

Alliteration

repetition of initial sounds

example: Peter Piper picked a pail of pickled peppers. Sally happily serenaded the sandy seashore.

Allusion

a reference to something (a book, a movie, a poem, a speech, etc.)

example: “Call me Ishmael” is an allusion to the novel *Moby Dick*.

“D’oh!” is an allusion to *The Simpsons*.

Ambiguity

the situation where a word or phrase has more than one meaning

example: That actress is hot.

Ballad

a narrative poem originally meant to be sung

example: “Bonny Barbara Allan” is a European ballad about a coldhearted young woman

Characterization

Details used by the author to define a character's personality

Direct Characterization: The author describes a character's personality directly. **Example:**
"Ebenezer Scrooge was a mean, old man."

Indirect Characterization: The author uses a character's speech, actions, appearance, etc. to reveal the character's personality. **Example:**
"Scrooge swatted the homeless child with his cane."

Cliché

an overused comparison or saying

example: Red as a rose, blue as the sea, green as grass

Dialect

speech that reflects the speaking style of a certain group or region

example: Y'all come back now, y'hear?
Y'uns live a fur piece down the holler.

Diction

the specific words that an author chooses (“word choice”)

example of poor diction:

John had a very bad day.

How can you make the diction better?

Elegy

a poem of mourning for the dead

example: “In Memoriam” is a famous poem written in memory of a dead friend.

Figurative Language

statements that are not literally true
but that achieve poetic effect

example: The snowflake ashes fell
from the smokestacks onto the tired,
gray city below.

Foreshadowing

Details that provide hints as to what will happen later in the story

example: The teenager was all alone in the house when the lights suddenly went out.

Hyperbole

a figure of speech in which the truth is exaggerated for emphasis or humorous effect

example: The man was as tall as a tree. She was so dumb that she got hit by a parked car.

Idiom

A common expression that means something different than what the words actually say

example: It's raining cats and dogs.
You're barking up the wrong tree.

Imagery

description that appeals to one or more of the five senses

example: I awoke to the pleasant smell of bacon in the morning air.

Irony

Situational Irony: What happens is vastly different from what the reader expected to happen. Example: “An all-star swimmer drowns.”

Dramatic Irony: The reader knows important details that the characters in the story do not. Example: “As the teenager sat on the couch munching popcorn, the homicidal maniac snuck slowly toward her.”

Jargon

technical terms associated with a certain profession

example: The farmer pulled on the halter and the reins. The waiter waited on a four-top.

Metaphor

a comparison of two unlike things
(not using “like” or “as”)

example: I am a rock; I am an island.

Mood

the feeling that a literary work conveys to readers. Mood is created through the use of plot, character, the author's descriptions, etc.

example: The films of Tim Burton are a good example of mood.

Onomatopoeia

words whose sounds suggest their meaning

example: Snap, crackle, pop, bang

Parody

a humorous imitation

example: Hollywood produces many films that parody other films. Can you think of one?

Personification

giving non-human objects or creatures human characteristics

example: The ceiling fan oscillated lazily. The sun raised its sleepy head over the horizon.

Refrain

a repeated line or phrase within a poem

example: “American Pie” is a song that has a famous refrain.

Satire

a work that ridicules society in order to bring about a positive change

example: The novel *Animal Farm* ridicules how easily people are fooled and controlled by dictators.

Simile

a comparison of two unlike things
using “like” or “as”

example: My mouth is as dry as a
river bed during a drought. My
mouth is like a dry river bed.

Symbol

Something that stands for more than itself

example: The dove symbolizes peace.

Tone

the attitude an author takes toward his or her subject

example: Mark Twain has a certain tone when he narrates his stories.

Understatement

a statement that is restrained in ironic contrast to what might have been said; the opposite of hyperbole. Understatement is usually used for a humorous effect.

example: A man accidentally bumps into a column of the Acropolis, which causes the entire structure to collapse. "Whoops," he says.