

TECHNIQUES AND DEVICES

"The symbol and the metaphor are as necessary to science as to poetry."
- Jacob Bronowski

Choose **two** or **three** devices that you recognize clearly and are comfortable explaining. You do not have to define them; however, you must **identify** them and **explain** how effectively the author uses them to develop the **idea** you are discussing.

LITERARY TECHNIQUES AND DEVICES USED IN SHORT STORIES:

- Characterization:** An author always creates central characters to develop a plot and to represent a particular **topic**, such as relationships, love, neglect, grief, conflict, prejudice, injustice, survival, change, identity, moral dilemmas, stages of life, etc., or **human qualities**, such as leadership, courage, empathy, etc. It is central to any story and is always connected to the main idea.
- Flashback:** An author jumps backwards in time, temporarily suspending the progress of the plot to narrate earlier events.
- Foreshadowing:** Certain words or images found in a story can be hints about important events that will follow.
- Narrative Point of View:** A story is always told from a particular perspective. In **first-person** narration, the main character, speaking as "I," provides readers with direct insight into their thoughts and feelings. In **third-person** narration, a voice with no actual identity narrates the story, referring to all characters as "he," "she," or "they." It usually reveals the thoughts and feelings of the characters in a more objective way or from varied perspectives.
- Setting:** An author chooses a time and place to develop a story. (e.g., **time**: a historical era, season, year, time of day, etc., or **place**: outer space, heaven, a city, a hospital, a classroom, etc.).

RHETORICAL TECHNIQUES AND DEVICES COMMONLY USED IN ESSAYS:

- Anecdote:** An essayist can share personal experience or life events.
- Appeal to Authority:** An essayist can refer to the opinions of experts (the WHO, government officials, a famous critic, the Pope, a rabbi, a coach, a CEO, a teacher) to support certain views.
- Definition:** An essayist can explain key terms to help the reader understand the topic.
- Emotional Appeal:** An essayist can try to make the reader feel specific emotions to persuade the reader to accept their ideas.
- Empirical Evidence:** An essayist presents scientific findings from the physical or social sciences to support a position.
- Enumeration:** An essayist can use numbering to establish a sequence of points. (e.g., First, Second, Third; a), b), c))
- Example:** An essayist can refer to people, items, concepts, experiences or events to illustrate a point.

KEEP
READING

TECHNIQUES AND DEVICES

Continued

Methods of Argumentation:

An essayist can use clear reasoning — establishing points and drawing conclusions in an organized way; you can mention this as a ‘logical argument.’ If you are familiar with specific patterns of formal reasoning (deductive, inductive, etc.), you may comment on them.

Refutation of Opposing Views:

An essayist can support their own opinion by pointing out faults in opposing views.

TECHNIQUES AND DEVICES COMMONLY USED IN BOTH SHORT STORIES AND ESSAYS:

Cause and Effect: An author emphasizes a relationship between actions or events when one is the result of another.

Comparison/ Contrast: An author can use comparison to examine two things, mentioning both similarities and differences. A contrast focuses on differences — typically major differences.

Description: An author can provide details about a person, place, or thing.

Dialogue: An author can create conversations to develop the story. Dialogue normally appears in quotation marks.

Diction: An author chooses particular words, phrases, and expressions. Use an adjective to describe the style of diction (e.g., simple, formal, emotional, scientific, objective, etc.).

Imagery: The author can use descriptions that create sensory impressions in a reader’s mind — usually sights or sounds, but occasionally the senses of taste, smell, or touch. More vivid than description.

Metaphor: The author can refer to something as if it were something else (e.g. “Life is a winding road”).

Symbolism: The author can use something to represent an idea, a concept, a common experience, a feeling, etc. Symbols can be objects, animals, colours, light or darkness, weather, etc. (e.g., a dark shadow can symbolize death)

Tone: The author can convey an overall feeling in a text. A tone can be angry, joyful, sorrowful, fearful, nostalgic, optimistic, cynical, sympathetic, apologetic, etc.

Level of Language: The degree of formality of the language can range from very casual (e.g., slang, a personal tone, and unstructured) to very formal (e.g., a scholarly tone and sophisticated vocabulary).

SAFE BETS:

Short story: Characterization, setting, imagery, description, symbolism, tone, and flashback

Essay: Description, example, level of language, tone, comparison, and contrast