



DRAMAMATIC LITERARY DEVICES



MRS DUTRO.ORG

Dramatic Literary Devices

Mrs. Dutro - English 9 and 10 - Manzano High School

Elements of Drama

1. **Act** - one of the main divisions of the play. Shakespeare favored the five act structure for his plays.
 2. **Scene** - this refers to a unit smaller than an act.
 3. **Aside** - a character reveals his/her true feelings by directly addressing the audience. The device is based on the premise that while he/she is not alone on stage, but he/she is supposedly not heard by any other characters. This convention promoted audience involvement and provided opportunity for puns, foreshadowing, etc.
 4. **Soliloquy** - a speech delivered by a character while he/she is alone on stage. He/she is able to "talk to him/herself" by expressing his/her thoughts, mood, or opinion aloud. The playwright uses this device to inform the audience of the character's state of mind, his/her motives and intentions, or to advance the plot, create suspense, foreshadow future events or give information about others that would otherwise remain unvoiced.
 5. **Monologue** - a long speech by one character delivered to another character or group of characters on stage.
 6. **Chorus** - a character or group of characters who give comments on the play which link acts or foreshadow coming events.
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Poetic Terms

7. **Sonnet** - a fourteen line poem in iambic pentameter with a prescribed rhyme scheme. Shakespearean sonnets use the abab/cdcd/efef/gg rhyme scheme.
8. **Rhyming Couplet** - a pair of successive lines of poetry that rhyme. Usually found at the end of a sonnet.
9. **Alliteration** - Repeated consonant sounds at the beginning of words placed near each other, usually on the same or adjacent lines.
10. **Assonance** - Repeated vowel sounds in words placed near each other, usually on the same or adjacent lines. These should be in sounds that are accented (stressed), rather than in vowel sounds that are unaccented.
11. **Consonance** - Repeated consonant sounds at the ending of words placed near each other, usually on the same or adjacent lines. These should be in sounds that are accented (stressed) rather than in vowel sounds that are unaccented. This produces a pleasing kind of near-rhyme.
12. **Cacophony** - A discordant series of harsh, unpleasant sounds helps to convey disorder. This is often furthered by the combined effect of the meaning and the difficulty of pronunciation.
13. **Euphony** - A series of musically pleasant sounds, conveying a sense of harmony and beauty to the language.
14. **Onomatopoeia** - Words that sound like their meanings.
15. **Repetition** - The purposeful re-use of words and phrases for an effect.

16. **Rhyme** - This is the one device most commonly associated with poetry by the general public. Words that have different beginning sounds but whose endings sound alike, including the final vowel sound and everything following it, are said to rhyme.
 17. **Rhythm** - Although the general public is seldom directly conscious of it, nearly everyone responds on some level to the organization of speech rhythms (verbal stresses) into a regular pattern of accented syllables separated by unaccented syllables.
 18. **Scansion** - the conscious measure of the pattern of stressed and unstressed syllables in a line of poetry.
 19. **Enjambment** - (in verse) the continuation of a sentence without a pause beyond the end of a line, couplet, or stanza.
 20. **Caesura** - (in modern verse) a pause in the middle of a line, usually indicated by punctuation
 21. **End Stop** - an end-stop occurs when a line of poetry ends with a period or definite punctuation mark, such as a colon. When lines are end-stopped, each line is its own phrase or unit of syntax. So when you read an end-stopped line, you'll naturally pause.
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Literary Devices

22. **Allusion** - A brief reference to some person, historical event, work of art, or Biblical or mythological situation or character.
 23. **Dramatic Irony** - Occurs when a character's words or acts carry a larger meaning that the character does not perceive. He/she expects the opposite of what fate holds in store, or unknowingly says something that has a double meaning. The audience, however, is fully aware of the character's situation.
 24. **Foreshadowing** - An author's use of "hints" which prepare the reader for future events or the outcome
 25. **Euphemism** - An understatement, used to lessen the effect of a statement; substituting something innocuous for something that might be offensive or hurtful.
 26. **Apostrophe** - Speaking directly to a real or imagined listener or inanimate object; addressing that person or thing by name.
 27. **Symbol** - An ordinary object, event, animal, or person to which we have attached extraordinary meaning and significance – a flag to represent a country, a lion to represent courage, a wall to symbolize separation.
 28. **Rhetorical Question** - A question solely for effect, which does not require an answer. By the implication the answer is obvious, it is a means of achieving an emphasis stronger than a direct statement.
 29. **Synesthesia** - An attempt to fuse different senses by describing one kind of sense impression in words normally used to describe another.
 30. **Parallelism** - the use of components in a sentence that are grammatically the same; or similar in their construction, sound, meaning or meter.
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Imagery

31. **Imagery** - The use of vivid language to generate ideas and/or evoke mental images, not only of the visual sense, but of sensation and emotion as well.
32. **Hyperbole** - An outrageous exaggeration used for effect.
33. **Metaphor** - A direct comparison between two unlike things, stating that one is the other or does the action of the other.
34. **Simile** - A direct comparison of two unlike things using "like" or "as."

- 35. **Paradox** - A statement in which a seeming contradiction may reveal an unexpected truth.
- 36. **Pathetic Fallacy** - a figure of speech that describes nature or inanimate things in a way that is sympathetic to or prophetic about the events in the plot and/or the emotions of the characters
- 37. **Personification** - Attributing human characteristics to an inanimate object or abstract idea.
- 38. **Pun** - a play on words; used artfully by Shakespeare for comedy and often creates irony. It is the humorous use of a word or of words which are formed (homographs) or sound alike (homophones) but have different meanings
- 39. **Understatement** - weakly stating or expressing feelings or ideas for effect
- 40. **Litote** - a figure of speech which employs an understatement by using double negatives or, in other words, positive statement is expressed by negating its opposite expressions.

Elements Common to Shakespearean Tragedy

- 41. **Tragedy** - a drama in which a disastrous series of events happens to the hero. This hero is often an individual of a higher rank, who faces a tragic end because of several poor decisions. A downfall results when greed, pride or ambition override a hero's otherwise good sense.
- 42. **Tragic Hero** - a hero who is torn by an internal conflict. The hero simply makes a wrong choice which triggers a series of negative events. Once the bad decision is made, the hero is helpless to stop the tragedy.
- 43. **Tragic Flaw** - a negative quality or weakness within the hero. Often leads him to make a poor decision which leads to his downfall. Greed, ambition, indecision, jealousy, blindness and thirst for power are common flaws.
- 44. **Hubris** - excessive pride or self-confidence which leads to a downfall. Often a tragic flaw of Shakespeare's tragic characters.
- 45. **Hamartia** - an ancient Greek theatre term meaning the error, frailty, mistaken judgment or misstep through which the fortunes of the hero of a tragedy are reversed. Hamartia must express itself through a definite action, or, failure to perform a definite action. Hamartia can result from bad judgment, a bad character, ignorance, inherited weakness, or accident. This error does not always result from an error in character.
- 46. **Nemesis** - refers to a character who is an archenemy of the protagonist; can be considered the antagonist in a short story
- 47. **Pathos** - The portrayal of an incident which arouses strong feelings in the reader, often of pity and sadness.
- 48. **Poetic Justice** - an ideal situation in which good is rewarded and evil is punished.