

GLOSSARY OF TECHNIQUES USED TO CREATE MEANING

Active/Passive Voice:

Writing that uses the forms of verbs, creating a direct relationship between the subject and the object. Active voice is lively and much more direct.

Alliteration:

The repetition of the consonant sounds at the beginning of words, used to produce sounds that add to the atmosphere or mood of the words (and may even echo their meaning).

Allusion:

A reference to another text, commonly used to clarify an idea and/or enhance meaning.

Ambiguity:

A word or phrase that invites at least two different interpretations.

Analogy:

A comparison made between two things that share something in common.

Anecdote/anecdotal evidence

A short story, commonly based on an individual case that illustrates a point, such as an idea or motive, and is often used to introduce feature articles and essays.

Anticlimax:

A point in a narrative that promises or leads to be the climax however, then fails to deliver. This may take the form of problems not being resolved, the truth not being revealed, and things not turning out the way we expected them to. A sense of disappointment is felt.

Antithesis:

Setting up an opposition of contrasting ideas in a phrase or sentence.

Aphorism:

A short and pithy (tense/forcible) statement.

Aside:

Words or lines spoken for the direct benefit of the audience or a particular character, but which other characters on the stage cannot hear. The lines may reveal the character's thoughts, feelings or motivations.

Assonance:

The repetition of a vowel sound to sound out or to create a particular effect.

Atmosphere:

The mood that is created by the language of a text.

Bathos:

An attempt at passionate or lofty (elevated in sentiment) writing that overshoots the mark and produces, instead, a comic or trivial effect.

Bias:

A favouring of one certain side of a given argument through the deliberate distorting of evidence, thereby providing an unbalanced view.

Camera Position:

The physical location of the camera at the time of shooting, which includes focus, framing and angle of the shot. This influences the audience's response to the scene and its subject.

Caricature:

The depiction of a certain character that exaggerates one or two of their actual qualities for the pure purpose of making fun of them (comic undertones).

Cliché:

A phrase or expression that has been "worn out" by overuse.

Climax:

The part of a narrative/drama where the crisis point is reached, usually occurring towards the end of most texts, after which the problems raised earlier are resolved, allowing the text to end with a sense of fulfilment that the conflict has been properly worked out.

Colloquial:

Language in the manner of everyday speech, thereby being casual, relaxed and neither slang or formal.

Connotation/Denotation:

The denotations of a word are its primary meanings (dictionary meanings), whereas the connotations of a word are the associations we make with the word.

Dialogue:

Speech between characters in a narrative or drama, used to reveal thoughts, feelings, motivations, prejudices and fears of speakers or characters.

Direct Speech:

The speech of characters in a narrative presented directly and identified by the use of inverted commas. The alternative is reported or indirect speech in which case the narrator explains what the character said and thus there is no need to use inverted commas. Direct speech is usually more dramatic because it provides the impression that it is more immediate.

Ellipsis:

The omission of one or more words in a sentence, indicated by the use of three consecutive dots or stops. Ellipsis is commonly used when quoting another text to shorten the quote length.

Emotive Language:

Words or phrases that evoke an emotional response and strongly position readers in relation to a subject.

Empathy:

The involuntary association of a reader with a character or object in a text causing a physical reaction in the reader.

Emphasis:

Stress laid upon and importance given to a word or phrase in a sentence or paragraph, usually indicated by placing the words to be emphasised in either bold or italic type.

Epigram:

A short statement containing wit, and often humour.

Euphemism:

A phrase or word substituted for one which is considered tasteless or too blunt.

Figurative Language:

Language that exceeds the literal meanings of words to achieve a special meaning or effect. The most common figures of speech are simile, metaphor and personification.

Form:

The shape, style and structure of a text-as opposed to its content.

Homily:

A sermon or written text intended to instruct and improve the audience morally.

Hyperbole:

A figure of speech that presents an overstatement or exaggeration for emphasis.

Ideology:

A way of thinking about the world and people, including beliefs, values and attitudes.

Idiom:

Phrases that mean something other than the logical or grammatical meaning that one would normally expect from the combination of words.

Imagery:

Occurs in the form of pictures conjured by a text in a reader's imagination, the appeals made to the senses in a text, and the figurative language used in a text (the similes, metaphors, personification, onomatopoeia etc).

Inference:

The process of drawing a conclusion from data or evidence, usually allowing readers to make judgements about characters or events from a limited amount of information.

Intertextuality:

The interdependence of texts - texts often make references to other texts (allusion), either by direct reference or quotation, or indirectly by paraphrase or imitation to clarify ideas or enhance meaning.

Irony:

The condition created by the difference between what is stated and what is actually the case. Verbal irony refers to saying the opposite of what you mean. Situational irony occurs when there is a difference between what is reported and what we would expect in that situation.

Jargon:

The special vocabulary of particular trades or professions, and is commonly used to increase the authenticity of a subject.

Juxtaposition:

Setting one thing beside another, usually to make a contrast and emphasise or highlight some particular aspect.

Melodrama:

Dramas that rely on improbable events and sensational action to evoke strong emotional responses in the audience.

Metaphor:

A figure of speech in which one thing is described in terms of another - the connection is implicit, whereas in a simile, the connection is made explicitly.

Monologue:

A speech by a single person of who may be alone or have an audience.

Moral:

The lesson to be learned from a story or poem.

Motif:

Any element that recurs frequently in a literary text that can help to develop and inform the text's major theme.

Objective/subjective:

Objectivity refers to being able to maintain a distance/detachment from the subject matter, meaning that a writers/readers feelings or prejudices will not affect the way an issue is presented within a text. A subjective text is one in which we are invited to think of the persona, the 'I', as the author.

Onomatopoeia:

A figure of speech in which the sound of the word is an echo of its sense.

Oxymoron:

A figure of speech in which two opposites are combined for a striking effect.

Paradox:

A statement that is apparently self-contradictory but still holds an attractive truth.

Parenthesis:

A word or phrase inserted into an already complete sentence, to clarify an idea, usually one with brackets (dashes can be used though).

Parody:

An imitation of another text in order to send it up or make it appear ridiculous. The imitation usually works by exaggerating a particular aspect (subject matter, style, tone or vocabulary) of the original text, provoking amusement in readers.

Pathos:

The feeling of pity and sorrow evoked by tragedy.

Persona:

The personality or mask adopted by a writer in a particular text.

Personification:

A figure of speech that gives human qualities to objects or ideas.

Propaganda:

Texts devoted to the purpose of spreading a particular idea or belief.

Repetition:

Repeating a sound, word, phrase, line or idea to provide emphasis and raise importance of the ideas expressed.

Representation:

A construction in a text that tries to reflect some part of the real world, literally 'presenting again' in order to challenge or support current cultural attitudes and beliefs.

Resolution:

The events following the climax of a play or story in which the conflicts and problems raised by the plot are resolved or worked out.

Rhetoric:

The art of using language to persuade an audience.

Rhetorical Question:

A question that does not require an answer because the speaker or writer already assumes that the answer is obvious by the context in which the question is asked. The audience is persuaded by positioning them in ways that they cannot easily challenge.

Rhyme:

The occurrence of similar sounds in lines of verse to provide a pleasant musical effect and to bind the lines together, thus providing structure.

Sarcasm:

The use of praise in a tone that clearly implies criticism.

Satire:

A text that uses humour and exaggeration to criticise human foibles. Satire works to portray individuals, groups or institutions as ridiculous. Unlike comedy, the final purpose of satire is to provoke thought and political change.

Setting:

The place and context (social, historical, physical, moral, psychological etc) in which the events of a story occur.

Simile:

A figure of speech in which an object is compared to another in one particular aspect, using either "like" or "as" to draw the comparison.

Slang:

A register of language associated with a particular location or occupation, more localised, more colourful, often considered more common than colloquial or formal language.

Soliloquy:

A speech in which a character who is usually alone on stage delivers their thoughts and feelings on an issue. This 'pouring out of the heart' by a character evokes sympathy from the audience.

Stereotypes:

Models or templates for a particular kind of character. Stereotypes often define groups in very narrow terms such as 'dumb blonde' or the 'romantic Frenchman'. Stereotypes can be damaging and divisive when they become the main way of thinking about a group of people.

Symbol/Symbolism:

An object that stands for something else.

Tone:

The way language is used to reflect attitudes to the subject matter and the readers. If the text is spoken (or imagined as spoken) then the volume, pitch, emphasis and intonation will carry the tone. Readers and listeners will judge tone from past experience and contextual clues. Words used to describe tone include: serious, sombre, ironic, satiric, parodic, bitter, sarcastic, melodramatic, cynical, critical, knowledgeable, excited, mournful, forceful, wise, guarded, proud, sincere, light-hearted, didactic and flippant.

Understatement:

Representing something as much less in magnitude or importance than it really is.

Voice

The sense of personality and intelligence behind the words of a text (similar to persona or narrator).

Wit

The ability to express a fine idea with precision and perhaps humour, and is subtle and clever (a witty remark).