

TECHNIQUES AND DEVICES

Means Used by an Author to Illustrate a Theme or Get His/Her Point Across

(F): This literary technique or device is used primarily in works of **fiction**.

(NF): This literary technique or device is used primarily in works of **non-fiction**.

(F/NF): This literary technique or device is used in both works of **fiction** and **non-fiction**.

Allusion (F) is a direct or indirect reference to usually well-known persons, works of art, places, events or literary texts. Example: *The narrator **alludes** to Shakespeare when he compares Ryan to “a heartbroken Romeo searching for his Juliet”. The author employs this **allusion** to convey the tragedy of Ryan’s love life.*

Analogy (NF) is a comparison of two concepts, usually one that is familiar and one that is not in order to argue or explain a point. Example: *Nerenberg suggests that global warming can be explained by imagining that the Earth experiencing a fever.*

Anecdote (NF) is a short, simple story told by an author usually to illustrate a larger point. This story could be an account of the author’s personal experience, or an historical account. Example: *Ted Gup uses the **anecdote** of watching his son do his homework to support his claim that the use of the internet for research has narrowed society’s field of learning.*

Appeal to authority (NF) is when an author uses the research or opinions of an expert (or experts) in the field related to his/her claim. An appeal to authority is used to strengthen the credibility of the author’s claim. Example: *The author refers **to noted urban planner, J.H. Crawford’s** belief that “Medieval urban forms are superior to everything that came before or has come since” to support his claim that we should develop car free cities.*

Cause and effect (NF) is when an author looks at the cause(s) of something and/or its consequences.

Characterization (F) refers to the level or degree of detail an author employs to make his/her characters come alive; it may include outward appearance (tall, old, skinny, ugly, etc.), behaviours (dull, angry, happy, etc.), or their inner emotional, intellectual and moral qualities (centered, religious, intelligent, apathetic, etc.). Example: *Clare is **characterized** as a beautiful and mysterious woman who never reveals her true intentions.*

Claim (NF) is the author’s main position or argument in a non-fiction text.

Classification (NF) is a way of organizing information according to categories. Example: *Cross **classifies** time into different categories based on how she sees people making use of their leisure hours: Busy Time, Leisure Time, and Travel Time.*

Conflict (F) is a struggle between opposing forces. It can be between two people, a person and something in nature or society, or even between impulses or parts of the self.

Contrast (F/NF) involves the examination of differences of associated things, qualities, or events.

Counterargument (NF) is when an author takes a contrary position on a matter to make point or draw a contrast. Example: *Although doctors recommend children have vaccinations, there are side effects that might outweigh the benefits.*

Description (NF) is the amount of detail used by the author to give a mental image of something experienced.

Dialogue (F) is the conversation between any characters in a story.

Diction (F/NF) involves the kinds of words used to achieve particular effects. An author may use formal or informal diction. An example of informal language is **slang** which is “street” or common (usually spoken) language. For example, the word “children” is an example of formal diction, whereas “kids” is an example of informal diction or slang.

Empirical evidence (NF) is knowledge acquired through observation or experimentation. Example: *The rising sea levels and ocean heat content is **empirical evidence** of global warming’s existence.*

Enumeration (NF) is when an author provides a list of items to support his/her argument, applying a number to the list. Example: *The author **enumerates** different ways to improve your vocabulary by providing a list of **five** different techniques.*

Ethos (NF) is an appeal to ethics, motivating an audience toward belief by way of the speaker’s trustworthiness and credibility. Example: *Trust me, I have been a doctor for fifteen years.*

Example (NF) refers to the particular single item, fact, incident, or aspect that illustrates an idea or a general statement. Example: *The author uses the **example** of the Industrial Revolution to support her idea that machines have been replacing the need for manual work for a long time.*

Fact (NF) is verifiable information used to support the author’s claim in a work of non-fiction. Example: *The author refers to the **demolition of the Berlin Wall on November 9, 1989** to support her claim.*

Flashback (F) is when a character or narrator interrupts the narrative to recount an event that occurred in the past, i.e., outside the present action of the work.

Foreshadowing (F) is when an outcome or event is suggested before it happens. For example, if there is a gun introduced at the beginning of the story, this could foreshadow that someone may be shot later on in the story.

Imagery (F) refers to the author’s use of words that appeal to the senses. Although a lot of imagery is visual, or can be seen, the author may also use imagery of touch, feel, taste, and sound. Example: *The **black** cat **howled** as it sat atop the **slick, wet** fence.*

Irony (F/NF) refers to the unexpected difference or lack of agreement between appearances and truth or between expectation and reality. Irony is apparent when an author uses language to create a deliberate contrast between appearance (what seems to be true) and truth (what the author/narrator/character really thinks). Example: *Since the Hadley’s purchase the HappyLife Home because it will make their lives easier, it is **ironic** that in the end, this decision is what leads to their deaths.*

Logos (NF) as a statement, sentence, or argument used to convince or persuade the targeted audience by employing reason or logic. It is used when citing facts, in addition to statistical, literal, and historical analogies. It is something through which inner thoughts are presented logically, to persuade the audience.

Metaphor (F/NF) is a comparison that does not use “like” or “as”. Example: *Your love is a hurricane.*

Narration (F/NF) is the act or telling a story or sequence of events; it is how the author arranges aspects of the story such as place, time, events, and the characters and what they say or do. Not all narration is in chronological order.

Overstatement/Hyperbole (F/NF) most often used in non-fiction, it is an exaggerated remark or comment used by an author or through the voice of a character, usually with a specific effect or intent in mind. Example: *I'm so hungry I could eat a horse.*

Pathos (NF) is a method of convincing people with an argument drawn out through an emotional response. It is a technique that stirs up emotions of pity, sympathy, and sorrow. Example: *The author invokes **pathos** when he describes the ads that encourage charitable donations by showing small children living in pathetic conditions, to evoke pity in people.*

Personification (F) involves the giving of human qualities to inanimate objects or animals. Example: *Emily Dickinson's line, "Because I could not stop for Death/ He kindly stopped for me" **personifies** death as a gentlemanly figure.*

Plot (F) refers to what happens in the story, such as the events and thoughts which make up the story's basic structure and the order in which these events/thoughts are presented.

Point of view (F/NF) in fiction refers to the perspective used by the narrator to tell the story. It is through the narrator's perspective (through the narrator/s eyes and mind) that readers learn what is happening in a story. An author might choose the first person, third person restricted, omniscient, or some other point of view. Non-fiction is generally written in the first person.

Refutation (NF) is when an author presents opposing views and points out why they are not as convincing and his/her own views in order to persuade the reader to agree with him/her.

Repetition (F/NF) involves the author stating the same words, phrases, or ideas several times throughout a text, usually to emphasize a main idea or the main theme. In fiction this repetition can occur through the voice of a character.

Rhetorical question (NF) is a question that is posed without the expectation of an answer. The question is posed in order to persuade the reader to agree with the author. Example: *King poses a rhetorical question to persuade readers to understand his desire for a strategy of nonviolence in a conflict between nations. When he asks: "How much longer must we play at deadly war games before we heed the plaintive pleas of the unnumbered dead and maimed of past wars?" the reader is led to think about how throughout history there has been a great number of lives lost as the result of warring nations.*

Satire (F/NF) may occur when someone or something is ridiculed or made fun of. Satire usually exposes a vice or folly. This can be a difficult technique to spot or to explain, so do not use this unless you are sure you understand what you are supposed to do. Example: *When Birdboot first arrives to the theatre and tells Moon that he and the other theatre reviewers have decided that they will give the play good reviews if it is not too long, Stoppard is satirizing the inflated egos of theatre reviewers by exposing these critics as selfish people who care more about the play's infringement on their time than on the quality of the art.*

Setting (F) refers to the location of a story or novel in terms of place, time, social environment, and physical environment. Example: *The story is set in the **Depression Era of the 1930's**, in a **small town in Oregon**, where **one afternoon** the protagonist finally goes to **the bus station** to find out how much a ticket to **Hollywood** costs.*

Simile (F/NF) is a comparison where "like" or "as" is used. Example: *Your love is like a hurricane.*

Symbolism (F) involves using something to represent something else, usually something concrete or physical to represent something that is abstract. Example: *A heart is a **symbol** of love. Spring is **symbolic** of rebirth. The author uses **symbolism** to illustrate the feeling of renewal brought on by true love.*

Theme (F/NF) is a larger truth that a story reveals; it is the author's main idea. A theme is rarely stated directly by the author. Instead, the reader must uncover what they perceive the theme to be by examining and questioning details found in the story. Remember that a theme is more than simply a subject or topic of a story, such as love, fear, identity, or isolation. For example, if the story is dealing with a character who feels isolated, the theme is not simply isolation, but something *about* isolation. The idea here is that there are many works of fiction that deal with isolation, and you need to uncover what this particular story explores in terms of this topic. Example: *The author explores how music is used to cope with the isolation caused by racial discrimination.*

Tone (F/NF) refers to the author's attitude or position toward the action, characters, narrator, subject, and even to the reader, to determine the tone, the reader must examine the language the author uses and decide what effect the author's choice of words has on the overall mood of the essay or story.

Understatement (F/NF) is when an author presents something as having less importance than it does in reality. Example: *There are worse things than being loved by everyone around you.*