

List of Literary Techniques

Technique	Definition + Example
Aerial Shot	Exterior shot taken from above scene via an aircraft/crane
Allegory	Use of highly symbolic features to represent well-known ideas, such as death or love
Alliteration	Repetition of consonants at the beginning of successive words or within sentences/phrases to create a sense of rhythm <i>E.g. Peter piper picked a peck of pickled peppers.</i>
Allusion	A subtle or passing reference to an event, person, place, other text, etc. that is intended to be noticed by readers
Ambiguity	When something is left to the reader's imagination, which often involves the author not stating explicitly what is happening, what has been said, etc
Amplification	An expansion of detail to clarify a point <i>E.g. We few, we happy few, we band of brothers</i>
Analogy	Uses two similar concepts or ideas to create a relationship, draw comparisons or contrast between the two ideas <i>E.g. A sword is to a warrior as a pen is to a writer</i>
Anaphora	The repetition of one or more words at the head of consecutive phrases, clauses or sentences <i>E.g. I came, I saw, I conquered</i>
Anecdotes	Use of a short tale or amusing bibliographical incident
Antimasque	A comic or grotesque dance presented before or between acts of masque to provide a direct contrast
Antistrophe	The repetition of a word or phrase at the close of successive clauses <i>E.g. You said he was late — true enough. You said he was not prepared — true enough. You said he did not defend his statements — true enough.</i>
Antithesis	Using two sentences with contradictory or contrasting meanings close to one another, sometimes even in immediate succession <i>Eg. It was the best of times, it was the worst of times</i>
Aporia	A statement of hesitation, in which characters express themselves with actual or feigned doubt

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Apostrophe	The interruption of a thought to directly address a person
Archetype	An archetype is an immediately recognisable character, concept or object that makes it easy for audiences to categorise them based on what they resemble in literature <i>Eg. Hagrid (Harry Potter) fits the 'gentle giant' archetype, while Batman is the ultimate 'lone vigilante' archetype.</i>
Assonance	Repetition of vowel sounds within sentences/phrases to create a sense of rhythm <i>Eg. A long song</i>
Asyndeton	The absence of conjunctions
Background	The part of a picture, scene or design that forms a setting for the main figures or objects, or appears furthest from the viewer
Backlighting	Main light source is behind subject, silhouetting it
Cacophony	Deliberate use of harsh letter sounds <i>E.g. The clash and clang of steel jarred him awake</i>
Caricature	A satiric technique in which a picture, description, or imitation of a person in which certain striking characteristics are exaggerated in order to create a comic or grotesque effect
Chiaroscuro	The use of strong contrasts between light and dark which affects the composition of the artwork or cinematography
Cliche	A common and/or overused expression, often found in similes and metaphors <i>Eg. He ran like the wind</i>
Close Shot/Closeup	Shows head/shoulders, providing clear detail of a person
Commoratio	Is a rhetorical term for dwelling on a point by repeating it several times in different words <i>E.g. He's passed on! This parrot is no more! He has ceased to be! He's expired and gone to meet his maker! He's a stiff!</i>
Contrast	Any situation wherein two different or opposing things are presented together in order to highlight their differences
Cumulative Listing	Listing of things/effects to emphasise a point
Diachope	The repetition of a word or phrase with one or two intervening words <i>E.g. Put out the light, and then put out the light!</i>
Dialogue	A conversation between two or more characters/people
Diegetic Sound	Belonging on screen eg. Dialogue, sound effects, ambient noise Any situation wherein the audience is privy to some sort of information that the characters do not know, building audience tension, suspense, etc

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Dramatic Irony	<i>Eg. Romeo and Juliet uses dramatic irony to create audience tension and emotional reactions when Romeo believes Juliet to be dead and kills himself, as audiences know she's actually alive and will wake up any moment.</i>
Emotive Language	Words chosen to create a specific emotional response in the reader, often linked to the word's connotations and commonly used in highly emotional or descriptive scenes/situations
Epilogue	A section or speech at the end of a book or play that serves as a comment on or a conclusion to what has happened
Epistrophe (or epiphora)	The repetition of a word at the end of each phrase or clause <i>Eg. I swear to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth</i>
Epithet	The illogical use of an adjective
Establishing Shot	Initial shot of a scene, typically from a distance, letting viewer know where scene occurs and revealing everything that is happening in scene
Ethos	A rhetorical technique that is used to convince an audience of the author's credibility or character
Euphemism	A mild or 'proper' expression used to replace one that is harsh, blunt or otherwise offensive in order to not cause trouble or appear vulgar
Exclamation	A sentence ending with an exclamation mark or said with a tone of shock/excitement is used to express high emotion <i>Eg. "I can't believe you!" may be said when someone has done something shocking or betrayed a character in some way and elicited a strong emotional response</i>
Exordium	The opening or introduction of a speech (personal favourite, just because of the name 😊)
Extreme Close-Up	Detailed view of a person/thing (eyes/mouth)
Extreme Long Shot	A view from an even greater distance, in which people appear as small dots in the landscape (if at all)
Figurative Language	Language, words and/or expressions that have meaning beyond their literal interpretation, often used to express links between ideas, characters and concepts or subtly tie into overall themes
Foil	A foil is another character in a story that specifically contrasts the main character in order to emphasise the main character's attributes and values or compare the values of the two characters <i>Eg. Draco Malfoy is a foil to Harry Potter, as he represents the opposites of Harry's values and experiences, though the two are tied together by their positions on opposite sides of the battle against Voldemort</i>
Foreground	Part of the scene closest to viewer
Foreshadowing	The act of hinting at or setting up a situation, event or action that will later be extremely

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	important in the narrative but doesn't seem important at the time
Form	The construction and structure of a text based on the text type, the context and the author's personal stylistic choices
Frame Narrative	<p>This is often used in film and is essentially a 'story within a story', wherein the main narrative is being told, remembered, etc. by someone in the 'outside narrative'</p> <p><i>E.g. "In fair Verona where we lay our scene... Is now the two hours' traffic of our stage." As the introduction to Romeo and Juliet. Despite being part of the script, this monologue is outside of the actual plot. Therefore, the main story is in a "frame", which is why it's a frame narrative.</i></p>
High-Angle Shot	A cinematic technique where the camera looks down on the subject from a high angle and the point of focus often gets "swallowed up"
Hyperbole	<p>The purposeful over-exaggeration of a statement in order to create a more intense or over-the-top effect</p> <p><i>E.g. I'm so exhausted I couldn't move if I tried.</i></p>
Hypophora	A rhetorical question that is asked and answered by the speaker
Iambic Pentameter	<p>A line of verse with five metrical feet, each consisting of one short (or unstressed) syllable followed by one long (or stressed) syllable</p> <p><i>Eg. Two households, both alike in dignity</i></p>
Imagery	Words used to create an idea or mental image of something, most often found in descriptions or created through descriptive language
Innuendo	<p>Implying something that is not overtly stated</p> <p><i>E.g. "If you know what I mean" *wink*</i></p>
Interjection	<p>An additional thought or aside, often added in the heat of the moment</p> <p><i>E.g. "And ANOTHER THING!"</i></p>
Intertextuality	This occurs when one text makes reference to another text, either obviously or in a more subtle way in order to make a point or draw links between the two
Irony	A disconnect between what is said and what is meant, usually with the words said having a second insulting, humorous or satirical meaning
Isocolon	The use of clauses or phrases of equal length
Juxtaposition	Placing one character, idea, theme, object, setting, etc. parallel to another in order to compare and contrast the two
Kairos	A moment where the conditions are tight for crucial action; ie an opportunistic moment
Logos	A form of rhetoric that appeals to logic as a means of convincing an audience through logical reasoning

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Long Shot	A view of a scene that is shot from a considerable distance, so that people appear as indistinct shapes.
Masque	A dramatic entertainment of the 16th to 17th centuries in England, consisting of pantomime, dancing, dialogue, and song, often performed at court
Metaphor	Comparing two things by saying that one 'is' the other in order to draw stronger comparisons and often add a level of figurative meaning <i>Eg. He was a crumbling ruin of a man; once great, then left to erode into dust</i>
Midshot	Also called social shot, shows character from waist up — viewers can see character's faces more clearly along with their interaction with other characters
Midground	The visual plane located between both the foreground and background
Modality	The strength or force of a word, which low modality words being passive while high modality words are forceful
Monologue	A long speech by one actor in a play or film, or as part of a theatrical or broadcast programme
Motif	A motif is an idea, symbol, object, concept or theme that is always present throughout an entire text, playing a significant and/or symbolic role in the narrative
Narration	A commentary delivered to accompany a film, broadcast, etc
Narrative Perspective	A set of features determining the way a story is told and what is told
Non-Diegetic Sound	Sound viewer can hear, but the characters can't e.g. Music
Omission	What is left out of a text — missing scenes, fade to blacks, conversations only mentioned in passing, etc
Onomatopoeia	A word that is the 'sound' of what it represents, allowing the reader to 'hear' what is occurring <i>E.g. Bang, crash, bam, screech, eek, etc</i>
Oxymoron	Two contradictory words or concepts used together to create a strange or complex thing/idea that still makes sense <i>Eg. Organised chaos</i>
Panning Shot	Shot using moving camera to encompass full width of a scene
Paradox	An apparent contradiction that in fact has an underlying truth
Parallelism	Comparing two objects, and object and a person, etc. to draw parallels between them, includes similes and metaphors <i>Eg. He was cold as ice</i>

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Pathetic Fallacy	Giving any non-human object some kind of human feeling or senses
Pathos	A rhetorical technique that persuades an audience by appealing to their emotions
Peroration	The concluding argument of a speech which recaps the speech and urges a greater force
Personification	The attributing of human characteristics to non-human objects, by which inanimate objects appear to have life and/or feelings <i>Eg. The tree branches thrashed against the window, their spindly, arthritic fingers creaking in the wind</i>
Polyptoton	Repetition of two or more forms of a word <i>Eg. You try and forget, and in the forgetting, you are yourself forgotten</i>
Polysyndeton	Insertion of conjunctions before each word in a list <i>Eg. I laughed and played and talked and failed</i>
Pysma	Asking a series of questions that require complex answers
Repetition	Restating key words or phrases to make the text more memorable
Rhetorical Question	A question that is asked without the intent of receiving an answer because the answer itself is obvious
Rhyme	The correspondence of sound between words or the endings of words, especially when these are used at the ends of lines of poetry
Rhythm	A strong, regular repeated pattern of movement or sound
Salience	The quality of being particularly noticeable or important; prominence
Satire	Irony/Sarcasm/Ridicule with the intent of showing the foolishness/injustice of a situation, often political
Sibilance	A specific form of alliteration involving the repetition of 's' within a phrase or sentence
Soliloquy	An act of speaking one's thoughts aloud when by oneself or regardless of any hearers, especially by a character in a play
Stage Directions	An instruction in the text of a play indicating the movement, position, or tone of an actor, or the sound effects and lighting
Symbol	A word or phrase that takes on a particular meaning for the audience and is used to represent something
SYMBOLISM!!!	When an object, person, etc. represents a more complex idea, concept or theme
Syntax	The way a sentence is constructed – short, long, fragmented, compound, complex, etc

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Tautology	Repeating the same idea in a different word to add emphasis <i>E.g. English is never bored or tedious</i>
Theme	The overall message or moral of a narrative which is intended to cause audiences to think on real-life issues or moral questions
Tone	The emotional state of the speaker's voice which gives clues as to their attitude towards the subject
Tricolon	A series of three parallel words, phrases, clauses or statements <i>Eg. Tell me and I forget. Teach me and I remember. Involve me and I learn.</i>
Truncated Sentences	Blunt, cut-off, shortened sentences to create emphasis
Vector	Object that directs our eyes towards focal point e.g. subject in visual text is pointing or looking towards a certain direction
Verfremdungseffekt (Distancing Effect)	A technique used in theatre and cinema that prevents the audience from losing itself completely in the narrative, instead making it a conscious critical observer, who is distanced from the emotion of the stage