

General Literary Vocabulary

Literary Device	Explanation & Example
Simile	Comparing two things using 'like' or 'as'. ○ "He wielded the pen like a blade."
Metaphor	Comparing two things directly, i.e. calling one thing something else. ○ "Understand: this pen is a sword, and a sword gives you power."
Extended Metaphor	A single metaphor that runs throughout the whole/part of a text. ○ "He took his crimson blade and, with it, carved rivers of inky blood on the paper's skin."
Personification	Assigning human characteristics to something non-human. ○ "The clock waved as time bid farewell ."
Anthropomorphism	When a non-human being consciously behaves like a human. ○ Mickey Mouse is a mouse who behaves like a human.
Alliteration & Sibilance	Alliteration: When multiple words close to each other start with the same sound. ○ " Anxious ants avoid the anteater's advances." Sibilance: Repetition of soft sounds ('s', 'sh', 'w', etc.) to create a hissing or whooshing sound. ○ " She sells seashells by the seashore."
Onomatopoeia	When a word sounds like the sound it describes. ○ "The bee buzzed in my ear."
Contrast	A noticeable difference between two characters, places, things, ideas, etc. ○ In <i>Macbeth</i> , there is a clear contrast between Macbeth and Banquo. Macbeth is easily tempted by the witches but hides it, while Banquo is noble and steadfast, yet openly states his concern regarding the prophecy. ○ "Beneath the lavish high-rise buildings that dominated the glorious skyline lay the Undercity: a pitiful, decrepit place, where all manners of death and decay festered."
Juxtaposition	When two contrasting things are placed directly next to each other. ○ "All's fair in love and war ." ○ "It was the best of times , it was the worst of times ,"
Oxymoron	When two words opposite in meaning are placed directly next to each other. ○ "Oh! The burning cold ! The agonising bliss ! The soft sting of her voice: sweet venom put to song!"
Repetition	The repetition of a word or phrase throughout a text. ○ " To be or not to be , that is the question."

Anaphora	The repetition of a word or phrase at the beginning of successive clauses/lines. ○ Cannon to right of them, Cannon to left of them, Cannon in front of them, Volleyed and thundered;
Types of Symbolism	Symbolism: The use of a person, situation, or object to represent an idea. See the following for some examples. Colour symbolism: ○ F. Scott Fitzgerald uses the colour green throughout <i>The Great Gatsby</i> to represent wealth and greed. Animal symbolism: ○ Owls are often associated with wisdom; doves with hope; and crows/ravens with death and tragedy. Religious symbolism: ○ The cross is an important symbol in Christianity and, if it were to come up in a text, it would be an obvious reference to Jesus. Other religious symbols include the crescent moon for Islam; the Star of David for Judaism; and the Dharmachakra for Buddhism.
Imagery	The use of vivid description to create an image or idea in the reader's mind. Imagery is not limited to sight; it can be used to evoke all senses. Other literary devices are often used to create imagery. ○ "The sky was as blue as the ocean and the clouds sailed across it like white boats."
Connotation	An idea or feeling associated with a word in addition to its main meaning. Connotation is essentially the same as an association or implication, and symbolism often operates through connotations. ○ "This clothing is affordable!" vs "This clothing is cheap!". Here, "affordable" sounds better than "cheap" because the word cheap has negative connotations, implying low quality.
Motif	An object, image, sound, or phrase that is repeated throughout a text to point toward the story's larger theme. ○ Blood is repeatedly used in <i>Macbeth</i> to represent and point toward the theme of guilt.
Synaesthesia	When two or more human senses are blended to describe something. ○ "Her silver voice is the rich music of a summer bird." A voice can't be silver, but it helps us understand the impact her voice had on the narrator.



STUDY PLUS
A BRIGHTER FUTURE

Our students have full access to all our resources on request. Gain access to our full literary terminology list and so much more!



Book your free initial assessment!