

It is the sound of the language, in specific crafted ways that is crucial to its meaning. In order to appreciate and understand Shakespeare's language the reader needs to be aware of how the structure of verse and prose, and the use of literary devices contribute essentially to the meaning conveyed by spoken language.

Some Literary Devices used by Shakespeare:

Alliteration – is the repetition of initial consonant sounds in neighboring words.

Allusion – Referring metaphorically to persons, places or things from history or previous literature, with which the reader is expected to have enough familiarity to make extended associations, such as “The new kid is as mean as Grendel and twice as ugly” or “He must think he's some kind of Superman.”

Allegory – A form of extended metaphor in which objects, persons, and actions in a narrative are equated with meanings that lie outside the narrative itself, such as: Everyman. Special kinds of allegories include the fable and the parable.

Anachronism – The assignment of something to a time when it was not in existence. Placing an event, person, item, or verbal expression in the wrong historical period. In Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*, Shakespeare writes the following lines: Brutus: “Peace! Count the clock. Cassius: The clock has stricken three (II, i, 193-94).

Of course, there were no household clocks during Roman times, no more than there were Blu-Ray disk players! The reference is an anachronism, either accidental or intentional.

Analogy – A comparison of two things, alike in certain aspects

Anaphora – The deliberate repetition of a word or phrase at the beginning of several successive verses, clauses, or paragraphs. One of the devices of repetition, in which the same phrase is repeated at the beginning of two or more lines. In *Julius Caesar*: “And Brutus is an honorable man.” Is deliberately repeated.

Antithesis – Using contrasts for an accumulative effect, such as: “Man proposes; God disposes.”

Apostrophe – Addressing some abstract object as if it were animate, such as: “O world! Tell me thy pain!” Thus, it is a kind of personification.

Assonance – repetition of identical vowel sounds in syllables that have different consonant sounds: “LAKE” and “FAKE”

Chiasmus – A type of rhetoric in which the second part is syntactically balanced against the first. For example: “There's a bridge to cross the great divide... There's a cross to bridge the great divide...”

Conceit – an extended and elaborate metaphoric comparison (that may form the framework of an entire poem) of two vastly different objects. They are likened together with the help of similes or metaphors. Shakespeare makes use of a conceit in *Richard II*, when he compares two kings competing for power to two buckets in a well.

Consonance – the repetition of identical consonant sounds in syllables that have different vowel sounds: “Fair is foul, and foul is fair”

Ellipsis – the omission of a word or words necessary to complete a grammatical construction, but which is easily understood by the reader, such as “the virtues I esteem” for the virtues which I esteem.” Also, the marks (...) denote an omission or pause.

Hyperbole – Saying more than is true, an over-exaggeration, such as: “He wore his fingers to the bone.”

Imagery – is produced by **figures of speech**. Three forms, which all are rhetorical methods affect the literal meaning of words: Comparisons, substitutions, and ambiguities.

Irony – Saying the opposite to what is true, such as: “War is kind.”

Inversion – The changing of the usual order of word. The usual order is reversed to emphasize the more important words.

Litotes – (**LIH-tuh-teez**, pl. **LIH-to-teez**) A form of understatement in which a thing is affirmed by stating the negative of its opposite, such as: “He was not unmindful” which actually means he was mindful.

Metaphor –Two unlike things compared directly, implying several similar qualities, such as “The river is a snake which coils on itself.”

Motif - A conspicuous recurring element, such as a type of incident, a device, a reference, or verbal formula, which appears frequently in works of literature

Meiosis –Saying less than is true, an under-exaggeration, such as: “The reports of my death have been exaggerated.”

Metonymy – Substitution of one word for another closely related word, such as: “The pot’s boiling” or “The White House announced.”

Neologism – A word concocted for deliberate effect, such as “slithy” from “lithe” and “slimy,” “frumious” from “fuming” and “furious.” Some such words actually become a part of the language, such as: “smog,” “brunch,” or “motel.” Sometimes called a **coined word** or a **portmanteau word**.

Onomatopoeia – the use of words which sound like their meanings: “HISS,” “MURMUR,” “BUZZ,”

Oxymoron –An antithesis which brings together two sharply contradictory terms, such as: “wise fool,” “little big man,” “eloquent silence,” and “loving hate.”

Paradox – A statement which while seemingly contradictory or absurd may actually be well-founded or true; a “logic twist,” such as:“Everything I say is a lie.”

Personification – Giving human qualities to inanimate objects or non-human creatures, such as “The trees danced in the breeze.”

Prolepsis – Anticipating, the type of anachronism in which an event is pictured as taking place before it could have done so, the treating of a future event as if past.

Pun – A play on words based on the similarity of sound between two words with different meanings, such as: “She offered her honor; he honored her offer; and all night long he was on her and off her.”

Simile – Two unlike things compared using “like” or “as,” implying only one similar quality, such as “The man paced like a hungry lion.” -a simile is an expressed analogy;

Symbolism – The use of one object to represent or suggest another object or an idea. Thus, a rose might be used to symbolize the loved one or love in general, depending on the context.

Synaesthesia –Substitution of one sensory response for another (or the concurrent stimulation of several senses), such as: “a blue note” or “cool green” or “The blind man turned his face to feel the sun.”

Synechdoche –Substitution of part for the whole, such as: “All hands on deck.”

