Literary Devices

Everything you need to know to analyze figurative language in poetry, drama, literature, speeches, etc., etc., etc.
Essential Question

What are the literary devices I need to understand to analyze poetry, drama, and other literature?
Students understand, make inferences and draw conclusions about how an author's sensory language creates imagery in literary text and provide evidence from text to support their understanding.
Figurative Language

language that is not meant to be taken literally, or word for word
Imagery/Sensory Language

• the use of language to create mental images and sensory impressions for emotional effect and intensity

• Example—
  o He could hear his world crashing down when he heard the news about her.
  o A host, of golden daffodils;
    Beside the lake, beneath the trees,
    Fluttering and dancing in the breeze.
    Continuous as the stars that shine
    And twinkle on the Milky Way

from *Daffodils* by William Wordsworth
Simile

• a comparison of two things that are essentially different, using the words *like* or *as*

• Example
  o *O my love is like a red, red rose*
    from Robert Burn’s “A Red, Red Rose”
Metaphor

• a subtle comparison in which an author describes a person or thing using words that are not meant to be taken literally

• Examples—
   All the world’s a stage,
   And all the men and women merely players:
   They have their exits and their entrances
   from As You Like It by William Shakespeare

   Sisters
   
   She calls me tofu
   because I am so soft, easily falling apart.

   I wish I were tough and full of fire, like ginger—like her.

   A Suitcase of Seaweed and other poems
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Extended Metaphor

• a metaphor introduced and then further developed throughout all or part of a literary work, especially a poem—comparison can be made to something else not mentioned in the poem

• Example—
  o *Nothing Gold Can Stay* by Robert Frost
Nothing Gold Can Stay by Robert Frost

Nature's first green is gold
Her hardest hue to hold.
Her early leaf's a flower;
But only so an hour.
Then leaf subsides to leaf.
So Eden sank to grief,
So dawn goes down to day.
Nothing gold can stay.

Comparison = life to a sunrise
Personification

• figurative language in which nonhuman things or abstractions are represented as having human qualities

• Example—
  o Necessity is the mother of all invention.
Hyperbole

• an intentional and extreme exaggeration for emphasis or effect

• Example—
  o This book weighs a ton.
Idiom

Phrases people use in everyday language which do not make sense literally, but the meaning is understood.

Examples—

Just *hold your horses* if you think idioms are hard! I’m here to *let the cat out of the bag*. Idioms are *a dime a dozen*, and learning them is a *piece of cake*. OK...now what?
Sound Devices

Focus on the sound of words, rather than their meaning
Repetition

• Repetition is when an author repeats a word, phrase, sentence, or stanza for **effect or emphasis**.

• Examples:
  - The chorus or refrain of almost any song
  - This poem, by Shel Silverstein:

  "How Not to Have to Dry the Dishes"

  If you have to dry the dishes
  (Such an awful, boring chore)
  If you have to dry the dishes
  (‘Stead of going to the store)
  If you have to dry the dishes
  And you drop one on the floor—
  Maybe they won’t let you
  Dry the dishes anymore."
Rhyme is the repetition of end sounds in two or more words or phrases that appear close to each other in a poem.

INVICTUS
Out of the night that covers me,
Black as the Pit from pole to pole,
I thank whatever gods may be
For my unconquerable soul.

In the fell clutch of circumstance
I have not winced nor cried aloud.
Under the bludgeonings of chance
My head is bloody, but unbowed.

Beyond this place of wrath and tears
Looms but the Horror of the shade,
And yet the menace of the years
Finds, and shall find, me unafraid.

It matters not how strait the gate
How charged with punishments the scroll.
I am the master of my fate:
I am the captain of my soul.

—William Ernest Henley

Oh lovely orange
You golden treat,
Oh tell me why aren't you easy to eat?
Alliteration

- Alliteration is the repetition of a sound at the beginning of words.

- Common examples:
  Coca-cola, Tiny Tim, Mickey Mouse

“While I nodded, nearly napping, suddenly there came a tapping...”

The Raven—
Edgar Allan Poe
Assonance

• Assonance is the repetition of vowel sounds
• Often creates near-rhyme

"The Bells" by Edgar Allen Poe

Hear the mellow wedding bells,
Golden bells!
What a world of happiness their harmony foretells!
Through the balmy air of night
How they ring out their delight!
From the molten-golden notes,
And an in tune,
What a liquid ditty floats
To the turtle-dove that listens, while she gloats
On the moon!

"mellow wedding bells" – short e sound
"molten-golden notes" – long o sound
"liquid ditty" – short i sound

"The Bells" by Edgar Allen Poe
Consonance

• Consonance is the repetition of consonant sounds at the end or middle of words (not rhyme).

“Do Not Go Gentle into that Good Night” by Dylan Thomas

“blind eyes could blaze” – z sound

“curse, bless me now with your fierce tears” – s sound
Onomatopoeia

- Onomatopoeia - a word that sounds like the sound it makes
- For example: pop, crackle, screech, zip, fizz
- Not just sound effects!

“And ere three shrill notes the pipe uttered,
You heard as if an army muttered;
And the muttering grew to a grumbling;
And the grumbling grew to a mighty rumbling;
And out of the houses the rats came tumbling.”

The Pied Piper of Hamelin—
Robert Browning
Other Literary Devices

Even more...
Symbol

- A symbol is an object, person, place, or action that has a meaning in itself, and that also stands for something larger than itself.

For example:
A dove symbolizes peace.

A black crow or raven symbolizes death.

A wedding ring symbolizes...???
An allusion is a reference to a person, place, event, or literary work that a writer expects the reader to recognize and understand. It may come from history, geography, literature, art, music, or religion.

For example:

You were Romeo, you were throwing pebbles
And my daddy said, "Stay away from Juliet"

“Love Song”, by Taylor Swift
Oxymoron

• An Oxymoron is a figure of speech in which opposites are paired for effect.

Further Examples

- "Parting is such sweet sorrow."
  ~ Romeo and Juliet

- "So foul and fair a day I have not seen!"
  ~ Macbeth
Aphorism

- a concise statement of a general truth or principle; like a truism

- Example—
  - A penny saved is a penny earned. - Ben Franklin
  - The man who does not read good books has no advantage over the man who cannot read them. - Mark Twain
  - “You never really understand a person until you consider things from his point of view – until you climb into his skin and walk around in it.”

  from To Kill A Mockingbird by Harper Lee
Epigraph

• a quotation at the beginning of a literary work to introduce its theme

• Example—
  o *But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.*
    (Genesis 2:17)
    --from *Twilight* by Stephanie Meyer
  o [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LnBr-7QzBBg](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LnBr-7QzBBg)
Irony

- a literary technique used to create meaning that seems to contradict the literal meaning or events
  - Verbal
  - Situational
  - Dramatic
Verbal Irony

- use of words in which the intended meaning is contrary to the literal meaning

Example –
- “Are we gonna do anything today?” or “Is class gonna be fun today?”
- In *SHREK*, when Fiona Says “Where are you going?” and Shrek replies “I’ve got to save my ass.” (Speaking of Donkey, of course.)
Situational Irony

• implying through plot or character that a situation is quite different from the way it is presented.

• Example—
  o 'The Wonderful Wizard of Oz', Scarecrow always had a brain; Tin Man always had a heart; Dorothy could have always gone home; the Cowardly Lion wasn’t a coward after all.
Dramatic Irony

• dramatic device in which a character says or does something that he or she does not fully grasp but which is understood by the audience

• Example—
  o Lois Lane is constantly trying to get an interview with Superman, but she actually sees him every day and doesn’t know it (Clark Kent).
Sarcasm

a bitter form of irony, can be intended to tease or hurt; often insinuated by the tone; late Greek sarkasmós, f. sarkázein tear flesh, gnash the teeth, speak bitterly, f. sárx, sark- flesh.

Example—

○ “I’m proud of you, Mom. You’re like Christopher Columbus. You discovered something millions of people knew about before you.” –Lisa Simpson
Paradox

• a seemingly contradictory statement that on closer analysis reveals a deeper truth

• Example—
  o “I’m nobody.” --anonymous
  o “I can resist anything but temptation.” --Oscar Wilde
  o “Nobody goes to that restaurant; it’s too crowded.”
For Analyzing Poetry

Review
Refrain

• a phrase or verse recurring at intervals in a song or poem, especially at the end of each stanza; chorus.

• Example—
  o “All you need is love
    Love is all you need”
    --The Beatles
  o [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s-pFAFsTFTI](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s-pFAFsTFTI)
Rhythm

- the BEAT created by the sounds of the words in a poem
- Rhythm can be created by meter, rhyme scheme, alliteration, assonance, and refrain.
Stanza

• A stanza is a group of related words in a poem, similar to a paragraph of prose but does not have to have complete sentences.

• *It’s like a poetry paragraph!*

“When the Teacher’s Back is Turned” by Ken Nesbitt

When the teacher’s back is turned
We never scream and shout
Never do we drop our books
and try to freak her out.

No one throws a pencil
At the ceiling of the class.
No one tries to hit the fire alarm
And break the glass.
Style

- Style is a manner or “way” of writing.
- It involves HOW something is said rather than what is actually said.
- A writer’s style is determined by the way he/she uses words.
  - Ex: vivid verbs, imagery, sentence structure

Tyger Tyger. burning bright,  
In the forests of the night;  
What immortal hand or eye.  
Could frame thy fearful symmetry?

In what distant deeps or skies.  
Burnt the fire of thine eyes?  
On what wings dare he aspire?  
What the hand, dare seize the fire?

“life’s not a paragraph

and death i think is no parenthesis”
maggie and milly and molly and may went down to the beach (to play one day)

and maggie discovered a shell that sang so sweetly she couldn't remember her troubles, and

milly befriended a stranded star whose rays five languid fingers were;

and molly was chased by a horrible thing which raced sideways while blowing bubbles: and

may came home with a smooth round stone as small as a world and as large as alone.

For whatever we lose (like a you or a me) it's always ourselves we find in the sea

• No capital letters
• Personification
• Ends lines in the middle of a "sentence"
• Imagery

E. E. Cummings writes all his poems like this—no capital letters, simple language, unusual line breaks. Why do you think he does this?
Tone

• Tone is the **writer’s attitude** toward a subject, character, or audience and is conveyed through the author’s choice of diction, imagery, figurative language, details, and syntax.

• (In other words, tone is **how the author feels about his subject, character, or audience, and he shows it through the words he chooses, and how he puts them together**.)
Some words that can describe tone are:

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<th>happy</th>
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Mood

• The feeling that the writer creates for the reader.
• This is how the reader is supposed to feel about the subject.
• Descriptive words, imagery, and figurative language all influence the mood of a literary work.
Theme

- Theme is the central message of a literary work, or the idea the author wishes to convey about that subject. It is **not** the same as the subject, which can be expressed in one or two words. (This is a lot like a **truism**.)

- Possible themes for *The Outsiders*:
  - Not all kids who are in gangs are bad.
  - People may come from different backgrounds, but we’re all the same people.
  - If something bad happens to someone, don’t blame it on yourself if it’s not really your fault.
POINT OF VIEW FLOW CHART

Decide whether narrative is written in 1st or 3rd person

1ST PERSON: (I, me, we, us)

Is a major character telling the story?

YES → MAJOR PARTICIPANT (First Person Singular or plural)

Is the story written in present tense?

YES → First Person Distant

NO → First Person Close

MINOR PARTICIPANT

NO → 3RD PERSON: (he, she, they)

Do you know what any of the characters are thinking?

YES → OMNISCIENT

LIMITED

OMNISCIENT

Third Person Distant

Third Person Close?

YES → FAMILIAR OBSERVER

NO → OBJECTIVE OBSERVER

Do you know any of the character's histories or backgrounds?

YES → NO

NO → NO