

**Literary Techniques: Techniques for Analysing a Written Text**

**Literary Techniques**

Literary techniques are used in text to express artistic meaning through the use of language (e.g. hyperbole, metaphor).

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| **Allegory** | Story with a double meaning: one primary (on the surface) and one secondary. |
| **Alliteration** | Repetition of consonants at the start of words or in a sentence or phrase. |
| **Cliché** | An over-used, common expression. |
| **Consonance** | Repetition of consonants throughout a sentence or phrase. |
| **Contrast** | Paradox, antithesis, oxymoron, juxtaposition, contrast in description etc. |
| **Didactic** | Any text that instructs the reader or is obviously delivering a moral message. |
| **Disjunction** | A conjunction (e.g. ‘but’ or ‘yet’) that dramatically interrupts rhythm of sentence. |
| **Ellipsis** | A dramatic pause (…) creates tension or suggests words can’t be spoken. |
| **Emotive language** | Words that stir the readers’ emotions. |
| **Enjambment** | A poetic technique, when a sentence or phrase runs over more than one line (or stanza). This assists the flow of a poem. |
| **Euphemism** | Mild expression used to replace a harsh one. |
| **Exclamation** | Exclamatory sentence ending in “!” to convey high emotion. |
| **Form** | Purpose and features of a text influence its construction and will suggest its structure. |
| **Figurative language & sound devices** | metaphor, metonymy, hyperbole, simile, personification, assonance, alliteration, consonance, onomatopoeia, etc. These devices have a powerful impact as they work on our senses to strengthen the subject matter of the text. |
| **Fractured/truncated sentences** | Incomplete sentences used to increase tension or urgency, or reflect the way people speak to each other. |
| **Gaps & silences** | What is not said; whose voice isn’t heard and whose voice dominates? |
| **Humour** | Incongruity, parody, satire, exaggeration, irony, puns etc. used to lighten the overall tone. |
| **Icons** | A single person, object or image that represents complex ideas and feelings. |
| **Imagery** | Vivid pictures created by words. Reader visualises character/setting clearly. |
| **Imperative Voice** | Forceful use of the verb at the start of sentence or phrase. |
| **Intertextuality** | A text makes a reference to other texts, may be explicit, implied or inferred. |
| **Irony** | Gap between what is said and what is meant. |
| **Juxtaposition** | Layering images/scenes to have a dramatic impact. |
| **Level of usage of language** | Slang, colloquial, informal or formal. |
| **Linear** | Sequential – in chronological order. |
| **Metaphor** | Comparison of 2 objects where one becomes another – adds further layers of meaning about object being compared. |
| **Modality** | The force the words are delivered at. High modality = forceful. Low modality = gentle. |
| **Non-linear** | Non-sequential narrative, events do not occur in chronological order |
| **Onomatopoeia** | A word that echoes the sound it represents. Reader hears what is happening. |
| **Parody** | Conscious imitation for a satiric purpose. |
| **Person** | First, second or third person.First person refers to the speaker himself or a group that includes the speaker (i.e., I, me, we and us).Second person refers to the speaker’s audience (i.e., you).Third person refers to everybody else (e.g., he, him, she, her, it, they, them), including all other nouns (e.g. James, Swedish, fish, mice). |
| **Personification** | Human characteristic given to a non-human object. Inanimate objects take on a life. |
| **perspective** | A particular way of looking at individuals, issues, events, texts, facts etc. |
| **Plosive consonants** | Harsh sounds in a sentence or phrase. |
| **Repetition** | Of words or syntax (order of words) for emphasis or persuasion. |
| **Representation** | How a composer conveys meaning through textual features. |
| **Satire** | Composition which ridicules in a scornful & humorous way. |
| **Setting** | Location of a story – internal and external. |
| **Sibilance** | Repetition of ‘s’ – can sounds melodious and sweet or cold and icy. |
| **Simile** | Comparison of 2 objects using ‘like’ or ‘as’. |
| **Symbolism** | When an object represents one or more (often complex) ideas. |
| **Syntax – sentence structure** | Short, simple sentences or truncated sentences create tension, haste or urgency; compound or complex sentences are slower, often feature in formal texts. |
| **Tense** | Present, past, future (events are predicted). |
| **Theme** | Message or moral of a story – makes us ponder bigger issues in life. |
| **Tone** | The way composer or character feels – conveyed by word choice. |
| **Word choice or Diction** | Emotive, forceful, factual, descriptive, blunt, graphic, disturbing, informative etc. E.g. use of forceful verbs ‘insist’ & ‘demand’ can be very persuasive. |