

I.B. English Literature H.L.

Literary Devices

1. **Setting** – The time and place when and where a story takes place.
2. **Symbolism** – The use of symbols that stand for or represent something else. Characters, objects, events, and settings can all be symbolic.
3. **Theme** – The theme is the central idea of a story, usually implied rather than directly stated. The theme should not be confused with either *moral* or *plot*.
4. **Atmosphere** – The atmosphere or mood of a story is the pervading feeling created by the story. Atmosphere usually sets up expectations in the reader about the outcome of an episode or plot. Dialogue and, more often narration create it, by descriptive diction or imagery.
5. **Imagery** – Descriptions and figures of speech that help the mind to form forceful or beautiful pictures.
6. **Perspective** – The point of view from which a story is told. Short stories may be told from the first person (the narrator refers to him or herself as “I”), the second person (the reader is included as a character in the story) or the third person (the narrator refers to characters as he or she and is omniscient or semi-omniscient).
7. **Metaphor** – an implied comparison between two different things, which does **not** use the words **like** or **as** in the comparison; a word or phrase that ordinarily means one thing is used to describe another thing in order to suggest a likeness between the two.
8. **Irony** – Irony is a literary device which reveals concealed or contradictory meaning(s). Three common forms of irony are:
 - (a) **Verbal irony**, which occurs when a contrast is evident between what a character says and what the character actually means.

(b) **Dramatic irony**, which occurs when the author shares with the reader information not known by a character. As a result, the reader becomes aware that a character's actions may be inappropriate for the actual circumstances, that what is to come is the reverse of what a character expects, or that a character has unknowingly made a comment which anticipates the outcome.

(c) **Situational irony** occurs when a set of circumstances turns out differently from what is expected or considered appropriate.

9. **Foreshadowing** – Foreshadowing is a device which hints or warns of events to happen later in the story. Foreshadowing prepares the reader for the climax, the “denouement”, and any changes in the character.

10. **Deus ex machina – a)**(in [ancient](#) Greek and Roman drama) a god introduced into a play to resolve the entanglements of the plot.

b) any artificial or improbable device resolving the difficulties of a plot.

11. **Characters:**

a) Round characters – convincing, true to life – these characters exhibit many different and sometimes even contradictory personality traits.

b) Dynamic characters – these characters undergo some type of change or development in a story, often because of something that happens to them.

c) Flat characters – stereotyped, shallow and often symbolic. These characters exhibit only one or two personality traits.

d) Static characters – these characters do not change in the course of the story.

12. **Allegory** – narrative (usually poetry or prose)
- characters/events/setting represent deeper truths (hidden or more profound)
- usually deals with religious, political or personal issues
13. **Thesis** – The main argument (claim) in a non-fiction work expressed in a statement. A strong thesis expresses a significant assertion.
14. **Exposition** – The first Act of a play is usually referred to as the **exposition**. The function of the **exposition** is to provide the reader with the information that he or she needs to know in order to understand and appreciate what is to follow, to introduce some of the characters, to establish the mood and atmosphere of the play and to get the action off to a good start.
15. **Alliteration** – The repetition of similar initial consonant sounds.
16. **Rhyme** – A repetition of similar initial vowel sounds followed by similar consonant sounds, results in rhyme.
a) End rhyme – most common type – occurs at the end of a line of poetry.
b) Internal rhyme – occurs when a word within a line rhymes with another word within the same line.
17. **Assonance** – The repetition of similar stressed vowel sounds.
18. **Consonance** – The repetition of similar final consonant sounds.
19. **Personification** – A special form of metaphor in which human characteristics are attributed to animals, inanimate objects or ideas.
20. **Hyperbole** – Deliberate exaggeration in order to emphasize a fact or a feeling. It can be used to create either a comic or serious effect.
21. **Allusion** – A brief, indirect reference to a historical or literary person, event or object. The writer assumes that the reader will recognize the reference and superimpose the ideas and meaning associated with it into the current context.

22. **Euphemism** – The use of inoffensive, mild or vague words in place of harsher, more blunt ones. Euphemisms are often used to reduce the risk of offending or upsetting people.
23. **Euphony** – The musical effect achieved when a poet uses words and phrases that create pleasant, harmonious sounds and rhythms.
24. **Cacophony** – The use of unpleasant sounds or rhythms to create a jarring effect.
25. **Onomatopoeia** – The use of a word that closely resembles the sound to which it refers.
26. **Metre** - The rhythmic arrangement of syllables in verse, usually according to the number and kind of **metrical** feet in a line (see Poetry Alive handout).
27. **Tone** – The attitude of the author toward his/her subject. Examples include, but are not restricted to **serious, playful, formal** and **informal**.
28. **Antithesis** – The arrangement of contrasting words, sentences, or ideas in a balanced grammatical structure. For example, “do not doubt the man who tells you he is afraid/ but be afraid of the man who tell you he never doubts.” .
29. **Meiosis** – A deliberate understatement, used for emphasis, or to create a humorous effect. Understatement occurs when we say less than we actually mean, or use less emphasis than the context requires or deserves.
30. **Metonymy** – The use of a closely related term to represent an object with which it is associated.
31. **Motif** - a recurring subject, theme, idea, etc., especially in a literary, artistic, or musical work.