

# Alphabetical Listing of Every Literary Technique You'll Ever Need for Stage 6 (and Many More You Won't)

**Accumulation** – A listing of words embodying similar qualities either physical or abstract with the intent of emphasising to the reader the quality that they hold in common.

**Adynaton** – A form of hyperbole which involves magnification of an event by reference to the impossible or unattainable.

**Allegory** – A story in prose or in verse which has one surface or literal meaning co-existing with metaphorical interpretations. The allegory must be consistent throughout the story.

**Alliteration** – The repetition of a single consonant sound at either the beginning of words or on stressed syllables.

**Allusion** – An implicit reference to another work of literature or art, to a person, to an event, or to a modern meme.

**Amblysia** – A noticeable modification of language to prepare for the announcement of something tragic, alarming, or shocking.

**Amphiboly** – An ambiguity in the meaning of a sentence caused by grammatical looseness to produce a double meaning.

**Anachronism** – The misplacement of an action, character, phrase, or setting in time. Anachronisms may be used deliberately to distance events and to underline a universal verisimilitude and timelessness.

**Anacoluthon** – A sentence that is begun in one way, but then ended in a different way, usually with a hyphen linking two disparate clauses.

**Anadiplosis** – The repetition of the last word of one clause at the beginning of the next clause.

**Analogue** – A word or thing that is similar or parallel to another, to the point that most salient features are alike.

**Anaphora** – The repetition of a word or phrase at the beginning of successive sentences or clauses.

**Anastrophe** – An inversion of the normal word order, where elements of a sentence are completely back to front from convention.

**Anecdote** – A brief account of or a story about an individual or an incident, usually used with the rhetorical intent of reinforcing a point.

**Anesis** – A rhetorical device in which a concluding sentence, clause, or phrase is used to deliberately diminish or discredit the previous statements.

**Antanaclasis** – The usage of a word multiple times, where each usage uses a different denotation of the word.

**Anthropomorphism** – The attribution of human characteristics to anything which is non-human, usually distinct from personification in that it is more a structural feature rather than metaphorical.

**Anthimeria** – The substitution of one part of speech for another in the sense of making the prose more decorative, as in adjectives as nouns or nouns as verbs.

**Antipophora** – A character asks a question of themselves, and then answers by themselves.

**Antimetabole** – The repetition of words in successive clauses, in reverse grammatical order.

**Antiphrasis** – The use of the word in the opposite sense to its proper denotation.

**Antithesis** – A set of contrasting ideas sharpened by the use of opposite or noticeably different meanings.

**Antonomasia** – The substitution of a proper noun for an epithet, title, occupation associated with that object or person.

**Aphorism** – A terse statement of a truth or dogma; a pithy generalisation, which may or may not be witty. An aphorism exposes and purports to give insight into a universal truth.

**Aposiopesis** – The abrupt breaking off of speech with the sentence being left unfinished, and is not continued, unlike anacoluthon.

**Apostrophe** – A figure of speech in which a thing, a place, an abstract quality, an idea, a dead or absent person is addressed as if they were present and capable of understanding.

**Archaism** – A word, phrase, or idiom which is old or obsolete at its time of usage.

**Assonance** – The repetition of similar vowel sounds close together in order to achieve a form of euphony.

**Asyndeton** – The omission of conjunctions, articles, and often pronouns for the sake of speed and economy.

**Aside** – A few words or a short passage spoken in an undertone or to the audience. It is a theatrical convention that the words are presumed inaudible to other characters on stage, unless of course the aside is between two characters and therefore clearly not meant for anyone else present.

**Bathos** – A sensation achieved when the writer strives at the sublime and overreaches himself and topples into the absurd, either deliberately or accidentally.

**Black comedy** – A form of humour which uses the shocking, horrific or macabre to create comedy, often with undertones of disillusionment and cynicism.

**Blank verse** – Verse which consists of unrhymed five stress lines in iambic pentameter.

**Blazon** – Verses of an overall work which dwell on and describe in detail the various parts of a woman's body.

**Bombast** – The use of inflated or extravagant language.

**Burlesque** – A derisive imitation or exaggerated 'sending up' of a literary or musical work, usually stronger and broader in tone and style than parody.

**Cacophony** – The effect achieved through the use of harsh or contrasting sounds which sound mildly unpleasant.

**Caesura** – A break or pause in a line of poetry dictated by the natural rhythm of the language, or enforced by punctuation.

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**Catachresis** – The misapplication of a word or metaphor, particularly when used in a mixed metaphor.

**Catalexis** – The omission of the last syllable or syllables in a regular metrical line.

**Catharsis** – A mode of writing in which the composer writes to gain a sense of relief from tension for therapeutic effect, or similarly when the effect is created in the responder.

**Chiasmus** – A reversal of grammatical structure in subsequent clauses or phrases with different words.

**Circumlocution** – In speech, the use of many words where a few will suffice to make a roundabout point.

**Cliché** – An expression which has become formulaic and stale through overuse and repetition throughout history.

**Conceit** – An elaborate figurative device of a fanciful kind which can incorporate metaphor, simile, or hyperbole which is intended to surprise or delight through ingenuity. An conceit which lasts for the entire story is an allegory.

**Connotation** – The suggestion or implication evoked by a word or a phrase, over and above what the literal denotation is defined as.

**Consonance** – The repetition of identical consonant sounds before or after different vowels.

**Couplet** – Two successive rhyming lines.

**Defamiliarisation** – The modification of a reader's habitual perceptions by drawing attention to the artifice of the text, or the peculiarities of the writing itself.

**Denotation** – The most literal and limited meaning of a word, regardless of any additional feelings or connotations that have evolved for it.

**Depitiation** – The use of overly complex words in order to appear more intelligent, rather than to actually imply additional meaning.

**Dissonance** – The arrangement of cacophonous sounds in words or rhythms for effect.

**Double entendre** – A word or expression used to have two meanings, one of which is usually frivolous or bawdy.

**Dramatic irony** – The effect created when the audience understand the implication and meaning of a situation in a text, or what is being said, but the characters do not.

**Dysphemism** – The use of a phrase which emphasises negative qualities, unpleasantness, or defects. The opposite of a euphemism.

**Ecphonema** – An exclamation of joy, woe, or amazement.

**Ekphrasis** – The intense pictorial description of an object.

**Elegy** – A poem or prose passage which mourns for an individual or lament a tragic event.

**Elision** – The omission or slurring of a syllable, usually to preserve the meter of a line in verse.

**Ellipsis** – The omission of several words from a sentence, usually at the end, for effect, not necessarily indicated by punctuation, though commonly done through the use of three dots.

**Enjambment** – The spacing of lines of verse so that the ends of sentences do not stop at the ends of lines, but flow immediately on to the next without pause.

**Epanados** – The repetition of a word or phrase at the beginning and middle, or middle and end of a sentence.

**Epanalepsis** – The repetition of words or a phrase after other words have come in between them.

**Epexegetis** – An explanation of what has been said in the immediately preceding statements.

**Epideictic oratory** – A rhetorical device which praises or blames somebody or something in public.

**Epistrophe** – The repetition of a word or phrase at the end of successive clauses or sentences.

**Epitasis** – The section of a story or narrative where the climax is approaching and when the plot thickens.

**Epizeuxis** – The repetition of a word or phrase emphatically to produce a special effect.

**Euphemism** – The substitution of a mild and palatable expression for a harsh and blunt one.

**Euphony** – The use of pleasing, mellifluous sounds, usually produced by long vowels rather than consonants, though liquid consonants can also be used.

**Farce** – A style of work which provokes mirth of the simplest and basic kind, usually through rather crude, low humour.

**Feminine rhyme** – A rhyme between two words with more than one syllable when all syllables rhyme and the final syllable is unstressed.

**Flyting** – A cursing match in verse between two characters who hurl abuse at each other.

**Foreshadowing** – The arrangement of events and information in such a way as to prepare the responder for later events.

**Free verse** – Verse which has no regular meter, line length, or rhyme, and depends on natural speech rhythms and opposition of stressed and unstressed syllables.

**Hamartia** – A fatal flaw or error which causes a character's downfall.

**Hemistich** – A term for half of a metrical line which has been divided by a caesura.

**Hendiadys** – An idea which is expressed through the use of two substantives or a substantive and noun joined by a conjunction.

**Homonym** – A word written in the same way as another, but with a different origin and meaning.

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**Homophone** – A word pronounced the same way as another, but with a different spelling and meaning.

**Hubris** – Excessive pride which is brought about by a shortcoming or a defect in the hero, which eventually leads to his downfall.

**Hypallage** – An epithet which is transferred from one noun to modify another related noun to which it does not really belong.

**Hyperbaton** – The transposition of words out of their conventional grammatical order.

**Hyperbole** – Exaggeration of a situation or quality for emphasis.

**Hypocorism** – The use of familiar or endearing terms in place of proper nouns.

**Hypostatisation** – A form of personification in which an abstract quality is spoken of as something human.

**Hypotyposis** – An object or person is represented as if it were present through description by a character or other message.

**Hypozeuxis** – The repetition of the same verbs with different nouns and the same subject.

**Idiom** – A form of expression, construction or phrase peculiar to the language and often possessing a meaning other than its logical one.

**Imagery** – The use of language to represent objects, actions, feelings, thought, ideas, states of mind, and any sensory or extra-sensory experience. Images may be:

- Visual (Sight)
- Olfactory (Smell)
- Tactile (Touch)
- Auditory (Hearing)
- Gustatory (Taste)
- Kinaesthetic (Movement)
- Abstract (Appeal to intellect)

**Invective** – A tone of speech or writing which is denunciatory, abusive, or vituperative.

**Inversion** – In prosody, reversing the stress of a syllable by substitution.

**Invocation** – A call for help given by a character to a supernatural being for aid.

**Irony** – An incongruity between the words and their actual meaning or the usage, intentionally used to create a contrast. There are two main types:

- Verbal irony: saying something but intending to mean the opposite.
- Situational irony: a situation occurs which is humorous to a character, but likely to occur to them in the future.

**Isocolon** – A sequence of clauses of identical length.

**Jargon** – A set of words or phrases which use vocabulary that is peculiar to a particular profession or trade.

**Kenning** – The use of two nouns together to describe a single thing. One noun is usually abstracted, while the other has a direct relation to the object being described.

**Light rhyme** – A rhyme where one or both of the rhyming syllables are unstressed.

**Litotes** – A descriptive statement that deliberately understates something in order to emphasise it, usually with a negative connotation.

**Malapropism** – The unintentional incorrect use of complex words by a character.

**Masculine rhyme** – A single monosyllabic rhyme at the end of a line.

**Meiosis** – A statement which understates for emphasis and the attainment of simplicity rather than the extravagant, usually understating a positive.

**Melodrama** – A form of sensational entertainment in which the main characters are excessively virtuous or exceptionally evil, with a large focus on action and thrills in order to emotionally appeal to an audience.

**Metalepsis** – A form of metonymy in which the general idea substituted is considerably removed from the particular detail.

**Metaphor** – A description of one thing which is given in terms of another in the form of a direct comparison.

**Meter** – The pattern of stressed and unstressed syllables in verse.

**Metonymy** – A substitution of the name or attribute of a thing with the thing itself.

**Monologue** – A single speaking alone with or without an audience, of which there are several forms:

- Soliloquy: A monologue which expresses a character's inner thoughts, feelings, or motivations.
- Dramatic monologue: A monologue where an imaginary speaker addresses an imaginary audience.

**Motif** – A dominant idea in a work of literature which represents the main theme, usually consisting of a recurrent image or verbal pattern.

**Mythopoeia** – The creation of a realm of mythical material or a 'private' mythology in a work of fiction.

**Neologism** – A newly coined word or phrase in a text.

**Nonce-word** – A word which is created for one sole use, a form of neologism which is effectively useless.

**Onomatopoeia** – The use of words which mirror sounds. 'Sounds as it means and means as it sounds'

**Oxymoron** – A combination of incongruous and contradictory words and meanings for effect.

**Palilogy** – A deliberate repetition of words throughout a passage.

**Paradox** – A statement which is inherently self-contradictory, rather than the combination of two or more concepts as in oxymoron.

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**Paralipsis** – A deliberate exclusion of a topic in speech or writing in order to draw attention to it.

**Parallelism** – Constructing consecutive sentences in a similar style in order to balance each other.

**Parataxis** – Co-ordination of clauses close together without use of conjunctions, only through punctuation.

**Parenthesis** – Exclusion of words from the main body of a clause or sentence through parentheses, hyphens, dashes, or commas.

**Paronomasia** – A play on words which uses similar sounds between words for effect.

**Pathetic fallacy** – A belief that the nature or emotion of events is reflected in the natural world as an expression of pathos by nature.

**Periphrasis** – The usage of many words in order to express a simple idea usually used to characterise a character as comic or overly officious.

**Personification** – The attribution of human qualities to inanimate objects.

**Platitude** – A dull and commonplace remark which is trite and obvious.

**Polyptoton** – The repetition of a word but with a different grammatical form each time.

**Polysyndeton** – The repetition of conjunctions in order to link clauses and sentences.

**Prolepsis** – A segment of a narrative which portrays future events before they have happened with reference the main sequence of the story.

**Prodiorthosis** – A statement intended to prepare the audience for a shocking or offensive statement succeeding the current one.

**Repartee** – A witty or clever rejoinder.

**Rhetorical question** – A question not expecting an answer, or one to which the answer is more or less self-evident.

**Rhyme** – The formalised consonance of syllables, typically in verse. There are several different forms of rhyme:

- Internal: Rhymes which occur within a line.
- External: Rhyme which occurs between lines or other units.
- Half/Near/Slant: When the sounds following the last stressed vowel are not identical, or when the stressed vowels differ and everything subsequent is identical.

**Rhythm** – In verse or prose, the movement or sense of movement communicated by the arrangement of stressed and unstressed syllables.

**Sentence structure** – Sentences can be constructed in different ways by changing the position of the clauses and the traditional grammatical structure. Some forms of sentence structure are:

- Loose sentences: The main clause comes first and is followed by its dependent clauses.

- Periodic sentences: The main clause comes last, with dependent clauses preceding.
- Balanced sentences:

**Simile** – The indirect comparison of one thing to another, through the words 'like' and 'as'.

**Stichomythia** – Alternating single lines of dialogue in drama indicating verbal sparring.

**Stream of consciousness** – A writing style which seeks to depict the flow of thoughts and feelings through the mind.

**Symbolism** – An object, animate or inanimate, which represents or stand for something else, differing from an allegory in that a symbol embodies a real existence.

**Synaesthesia** – The displacement and confusion of the sense in descriptive language, or the response of several sense to the stimulation of one.

**Syncope** – The omission of a letter or a syllable within the middle of a word.

**Synecdoche** – A substitution where a part of an object stands for the whole.

**Tapinosis** – A figurative device which belittles by exaggeration.

**Tmesis** – The separation of the parts of a word through the insertion of another word.

**Tone** – The reflection of a writer's attitude, manner, mood, and moral outlook within his work.

**Topothesia** – A description of an imaginary place.

**Verisimilitude** – The appearance of being true even when clearly related to the fantastic.

**Voice** – The viewpoint of the narrator of the story. There are several different voices that are used in literature:

- 1<sup>st</sup> person: The story is told from the perspective of one of the characters.
- 2<sup>nd</sup> person: The reader is the primary agent in the story.
- 3<sup>rd</sup> person omniscient: The narrator has access to all characters and situations in the story.
- 3<sup>rd</sup> person limited: The narrator tells the story of one character using information limited to that character.

**Zeugma** – A verb or noun which joins two or more clauses in a sentence. There are several variations of zeugma:

- Prozeugma: A verb at the beginning of the sentence governs several later parallel clauses.
- Mesozeugma: A verb in the middle of a sentence governs several parallel adjacent clauses.
- Hypozeugma: A verb at the end of the sentence governs parallel preceding clauses.
- Diazeugma: Two or more verbs are governed by one noun.
- Syllepsis: A zeugma where the clauses disagree in grammar or semantics.