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Considerations for analysing novels and short stories

When analysing a novel or short story, the following elements should be considered: the context, setting, characters, plot, literary devices, and themes. This note will look at these in turn (after that a list of specific questions to ask is given in Critical Reading Checklist on page 3.)

What was the *Context* the novel was written in? Did this affect the choices the writer made when writing the novel. Eg. Tolkien fought in the Battle of the Somme during World War 1 where some of his closest friends were killed – this may well have affected his sentiments about war and how he wrote about conflicts in his work as in the great war fought by a group of friends in the Lord of the Rings. In *The Left Hand of Darkness*, Le Guin was writing in a social environment of increasing feminism and sexual freedom and political concerns about the Vietnam and Cold War and this would have affected the way she handled those themes in that book.

What *Setting* did the author use? And why was that choice made? In Shakespeare's *Othello*, for example, the setting is Italy, although Shakespeare was writing in England. He set his play elsewhere, in part, so he could make social commentary about England without incurring the wrath of English rulers.

- What aspects make up the setting?
 - Geography, weather, time of day, social conditions?
- What role does setting play in the story? Is it an important part of the plot or theme? Or is it just a backdrop against which the action takes place?
- In which time period is the story set – is this relevant or could it be set in any time period - present, the past, or the future? Does the time period affect the language, Wikipedia) shows some common plot devices.

Plot

- What are the most important events?
- How is the plot structured? Is it linear, chronological or does it move back and forth?
- Are there turning points, a climax and/or an anti-climax?
- Is the plot believable?

Table 1 lists a range of plot devices.

Conflict or tension is usually the heart of the novel. Conflict may be internal or external. Internally a character may be in conflict with his or her own values, morality, beliefs, religions, conscience, emotions or thoughts.

Externally they may be in conflict with: God, other characters, society, the law of the land, their employer, their friends (and enemies), their children, nature, technology, a belief system, the government, the supernatural, or even their own destiny.

- How would you describe the main conflict?
 - Is it internal where the character suffers inwardly?
 - is it external caused by the surroundings or environment the main character finds himself/herself in?

Are *Chapters* and *Sections* used? Why? Or if not, why not?

Why did the author select the particular set of *Characters* used in the novel? What are the characteristics of each character? Why did the author choose these characteristics? What is the character's role in the story – are they a protagonist or an antagonist? Are they a primary or secondary character? How convincing is the portrayal of each character? Which characters do we like or trust and which do we not. Are the characters moral or amoral? Are they flawed (and the more interesting for being flawed?). For example, in Harry Potter, Dumbledore is a threat to Cornelius Fudge because of his power and influence. In being frightened and resentful of Dumbledore, Fudge shows himself to be a weak man who blames others for his mistakes—Rowling's comment on government.

Characterization deals with how the characters are described.

- through dialogue?
- by the way they speak?
- physical appearance? thoughts and feelings?
- interaction – the way they act towards other characters?
- Are they static characters who do not change?
- Do they develop by the end of the story?
- What type of characters are they?
- What qualities stand out?
- Are they stereotypes?
- Are the characters believable?

Points of View - The *narrator* is the person telling the story. Whoever is telling a story will influence the reader's understanding of what happens so we must ask who is telling the story?

- Who is the narrator or speaker in the story? Are there multiple narrators?
- Is the narrator the main character?
- Does the author speak through one of the characters?
- Is the story written in the first person "I" point of view?
- Is the story written in a detached third person "he/she" point of view?
- Is the story written in an "all-knowing" 3rd person who can reveal what all the characters are thinking and doing at all times and in all places? is he/she reliable or not?
- Contradictions: there may be a contradiction in what a character says or what he/she does. Or there may be a contradiction between ideas at the sentence level or in an action

Table 2: List of narrative perspectives lists the possible narrative perspectives in more detail.

Various *Literary devices* help convey meaning or create a mood. Look for these in a story to identify key points and their contribution to the author's overall meaning. These could include Allusions, Foreshadowing, Irony, Symbolism etc – see below.

What *Themes* are used? Common themes are love, sex, war, compassion, friendship, authority, coming of age, human rights, feminism, racism, education, human nature, good vs evil, religion, love, family problems, faith, alienation, anger, social structure, the meaning or non-meaning of life, the individual vs the collective, death. What is the author saying in each thematic area? For example, T.H. White's *The Once and Future King* deals with the theme of authority, among others. Other Arthurian writers associate King Arthur's greatness with military glory and valorous deeds. White is different in that he presents Arthur as a political innovator and implies that king is not great because of an aptitude for war, but because of his ability to balance government strength and social justice.

Which *Styles* does the author use? This will be determined by imagery, tone and feeling. Examples are ironic, humorous, cold, dramatic.

- Is the text full of figurative language?
- Does the author use a lot of symbolism? Metaphors, similes?
An example of a metaphor is when someone says, "My love, you *are* a rose".
An example of a simile is "My darling, you are *like* a rose."
- What images are used?

Critical Reading Checklist

1. What is the structure of the piece? What forms are used: focalisation (different points of view), anachrony (flashback/flashforward), do things happen in a linear order, or does the story move backwards and forwards across a timeline in a non-linear fashion. What is the mix between showing and telling? Is it appropriate for this type of piece?¹ The narrator may speak as a particular character or may be the

¹ If the narrator tells the story by presenting the actions (and sometimes thoughts) of the characters directly to the readers or audience, this is diegetic. Diegetic elements are part of

"invisible narrator" or even the "all-knowing narrator" who speaks from above in the form of commenting on the action or the characters. Is the selection of narrator appropriate? Does the piece have a satisfying order and rhythm to its structure?

What is the form of the piece? The four major literary forms: prose, fiction prose, poetry, and drama. These can be broken down into a huge subset of genres.

A genre is a specific style or category of writing. Forms and genres join with content to create the meaning of a piece of writing. A list of genres is given in

the fictional world ("part of the story"), as opposed to non-diegetic elements which are stylistic elements of how the narrator tells the story. Mimesis on the other hand *shows*, rather than *tells*, by means of directly describing the action in the story and asking the reader to deduce the underlying implications (eg the emotions or intent of the characters).

2. Appendix 1 – Genres but does categorising the piece into a particular genre tell us very much – I'm not convinced this is very helpful question.
3. At its core, every story has five elements: introduction, rising action, climax, falling action, and resolution. How well is the story paced? How well is each individual scene paced? Does the story start at the right place, does it draw the reader in, does it move towards and reach a satisfactory conclusion? Does it end at the right place?
4. What is the emotional temperature of this piece? Is it suited to the themes and material presented?
5. Does the author have an underlying didactic social or political agenda? Is this hidden or overt? Does it help or hinder the overall effect of the narrative?
6. What type of plot is being used? Is it a simple linear narrative or something more complex?
7. Who are the narrators? Are they reliable or unreliable? What level of ambiguity is present in the different narrator viewpoints? What is the author trying to achieve with their selected narrators – is this the best selection? What are the facts (if any) that the story is based on? Is there an element of life writing in the piece? Is it authentic?
8. Which Points of View are being used in the piece – if there are multiple POV, are the changes between POVs handled effectively? (The changes could be seamless or they could be disjointed and disturbing depending on what effect the author was trying to achieve). If there is ambiguity between the POVs presented, does this add tension and interest to the story, or does it distract or upset the reader?
9. What happens at the surface narrative layer? What is happening between the characters under the surface? Does each character have the same view of events in the piece - or do they have differing views and how does this affect what the reader thinks?
10. Why did you think the author write the piece?
11. Is the piece aimed at being commercially successful - was the author's intention - or do they have some other objective in mind?
12. What is the sentence style - does it vary? In what way? Does the author use punctuation innovatively? How do the paragraph sizes vary? Does the layout of the text on the page vary? Do any of these considerations help or hinder the pace of the work and the impression it leaves on the reader?
13. Is the syntax of the piece appropriate? Does the pattern of grammar or the formation of sentences or phrases, grammatical arrangement? (It may be best to read the piece out loud). Does the author choose to use unusual sentence structure, perhaps a one-word sentence or putting the verb before the subject? Are sentences used without a main verb and are they affective? Are too many adverbs used in place of showing action/characterisation by other means? How does the syntax change the tone of the book? Is the syntax used in the dialogue of each character appropriate to that

character's personality and background?

14. How appropriate is the vocabulary used? What is the expected readership of the piece – does the vocabulary suit the readership? Does the vocabulary suit the themes and material presented in the piece? Are colloquialisms used – are they authentic to the characters and settings? If the characters have regional accents is this successfully portrayed in the text?
15. Are the semantics of the words used appropriate? E.g. If the piece describes a person as "threadbare" that might seem odd because that word usually means frayed and a person isn't often frayed. But it can also mean worn out and a person might have that quality so it could be appropriate to use it for a character in the correct context.
16. Can you discern patterns, leitmotifs or running themes throughout the piece? Are there patterns in characters, mood or word choice? Are there connections between objects, characters, themes, moods between one part of the piece and other parts and, if so, does this successfully enhance the piece?
17. How well does the piece use effective imagery? Are similes and metaphors used appropriately? Is the piece overwritten with too much literary language? Or is it dull and sparse? Does the prose paint clear, vivid pictures in your mind as you read it? If the imagery is drawn from speculations on the part of the viewer, is this an authentic view?
18. Look for foreshadowing, irony, humour and other literary devices used to move the story along. A list of literary devices is given below in Table 3: Types of Literary Device. Whichever devices are used – are they used effectively and successfully?
19. Is a successful balance achieved between the way we are told directly about the characters thoughts and motivations (externalisation) and what we can deduce about their thoughts and motivations (internalisation)?
20. Has the author found a unique voice? What are the characteristics of this voice?

A list of literary devices to look out is shown in Table 3 on page 24.

Tables

Name	Definition	Example
Backstory	Past events or background that add meaning to current circumstances.	Though The Lord of the Rings trilogy takes place in a relatively short period towards the end of the 3021-year Third Age, the narration gives glimpses of the mythological and historical events which took place earlier in the Third age leading up to the action in the novel, and in the First and Second Age.
Checkhov's Gun	A dramatic principle that requires every element in a narrative to be irreplaceable, with anything else removed.	"Remove everything that has no relevance to the story. If you say in the first chapter that there is a rifle hanging on the wall, in the second or third chapter it absolutely must go off. If it's not going to be fired, it shouldn't be hanging there." — Anton Chekhov
Cliffhanger	A chapter or episode ends with some issues unresolved, often leaving the protagonist's in a position of physical, emotional or psychological peril, with the intent of making the audience read/watch the next instalment.	The ending of most Dr Who episodes.
Deus a Machina (a machination, or act of god; lit. "god out of the machine")	Resolving the primary conflict by a means unrelated to the story (e.g., a god appears and solves everything). This device dates back to ancient Greek theater, but can be a clumsy method that frustrates the audience.	The phrase originates from Medea, an ancient Greek drama. An example occurs in Mighty Aphrodite and the Tamil movie Inga Enna Solluthu.
Eucatastrophe	Coined by J. R. R. Tolkien, a climactic event through which the protagonist appears to be facing a catastrophic change. However, this change does not materialise and the protagonist finds himself as the benefactor of such a climactic event; contrast peripety/peripeteia.	At the end of The Lord of the Rings, Gollum forcibly takes away the Ring from Frodo, suggesting that Sauron would eventually take over Middle Earth. However, Gollum celebrates too eagerly and clumsily falls into the lava, whereby the ring is destroyed and with it Sauron's power. In a way, Gollum does what Frodo and the Fellowship of the Ring intended to do through the whole plot of the trilogy, which was to throw the ring into the lake of fire in the heart of Mount Doom.

Name	Definition	Example
Flashback (or analeptic reference)	A scene that reveals some past actions or events that inform the reader about what is happening in the current timeframe in the novel.	The story of "The Three Apples" in Arabian Nights tale begins with the discovery of a young woman's dead body. After the murderer later reveals himself, he narrates his reasons for the murder as a flashback of events leading up to the discovery of her dead body at the beginning of the story.
Flashforward, prolepsis		Occurs in A Christmas Carol when Mr. Scrooge visits the ghost of the future. It is also frequent in the later seasons of the television series Lost.
Foreshadowing	This device introduces tension into a dialogue the author indirectly hints at what is to come later in the story – using either dialogue, description, or the characters' actions.	This device introduces tension into a dialogue the author indirectly hints at what is to come later in the story – using either dialogue, description, or the characters' actions.
Frame story, story within a story	A main story encompasses series of linked shorter stories.	Early examples include Panchatantra, Kalila and Dimna, Arabian Nights, and The Decameron. More modern examples are Brian Jacques's 1999 The Legend of Luke and Ramsay Wood's 2011 Kalila and Dimna update, subtitled Fables of Conflict and Intrigue.
Framing Device	A single action, scene, event, setting, or any element of significance at the beginning and end of a work. The use of framing devices allows frame stories to exist.	In <i>Arabian Nights</i> , Scheherazade, the newly wed wife to the King, is the framing device. As a character, she is telling the "1,001 stories" to the King, in order to delay her execution night by night. However, as a framing device her purpose for existing is to tell the same 1,001 stories to the reader.
In media res	Starting the story in the middle of the action without any detailed preamble. Intended to immediately draw the reader into the narrative and cause them to continue to read on.	The <i>Iliad</i> and the <i>Odyssey</i> of Homer are prime examples. The latter work begins with the return of Odysseus to his home of Ithaca and then in flashbacks tells of his ten years of wandering following the Trojan War.
MacGuffin	A goal or object introduced often with little or no narrative explanation and which is important to the plot. The term was introduced by Alfred	The Maltese Falcon is a powerful MacGuffin in the film of the same name, a supposedly jewel encrusted black bird which creates the greed which propels every character, even the hero.

Name	Definition	Example
	<p>Hitchcock: Alfred Hitchcock told it something like this:</p> <p>Two men were riding on a train in Scotland. One turned to the other and said, “What’s in that black box on the luggage rack?”</p> <p>“A MacGuffin,” the other replied.</p> <p>“What does it do?”</p> <p>“It catches lions on the Scottish highlands.”</p> <p>“But there are no lions on the Scottish highlands,” the man protested.</p> <p>“Oh? Then that’s no MacGuffin.”</p>	
Narrative Hook	A dramatic opening that immediately captures readers' attention so they will keep reading.	Any non-fiction book is often introduced with an interesting factoid.
Plot twist	An expected outcome or direction in the plot. See also twist ending.	An early example is the Arabian Nights tale "The Three Apples". A locked chest found by a fisherman contains a dead body, and two different men claim to be the murderer, which turns out to be the investigator's own slave.
Poetic Justice	Virtue ultimately rewarded, or vice punished, by an ironic twist of fate related to the character's own conduct	Wile E. Coyote coming up with a contraption to catch the Road Runner, only to be foiled and caught by his own devices. Each sin's punishment in Dante's <i>Inferno</i> is a symbolic instance of poetic justice.
Quibble	Plot device based on an argument that an agreement's intended meaning holds no legal value, and that only the exact, literal words agreed on apply.	For example, William Shakespeare used a quibble in <i>The Merchant of Venice</i> : Portia saves Antonio in a court of law by pointing out that the agreement called for a pound of flesh, but no blood, so Shylock can collect only if he sheds no blood.

Name	Definition	Example
Red herring	Diverting attention away from an item of significance.	For example, in mystery fiction, an innocent party may be purposefully cast as highly suspicious through emphasis or descriptive techniques to divert attention from the true guilty party.
Self-fulfilling prophesy	Prediction that, by being made, makes itself come true.	Early examples include the legend of Oedipus, and the story of Krishna in the Mahabharata. There is also an example of this in Harry Potter when Lord Voldemort heard a prophecy (made by Sybill Trelawney to Dumbledore) that a boy born at the end of July, whose parents had defied Voldemort thrice and survived, would be made marked as his equal. Because of this prophecy, Lord Voldemort sought out Harry Potter (believing him to be the boy spoken of) and tried to kill him. His parents died protecting him, and when Voldemort tried to cast a killing curse on Harry, it rebounded and took away most of his strength, and gave Harry Potter a unique ability and connection with the Dark Lord thus marking him as his equal.
Story within a story – hypodiegesis	A story told within another story. See also frame story.	In Stephen King's <i>The Wind Through the Keyhole</i> , of the <i>Dark Tower</i> series, the protagonist tells a story from his past to his companions, and in this story he tells another relatively unrelated story.
Ticking clock, time bomb	Threat of impending disaster—often used in thrillers where salvation and escape are essential elements	In the TV show <i>24</i> , the main character, Jack Bauer often finds himself interrogating a terrorist who is caught in order to disarm a bomb.
Unreliable narrator	The narrator of the story is not sincere, or introduces a bias in their narration and possibly misleads the reader, hiding or minimizing events, characters, or motivations.	An example is <i>The Murder of Roger Ackroyd</i> . The novel includes an unexpected plot twist at the end of the novel. In the last chapter, Sheppard describes how he was an unreliable narrator.

Table 1: List of plot devices

Name	Definition	Example
Audience surrogate	A character who expresses the questions and confusion of the audience, with whom the	Dr. Watson in the Sherlock Holmes stories. Scott Evil, played by Seth

Name	Definition	Example
	audience can identify. Frequently used in detective fiction and science fiction, where the character asks a central character how he or she accomplished certain deeds, for the purpose of inciting that character to explain (for the curious audience) his or her methods, or a character asking a relatively educated person to explain what amounts to the backstory.	Green, son of Dr. Evil in the Austin Powers movies
Author surrogate	Characters which are based on authors, usually to support their personal views. Sometimes an intentionally or unintentionally idealized version of them.	Socrates in the writings of Plato. Plato never speaks in his own voice in his dialogues. In the Second Letter, it says, "no writing of Plato exists or ever will exist, but those now said to be his are those of a Socrates become beautiful and new".
Breaking the fourth wall.	An author or character addresses the audience directly Acknowledges to the reader or audience that what is being presented is fiction, or may seek to extend the world of the story to provide the illusion that they are included in it.	The characters in Sesame Street often break the fourth wall when they address their viewers as part of the ongoing storyline, which is possible because of the high level of suspension of belief afforded by its audience—children. The American political drama show House of Cards also uses this technique frequently to let the viewers know what the main character Frank Underwood is thinking and planning. Ferris Bueller in Ferris Bueller's Day Off frequently addresses the audience.
Defamiliarisation	Taking an everyday object and presenting it in a way that is weirdly unfamiliar so that we see the object in a new way. Coined by the early 20th-century Russian literary critic Viktor Shklovsky in "Art as Technique."	In Swift's Gulliver's Travels, when Gulliver visits the land of the giants and sees a giant woman's skin, he sees it as anything but smooth and beautiful when viewed up close.[3] Another common method of defamiliarization is to "make strange" a story (fabula) by creating a deformed plot (syuzhet). Tristram Shandy is defamiliarized by Laurence Sterne's unfamiliar

Name	Definition	Example
		plotting,[4] which causes the reader to pay attention to the story and see it in an unjaded way.
First person narration	A text presented from the point of view of a character, especially the protagonist, as if the character is telling the story themselves. (Breaking the fourth wall is an option, but not a necessity, of this format.)	Mark Twain's Adventures of Huckleberry Finn uses the title character as the narrator, while Sherlock Holmes is primarily told from Watson's perspective. The film, The Wolf of Wall Street, uses this technique where the protagonist narrates the film's events throughout, providing clarity that could not be gained from the picture and dialogue alone.
Magical Realism	Describing events in a real-world setting but with magical trappings, often incorporating local customs and invented beliefs. Different from urban fantasy in that the magic itself is not the focus of the story.	Particularly popular with Latin American authors like Gabriel García Márquez and Jorge Luis Borges. Elsewhere, Salman Rushdie's work provides good examples.
Multiperspectivity	A narrative that is told from the viewpoints of multiple characters that incorporate various perspectives, emotions, and views from witnesses or actors to varying particular events or circumstances that might not be felt by other characters in the story.	The films of Robert Altman. 2666 by Roberto Bolano features European literary critics, a Chilean philosophy professor, an African-American journalist, detectives investigating Santa Teresa murders and an obscure German writer named Benno Von Archimboldi. Pale Fire by Vladimir Nabokov features literature professor John Shade, Charles Kinbote, a neighbor and colleague of Shade's and Charles the Beloved, king of Zembla. Kinbote is the ultimate unreliable commentator.
Second person narration	A text written in the style of a direct address, in the second-person.	Homestuck
Stream of conscious	The author uses narrative and stylistic devices to create the sense of an unedited interior monologue, characterized by leaps in syntax and punctuation that trace a character's fragmentary thoughts and	An example is Ulysses. At one point Leopold Bloom saunters through Dublin musing on "Pineapple rock, lemon platt, butter scotch. A sugar-sticky girl shovelling scoopful of creams for a Christian brother. Some school treat. Bad for their tummies."

Name	Definition	Example
	sensory feelings. The outcome is a highly lucid perspective with a plot. Not to be confused with free writing.	
Third person narration	A text written as if by an impersonal narrator who is not affected by the events in the story. Can be omniscient or limited, the latter usually being tied to a specific character, a group of characters, or a location.	A Song of Ice and Fire is written in multiple limited third-person narrators that change with each chapter. The Master and Margarita uses an omniscient narrator.

Table 2: List of narrative perspectives

Device	Explanation	Example
Allegory	a story, poem, or picture that can be interpreted to reveal a hidden meaning, typically a moral or political one.	Pilgrim's Progress is an allegory of a spiritual journey. Animal Farm is an allegory for communism.
Alliteration	Sequence of words that start with the same sound. Consonance is a broader literary device identified by the repetition of consonant sounds at any point in a word (for example, coming home, hot foot).[14] Alliteration is a special case of consonance where the repeated consonant sound is in the stressed syllable.	<i>The Raven</i> by Edgar Allan Poe has many examples of alliteration, including the following line: "And the silken sad uncertain rustling of each purple curtain".
Allusion	Allusion is when an author makes an indirect reference to a figure, place, event, or idea originating from outside the text. Many allusions make reference to previous works of literature or art.	"Stop acting so smart—it's not like you're Einstein or something." The title of William Faulkner's novel <i>The Sound and the Fury</i> is an allusion to a line in Shakespeare's <i>Macbeth</i> —a futile speech made by an embittered man who has ruined his life. Alluding to that speech in the title helps Faulkner set the tone for his story of a family in ruins.
Anachronism	An anachronism occurs when there is an (intentional) error in	Act 2, Scene 1 of William Shakespeare's play <i>Julius Caesar</i> :

Device	Explanation	Example
	the chronology or timeline of a text. This could be a character who appears in a different time period than when he actually lived, or a technology that appears before it was invented.	Brutus: "Peace! Count the clock." Cassius: "The clock has stricken three." The problem is that the Romans did not have mechanical clocks capable of striking the hours.
Anaphora	A rhetorical device that consists of repeating a sequence of words at the beginnings of neighboring clauses, thereby lending them emphasis. In contrast, an epistrophe (or epiphora) is repeating words at the clauses' ends.	Winston Churchill's speech: " We shall fight in France, we shall fight on the seas and oceans, we shall fight with growing confidence and growing strength in the air, we shall defend our Island, whatever the cost may be, we shall fight on the beaches, we shall fight on the landing grounds, we shall fight in the fields and in the streets..."
Anthropomorphism	An anthropomorphism occurs when something nonhuman, such as an animal, place, or inanimate object, behaves in a human-like way.	The cartoon characters Tom and Jerry.
Assonance	Assonance is a resemblance in the sounds of words/syllables either between their vowels (e.g., meat, bean) or between their consonants (e.g., keep, cape). However, assonance between consonants is generally called consonance in American usage. The two types are often combined, as between the words six and switch, in which the vowels are identical, and the consonants are similar but not completely identical. If there is repetition of the same vowel or some similar vowels in literary work, especially in stressed syllables, this may be termed "vowel harmony" in poetry. A special case of assonance is rhyme, in which the endings of words (generally beginning with the vowel sound of the last stressed syllable) are	William Shakespeare, "Sonnet 1": His tender <i>heir</i> might <i>bear</i> his memory (assonance) <i>Kenneth Grahame, The Wind in the Willows</i> : The Willow-Wren was <i>twittering his thin</i> little song, <i>hidden himself</i> in the dark <i>selvedge</i> of the <i>riverbank</i> . The <i>squeaky wheel</i> gets the <i>grease</i> . (consonance) The <i>early bird</i> catches the <i>worm</i> . (consonance)

Device	Explanation	Example
	identical—as in fog and dog or history and mystery.	
Asyndeton	<p>A phrase in which one or more conjunctions are omitted from a series of related clauses. Its use can have the effect of speeding up the rhythm of a passage and making a single idea more memorable.</p> <p>Asyndeton may be contrasted with syndeton (syndetic coordination) and polysyndeton, which describe the use of one or multiple coordinating conjunctions, respectively.</p> <p>More generally, in grammar, an asyndetic coordination is a type of coordination in which no coordinating conjunction is present between the conjuncts.</p>	<p>Julius Caesar: “veni, vidi, vici” and its English translation “I came, I saw, I conquered”.</p> <p>Winston Churchill again: ““We shall go on to the end, we shall fight in France, we shall fight on the seas and oceans, we shall fight with growing confidence and growing strength in the air, we shall defend our Island...”</p>
Colloquialism	<p>Informal language and slang usually used to add realism to dialogue. Forms of colloquialism include words, phrases, and contractions that are not real words (such as "gonna" and "ain't").</p>	<p>“Hey man, I ain’t gonna go to work today.”</p>
Consonance	<p>the recurrence of similar-sounding consonants in close proximity. Alliteration is a special case of consonance where the repeated consonant sound is at the stressed syllable, as in “few flocked to the fight” or “around the rugged rock the ragged rascal ran”. Alliteration is usually distinguished from other types of consonance in poetic analysis and has different uses and effects.</p>	<p>coming home, hot foot (consonance)</p> <p><i>humble house, potential power play</i> (alliteration)</p>
Ellipsis	<p>The ellipsis ... is a series of three dots that indicates an intentional omission of a word, sentence, or whole section from a text without altering its</p>	

Device	Explanation	Example
	original meaning. As a narrative device which omits portion of the sequence of events, allowing the reader to fill in the narrative gaps. This advances the story.	
Epigraph	<p>An epigraph is a short statement that comes at the beginning of a literary text, but contains words belong to a different author. Can be in sentence, paragraph or poem form.</p>	<p>At the beginning of <i>The Sun Also Rises</i>, Ernest Hemingway quotes Gertrude Stein: “You are all a lost generation.”</p>
Epistrophe	<p>Epistrophe is similar to anaphora, but in this case, the repeated word or phrase appears at the <i>end</i> of successive statements. Like anaphora, it is used to evoke an emotional response from the audience.</p>	<p>In Lyndon B. Johnson's speech, “The American Promise,” he repeats the word “problem” in a use of epistrophe: “There is no Negro problem. There is no Southern problem. There is no Northern problem. There is only an American problem.”</p>
Euphemism	<p>A euphemism is when a phrase that is considered harsh, blunt, offensive is replaced by a milder or indirect word or expression.</p>	<p>“Graham Chapman of the parrot sketch is no more, he has ceased to be, bereft of life, he rests in peace, he has kicked the bucket, hopped the twig, bit the dust, snuffed it, breathed his last, and gone to meet the great Head of Light Entertainment in the sky.” John Cleese at Graham Chapman’s memorial service, 1989.</p>
Flashback, analepsis	<p>This device is provides information on the backstory of the characters, events, plot points in the narrative. It interrupts the narrative and depicts events that have already occurred, either before the present time or before the time at which the narration takes place. Also called analepsis. Internal analepsis is a flashback to an earlier point in the narrative; external analepsis is a flashback to a time before the narrative started. Though usually used to clarify plot or backstory,</p>	<p>In Billy Wilder's film noir <i>Double Indemnity</i> (1944), a flashback from the main character is used to provide a confession to his fraudulent and criminal activities.</p>

Device	Explanation	Example
	flashbacks can also act as an unreliable narrator.	
Flashforward	A flash-forward represents expected or imagined events in the future, interjected into the main plot, revealing important information to the story that has yet to be brought to light. It is the opposite of a flashback, or analepsis, which reveals past events.	
Foil	A character used to contrast a second, usually more prominent character in order to highlight certain qualities of the more prominent character.	In Shakespeare's <i>Hamlet</i> , Fortinbras is a foil for Hamlet in that he is unhesitating in action and war-like in nature; in contrast, Hamlet is thoughtful, analytical, and careful.
Foreshadowing	This device introduces tension into a dialogue the author indirectly hints at what is to come later in the story – using either dialogue, description, or the characters' actions.	“the leaves fell early that year” (foreshadowing death) in A Farewell to Arms. The pain in Harry Potter's scar. In Shakespeare's <i>Romeo and Juliet</i> , Juliet tells her nurse to find Romeo's name: “Go ask his name. If he be married, my grave is like to be my wedding-bed.” This foreshadows the danger of Romeo's name being Montague and of Juliet's death because of their marriage.
Hyperbole	Exaggerated statements or claims not meant to be taken literally. Used for emphasis. it is also sometimes known as auxesis it is a rhetorical device or figure of speech and is not meant to be taken literally.	I'm so hungry I could eat a horse.
Imagery	Imagery, in any sort of writing, refers to descriptive language that engages the human senses. Imagery includes figurative and metaphorical language to improve the reader's experience through their senses. The imagery can be visual, auditory, olfactory, gustatory (taste) or tactile.	from Charlotte's Web by E.B. White: From Charlotte's Web by E.. White: “In the hard-packed dirt of the midway, after the glaring lights are out and the people have gone to bed, you will find a veritable treasure of popcorn fragments, frozen custard dribblings, candied apples abandoned by tired children, sugar fluff crystals, salted almonds,

Device	Explanation	Example
		popsicles, partially gnawed ice cream cones and wooden sticks of lollipops.” William Wordsworth's famous poem "I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud": When all at once I saw a crowd, A host of golden Daffodils; Beside the Lake, beneath the trees, Fluttering and dancing in the breeze. Shakespeare's <i>Romeo and Juliet</i> , Act 1 Scene V: “O, she doth teach the torches to burn bright! It seems she hangs upon the cheek of night Like a rich jewel in an Ethiop's ear ...”
Irony	Irony is when a statement is used to express an opposite meaning than the one literally expressed by it. There are three types of irony in literature: • Verbal irony: When someone says something but means the opposite (similar to sarcasm). • Situational irony: When something happens that's the opposite of what was expected or intended to happen. • Dramatic irony: When the audience is aware of the true intentions or outcomes, while the characters are not. As a result, certain actions and/or events take on different meanings for the audience than they do for the characters involved.	• Verbal irony: One example of this type of irony can be found in Edgar Allan Poe's "The Cask of Amontillado." In this short story, a man named Montresor plans to get revenge on another man named Fortunato. As they toast, Montresor says, "And I, Fortunato—I drink to your long life." This statement is ironic because we the readers already know by this point that Montresor plans to kill Fortunato. • Situational irony: A girl wakes up late for school and quickly rushes to get there. As soon as she arrives, though, she realizes that it's Saturday and there is no school. • Dramatic irony: In William Shakespeare's <i>Romeo and Juliet</i> , Romeo commits suicide in order to be with Juliet; however, the audience (unlike poor Romeo) knows that Juliet is not actually dead—just asleep.

Device	Explanation	Example
Juxtaposition	This is the positioning of two contrasting things in close proximity – with the intention of emphasising their differences.	"Ask not what your country can do for you; ask what you can do for your country", and "Let us never negotiate out of fear, but let us never fear to negotiate", both by John F. Kennedy. All's fair in love and war.
Litotes	See understatement	I shan't be sorry for I shall be glad. (litotes)
Malapropism	A humorous or nonsensical misuse of word in place of a word with a similar sound.	"Will you dance the flamingo with me?" (flamenco) "She's as headstrong as an allegory." (alligator). "Johnny is learning to play the baboon." (bassoon).
Metaphor/Simile	Used for emphasis or clarity. Metaphors are when ideas, actions, or objects are described in non-literal terms. It usually involves comparing two things that share something in common but are unlike in all other respects. A simile is a type of metaphor in which an object, idea, character, action, etc., is compared to another thing using the words "as" or "like."	"What light through yonder window breaks? It is the east, and Juliet is the sun." (metaphor) As American as apple pie (simile)
Metonym	A metonym is when a related word or phrase is substituted for the actual thing to which it's referring. This device is usually used for poetic or rhetorical effect.	"The pen is mightier than the sword." This statement, which was coined by Edward Bulwer-Lytton in 1839, contains two examples of metonymy: "the pen" refers to "the written word," and "the sword" refers to "military force/violence."
Meiosis	See understatement.	Calling the violence in Northern Ireland "The Troubles." (meiosis)
Mirroring	This is where one character's action, motivation, emotion etc is repeated or contrasted against by another for dramatic effect. Mirroring can also show how the change in a character showing how the protagonist's life has changed and why she's better or worse	Types of mirrors are: <i>The Path Not Taken</i> – A second character represents the consequences the protagonist will face if she doesn't fix what's wrong in the novel. This might be a plot path, a character arc path, or a subplot. Whatever bad thing is facing the protagonist is also

Device	Explanation	Example
	Mirrors aren't just copies, but ideas and themes reflected in characters and situations around the protagonist. Sometimes they match the protagonist's emotions or choices, other times they reflect the opposite, but they deepen the story by allowing the protagonist (and reader) to "experience" other potential outcomes without derailing the story. Stakes become more real when we see them occur, and the right mirror can do a world of foreshadowing and raise the tension.	happening to someone else, and that struggle helps show the protagonist what their life would be like if they follow the same path in future. <i>The example</i> - A second character has already suffered all the consequences the protagonist fears. They are already enduring the protagonist's worst nightmare. <i>The Road to Salvation</i> - Conversely to the above, a second character might represent all or some of the benefits of the protagonist doing what's right and growing as a character. This second character shows what the protagonist could achieve if they act correctly. <i>The Conflicting Opinion</i> - Quite often the antagonist mirrors the opposing view of the protagonist, but sometimes another character (often a sidekick or best friend) can take the other side. This character can show why the protagonist is fighting so hard and can even show the redeeming aspects of the other side. <i>The Voices in Your Head</i> - Different characters can offer perspectives that mirror the internal conflict the protagonist might be having. They can even help the protagonist keep it real and consider all sides of an argument.
Mood	Mood is the general feeling the writer wants the audience to have. The writer can achieve this through description, setting, dialogue, and word choice.	
Onomatopoeia	A word that represents a sound and actually resembles or imitates the sound it stands for.	Buzz, boom, chirp, creak, sizzle, crack.

Device	Explanation	Example
	It is often used for dramatic, realistic, or poetic effect.	
Oxymoron	A figure of speech in which apparently contradictory terms appear in conjunction.	Deafening silence, organized chaos, cruelly kind, insanely logical, etc.
Paradox	A paradox, also known as an antinomy, is a logically self-contradictory statement or a statement	"The following sentence is true. The preceding sentence is false." The grandfather paradox arises if a time-traveler were to kill his own grandfather before his mother or father had been conceived, he would thereby prevent his own birth.
Personification	The attribution of a personal nature or human characteristics to something non-human, or the representation of an abstract quality in human form. It is used to help the reader create a clearer mental picture of the scene or object being described. This is unlike anthropomorphism where non-human figures become human-like characters, with personification, the object/figure is simply described as being human-like.)	Lightning danced across the sky. The wind screeched in the night. The car complained as the key was roughly turned in its ignition. Dave heard the last helping of trifle calling his name.
Prolepsis	Procatlepsis, also called prolepsis or prebuttal, is a figure of speech in which the speaker raises an objection to their own argument and then immediately answers it. By doing so, they hope to strengthen their argument by dealing with possible counter arguments before their audience can raise them. Prolepsis in a more literary context, anticipating action, a flash forward, see Foreshadowing.	

Device	Explanation	Example
Repetition	Repetition is when a word or phrase is written multiple times, usually for the purpose of emphasis. It is often used in poetry (for purposes of rhythm as well).	Hey! I'm walking here! I'm walking here!" (Midnight Cowboy) "You talkin' to me? You talkin' to me? You talkin' to me? Then who the hell else are you talkin' to? You talkin' to me? Well, I'm the only one here." (Taxi Driver) "You don't understand! I coulda had class. I coulda been a contender. I could've been somebody, instead of a bum, which is what I am." (On the Waterfront) "Bond. James Bond." (James Bond films)
Satire	Vices, follies, abuses and shortcomings are held up to ridicule. Usually meant to be humorous, satire is often used to more seriously draw attention to or criticise wider issues in society.	Joseph Heller ruthlessly satirized the failures of the mid-20th century American military and political establishment, most famously in his novel Catch-22.
Soliloquy	A type of monologue that's often used in dramas, a soliloquy is when a character speaks aloud to himself (and to the audience), thereby revealing his inner thoughts and feelings.	In Romeo and Juliet, Juliet's speech on the balcony that begins with, "O Romeo, Romeo! Wherefore art thou Romeo?" is a soliloquy, as she is speaking aloud to herself (remember that she doesn't realize Romeo's there listening!).
Symbolism	Symbolism refers to the use of an object, figure, event, situation, or other idea in a written work to represent something else—typically a broader message or deeper meaning that differs from its literal meaning. The use of an object or action to mean something more than its literal meaning. A character can also be equated with an object throughout a work, another form of symbolism.	In F. Scott Fitzgerald's 1925 novel <i>The Great Gatsby</i> , the green light that sits across from Gatsby's mansion symbolizes Gatsby's hopes and dreams. For example, in Faulkner's <i>The Sound and the Fury</i> , one of the principle characters, Caddy, falls and stains her white dress when she's a child. The stained dress symbolizes (and foreshadows) her later loss of purity. In Eudora Welty's <i>Delta Wedding</i> , an aunt is repeatedly

Device	Explanation	Example
		seen carrying an empty bag, which symbolizes her childlessness.
Synecdoche	a figure of speech in which a part is made to represent the whole or vice versa.	England lost by six wickets (here 'England' means 'the English cricket team'). "check out my new wheels," "wheels" is an example of synecdoche, used to refer to a "car." A part of a car, in this example, represents the whole of the car
Tone	While mood is what the audience is supposed to feel, tone is the writer or narrator's attitude towards a subject. A good writer will always want the audience to feel the mood they're trying to evoke, but the audience may not always agree with the narrator's tone, especially if the narrator is an unsympathetic character or has viewpoints that differ from those of the reader.	In an essay disdaining Americans and some of the sites they visit as tourists, Rudyard Kipling begins with the line, "Today I am in the Yellowstone Park, and I wish I were dead." If you enjoy Yellowstone and/or national parks, you may not agree with the author's tone in this piece.
Understatement	Ironic understatement in which an affirmative is expressed by the negative of its contrary In rhetoric, meiosis is a euphemistic figure of speech that intentionally understates something or implies that it is lesser in significance or size than it really is. Meiosis is the opposite of auxesis , and is often compared to litotes . The term is derived from the Greek μειώω ("to make smaller", "to diminish").	I shan't be sorry for I shall be glad. (litotes) Calling the violence in Northern Ireland "The Troubles." (meiosis) After all four engines of British Airways Flight 9 failed due to ingestion of volcanic ash, the captain of the flight made the following announcement: "Ladies and Gentlemen, this is your Captain speaking. We have a small problem. All four engines have stopped. We are doing our damndest to get them going again. I trust you are not in too much distress." (understatement)
Unreliable narrator	An unreliable narrator is a narrator whose credibility is compromised. While unreliable narrators are almost	Ken Kesey's two most famous novels feature unreliable narrators. "Chief" Bromden in One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest has

Device	Explanation	Example
	by definition first-person narrators, arguments have been made for the existence of unreliable second- and third-person narrators, especially within the context of film and television, and sometimes also in literature. Sometimes the narrator's unreliability is made immediately evident. For instance, a story may open with the narrator making a plainly false or delusional claim or admitting to being severely mentally ill, or the story itself may have a frame in which the narrator appears as a character, with clues to the character's unreliability. A more dramatic use of the device delays the revelation until near the story's end. In some cases, the reader discovers that in the foregoing narrative, the narrator had concealed or greatly misrepresented vital pieces of information. Such a twist ending forces readers to reconsider their point of view and experience of the story. In some cases the narrator's unreliability is never fully revealed but only hinted at, leaving readers to wonder how much the narrator should be trusted and how the story should be interpreted.	schizophrenia, and his telling of the events often includes things such as people growing or shrinking, walls oozing with slime, or the orderlies kidnapping and "curing" Santa Claus.

Table 3: Types of Literary Device

And as if that is not enough, there are even more comprehensive lists of literary devices at: <https://literarydevices.net/> and https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_narrative_techniques.

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James Wood, *How Fiction Works*
Annie Dillard, *The Writers Life*

Appendix 1 – Genres

The prevailing genres of literary composition in Ancient Greece were all written and constructed to explore cultural, moral, or ethical questions; they were ultimately defined as the genres of epic, tragedy, and comedy.

Today the list is a little longer (and could be even longer still):

- Fiction
- Poetry
- Drama
- Life writing
- Children's fiction
- Young adult fiction
- Romance
- Thriller
- Action
- Docudrama
- Kitchen sink
- Monologue
- Social
- Political
- Narrative
- Recollections
- Diary
- Journal
- Recollections
- Memoir
- Travelogue
- Norse legend
- Folk story
- Epistle (letter)
- Crime
- Fantasy
- Horror
- Biography
- Autobiography
- Journalism
- Experimental
- Historical
- Speculative
- Science fiction
- Dystopian
- Utopian
- Buddy movie

- Road movie
- Libretto
- Lyrics
- Performance poetry
- Script – tv, film, radio, mixed media
- Podcast
- etc