." In Shakespeare's
Hamlet, Queen Gertrude refers to the death of her husband by saying he has "gone to a better place," a euphemism used to soften the harsh reality of death. 43 Euphony Euphony Euphony Euphony refers to the use of pleasant, harmonious, and melodious sounds in language to create a soothing effect. It is often achieved through soft consonants, vowels, and fluid
rhythms. "The murmuring of innumerable bees." —Alfred, Lord Tennyson 44 Exposition Exposition is used to provide background information about characters, settings, events, or other elements of a story, typically at the beginning, to help the audience understand the context. In Romeo and Juliet, by William Shakespeare, the prologue provides
exposition: "Two households, both alike in dignity, In fair Verona, where we lay our scene, From ancient grudge break to new mutiny, Where civil blood makes civil hands unclean." 45 Fable A fable is a short, fictional story, often featuring animals as characters, designed to convey a moral lesson or universal truth. In Aesop's "The Fox and the
Grapes," a fox tries to reach some grapes hanging high on a vine but fails. He walks away, saying, "They're probably sour anyway." 46 Farce Farce uses exaggerated, absurd, or improbable situations, physical humor, and over-the-top characters to create comedy and entertain the audience. In The Importance of Being Earnest, by Oscar Wilde, the
 absurdity of characters leading double lives and the misunderstandings around the name "Ernest" create a farcical situation that drives the play's humor. 47 Flashback scenes in To Kill a Mockingbird provide context for the main narrative. 48 Flashforward A
flashforward presents events that will occur in the future. In A Christmas Carol by Charles Dickens, Ebenezer Scrooge is shown a vision of his future death by the Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come. 49 Foil A foil is a character who contrasts with another character to highlight specific traits. Draco Malfoy serves as a foil to Harry Potter in the Harry
Potter series. 50 Foreshadowing Foreshadowing Foreshadowing is the technique of hinting at future events in a story using subtle parallels, usually to generate more suspense or engage the reader's curiosity. In The Empire Strikes Back, Luke Skywalker's vision of himself wearing Darth Vader's mask foreshadows the later revelation that Vader is, in fact, Luke's
father. 51 Frame story A frame story is a narrative within another narrative within another narrative within another story through the letters of Captain Walton. 52 Genre Genre categorizes a work of literature into a specific type or style based on its content, form, or purpose, such as fiction, poetry, and drama, or specific subcategories like
romance or science fiction. J. R. R. Tolkien's The Lord of the Rings falls within the fantasy genre, characterized by its imaginative world-building, magical elements, and epic quest narrative. 53 Homophone is when two or more words have the same pronunciation but different meanings, spellings, or both, often used for wordplay or
emphasis. "The knight rode into the night." 54 Hubris Hubris is excessive pride or self-confidence that leads to a character's downfall. In Oedipus Rex, Oedipus's hubris is evident in his arrogance and refusal to heed warnings. This ultimately leads to his tragic downfall, as he unknowingly fulfills the prophecy of killing his father and marrying his
mother. 55 Hyperbole Hyperbole Hyperbole uses exaggeration to add more power to words, often to an unrealistic or unlikely degree. "I had to wait in the station for ten days—an eternity." —Joseph Conrad, Heart of Darkness 56 Hypophora Hypophora Hypophora is when a writer or speaker raises a rhetorical question and then immediately answers it. It is often used to
guide the audience, emphasize a point, or create a conversational tone. "Why is education important? Because it is the key to unlocking a better future." 57 Idyll An idyll depicts a scene of rural life, peace, and simplicity, often idealizing the beauty and tranquility of nature. "The cows grazed lazily in the golden meadow, while the brook babbled softly
under the shade of ancient oaks." 58 Imagery Imagery refers to writing that plays to the reader's senses with descriptive word choice to create a more vivid and realistic recreation of the scene in their mind. "The barn was very large. It was very old. It smelled of hay and it smelled of hay and it smelled of the perspiration of the scene in their mind."
 wonderful sweet breath of patient cows. It often had a sort of peaceful smell as though nothing bad could happen ever again in the middle of the action rather than at the chronological start, engaging the audience immediately by skipping the
exposition and later revealing prior events. Homer's The Iliad begins in medias res, during the Trojan War, focusing on the conflict between Achilles and Agamemnon rather than starting with the war's origins. 60 Irony Irony is when the intended meaning of words or events contrasts with their literal or expected meaning. It adds depth, humor, or
poignancy by highlighting the difference between appearances and reality. In Pride and Prejudice, Mr. Darcy says, "She is tolerable, but not handsome enough to tempt me," yet he falls in love with Elizabeth later, contradicting his statement. 61 Juxtaposition Juxtaposition is when two or more elements are placed side by side or in close proximity to
 each other, often to emphasize their differences, similarities, or a particular effect. While juxtaposition frequently involves contrasts. Any two things placed together are in juxtaposition, whether they are opposing, complementary, or neutral. "It was the
best of times, it was the worst of times..." —Charles Dickens, A Tale of Two Cities 62 Litotes creates a sense of understatement by negating the opposite. 63 Malapropism Malapropism is the humorous misuse of a word by confusing it with a similar-sounding one. "He's the pineapple of politeness" instead of "pinnacle" 64 Metalepsis
Metalepsis involves a complex or indirect reference. It often combines multiple layers of meaning or links distant ideas to create an effect of wit, depth, or surprise. "I've got to catch the worm," implying the speaker needs to wake up early for success, creating
a layered allusion. 65 Metaphor Similar to an analogy, a metaphor compares two different things to show their similarities by insisting that they're the same. "All the world's a stage, And all the men and women merely players; They have their exits and their entrances, And one man in his time plays many parts ..." —William Shakespeare, As You Like
It 66 Metonymy Metonymy is a figure of speech replacing the name of something with a related concept. When "the crown" refers to royalty 67 Mood A story's mood is the emotional response the author is targeting. A writer sets the mood not just with the plot and characters but also with the tone and the aspects they choose to describe. In Bram
Stoker's horror novel Dracula, the literary mood of vampires is scary and ominous, but in the comedic film What We Do in the Shadows, the mood is friendly and light-hearted. 68 Motif A motif is a recurring element in a story that holds some symbolic or conceptual meaning. It's closely related to theme, but motifs are specific objects or events, while
 themes are abstract ideas. In Shakespeare's Macbeth, Lady Macbeth's obsession with washing her hands is a motif that symbolizes her quilt. 69 Onomatopoeia The literary term onomatopoeia refers to words that represent sounds, with pronounced like the noise a
bee makes. 70 Oxymoron An oxymoron combines two contradictory words to give them a deeper and more poetic meaning. The term bittersweet combines contrasting emotions—bitterness and sweetness—to convey a complex feeling. It is often associated with nostalgia or moments that are simultaneously happy and sad. 71 Palindrome A
palindrome is a word, phrase, or sequence that reads the same backward as forward. "A man, a plan, a canal, Panama!" 72 Parable A parable is a short, simple story, typically with human characters, to convey a moral or spiritual lesson. Leo Tolstoy's "How Much Land Does a Man Need?" is a parable that tells the story of a man who, driven by greed
 acquires more land than he can use, ultimately leading to his death. 73 Paradox Similar to an oxymoron, a paradox combines two contradictory ideas in a way that, although illogical, still makes sense. "I know only one thing, and that is I know nothing." —Socrates in Plato's Apology 74 Parallelism uses similar grammatical structures,
 words, or phrases in a sequence to create rhythm, balance, and emphasis in writing. 75 Parody Parody imitates another work for humorous or satirical effect. Pride and Prejudice and Zombies parodies Austen's original novel. 76 Pathetic fallacy is when human emotions or traits are attributed to nature, objects, or animals, often to
reflect the mood or atmosphere of a scene. "The storm raged on as he felt the fury of his own anger." 77 Pathos Pathos appeals to the audience's emotions, evoking feelings of pity, sympathy, sorrow, or compassion to create a connection with the narrative or argument. In John Steinbeck's Of Mice and Men, George's decision to shoot Lennie to save
him from a worse fate is filled with pathos, as Steinbeck writes: "You hadda, George. I swear you hadda," 78 Personification is strictly figurative, whereas anthropomorphism posits that those
things really do act like humans. "The heart wants what it wants—or else it does not care ..." —Emily Dickinson 79 Polyptoton A polyptoton involves the repetition of words derived from the same root but with different endings or forms, often used to emphasize an idea or create a rhythmic effect. "Love is not love which alters when it alteration finds."
(From Shakespeare's Sonnet 116) 80 Polysyndeton involves the deliberate use of multiple conjunctions in close succession to create a sense of emphasis, rhythm, or overwhelming abundance. "I laughed and talked and danced and sang all night." 81 Portmanteau A portmanteau combines two words to form a new word with a hybrid
 Romeo and Juliet, the prologue delivered by the Chorus begins: "Two households, both alike in dignity, In fair Verona, where we lay our scene..." 83 Protagonist is the main character in a story, often the one who drives the plot and faces the central conflict, eliciting the audience's empathy or interest. In Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's
 Stone, Harry Potter is the protagonist who embarks on a journey to uncover his magical heritage and confront the dark forces of Voldemort. 84 Puns Puns are a type of comedic wordplay involving homophones (different words that are pronounced the same) or two separate meanings of the same word. "Time flies like an arrow. Fruit flies like a
 modern example is the TV show South Park, which often satirizes society by addressing current events. 89 Simile Like metaphors, similes compare two things to highlight their similes use like or as to soften the connection and explicitly show it's just a comparison. "Her smiles and metaphors is that similes compare two things to highlight their similes and metaphors is that similes are similes and metaphors is that similes are similes and metaphors is the similes and metaphors 
 was as bright as the sun." This comparison highlights the brightness of her smile in relation to something universally understood, like the sun. 90 Soliloguy A soliloguy is when a character speaks their inner thoughts aloud, usually while alone, to provide insight into their feelings, motivations, or plans. In Shakespeare's Hamlet, the famous soliloguy
begins: "To be, or not to be, that is the question." 91 Stream of consciousness Stream of consciousness captures a character's thoughts, feelings, and sensory experiences in a continuous, unstructured flow, mimicking the natural progression of the human mind. "I should go to the store, but did I leave the stove on? Maybe not. Oh, I forgot to call
 Susan. She'll be mad. Why is the sky so gray today? Feels like rain..." 92 Syllogism Syllogism is when a conclusion is drawn from two premise; one general (major premise) and one specific (minor premise). It is often used to present arguments or illustrate logic. Major premise; All humans are mortal. Minor premise; Socrates is human. Conclusion is drawn from two premises.
Therefore, Socrates is mortal. 93 Symbolism Closely related to motifs, symbolism occurs when objects, characters, actions, or other recurring elements take on a deeper, more profound meaning or represent an abstract concept. In J. R. R. Tolkien's Lord of the Rings trilogy (and The Hobbit), the ring of Sauron symbolizes evil, corruption, and greed,
 which everyday people, symbolized by Frodo, must strive to resist. 94 Syntax Syntax refers to the arrangement of words and phrases to create well-formed sentences in a language, affecting tone, pace, and emphasis in writing. In A Tale of Two Cities, by Charles Dickens, the opening line demonstrates use of syntax: "It was the best of times, it was
the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of wisdom wi
 meaning. It's the central, unifying element of the narrative that communicates statements about life, society, humanity, and the world. Charlotte's Web, by E. B. White, explores the theme of life and death through the story of Wilbur the Pig and his friend Charlotte's Web, by E. B. White, explores the theme of life and death through the story of Wilbur the Pig and his friend Charlotte's Web, by E. B. White, explores the theme of life and death through the story of Wilbur the Pig and his friend Charlotte's Web, by E. B. White, explores the theme of life and death through the story of Wilbur the Pig and his friend Charlotte's Web, by E. B. White, explores the theme of life and death through the story of Wilbur the Pig and his friend Charlotte's Web, by E. B. White, explores the theme of life and death through the story of Wilbur the Pig and his friend Charlotte's Web, by E. B. White, explores the theme of life and death through the story of Wilbur the Pig and his friend Charlotte's Web, by E. B. White, explores the through the story of Wilbur the Pig and his friend Charlotte's Web, by E. B. White, explores the language and word charlotte's Web, by E. B. White, explores the language and word charlotte's Web, by E. B. White, explores the language and word charlotte's Web, by E. B. White, explores the language and word charlotte's Web, by E. B. White, explores the language and word charlotte's Web, by E. B. White, explores the language and word charlotte's Web, by E. B. White, explores the language and word charlotte's Web, by E. B. White, explores the language and word charlotte's Web, by E. B. White, explores the language and word charlotte's Web, by E. B. White, explores the language and word charlotte's Web, by E. B. White, explores the language and word charlotte's Web, by E. B. White, explores the language and word charlotte's Web, by E. B. White, explores the language and word charlotte's Web, explores the language and word charlotte's Web, explores the language and word charlotte's Web, explores the language
their subject matter, like a playful tone when describing the emergence of a villain. If you're confused about tone versus mood, tone refers mainly to individual aspects and details, while mood refers to the emotional attitude of the entire piece of work. Told in the first person, J. D. Salinger's Catcher in
the Rye uses its teenage protagonist's angsty and sardonic tone, including slang and curse words, to depict the character trait—typically a weakness or defect—that leads to the protagonist's downfall in a tragedy. In Mary Shelley's Frankenstein, Victor Frankenstein's obsessive curiosity and
 hubris lead him to create the monster, resulting in the destruction of his loved ones and his own tragic end. 99 Tricolon A tricolon involves a series of three parallel words, phrases, or clauses. It is often used to create a rhythmic, memorable, and impactful effect. "Tell me and I forget. Teach me and I remember. Involve me and I learn." (attributed to
 Benjamin Franklin) 100 Ubi sunt Ubi sunt (a Latin phrase that means "where are") involves reflective or rhetorical questions about the transience of life, the passage of time, or the loss of once-cherished things. It often evokes a sense of nostalgia or lamentation. "Where are the snows of yesteryear?" —François Villon, "Ballade des dames du temps
 jadis" 101 Understatement Understatement Understatement is when a writer or speaker intentionally presents a situation, fact, or idea as less significant or severe than it actually wounded, Mercutio says, "Ay, ay, a scratch, a scratch; marry, 'tis enough." 102
Utopia Utopia is used to describe an imagined perfect society or community in which political, social, and moral ideals are fully realized. It often serves as a critique of current societal flaws or as a thought experiment. In William Morris's News from Nowhere, the author envisions a utopian future where industrial capitalism has been replaced by a
pastoral and cooperative society, free from class distinctions, private property, and money. 103 Verisimilitude verisimilitude
 including its social norms and racial tensions, creates verisimilitude, grounding the story in a realistic and relatable setting. 104 Vernacular Vernacular vereate authenticity or realism in dialogue and narration. Mark Twain
 uses vernacular in The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn: "We's safe, Huck, we's safe, Huck, w
dramatic, witty, or humorous effect. "She broke his car and his heart." How to identify literary devices You don't necessarily need to understand literary devices to enjoy a good book. Specific devices like personification, onomatopoeia, and anthropomorphism are still entertaining to read, even if you don't know them by their proper name. However,
 identifying literary devices enables you to reflect on the artistry of a piece of writing and understand the author's motives. The more literary devices enables you recognize, the more significant meaning you might have missed otherwise. To identify
 literary devices, it's best to familiarize yourself with as many as you can. Your first step is knowing what to look for; from there, it just takes practice by reading different works and styles. With some experience, you'll start to spot literary devices in your
 writing The most important tip when using literary devices in your creative writing is to use them naturally. Too many literary devices stacked upon each other can get distracting, so it's best to use them only sparingly and at the most impactful moments. Novice writers often shoehorn literary devices into their writing to make them seem like better
authors. The truth is that misusing literary devices stands out more than using them correctly. Wait for when a literary device can be used organically instead of forcing them where they don't belong. Want to make sure your writing shines? Grammarly can check your spelling and save you from grammar and punctuation mistakes. It even proofreads
 your text, so your work is extra polished wherever you write. Literary devices FAQs What is a literary device? A literary device is a technique or tool writers use to enhance their writing, convey meaning, and evoke emotion through stylistic and structural choices. What are some of the most common literary devices? Some of the most common literary
 devices include: Metaphor: Comparing two things to highlight their similarities Symbolism: Using objects or actions to represent abstract ideas Foreshadowing: Hinting at events that will occur later in the story Alliteration: Repetition of initial consonant sounds for effect Irony: Creating a contrast between expectations and reality What's the
 difference between literary elements and literary techniques? Literary techniques? Literary techniques, such as euphemisms or alliteration, are specific tools used within sentences or smaller sections of the text. Why is it important to recognize literary devices?
 Recognizing literary devices enriches the reading experience by allowing readers to uncover deeper meanings in the text and understand the author's motives. How can I use literary devices effectively in my writing? Use literary devices sparingly and organically, selecting moments where they naturally enhance the writing rather than forcing them
as overuse can overwhelm readers and distract from the story. Your writing, at its best. Works on all your favorite websites Related Articles Whether you are analysing Shakespeare or poetry, or any literary texts as part of your English Literature course, or need to revise literary texts as part of your English Language exams, this guide provides students
 friendly definitions to all of the essential literary terms you will ever need. This glossary covers all of the literary devices refers to any techniques that a writer uses to create a particular effect in their writing. They can
be used to convey certain messages, influence the mood or atmosphere of a text, or elicit a specific emotional response from an audience. Literary devices are collectively also known by lots of other terms — literary devices are collectively also known by lots of other terms.
they are the methods a writer uses to create meaning. Literary devices glossary Literary devices glossary Literary device placed closely thereof the characters and events represent particular qualities or ideas relating to morals, politics or religionalliteration words that begin with the same sound (often the repetition of letters) placed closely
 togetherallusionan unexplained or implicit reference to someone or something outside of the textanalogywhere two unrelated objects are compared for their shared qualities anaphorathe repetition of the same phrase at the beginning of a sentence or clauseanecdotea short and interesting story, or an amusing event, often proposed to support or
demonstrate a pointantagonista character who opposes the main characteranthropomorphismwhere an animal or non-human object is given human form, behaviour or personality antithesisa person or thing that is the direct opposite of someone or something elseaphorisma short statement that is intended to express a general
truthapostropheaddressing a person who is not present, or a thing that is personifiedarchetypea typical example of something, or the original model of something from which others are copiedassonancethe repetition of the same or similar vowel sounds close together asyndetonwhere conjunctions are left out between words or parts of a sentence
often creating a list-like style ballada type of poem that tells a narrative which was traditionally set to music and usually written in quatrains bildungsromana narrative or novel about events and experiences in the life of the main character as they mature and become an adultblank versea type of poem that tells a narrative which was traditionally set to music and usually written in quatrains bildungsromana narrative or novel about events and experiences in the life of the main character as they mature and become an adultblank versea type of poem that tells a narrative which was traditionally set to music and usually written in quatrains bildungsromana narrative or novel about events and experiences in the life of the main character as they mature and become an adultblank versea type of poem that tells a narrative which was traditionally set to music and usually written in quatrains bildungsromana narrative or novel about events and experiences in the life of the main character as they mature and become an adultblank versea type of poem that tells a narrative which was traditionally set to music and usually written in quatrains bildungsromana narrative which was traditionally set to music and usually written in quatrains bildungsromana narrative which was traditionally set to music and usually written in quatrains and the properties of the main character as the properties of the mai
each linecaesuraa pause within a line of poetrycaricaturea highly exaggerated representation of a character in a text, often for comic effect catharsisthe release of strong or represed emotions, usually by an audiencecharacterisation the act of creating and describing characters in literature, including their traits and psychological make
upchiasmuswhen words, grammatical constructions or concepts are repeated in reverse orderclichésomething or someone that is not at all original, surprising or interesting because it has very often been seen beforeclimaxthe highest point of tension or drama in a piece of writingcolloquialism the use of informal words or phrases in writing or
 speechconnotationa feeling or idea that is implied by a word that is separate from its dictionary meaning consonant sound repeated within a group of wordscoupleta pair of consecutive lines of poetry that create a complete thought or ideadenotationthe literal meaning or dictionary definition of a worddenouementthe resolution of
conflict in a narrative plot structuredeus ex machinaan unnatural or very unlikely end to a story or event, that solves or removes any problems easilydialoguethe exchange of spoken words between character is likedramatic ironywhen the
audience or reader knows something the characters in the story do notdramatic monologuea poem written as if someone is speaking to an unseen listener about important thoughts dystopianan cruel or unfair society, especially an imaginary society in the future, in which there is a lot of hardship or sufferingelegya serious, melancholic poem, often
 written to mourn the loss of someone who has diedend rhymewhen the last syllables or words in two or more lines rhyme with a full stopenjambmentthe continuing of a sentence from one line of poetry ending in a grammatical break, for example with a full stopenjambmentthe continuing of a sentence from one line of poetry ending in a grammatical break, for example with a full stopenjambmentthe continuing of a sentence from one line of poetry ending in a grammatical break, for example with a full stopenjambmentthe continuing of a sentence from one line of poetry ending in a grammatical break, for example with a full stopenjambmentthe continuing of a sentence from one line of poetry ending in a grammatical break, for example with a full stopenjambment from the last syllables or words in two or more lines of poetry ending in a grammatical break, for example with a full stopenjambment from the last syllables or words in two or more lines of poetry ending in a grammatical break, for example with a full stopenjambment from the last syllables or words in two or more lines of poetry ending in a grammatical break, for example with a full stopenjambment from the last syllables or words in two or more lines of poetry ending in a grammatical break, for example with a full stopenjambment from the last syllables or words in two or more lines of poetry ending in the last syllables or words in two or more lines of poetry ending in the last syllables or words in two or more lines of poetry ending in the last syllables or words in two or more lines of poetry ending in the last syllables or words in two or more lines of poetry ending in the last syllables or words in two or more lines or words in two or
usually placed at the beginning of a piece of writingethosan argument that appeals to an audience's morality by highlighting the speaker's credibility or trustworthinesseuphemisma word or phrase used to avoid saying an unpleasant or offensive wordexpositionthe description or explanation of background information within a work of
 literatureextended metaphora metaphor that is further developed throughout all or part of a piece of writingfalling action the part of the plot that occurs after the climax has been reached and the major conflict has happened fiction literature in the form of prose that describes imaginary events and people figurative language the use of non-literature in the form of prose that describes imaginary events and people figurative language the use of non-literature in the form of prose that describes imaginary events and people figurative language the use of non-literature in the form of prose that describes imaginary events and people figurative language the use of non-literature in the form of prose that describes imaginary events and people figurative language the use of non-literature in the form of prose that describes imaginary events and people figurative language the use of non-literature in the form of prose that describes imaginary events and people figurative language the use of non-literature in the form of prose that describes imaginary events and people figurative language the use of non-literature in the form of prose that describes imaginary events and people figurative language the use of non-literature in the form of prose that describes imaginary events are described in the figurative language.
phrases or words to elicit an emotional response from a reader or audiencefirst personwhen a story is narrated by one character from the present moment in a chronological piece of writing to a scene in the pastforeshadowinga device that moves the reader from the present moment in a chronological piece of writing to a scene in the pastforeshadowinga device that moves the reader from the present moment in a chronological piece of writing to a scene in the pastforeshadowinga device that moves the reader from their own perspective, usually using the pronouns "I", "me" and "my"flashbacka device that moves the reader from their own perspective, usually using the pronouns "I", "me" and "my"flashbacka device that moves the reader from their own perspective, usually using the pronouns "I", "me" and "my"flashbacka device that moves the reader from their own perspective, usually using the pronouns "I", "me" and "my"flashbacka device that moves the reader from their own perspective, usually using the pronouns "I", "me" and "my"flashbacka device that moves the reader from the pastforeshadowing the pronouns "I", "me" and "my"flashbacka device that moves the reader from the pastforeshadowing the pronouns "I", "me" and "my"flashbacka device that moves the reader from the pastforeshadowing the pronouns "I", "me" and "my"flashbacka device that moves the pastforeshadowing the pastfo
 used by a writer to provide hints or clues to the reader or audience about what will happen later on in the textformthe type or genre of a text that a writer has chosen to useformal versea poem which uses a strict metre or rhyme
 lines are in rhyming pairshubrisexcessive pride or self-confidencehyperboledeliberate exaggeration used for effectiambic pentametera verse line consisting of ten syllables, organised into five pairs of alternating unstressed and stressed syllablesidioma short expression or phrase that means something more than just its literal meaningimagerythe use
 of words to describe ideas or situationsindirect characterisationrevealing details about a character without any introductioninternal rhymerhyme that occurs between words within a verse lineintertextuality relationship a text may have
 with other textsironywhen there is a noticeable, often humorous, difference between what is written and its intended or expected meaningjuxtapositionthe placement of two or more things side by side, often in order to bring out their differenceslanguagethe words, phrases and literary devices a writer uses for effectlitotesunderstatement used for
rhetorical effectlogosan argument that appeals to someone's sense of reasonmalapropismthe unintentional misuse of a word by confusion with one of similar sound, often with humorous resultsmetaphora figure of speech that refers to
something by using a word that describes its qualities or is closely associated with it metrethe regular and rhythmic arrangement of stressed and unstressed syllables according to a particular patternmonologuean extended speech uttered by one character, either to others or as if alonemotifa recurring image or idea in a piece of writingnarrative them.
description of a series of events, usually in a novelodea poem, especially one that is written in praise of a particular person, thing, or eventomniscient narrator who is all-knowing about plot, characters as well as characters.
of speech that puts together opposite element sparadoxa statement that contradicts itself, or that must be both true and untrue at the same timeparallelismwhere similar wordingparodya humorous piece of writing, drama
or music which imitates the style of a well-known person or represents a familiar situation in an exaggerated waypathetic fallacythe use of inanimate objects, most commonly the weather, to reflect human feelings and tonepathosan appeal to an audience's emotion, often evoking pity, sadness, or tendernesspersonathe narrative voice that a writer
 adopts for a specific piece of writingpersonificationgiving human characteristics to an inanimate object, abstract thing or an animal perspectivethe narrator's point of view in a storyplotthe sequence of events that make up a narrativepolysyndetonthe overuse of the same connective (for example, using "and" in between every item in a long
list)prolepsiswhere the order of events in a narrative is disrupted so that a future plot point is told earlier in the narrative than it actually occursprosewritten language in its ordinary form (structured in sentences and paragraphs) rather than set out as poetryprotagonistthe chief character in a literary workpunthe humorous use of a word or phrase
 that has several meanings or that sounds like another wordquatraina stanza of four linesrefraina word, line, or phrase repeated in a poemrepetitionthe intended to influence or persuade peoplerhetorical questiona question that is used for
 dramatic effect that does not expect an answerrhymea word that has the same last sound as another wordrhyme schemea poet's chosen pattern of lines whose last syllables rhyme with other lines in a poem (for example ABAB, or CDCD)rhyming coupleta pair of rhyming lines of poetry, typically of the same length, next to each otherrhythma strong
 pattern of sounds or words in verse or prose, determined by the relation of long and short or stressed and unstressed syllablesrising action the section of the narrative that leads towards its climaxsatire people's stupidity or vicessecond personusing the pronouns "you", "your"
 and "yours" to refer to someonesibilancewords which make a "s", "z" or "sh" soundsimilea description that uses "like" or "as" to compare two things that are not obviously similar, but share a common qualitysoliloquya dramatic speech uttered by one character speaking aloud while alone on the stage (or while under the impression of being
alone)sonneta fourteen-line poem written in iambic pentameter with a strict rhyme schemestanzaone of the parts into which a poem is dividedstream of consciousnessa type of narration where a character's every thought and feeling is expressed directly to the readerstructurethe deliberate organisation of a text by an authorsymbolany image or thing
that stands for something elsesymbolisma literary device in which a writer uses one thing to represent something more abstractsynecdochea figure of speech in which a part is made to represent the whole or vice versatautologythe use of different words to say the same thing twice in the same statementterceta set or group of three lines of verse
rhyming together or connected by rhyme with an adjacent tripletthemea central idea or topic in a literary or non-fiction textthird personwhen the narrator of a story stands outside of the world of the story and relates the events using the pronouns "he", "she", "it" and "they" tonethe attitude that a character, narrator or writer takes towards a given tripletthemea central idea or topic in a literary or non-fiction textthird personwhen the narrator of a story stands outside of the world of the story and relates the events using the pronouns "he", "she", "it" and "they" tonethe attitude that a character, narrator or writer takes towards a given to the story and relates the events using the pronouns "he", "she", "it" and "they" tonethe attitude that a character, narrator or writer takes towards a given to the story and relates the events using the pronouns "he", "she", "it" and "they" tonethe attitude that a character, narrator or writer takes towards a given to the story and relates the events using the pronouns "he", "she", "it" and "they" tonethe attitude that a character, narrator or writer takes towards a given to the story and relates the events using the pronouns "he", "she", "it" and "they" tonethe attitude that a character, narrator or writer takes towards a given to the story and relates the events using the pronouns "he", "she is a story attitude to the story and the story attitude that a character, and the story attitude that a character, and the story attitude that a character is a story attitude that a story attitude that a story attitude that a story attitude tha
 subjecttropean idea, phrase or image that is recurrent in a writer's workvillanellea 19-line poetic form consisting of five tercets (made up of three lines) followed by a quatrain (consisting four lines)voltaa change in mood or focus in a poemUsing the glossary in your examsFor study guides on how to use these literary devices in your own textual
analysis, literature essays or in your own creative writing, check out our comprehensive revision notes GCSE English Literature revision notes GCSE English Literature revision notes IGCSE English Literature revision notes are course specific, so everything you'll need to ace your exams is in one neat place! GCSE English Language revision notes IGCSE English Language revis
revision notes A Level English Literature revision notes Receive news, articles and guides directly from our team of experts. In this lesson, we will explore some of the most common literature. By the end of this article, you will have a better
understanding of how writers use literary devices to enhance their writing and convey their messages effectively. Literary devices are techniques that writers use to create a special effect in their writing on a deeper level. They are the building blocks of literature, and
 what make literature so enchanting. Language evolves through the literary devices in poetry and prose; the different types of figurative language make literature spark in different types of figure this your crash course in common literary devices in poetry and prose; the different types of figure this your crash course in common literary devices in poetry and prose; the different types of figure this your crash course in common literary devices in common literary devices in poetry and prose; the different types of figure this your crash course in common literary devices in poetry and prose; the different types of figure this your crash course in common literary devices in poetry and prose; the different types of figure this your crash course in common literary devices in poetry and prose; the different types of figure this your crash course in common literary devices in poetry and prose; the different types of figure this your crash course in common literary devices in poetry and prose; the different types of figure this your crash course in common literary devices in poetry and prose; the different types of figure this your crash course in common literary devices in poetry and prose; the different types of figure this your crash course in common literary devices in poetry and prose; the different types of figure this your crash course in common literary devices in poetry and prose in the poetry and
a word or phrase is applied to an object or action to which it is not literally applicable. For example, "Life is a journey" is a metaphor. Similes: A simile is a figure of speech that compares two things using the words "like" or "as." For example, "He was as brave as a lion" is a simile. Personification: Personification is a figure of speech in which an
 inanimate object or abstract concept is given human qualities or characteristics. For example, "The wind whispered through the trees" is personification. Alliteration of the same sound or letter at the beginning of consecutive words or syllables. For example, "Peter Piper picked a peck of pickled peppers" is alliteration
 Hyperbole: Hyperbole is an exaggeration used to emphasize a point. For example, "I'm so hungry I could eat a horse" is hyperbole. Types of Literary Devices Metaphor A metaphor is a figure of speech that compares two things without using the words "like" or "as." It is a way of describing something by saying it is something else. For example, "Her
eyes are like the stars in the sky." Here, the eyes are compared to stars, which is a simile. Hyperbole is a figure of speech that uses exaggeration to make a point. It is a way of emphasizing something by making it seem more significant than it really is. For example, "I have told you a million times to clean your room." Here, the speaker is
exaggerating the number of times they have asked, which is hyperbole. Personification is a figure of speech that gives human qualities to non-human things. It is a way of making something seem more alive or relatable. For example, "The wind whispered through the trees." Here, the wind is given the human quality of whispering,
 which is personification. Allusion Allusion Allusion is a figure of speech that references a well-known person, place, event, or work of art. It is a way of adding depth and meaning to a text by connecting it to something else. For example, "He was a real Romeo with the ladies." Here, Romeo is an allusion to the famous character from Shakespeare's play, which
 means the man was a romantic. Symbolism Symbolism is a figure of speech that uses symbol to represent something else. It is a way of adding layers of meaning to a text by connecting it to something else. For example, a dove is a symbol of peace. For example, a dove is a symbol of peace. For example, a dove is a symbol of peace in the story. It is a way of adding layers of meaning to a text by connecting it to something else. For example, a dove is a symbol of peace. For example, a dove is a symbol of peace in the story. It is a way of adding layers of meaning to a text by connecting it to something else. For example, a dove is a symbol of peace in the story. It is a way of adding layers of meaning to a text by connecting it to something else. For example, a dove is a symbol of peace in the story. It is a way of adding layers of meaning to a text by connecting it to something else. It is a way of adding layers of meaning to a text by connecting it to something else.
 a way of building tension and suspense by giving the reader a glimpse of what is to come. For example, "Little did she know, this would be the last time she saw him." Here, the author is foreshadowing that something will happen to the character's relationship. Related Onomatopoeia: Wonderful List of 120+ Words that Describe SoundsRole of
Literary Devices Literary devices play a crucial role in enhancing the quality of a literary work. They help the author create vivid imagery, emphasize themes, develop characters, and set the mood. In this section, we will explore the different ways literary devices contribute to the overall effectiveness of a literary work. Creating Imagery One of the
primary functions of literary devices is to create imagery. By using descriptive language, metaphors, similes, and other devices, the author can paint a vivid picture in the reader's mind. This helps to make the story more engaging and memorable. For example, in "The Great Gatsby," F. Scott Fitzgerald uses imagery to describe the opulent parties
thrown by the titular character, creating a sense of extravagance and excess. Emphasizing Themes Another important role of literary devices is to emphasize themes. By using repetition, symbolism, and other devices, the author can draw attention to the underlying messages of the story. This helps to make the themes more prominent and
memorable. For example, in "To Kill a Mockingbird," Harper Lee uses the mockingbird as a symbol of innocence in the face of prejudice. Character Development Literary devices also play a crucial role in character development. By using techniques such as dialogue, foreshadowing, and flashback, the
author can create complex, multi-dimensional characters that are more relatable and engaging. For example, in "The Catcher in the Rye," J.D. Salinger uses Holden Caulfield's internal monologue to reveal his complex inner life and struggles with mental illness. Setting Mood Finally, literary devices can be used to set the mood of a literary work. By
using techniques such as tone, pacing, and imagery, the author can create a specific atmosphere that enhances the reader's experience. For example, in "The Raven," Edgar Allan Poe uses a dark, foreboding tone and vivid imagery to create a sense of horror and despair. Related Onomatopoeia: Wonderful List of 120+ Words that Describe
SoundsLiterary Devices in Different Genres Poetry Poetry is a genre that relies heavily on literary devices to convey its message. Here are some of the most common literary devices used in poetry: Metaphor: a comparison between two things that are not alike, to create a deeper understanding of the subject. Simile: a comparison between two things
using "like" or "as". Personification: attributing human qualities to non-human objects or concepts. Alliteration: repetition of sounds at the end of words in a sentence. These devices are often used to create a
specific mood or tone or to convey a particular message or theme. Prose Prose is a genre that includes fiction and non-fiction writing, such as novels, short stories, essays, and articles. While prose uses literary devices used in
prose: Imagery: using vivid descriptions and sensory details to create a mental picture in the reader's mind. Symbolism: using objects or concepts to represent something else. Foreshadowing: hinting at events that will happen later in the story. Irony: using language to convey the opposite of what is expected. Hyperbole: exaggerating to create
emphasis or effect. These devices are used to create a more engaging and immersive reading experience and to convey the author's message or theme. Drama Drama is a genre that relies heavily on literary devices used in drama: Dialogue; conversation between characters that
moves the plot forward. Monologue: a long speech by one character that reveals their thoughts and feelings. Stage directions: instructions for actors and directors that describe how the play should be performed. Foreshadowing: hinting
at events that will happen later in the play. These devices are used to create a more immersive and engaging theatrical experience and to convey the playwright's message or theme. Last Updated on May 21, 2025
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