

# Stylistic Devices I

## IMAGERY

**Simile** [ˈsɪmlɪ] (*Vergleich*): An explicit comparison between two things which are basically quite different using words such as *like* or *as*.

She walks like an angel. / I wandered lonely as a cloud. (Wordsworth)

**Metaphor** [ˈmetəfə] (*Metapher*): A comparison between two things which are basically quite different without using *like* or *as*. While a simile only says that one thing is *like* another, a metaphor says that one thing *is* another. (adj. metaphorical)

All the world's a stage / And all the men and women merely players ... (Shakespeare)

**Personification** [ˌpɜːnsənɪfɪkən] (*Verkörperung*): A kind of metaphor in which animals, plants, inanimate (*leblos*) objects or abstract ideas are represented as if they were human beings and possessed human qualities.

Justice is blind. Necessity is the mother of invention (*Not macht erfinderisch*).

**Synecdoche** [sɪˈnekdəki] (lat. *pars pro toto*): A figure of speech which a part of something is used to signify the whole.

Lend me your ears (= give me your attention)

**Symbol** (*Symbol*): Something concrete (like a person, object, image, word or event) that stands for something abstract or invisible.

The Cross is the symbol of Christianity. The dove (*Taube*) symbolizes peace/is symbolic of peace.

## SOUND

**Alliteration** (*Alliteration*): The repetition of the same consonant sound in neighbouring words, usually at the beginning of words.

Peter Piper picked a peck of pickled peppers.

**Assonance** [ˈæsnəns] (*Assonanz*): The repetition of internal vowel sounds in neighbouring words that do not end the same.

sweet dreams / fertile - birth

**Metre** [ˈmiːtə] (*Metrum*): A regular pattern of stressed and unstressed syllables within a line of a poem.

**Iambic** [aɪˈæmbɪk] metre (*Jambus*): An unstressed syllable followed by a stressed one (– '–):

The way a crow (*Kräh*e) / Shook down on me / The dust of snow / From a hemlock tree (Frost)

**Trochaic** [trəʊˈkeɪk] metre (*Trochäus*): A stressed syllable followed by an unstressed one (' –):

Tiger, Tiger, burning bright / In the forest of the night. (William Blake)

**Anapestic** [ænəˈpestɪk] metre (*Anapäst*): Two unstressed syllables followed by a stressed syllable (– – '):

Oh he flies through the air / With the greatest of ease.

**Dactylic** [dækˈtɪlɪk] metre (*Daktylus*): A stressed syllable followed by two unstressed ones (' – –):

Just for a handful of silver he left us / Just for a riband (*Band*) to stick in his coat.

**Onomatopoeia** [ɒnəˌmɒtəˈpiːə] (*Lautmalerei*): The use of words which imitate the sound they refer to. (adj. onomatopoeic [ˌɒnəˈpiːɪk])

the stuttering (*stottern*) rifles' rapid rattle / The cuckoo whizzed past the buzzing bees.

**Rhyme** (*Reim*): The use of words which end with the same sounds, usually at the end of lines.

Tiger! Tiger! burning bright / In the forests of the night.

# Stylistic Devices II

**Internal rhyme:** Rhyme within a line.

letters of joy from girl and boy

**Impure rhyme:** Inaccurate (*ungenau*) repetition of sounds.

hill - full; man - mean; sky - fine; seem - weak

**Eye-rhyme:** Rhyme that does not depend on sound but on spelling.

flow - how, beat - great, over - discover.

In older poems one has to consider that words were (maybe) pronounced differently from today.

## STRUCTURE

**Anaphora** [ə'næfərə] (*Anapher*): The repetition of a word or several words at the beginning of successive (*aufeinander folgend*) lines, clauses or sentences.

In every cry of every man / In every infant's cry of fear / In every voice, in every ban. (Blake *London*)  
"To raise a happy, healthy, and hopeful child, it takes a family; it takes teachers; it takes clergy; it takes business people; it takes community leaders; it takes those who protect our health and safety."

**Parallelism** [ˈpærələɪzəm] (*Parallelismus*): The similarity of syntactical structure in neighbouring phrases, clauses, sentences or paragraphs.

"Let every nation know that we shall pay any price, bear any burden, meet any hardship, support any friend, oppose any foe to assure the survival and the success of liberty."

**Triple** (*Trikolon*): A kind of parallelism where words, phrases or sentences are arranged in groups of three ("rule of three"). For some reason people remember best when they hear repetition in a series of three.

government of the people, by the people and for the people

**Inversion** (*Inversion*): A change of the usual word order (subject-verb-object).

A lady with a dulcimer (*Hackbrett*) / In a vision once I saw.

**Chiasmus** [ka'æzməs] (*Chiasmus, Kreuzstellung*): A reversal in the order of words so that the second half of a sentence balances the first half in inverted (*umgekehrt*) word order.

Love's fire heats water, water cools not love. (Shakespeare)

**Climax** [ˈklaɪmæks] (*Steigerung, Höhepunkt, Klimax*): A figure of speech in which a series of words or expressions rises step by step, beginning with the least important and ending with the most important (= climactic order). The term may also be used to refer only to the last item in the series.

Some books are to be tasted, others to be swallowed (*schlucken*), and some few to be chewed (*kauen*) and digested (*verdauen*).

**Anticlimax** (*Antiklimax*): The sudden fall from an idea of importance or dignity (*Würde*) to something unimportant or ridiculous in comparison, especially at the end of a series.

The bomb completely destroyed the cathedral, several dozen houses and my dustbin.

**Enumeration** (*Aufzählung*): The listing of words or phrases. It can stress a certain aspect e.g. by giving a number of similar or synonymous adjectives to describe something.

Today many workers find their labor mechanical, boring, imprisoning, stultifying (*lähmend*), repetitive, dreary and heartbreaking.

## MISCELLANEOUS

**Allusion** [ə'lu:ʒn] (*Anspielung*): A reference to a person, work of art, event etc. Allusions require a common cultural experience shared by the writer and the reader.

The Old Man and the Computer (allusion to *The Old man and the Sea* by Ernest Hemingway)

# Stylistic Devices III

**Ambiguity** [æmbɪ'gju:əti] (*Ambiguität, Zwei-/Mehrdeutigkeit*): The deliberate use of a word or phrase that has two or more relevant meanings. Ambiguity is the basis for a lot of wordplay. (adj. ambiguous [æm'bɪgjuəs])

**Enjambment** (also: **run-on line**): In poetry, when one line ends without a pause and continues into the next line for its meaning.

**Euphemism** ['ju:fəmɪzəm] (*Euphemismus*): Hiding the real nature of something unpleasant by using a mild or indirect term for it. (adj. euphemistic [--'--])

"He has passed away." instead of "He has died."

"the underprivileged" instead of "the poor"

**Hyperbole** [haɪ'pɜ:bəli] (*Hyperbel*) also: **overstatement**: Deliberate (*absichtlich*) exaggeration. Its purpose is to emphasize something or to produce a humorous effect.

I'm so hungry I could eat a horse.

**Understatement** (*Untertreibung*): The opposite of hyperbole; the deliberate presentation of something as being much less important, valuable etc. than it really is.

"These figures are a bit disappointing" instead of "... are disastrous (*katastrophal*)."

"He was quite upset" instead of "He went into a terrible rage".

**Irony** (*Ironie*): Saying the opposite of what you actually mean. Do *not* use "ironic" in the vague sense of "funny/humorous". **Sarcasm** ['sɑ:kæzəm] (*Sarkasmus*) is a strong form of verbal irony used to hurt someone through mockery (*Spott, Hohn*) or disapproval (*Ablehnung*). (adj. sarcastic)

Teacher: "You are absolutely the best class I've ever had." Actual meaning: "the worst class"

**Satire** ['sætɪə] (*Satire*): A kind of text which criticizes certain conditions, events or people by making them appear ridiculous. Satirical [-'---] texts often make use of exaggeration, irony and sarcasm. (n. satirist, adj. satirical, v. to satirize *satirisch darstellen*)

**Sarcasm** ['sɑ:kæzəm] (*Sarkasmus*): Bitter and aggressive humour used to express mockery (*Spott, Hohn*) or disapproval (*Ablehnung*). (adj. sarcastic [-'--])

**Paradox** ['pærədɒks] (*Paradoxon*): A statement that seems to be self-contradictory (*widersprüchlich*) or opposed to common sense. On closer examination it mostly reveals some truth. (adj. paradoxical [--'---])

The child is father of the man. (Wordsworth) / It is awfully hard work doing nothing. (Oscar Wilde)

**Oxymoron** [ɒksɪ'mɔ:rɒn] (*Oxymoron*): A condensed (*komprimiert*) form of paradox in which two contradictory words (mostly adjective and noun) are used together.

sweet sorrow / wise fool / bittersweet / "O hateful love! O loving hate!" (*Romeo and Juliet*)

**Pun** (*Wortspiel*): A play on words that have the same (or a similar) sound but different meanings. There are a lot of puns in English because of its many **homophones**, i.e. words with the same sound as another. Homophones lose their ambiguity as soon as they are written.

At the drunkard's funeral, four of his friends carried the bier. (bier *Totenbahre* vs. beer *Bier*)

A word with the same form as another but with a different meaning is called **homonym**:

"Is life worth living?" - "It depends on the liver" (liver = sb. who lives vs. liver *Leber*)

**Rhetorical question** (*rhetorische Frage*): A question to which the answer is obvious and therefore not expected. In reality rhetorical questions are a kind of statement.

Don't we all love peace and hate war? / Shouldn't we try to be friendlier towards each other?

**Telling name**: A name that conveys certain character traits.

Darth Vader (dark + death, invader) / Lord Voldemort ("flight of death") / Willy Loman (low man)