

English Terminology

'Methods', 'subject terminology', 'writer techniques' and 'devices' are words we use to describe what an author is doing when constructing a text. Below is a list of strategies authors use in writing.

The Linguistic Devices, Literary Devices and Structural Devices lists are likely to be applicable in both Language and Literature subjects across most texts. Subsequent lists, under text-titled headings, are also applicable to other texts, but are most likely to apply to the unit under which they are listed. i.e. a tragic hero is easy to spot in *Macbeth*, but could be applied to *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*.

Linguistic Devices

Alliteration	Repetition of consonant sounds. <i>Fair is foul, and foul is fair.</i>
Allusion	Making reference to another story or phrase. <i>She was like Eve in her garden.</i>
Anaphora	Repetition of a word or phrase at the start of several sentences or lines. <i>I have a dream...</i>
Anecdote	A short interesting story used to support a point being made.
Anthropomorphism	Giving human characteristics to an animal, god or object. <i>Animals in Animal Farm</i>
Assonance	Repetition of vowel sounds. <i>Go slowly over the road.</i>
Asyndetic listing	Words are listed without the use of a conjunction. <i>I bought shoes, socks, a hat, trainers...</i>
Colloquial language	Informal, conversational speech
Extended metaphor	A comparison that continues throughout a whole paragraph or text.
Hyperbole	An exaggeratory word or phrase. <i>I've told you a thousand times before.</i>
Imagery	Language used to create images and improve the reader's experience through their senses. Metaphor, simile and sensory language fall into this category.
Juxtaposition	Contrasting two ideas to highlight their differences. <i>The stars shone brightly in the inky blackness.</i>
Metaphor	A comparison – made directly or indirectly – without using "like" or "as." <i>She is rock.</i>
Onomatopoeia	A word that sounds like the thing it is describing. <i>Bang, crash.</i>
Oxymoron	A phrase that appears to contradict itself. <i>Deafening silence</i>
Pathetic fallacy	gives human emotions to naturally-occurring things, often related to weather or natural phenomena.

Personification	Giving human characteristics to an inanimate object. <i>The trees cried out for water.</i>
Plosive	Short burst of sound using b/d/g/k/p/t. <i>Get back! Get down, go!</i>
Polysyndetic listing	Words are listed using a conjunction. <i>I bought trainers, and socks, and shoes and hats.</i>
Religious imagery	Using religious motifs to help create meaning. <i>His hair rested like a crown of thorns upon his head.</i>
Rhetorical question	A question asked without the expectation of an answer.
Semantic field	A set of words relating to the same topic. <i>I <u>gunned</u> the <u>trigger</u> of the chainsaw.</i>
Sibilance	Repetition of 's' and 'sh' sounds. <i>Snakes slither silently.</i>
Simile	A comparison that says something is like another. <i>She leapt like a cat.</i>
Tricolon/ Triadic structure	Three parallel words, phrases or clauses. <i>I came. I saw. I conquered.</i>
Zoomorphism	Giving animal characteristics to non animals e.g. humans and objects. <i>She roared at the class to stop talking.</i>

Wider Literary Devices

Antagonist	The enemy of the main character in a narrative.
Antithesis	A person or thing that is the direct opposite of someone or something else.
Bildungsroman	A novel dealing with one person's spiritual and psychological growth and maturation.
Characterisation	creation or construction of a fictional character.
Dramatic irony	The audience are aware of the impact of a character's actions or words, normally for dramatic effect.
Foil	a character who contrasts with another character, typically, a character who contrasts with the protagonist, in order to better highlight or differentiate certain qualities of the protagonist.
Genre	Style or category of literature, film, text
Irony	Using language to create the opposite meaning. <i>I love doing more work than I need to.</i>
Monologue	A long speech by a character
Mood	The feeling created from the writing
Motif	an object, image, sound, or phrase that is repeated throughout a story to point toward the story's larger theme. <i>E.g. blood, nature, stars in Macbeth.</i>

Narrative perspective	The point of view from which a story is told, often explained in terms of omniscient narrator, limited narrator, first person narrative perspective etc.
Pathos	rhetorical appeal to audience's emotions
Prose	A conversational way of speaking which doesn't have a set rhythm or structure. Verse in contrast always has a set rhythm and structure.
Protagonist	Main character in the narrative
Tone	The writer's attitude that is expressed.
Verse	Writing arranged with a metrical rhythm, typically having a rhyme.
Voice	The style of the author used to convey their views and personality within the writing.

Structural Devices

Analepsis	A flashback to something that has happened previously in the narrative.
Chronological structure	The story follows the order that things happen in.
Climax	Dramatic turning point in the novel, where the protagonist is pitted against an opposing force in order to resolve the story's conflict.
Cyclical structure	The end of the story is very similar to the beginning.
Exposition	opening of a story
Falling action	after the dramatic confrontation of the climax the plot's tension decreases
Inciting incident	An event that introduces a problem or conflict for characters (prophecies presented to Macbeth and Banquo)
Media res	When the narrative begins in the middle of the action.
Non-linear structure	A disrupted or disjointed narrative that doesn't follow a set pattern.
Prolepsis	A flash forward to something that will happen in the narrative.
Repetition	Repeating a word or phrase several times.
Resolution	the scene(s) forming the end of a story; narrative arc and character arcs often tied together, questions might be answered.
Structure	Sequence in which you present the narrative

Text Specific Devices

It is rare that a technique is only used by one author, however the devices below have been separated according to unit so you can see which are most likely to apply to each unit.

Animal Farm

Allegory	Representing a larger point about society or human nature through a simple story. Different characters may represent real-life figures.
Caricature	
Cyclical narrative	The beginning and end of a narrative are under similar circumstances.
Dystopia	An unfair society where there is a lot of suffering, typically an imaginary society in the future, after something terrible has happened.
Euphemism	Using word/phrases to reduce the unpleasantness/offensiveness of a term.
Fable	Short story telling a general, moral truth using symbolic characters
Jargon	Words not generally understood by most except specific groups of people (usually a field of work). E.g. legal, medical, technical jargon
Maxim	Short statement of general truth, principle or rule for behaviour
Microcosm	A small place, society, or situation that has the same characteristics as something much larger e.g. Animal Farm is a microcosm of the Russian Revolution.
Omniscient narrative perspective	The narrator knows the thoughts and feelings of all the characters.
Satire	Humorous criticism of people or ideas often to make a political or social comment
Stereotype	A widely held, oversimplified idea of a particular person

Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde

Doubling	esp. in Gothic literature, whereby a writer uses a character who seems to be good (often the protagonist) and links them to another character, who is evil.
Embedded narrative	A story within a story, also referred to as an embedded narrative, is a <u>literary device</u> in which a character within a <u>story</u> becomes the narrator of a second story (within the first one).
Epistolary novella	A literary work in the form of letters.
Episodic structure	A series of separate episodes or events.
Gothic	a literary genre characterized by elements of mystery, horror, and the supernatural
Limited narrative perspective	The narrator knows only the thoughts and feelings of the character.
Moral closure	The Gothic genre arose as a response to the brutality and bloodiness of Romantic society, and it as part of this response that Gothic fiction usually contains a strong moral. In Frankenstein, there are a number of moral messages which can be drawn; some more explicit than others.

Macbeth

Anagnorisis	a moment in a play or other work when a character makes a critical discovery i.e. Macbeth realises his actions have been futile when Lady Macbeth dies
Antithesis	figure of speech that juxtaposes two contrasting or opposing ideas, usually within parallel grammatical structures. E.g. <i>Fair is foul and foul is fair</i>
Aside	remark or passage in a play that is intended to be heard by the audience but unheard by the other characters in the play.
Blank verse	unrhymed but metered lines, almost always iambic pentameter*
Catharsis	The process of releasing, and finding relief from, strong or repressed emotions.
Hamartia	A fatal flaw leading to the downfall of a tragic hero or heroine.
iambic pentameter	a line of verse composed of ten syllables arranged in five metrical feet (iambes)
Peripeteia	a sudden reversal of fortune or change in circumstances, especially in reference to fictional narrative e.g. <i>Act 3 when Macbeth confronted by Banquo's ghost – suddenly confronted by guilt/madness/paranoia which dogs him until his death</i>
Rhyming couplet	a rhyming pair of successive lines of verse, typically of the same length
Soliloquy	An act of speaking one's thoughts aloud when alone or regardless of any hearers, especially by a character in a play.
Stichomythia	Dialogue where two characters speak alternate lines of verse.
Tragic hero	The central character of a play, novel etc. depicted as a noble figure who experiences a tragic downfall.

Poetry

Blank verse	A poem written in iambic pentameter (10 syllables per line) but doesn't rhyme.
Caesura	A natural pause or break in a line of poetry, usually near the middle of the line.
End stopped	The opposite of enjambment. End-stopped is where each line has a full stop after it. It is short and punchy and does not flow very well.
Enjambment	Where there is no punctuation at the end of a line of poetry, so you keep reading onto the next line, and the meaning continues too. Makes it flow from one line to the next.
Free verse	A poem which has no regular rhythm or rhyme scheme.
iambic pentameter	5 pairs of 'de dum' beats in a line of poetry (equalling 10 syllables in total).
Metre	The rhythmic arrangement of syllables in a line or verse of poetry (another word for rhythm).

Narrative persona	The persona is the invented voice which presents a narrative — the ‘I’ of a narrative which is not necessarily the voice of the author.
Narrative voice	– The narrative voice is the voice which ‘tells’ a story. Some narratives are third-person (he/she/they) while others are first-person (I).
Refrain	A phrase, line, or group of lines that is repeated throughout a poem, usually after every stanza – kind of like the chorus of a song.
Rhyme	The occurrence of the same or similar sounds at the end of two or more words. The pattern of rhyme in a stanza or poem is shown usually by using a different letter for each final sound. In a poem with an aabba rhyme scheme, the first, second, and fifth lines end in one sound, and the third and fourth lines end in another.
Rhyme scheme	The pattern that is made by the rhyme within each stanza or verse. Eg abab, aabb.
Rhyming couplets	In a poem, a pair of lines that are the same length and (usually) rhyme and form a complete thought. Shakespearean sonnets usually end in a couplet.
Rhythm	The pattern of beats within a line or stanza of poetry.
Stanza	A verse; the way a poem is divided by it’s lines.
Quatrain	4 line stanza
Cinquain	5 line stanza
Sestet	6 line stanza
Octave	8 line stanza
Tense	The time setting for the poem: past, present, future or a combination.