

Poetic Devices

...or Figurative Language

Poetic devices (also known as figurative language) make your writing more interesting to the reader and make the reading experience more enriching for the reader. Here are some commonly used forms.

Simile

A figure of speech in which things are compared using the words “like” or “as.”

The surface of the *water looked as smooth as glass.*

Metaphor

A figure of speech in which things are compared by stating that one thing *is* another.

The *clouds are cotton balls* in the sky.

Alliteration

Repetition of words with the same beginning letter or sound (the /p/ sound).

Polly planted plenty of pretty pansies.

Personification

A figure of speech in which objects are given human qualities.

The *sun played peek-a-boo* with the clouds.

Onomatopoeia

Words that sound like the objects or actions to which they refer.

A pesky mosquito *buzzed* around my head.

Imagery

Using figurative language to describe. Using words to paint pictures in the reader’s mind.

The *flaming red sky glittered brightly* in the early morning as the sun gently rose in the east.

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Rhyme

Words that have the same ending sounds.

The tiny bird in the *tree*
was singing songs just for *me*.

Assonance

Words that have the same middle sounds (the /ā/ sound).

The fat cat sat on a mat.

Idioms

Phrases and sentences that have a meaning other than the literal meaning.

It's raining cats and dogs. (It's pouring rain.)

Denotative/Connotative Meaning

Words can have more than one meaning. The reader's understanding is based on the context of its use.

Cheesy:

I enjoyed the *cheesy* pasta last night.
The shirt he wore was really *cheesy*!

Hyperbole

A phrase or sentence that is exaggerated (“stretching the truth”).

These books *weigh a ton*. (These books are heavy.)

Spoonerism

Interchanging letters of a word or words (generally the first) with an amusing effect.

Crown bamel- instead of brown camel.