

What a Difference

a Word—or a Phrase—Makes!



Literary Devices & Figurative Language

Literary devices and figurative language are tools that an author uses to draw in the reader and to give them a richer, more vivid understanding of what is happening in the story. They add layers of sound, sense, emotion, narrative, and meaning beyond the bare facts and transform the “lightning bug” into the “lightning.”

- **Alliteration:** the repetition of initial consonant sounds, often within the same line or sentence (e.g., The alligator ate apples all afternoon.)
- **Anaphora:** the repetition of a word or phrase at the beginning of a sentence or phrase (e.g., So many books, so little time.)
- **Anthropomorphism:** literally giving human characteristics to animals or objects so that they behave like a human (e.g., Mrs. Potts from *Beauty and the Beast*)
- **Assonance:** the repetition of vowel sounds in words that are close together (e.g., The rain in Spain stays mainly on the plains.)
- **Cacophony:** words, phrases, or sentences which are unpleasant to the reader’s ear
- **Consonance:** the repetition of consonant sounds in words that are close together (e.g., tick tock, Lone Ranger)
- **Euphony:** words, phrases, or sentences which are pleasant to the reader’s ear
- **Hyperbole:** the use of exaggeration for emphasis or effect (e.g., I could eat a horse!)



- **Imagery:** language that describes in detail, using words to paint a picture and immerse the reader in the scene
- **Lyrical Prose:** a style of writing that use literary devices and figurative language to create a musical quality and to evoke emotions in the reader
- **Metaphor:** compares two things to each other, but does not use “like” or “as” (also known as a direct comparison)
- **Onomatopoeia:** creating or using words that imitate the sounds of objects or actions
- **Personification:** describing an object, animal, force of nature, or other nonhuman thing using human characteristics (e.g., The thunder boomed angrily.)
- **Repetition:** repeating a specific word, phrase, or structure to emphasize an idea
- **Rhetorical Question:** a question posed that does not need an answer; used to emphasize a point or add drama (e.g., “Which would you rather be if you had the choice—divinely beautiful or dazzlingly clever or angelically good?” — *Anne of Green Gables*, L.M. Montgomery)
- **Rhyme:** the repetition of the same or similar sounds in words, often repeating the vowel and ending sounds (e.g., sweet and neat)
- **Rhythm:** the pattern of stressed and unstressed syllables; the beat
- **Simile:** using "like" or "as" to compare two dissimilar objects.

And if you want to get really “nerdy” . . .

- *112 Common Literary Devices: Definitions, Examples, and Exercises*
<https://writers.com/common-literary-devices#metaphor>
- *100 Literary Devices With Examples: The Ultimate List*
<https://blog.reedsy.com/literary-devices/>

