

Literary and Rhetorical Elements

Word choice is the deliberate selection of specific words in order to accomplish the writer’s intention to convey specific ideas and a more precise meaning to the readers. **In Close Reading for word choice, we need to focus on why an author chose to use the words he or she did. We also need to focus on how using those words affects the meaning of the selection as a whole. This process involves looking at both the individual words in the selection and the way the author uses them.**

In Close Reading for word choice, you will need to identify connotations, denotations, jargon, figures of speech, literary devices, and rhetorical devices and decide why the author uses them. The following charts will help you identify these aspects of word choice.

Figures of speech include, but are not limited to, the following.

Figure of Speech	Explanation	Example
Allusion	a reference to a well-known work of art, literature, or music within another work of art, literature or music	John enjoyed his role as the good Samaritan until he received the bill for repairing Joyce’s car.
Apostrophe	directly addressing someone who is not present or who is not real	O Juliet , what is the secret of true love?
Euphemism	using a mild, offensive word in place of one that might evoke a stronger reaction	using “ pass away ” in place of “die”
Hyperbole	extreme exaggeration	That suggestion to include a wooden spoon with the ice cream is a million dollar idea!
Metaphor	an imaginative comparison of two unlike things that does not use either <i>like</i> or <i>as</i>	Her mother’s love was a lighthouse in the storm of disappointment.
Onomatopoeia (on-oh-maht-oh-poe-ia)	an expression that sounds like what it names	The bees buzzed as the saw whirred .
Personification	giving something not human the characteristics of a human being	The bees sang a song of summer as they danced across the meadow.
Simile	a comparison of two unlike things using the words <i>like</i> or <i>as</i>	She was as angry as a bear , while he growled like a tiger .

Figurative language is one of the literary devices authors can choose to use in their writing. In Close Reading for word choice, you will need to identify literary devices and decide why the author uses them. Literary devices include, but are not limited to, the following.

Literary Device	Explanation	Example
Alliteration	placing words with the same beginning consonant sound next to each other or in very close succession in order to create a sound element	<u>m</u> any <u>m</u> erry <u>m</u> aidens <u>m</u> eet
Analogy (or Conceit)	a comparison in which the relationship between two things is established by comparing it to a similar relationship between two other things	Their relationship had become one of a tiger and its prey.
Antithesis	placing contrasting ideas side by side	Ada was as beautiful as an angel and as mean as a devil.
Archetype	a pattern or perfect model of a particular type of character	Amongst the member of the expedition, Johnson became the mother figure , reminding each man to take his daily quinine tablet.
Flashback	the interruption of chronological sequence to inject background information or events that happened earlier	
Flashforward	the interruption of chronological sequence to inject future events	
Foreshadowing	when the author hints at what will happen in a plot or prefigures it in some way	Little did he know how important that casual meeting was to become in later life.
Imagery	when an author uses figurative language or sensory description to help the readers visualize what the author is writing about	The gurgling stream curled its way through the honeysuckle and wild grasses of the meadow, like a blue satin ribbon tangled in the hair of a playful child.
Oxymoron	a paradoxical idea that is compacted into a single image by combining two contradictory words side by side	He considered himself a successful failure at the bitter pleasure of love.
Paradox	a seemingly contradictory statement that nonetheless expresses a truth	Tomorrow has another name—yesterday.
Suspense	when the author deliberately heightens the reader's anxiety over what will happen next	such as describing in great detail a character's descent into a darkened basement from

		which odd sounds had been coming
Symbolism	when something concrete is used by the author to represent something that is less concrete, such as an idea or emotion	such as using a rose to represent true love or a soaring bird to represent freedom
Verbal Irony (or Sarcasm)	saying the opposite of what is meant or saying sarcastically	Getting soaked to the skin in that rain storm was just great!

Rhetorical Devices are any combination of words or word patterns designed to achieve a particular effect. Written texts can contain rhetorical devices, but they are more common in texts designed to be read aloud. Rhetorical devices include, but are not limited to, the following.

Rhetorical Device	Explanation	Example
Colloquial Language	everyday, commonplace language	Anyone can see that everyone is the same at birth.
Formal Language	dignified, elevated language	We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal....
Loaded Language	emotionally charged, highly connotative words	such as choosing a word or phrase with negative connotations (e.g. <i>bureaucrat</i>) or positive connotations (e.g. <i>public servant</i>) instead of a more neutral term with the same meaning (e.g. <i>civil servant</i>)
Anadiplosis	using the last word of one clause or phrase as the first word of the next clause or phrase	Bread was their need, but need was not enough to sway the king.
Anaphora	the repetition of the same word or phrase at the beginning of successive phrases, clauses, sentences, or verses	such as Jefferson’s listing of George III’s crimes in the Declaration of Independence, which all begin with the words “He has...”
Chiasmus	reversing the order of the elements in two parallel clauses	John Kennedy’s “ask not what your country can do for you —ask what you can do for your country. ”
Juxtaposition	placing two items or ideas side by side in order to reveal something	such as, “Our repeated Petitions have been answered only by repeated

		injury, ” by which Jefferson wished to make his audience recognize King George as a tyrant
Parallelism	the use of parallel structure to add rhythm and emphasize a point (Parallelism is sometimes called parallel structure, and it may also involve anaphora and/or repetition.)	"...that which we are, we are; / One equal temper of heroic hearts,/ Made weak by time and fate, but strong in will / To strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield " (Tennyson, "Ulysses," lines 67-70).
Repetition	using exactly the same words more than once (anaphora is a more specific form of repetition)	
Restatement	using different words to repeat the same idea or point	We must defeat the enemy . We cannot rest until the foe is completely vanquished .
Signposting	emphasizing a point by announcing its importance	"The vital point is...." or "Most importantly...."
Synecdoche	using a part of something to represent the whole or the whole to represent a part	Your heart is not in your work.

This list does not include all the different types of literary and rhetorical devices. Moreover, you will find that different sources may list a literary device as a rhetorical device, or vice versa. What you need to understand is that writers and speakers employ these devices to make their efforts more interesting and memorable. Consequently, as a discerning reader you need to recognize these devices when you run across them.