

# Literary Device Glossary

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Every discipline employs a special vocabulary; literary criticism is no exception. Literary criticism is based in part on the assumption that writing is a **purposeful activity** and that excellent writing resulting in works of literary merit is not merely a *happy accident*. During the year you will familiarize yourself with some of the terminology that is used in literary criticism, and you will analyze specific instances when an author has employed a literary device. You will be creating a glossary of literary devices, complete with your specific analysis of the effect of the device on the text as a whole.

The specific devices you will need to use for your entries over the course of the year are discussed in more detail on the vocabulary lists given out each week.

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Over the course of the semester you'll be asked to complete a number of literary device entries. Any time you encounter a device from the vocabulary lists, whether it is in your outside reading or it is in a text we are studying as a class, you can use that device for a glossary entry.

In addition, you will need to maintain a section of your notebook where you keep track of literary definitions and examples of each that we encounter in class.

## Guidelines

- **You will submit two (2) entries per week**
- **You are responsible for keeping all of your lit devices once they have been graded**
- **All entries must be typed, edited, and in the correct format in order to be graded**
- **Texts from your previous English classes are not acceptable**
- **Plagiarized entries will result in a zero (0)**

The FUNCTION discussion is the most important part of your literary device. Unfortunately, it is also the most difficult (Isn't that just typical?). However, if you are certain to include the *Three C's* in your function discussion, you will always find success.

### **Every literary device function discussion needs to include:**

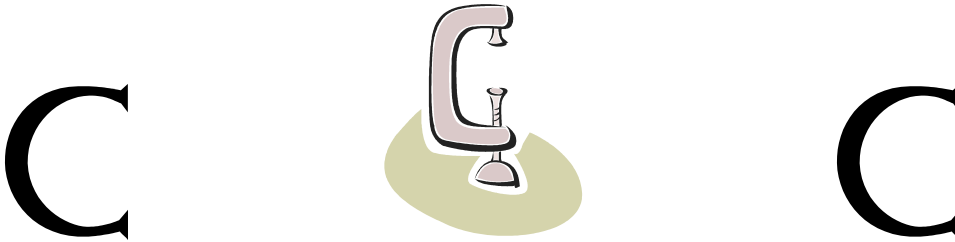
1. **C**ontext: This sets up the text portion you are about to discuss. In other words, you need to **BRIEFLY** introduce the general circumstances in your example. This does not mean you need to summarize the entire plot of a novel. For example, if you were using an example from the third chapter of *All the Pretty Horses* you would not need to explain the John Grady had left his home in Texas and had found work in Mexico as a rancher, etc., etc. You would merely need to say "When John Grady Cole hears the short pop of a gun, and Belvins fails to get back on the truck..."
2. **C**oncept: What is the specific device that you are addressing? Use it in the present tense and use the active voice (i.e. "This *symbolizes* the...") when referring to the literary device. Make certain you discuss it directly and are specific rather than general. Also make sure you have correctly identified the device.
3. **C**onnection: Discuss in clear and specific terms exactly how the literary device contributes to the passage/poem/novel as a whole. In other words, how does the literary device reinforce and contribute to what is occurring in the larger context? Make sure you address the artistic effect when appropriate. When discussing the connection, artistic or otherwise, make certain that you address how this language device operates within the passage.

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For example, it is typical for students to say that a device gives a passage “flow.” This is not a helpful comment unless that “flow” is connected to something specific in terms of the effect. All writing should “flow” to some extent -- addressing what there is about the “flow” that the shapes the text is the key.

**Remember that merely pointing out a literary device does not mean that you understand its effect on the passage as a whole. You have to be specific about its function. If you are certain to include the Three C's, then you will be successful.**



Format

- Term:** Definition of the literary device selected
- Example:** Quotation, followed by source, including title, page/line number
- Function:** Author's purpose in employing this language resource at this point in the work. How does this particular device enhance what the writer is conveying? You may comment on theme, character, setting, or whatever else is important in explaining how this device functions in this particular instance.

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Example
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**Symbol:** In the simplest sense, a symbol is anything that stands for or represents something else beyond it—often an idea conventionally associated with it. The term symbolism refers to the use of symbols, or to a set of related symbols.

**Example:** “Like him she was lefthanded or she played chess with her left hand . . . He leaned forward and moved his bishop and mated her in four moves” (133-137).

**Function:** This chess game between John Grady and Alejandra’s godmother symbolizes the competition that they are in for Alejandra herself. This game of chess, which takes place as John is trying to gain approval of his relationship with Alejandra, represents the greater chess game between these two competing characters. Although John Grady wins the first couple of games and seems to be well on his way to achieving his goal, in the end it is the godmother who triumphs. This directly mirrors John Grady’s and the godmother’s lives: although John Grady wins Alejandra’s affections initially, in the end he loses her. When he takes “her queen” (133) he is literally winning the chess match by taking the queen, but he is also on a symbolic level attempting to take the godmother’s true “queen,” Alejandra, whom the godmother is determined to keep from suffering the same misfortunes she endured. The lack of dialogue between the characters during the match further reinforces the quiet competition they are engaging in; one that is not violent but is indeed fierce. The intellectual nature of the chess match also enhances the choice that Alejandra ultimately makes near the end of the novel: leaving John and opting instead for the security and wealth of her family. This choice reflects the cool and calculating logic of a chess match rather than the passions of the heart.

**Please note that the author first provides context for the discussion (context), discusses the term itself (concept) and then carefully discusses how the literary device specifically functions both in the passage and within the context of the novel as a whole (connection). The author is also careful to use the term in the active voice within the function discussion.**