

# Literary Devices and Elements in Writing

**Rhetoric** – technique of using language effectively and persuasively in spoken or written form

**Literary Elements** – plot, setting, tone, characterization, mood, theme, point of view

**Literary Device** – Words or phrases used to achieve a greater understanding and appreciation within a literary work. These devices/techniques enhance the reader’s experience and enhance the effect of a specific literary element.

- **Alliteration** - the recurrence of initial consonant sounds - *rubber baby buggy bumpers*
- **Allusion** - a reference to an event, literary work or person - *I can't do that because I am not Superman.\**
- **Ambiguity** – Word phrase with more than one meaning - *I rode a black horse in red pajamas.*
- **Amplification** – repeats word/s for emphasis - *Love, real love, takes time.*
- **Analogy** - compares two different things that have some similar characteristics - *He is flaky as a snowstorm.*
- **Anaphora** - repeats a word or phrase in successive phrases - *"If you prick us, do we not bleed? If you tickle us, do we not laugh?" (Merchant of Venice, Shakespeare)\**
- **Anecdote** – a short and interesting story\*
- **Antithesis** - makes a connection between two things - *"That's one small step for a man, one giant leap for mankind." (Neil Armstrong)*
- **Cadence** – The rise and fall of one’s voice when reading a literary piece.\*
- **Caricature** – particular aspects of a subject are exaggerated to create a silly or comic effect. *Mr. Chadbrand walks like a bear who has been taught to walk upright.*
- **Cliché** – An expression that has been overused. *Only time will tell*
- **Colloquialism** – Informal use of words and phrases. *Go bananas, y'all, gonna*
- **Comparison**
- **Connotation** – a meaning that is implied by a word apart from the thing in which it describes explicitly. *Home suggests family, comfort and security*
- **Dialogue**
- **Diction** – Style of speaking or writing determined by the choice of words \*
- **Enumeratio** - makes a point with details - *Renovation included a spa, tennis court, pool and lounge. \**
- **Epithet** - using an adjective or adjective phrase to describe - *mesmerizing eyes*
- **Flashback** – a scene that interrupts the chronological sequence of events. Refers back to the past.
- **Figurative Language:** \*
  - **Metaphor** - compares two things by stating one is the other - *The eyes are the windows of the soul.*
  - **Simile** - compares one object to another - *He smokes like a chimney.*
  - **Personification**
- **Hyperbole** - an exaggeration - *I have done this a thousand times.*
- **Idiom** – A set expression or phrase not meant to be interpreted literally. *Every cloud has its silver lining.*

# Literary Devices and Elements in Writing

- **Imagery** – Use figurative language to represent objects, actions, and ideas to appeal to our physical senses. *I had seen the damp lying on the outside of my little window...Now, I saw the damp lying on the bare hedges and spare grass...\**
- **Irony**- Words are used in such a way that their intended meaning is different from the actual meaning. *The name of Susan’s biggest dog was “Tiny”*
- **Jargon** – Words or expressions that are used by a profession or a group and are difficult for others to understand.
- **Juxtaposition** – in which two or more ideas, places, characters and their actions are placed side by side for the purpose of developing a comparison/contrast. *Blind eyes could blaze like meteors and be gay*
- **Motif** – An object or idea that repeats itself throughout a literary work
- **Onomatopoeia** - words that imitate the sound they describe - *plunk, whiz, pop*
- **Oxymoron** - a two word paradox - *near miss, seriously funny*
- **Paradox** – Statement that appears to be self-contradictory but may include a truth. *I am nobody.*
- **Parallelism** - uses words or phrases with a similar structure - *I went to the store, parked the car and bought a pizza.\**
- **Repetition** – repeats the same word or phrase a few times to make an idea clearer \*
- **Rhetorical Question\***
- **Sarcasm** – To speak bitterly with the purpose to amuse, mock, or hurt someone or some section of society. *“Good fences make good neighbors.”\**
- **Satire** – Use of humor, irony, exaggeration or ridicule to expose and criticize foolishness and corruption of an individual or society.
- **Symbolism** – use of symbols to signify ideas and qualities by giving them symbolic meanings that are different from their literal sense.
- **Understatement** - makes an idea less important than it really is - *The hurricane disrupted traffic.*

*\*popular elements used to discuss how an author builds an argument.*

## **Literary Elements – Modes of Persuasion**

**Ethos - Ethical Appeals. The source’s credibility, the author’s authority = character, trust**  
Being competent/fair/authority, expert testimony, reliable sources

Key Question: “Do I trust this writer?”

## **Pathos – Emotional Appeals. Vivid language, emotional language, sensory details**

Accomplished by using poignant anecdotes, choosing charged language, inviting the readers to imagine emotional situations. Purpose is that evoking emotions can be very persuasive. Emotions like sympathy, alarm, or fear can make the readers want to change their thinking or to act. Emotional investment sustains readers’ attention and persuades.

Key Question: “How is the audience moved by this?”

## **Logos – Rational (Logical) Appeals**

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Logos is the appeal to rationality or reason, often consisting of the “if..then” or cause-and-effect statements. Purpose is to appeal to the readers’ intellect by stating directly the reasons why the argument is valid or by showing the underlying logic of the argument. Facts, case studies, statistics, experiments, analogies, authority voices.

Key Question: “What sense does it make?”