



Stylistic Devices operating on four levels

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Stylistic Devices

operating on four different levels

1. sounds
2. meaning
3. composition
4. words & sentences

level of sounds (1)

- **Alliteration** (opening sounds similar)
 - "busy as a bee"
 - "dead as a doornail"
 - "good as gold"
 - "right as rain"
- **Assonance** (only the vowel sounds rhyme)
 - fleet feet sweep by sleeping geeks
- **Anaphora** (repetition device)
 - **What** the hammer? **what** the chain?
 - In **what** furnace was thy brain?
 - **What** the anvil? **what** dread grasp
 - Dare its deadly terrors clasp?
[William Blake, "The Tyger"](#)

level of sounds (2)

- **Onomatopoeia** (a word that imitates or suggests the source of the sound that it describes)
 - bleep....electronically generated tone. "to bleep" often means "to mask inappropriate language on television or radio"
 - blipashort, crisp sound
 - bringg / brinng....sound of ringing telephone
 - buzz.... a sibilant humming sound, like a bee

level of sounds (3)

- **Rhyme**

- **Masculine:** a rhyme in which the stress is on the final syllable of the words. (*rhyme, sublime*)
- **Feminine:** a rhyme in which the stress is on the penultimate (second from last) syllable of the words. (*picky, tricky*)

level of meaning (1)

- **Allusion**

- An indirect reference; a hint; a reference to something supposed to be known, but not explicitly mentioned; a covert indication.
 - "As the cave's roof collapsed, he was swallowed up in the dust like **Jonah**, and only his frantic scrabbling behind a wall of rock indicated that there was anyone still alive".

Antithesis

- A device by which two contrastive ideas are juxtaposed in parallel form.
- "**It was** the best of times, **it was** the worst of times, **it was** the age of wisdom, **it was** the age of foolishness, **it was** the epoch of belief, **it was** the epoch of incredulity, **it was** the season of Light, **it was** the season of Darkness, **it was** the spring of hope, **it was** the winter of despair, **we had** everything before us, **we had** nothing before us, **we were** all going direct to Heaven, **we were** all going direct the other way."
(Charles Dickens, *A Tale of Two Cities*)

level of meaning (2)

- **Euphemism** (use of a word to make something seem more harmless or nicer)
 - [lame](#) → [crippled](#) → [handicapped](#) → [disabled](#) → *physically challenged* → *differently abled*
- **Hyperbole** (overstatement)
- Extreme exaggeration or overstatement.
 - **Enobarbus (about Cleopatra):**

The barge she sat in, like a burnish'd throne,
Burnt on the water. The poop was beaten gold,
Purple the sails, and so perfumèd that
The winds were love-sick with them; the oars were silver,
Which to the tune of flutes kept stroke, and made
The water which they beat to follow faster,
As amorous of their strokes. For her own person,
It beggar'd all description: she did lie
In her pavilion—cloth of gold, of tissue—
O'er-picturing that Venus where we see
The fancy outwork nature.
- [Antony And Cleopatra Act 2, scene 2, 191–201](#)

level of meaning (3)

- **Litotes**

- In rhetoric, **litotes** are figures of speech in which a certain statement is expressed by denying its opposite. For example, rather than merely saying that something is attractive (or even very attractive), one might say it is "not unattractive".

- **Imagery**

- **metaphor**

- metaphors state that something *is* something else.
- e.g. *Brian was a wall*, bouncing every tennis ball back over the net.

level of meaning (4)

- **Simile**

- a **simile** is a figure of speech comparing two unlike things, often introduced with the words "like", "as", or "than"
- e.g. He fights like a lion.

- **Symbol**

- a **symbol** is something such as an object, picture, written word, sound or particular mark that represents something else by association, resemblance, or convention.
- e.g. a white dove as a symbol for peace



level of meaning (5)

- **Irony**

- someone says "Oh, that's beautiful", when what they mean (probably conveyed by their tone) is they find "that" quite ugly

- **Sarcasm**

- hostile, critical comments may be expressed in a sarcastic way, such as saying "don't work too hard" to a lazy worker

level of meaning (6)

- **Paradox**
- A **paradox** is a statement that apparently contradicts itself and yet might be true. Most logical paradoxes are known to be [invalid](#) arguments but are still valuable in promoting [critical thinking](#).
- A self contradictory statement, which can only be true if it is false, and vice versa.
 - statements such as Wilde's "I can resist anything except temptation" and Chesterton's "spies do not look like spies" are examples of rhetorical paradox
- “

Oxymoron

- An **oxymoron** (plural **oxymora** or **oxymorons**) is a figure of speech that juxtaposes elements that appear to be contradictory.
- It is in contradictions like:
 - “the living dead”
or
“A deaf policeman heard the noise,
And came to arrest the two dead boys,
If you don't believe this story's true,
Ask the blind man; he saw it too!”

level of meaning (7)

- **Personification** is making a thing into a person.
 - e.g. wind whispers like a tree in the breeze
- **Tautology** is an unnecessary double use:
 - e.g. a free gift (gifts are always free!)

level of composition

- **Accumulation**
 - building up an effect step-by-step
 - e.g. a detective accumulates clues
- **Contrast**
 - bringing one thing into opposition with another
 - e.g. sunlight and shade
- **Circular structure**
 - points fitting together in a way that leads to a circle back to the beginning
- **Repetition**
 - as in the chorus of a song which is repeated
- **Train of thought or line of argumentation**
 - following something usually logically from point A to point B

level of composition



level of composition

“The true alchemists
do not change lead
into gold; they change
the world into words.”

~William H. Gass



Chiasmus

- It is the figure of speech in which two or more clauses are related to each other through a reversal of structures in order to make a larger point; that is, the clauses display inverted parallelism. Chiasmus was particularly popular in the literature of the ancient world, including Hebrew, Greek and Latin, where it was used to articulate the balance of order within the text. As a popular example, many long and complex chiasms have been found in the works of Shakespeare.
 - **eg in rhetoric the pattern A B B A**
 - **e.g. Ask not what your country can do for you, but what you can do for your country.**

level of words and sentences



level of words and sentences (1)

- **Ellipsis**: deliberate omission of a word or of words which are readily implied by the context.
 - e.g. Red light means stop; a green light, go.

- **Parallelism**: the balancing of rhetorical parts equally

Shakespeare used this device in his *Richard II* when King Richard laments his position:

- “I’ll give my jewels for a set of beads,
My gorgeous palace for a hermitage,
My gay apparel for an almsman’s gown,
My figured goblets for a dish of wood”

- *Act III, scene iii : lines 170 – 173*

level of words and sentences (2)

- **Parataxis:** placing together ideas without grammatical connection; the connection is of ideas
 - e.g. Sun was shining bright. We went for a walk.
- **Pun**
- Play on words.
 - e.g. What goes "Ha, ha, ha, plop"?
 - A man laughing his head off.

level of words or sentences (3)

- **register**: the term register simply describes the various styles of language available for writing or speaking—from the informal register of slang and swearing, to the formal academic register used when writing at university or professionally. No register is right or wrong in itself.
- **synonym** is a word which means the same or almost the same as another word
e.g. boy, lad
girl, lass

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Thanks