

THE MOST POPULAR STYLISTIC DEVICES

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Device	Explanation	Examples
Allusion [ə'lu:ʒən]	Indirect reference to a person, event or piece of literature. If the audience is familiar with the event or person, they will also know background and context. Thus, just a few words are enough to create a certain picture (or scene) in the readers' minds.	The software included a Trojan Horse . (<i>allusion on the Trojan horse from Greek mythology</i>) Plan ahead. It was not raining when Noah built the Ark . (<i>Richard Cushing</i>) (<i>allusion on the biblical Ark of Noah</i>)
Epithet	A word that creates an image and reveals the emotionally coloured individual attitude of the author towards the object spoken of	
Hyperbole	Deliberate exaggeration	I was so hungry, I could eat an elephant .
Gradation (climax)	A series of similar words or expressions that gradually or, on the other hand, decrease (climax and anticlimax, respectively) the sense or emotional significance.	... little by little , bit by bit , and day by day , and year by year ... (<i>Ch. Dickens</i>)
Litotes ['laitouti:z]	A form of understatement, which uses the denied opposite of a word to weaken or soften a message.	That's not bad . (<i>instead of: That's good/great.</i>) Boats aren't easy to find in the dark. (<i>instead of: Boats are hard/difficult to find in the dark.</i>) You're never too cool to learn something new.
Metaphor	Figurative expression based on comparing two different things	Through much of the last century, America's faith in freedom and democracy was a rock in a raging sea .
Me'tonymy	Figurative expression, closely associated with the subject in terms of place, time or background.	The White House declared ... (<i>White House = US government / President</i>) Empty pockets never held anyone back. Only empty heads and empty hearts can do that. (<i>Norman Vincent Peale</i>) (<i>empty pockets = poverty; empty heads = ignorance / dullness / density; empty hearts = unkindness / coldness</i>)
Oxymoron [,oksi'mo:ron] (<i>pl. oxymorons, more rarely oxymora</i>)	Juxtaposition of contradicting terms	O brawling [bro:liŋ] love! O loving hate! O anything of nothing first create! O heavy lightness, serious vanity! Misshapen chaos of well-seeming forms!
Paradox	An apparent contradiction that is nevertheless somehow true	If you try to fail, and succeed , which have you done? (<i>George Carlin</i>) We live in an age when unnecessary things are our only necessities . (<i>Oscar Wilde</i>)
Personification	Animals, inanimate objects or abstractions are represented as having human characteristics (behaviour, feelings, character etc.).	My blood speaks in your veins. And when she weeps, weeps every little flower.
Points of View	First-person narrator Third-person all-knowing (omniscient) narrator Third-person personal narrator (character)	Once I was sitting at the railway station... He didn't know that his company had already fired him. "This is why she didn't reply," thought Mark .
Simile ['simili]	Direct comparison "A is <u>like</u> B"	The rabbit-hole went straight on <u>like</u> a tunnel .
Synecdoche [sə'nekdəki]	The figurative expression, which is a physical part of the subject	The last morning we required all hands on deck ... (<i>hands = people</i>)
Understatement	Weaken or soften a statement	I think we have slightly different opinions on this topic. (<i>instead of: I don't agree with you at all.</i>)