STUDYDADDY

Get Homework Help From Expert Tutor

Get Help

Dr. Ribitzky
Great Works of Literature

LITERARY DEVICES SURVIVAL GUIDE

<u>DRAMA</u>
Use this for Racine and Ibsen.

1. Define **plot**
   The unified structure of a play's incidents

2. Define **climax**
   Point in the play when we discover whether protagonist achieves objective or not

3. How do playwrights control expectations?
   Through the arrangement of incidents

4. Define **round characters**
   Individualized; reveal complexity/ambiguity in their attitudes/behavior; not easily predictable in behavior/speech

5. Define **flat characters**
   Reveal only single dimension; behavior/speech predictable

6. What is the most important feature of a **protagonist** (main character)?
   Intense desire/objective

7. Define **antagonist**
   Character/force against which protagonist struggles

8. What may the **antagonist** be?
   Character / culture / nature / self

9. Why do the protagonist and the antagonist have to be evenly matched?
   To create necessary tension to sustain audience's interest

10. What do characters achieve dramatically through **conflict**?
    Reveal themselves / advance plot / dramatize meaning(s) of play

11. Define **soliloquy**
    Speech given by character as if alone, even though other characters may be on stage

12. Define **aside**
    Comments made directly to audience in presence of other characters, but w/o those other characters hearing what is said (usu. a brief remark)

13. What is the most important and consistent function of **dialogue**?
    Revelation of character

14.   Define **subtext**
        Hints in dialogue / actions / staging / character development / previous events
              → meaning beneath surface of dialogue lines

15.   Define **staging**
        The spectacle a play presents in performance; its visual detail

16.   What does staging include?
        Blocking, stage business, scenic background/set, props + costumes, lighting + sound
        effects

17.   Name some functions for the following:

        a.   **Props** – create sense of reality; can be symbolic; can complete costumes

        b.   **Costumes** – can reveal characters beneath them

        c.   **Set** – can est. mood/time period

POETRY
(I took these concise definitions from Perrine's Sound and Sense)

I.   Rhythm and Meter
1.   **Stanza** (a group of lines whose metrical pattern [and often its rhyme scheme
       as well] is repeated throughout a poem)
2.   Line
       a.   **end-stopped line** (a line that ends with a natural speech pause,
              usually marked by punctuation)
       b.   run-on line/**enjambment** (a line which has no natural speech pause
              at its end, allowing the sense to flow uninterruptedly into the
              succeeding line)
       c.   **caesura** (pause that occurs in the middle of a line)
3.   **foot** (a unit of sound measured in how we accent the syllables)
       a.   double meters
                    i.   **iamb** (example: the word "rehearse" has two syllables, and
                           the accent goes on the last syllable; we pronounce this word
                           as reHEARSE)
                           → we say that a poem is in an **iambic meter** if it
                           predominantly follows this rhythm of accenting every other
                           syllable, beginning with the second syllable. It helps if you
                           read it out loud.
                           → For example, Shakespeare's Sonnet 18 begins: "Shall I
                           compare thee with a summer's day?"
                                  → When you read this out loud, pay attention to
                           what syllables you stress: "shall I comPARE thee TO a
                           SUMmer's DAY?"

➔ Notice the pattern: every other syllable is accented, beginning with the second syllable. This makes the line iambic. The fact that there are 5 iambs (one unaccented syllable followed by an unaccented syllable is one iamb) makes this line **iambic pentameter**.

        ii. **trochee** (example: the word "college" has two syllables, and the accent goes on the first syllable; we pronounce this word as COLlege)

   b. triple meters

        i. **anapest** (example: the word "understand" has three syllables, and the accent goes on the last one; we pronounce this word as underSTAND)

        ii. **dactyl** (example: the word "merrily" has three syllables, and the accent goes on the first one; we pronounce this word as MERrily)

   c. **spondee** (this is a rare case in English, but it is when two consecutive syllables are equally accented, such as the word "heart-strings")

   d. **metrical variation** (departure from the basic metrical pattern; this means that a poem may seem to begin with a certain meter, such as iambic pentameter, but then may stray into a trochaic, anapestic, or dactylic meter, or have extra or fewer syllables in certain lines compared with others)

  4. **sonnet** (a poem written in 3 quatrains followed by 1 couplet; this means 3 stanzas of 4 lines followed by 1 stanza of 2 lines, adding to a total of 14 lines)

   a. **English / Shakespearean sonnet** (a sonnet with a rhyme scheme that goes *abab cdcd efef gg*)

   b. **Italian / Petrarchan sonnet** (a sonnet with a rhyme scheme that goes either *abba abba cdcdcd* OR *abba abba cdecde*)

II. Other Musical Devices

  1. **Alliteration** (repetition of close intervals of initial sounds of accented syllables, or important words; e.g. "**f**ull-**f**athom **f**ive")

   a. **Assonance** (alliteration composed of vowels)

   b. **Consonance** (alliteration composed of consonants)

  2. **Rhyme** (repetition of sounds)

   a. **internal rhyme** (rhyme that occurs in the middle of a line)

   b. **end rhyme** (rhyme that occurs at the end of a line)

   c. **approximate/slant rhyme** (words that have some kind of sound correspondence, but it's not perfect, like "rain" and "again")

   d. **refrain** (repeated word, phrase, line, or group of lines, normally at some fixed position in a poem written in stanzaic form)

III. Layers of Interpretation

  1. **denotation** (the dictionary definition of a word)

  2. **connotation** (what a word means in context of the work, which may be something outside of a dictionary definition)

  3. **imagery** (a representation, through, language, of sense experience; **an image** is anything that appeals to the 5 senses—it doesn't just have to be visual!)

   a. **Visual imagery** (imagery that appeals to sight)

      b.   **Auditory imagery** (imagery that appeals to sound)

      c.   **Tactile imagery** (imagery that appeals to touch)

      d.   **Olfactory imagery** (imagery that appeals to smell)

      e.   **Gustatory imagery** (imagery that appeals to taste)

4.   figurative language (language that means something beyond its literal meaning)

      a.   **Metaphor** (implicit comparison between 2 things that are essentially unalike; e.g. "my heart is a red rose" – obviously this is not a literal statement)

      b.   **Simile** (the same thing as a metaphor, but with the use of the word "like" or "as"; e.g. "my heart is like a red rose")

      c.   **Personification** (human attributes are given to an animal, object or concept; e.g. anything from Disney, like a talking clock or a talking candelabra)

      d.   **Apostrophe** (someone or something absent or dead is addressed as if it were alive and present and could reply; e.g. "O moon, why are you so bright?" Don't confuse this kind of poetic apostrophe with the apostrophe in grammatical punctuation (').

      e.   **Metonymy** (a significant aspect of an experience is used to represent the whole experience; e.g. "The White House said…" – obviously The White House can't say anything, because it is literally a house; but figuratively, as an example of metonymy, "White House" represents the presidential administration. You can find the same kind of figurative construction when people say "The Crown said.." when they mean the Queen of England.)

      f.   **Symbol** (something that means more than what it is; it has to be read both literally *and* figuratively; e.g. a wedding ring is a symbol of a particular kind of legally binding relationship, but it also exists on a literal level. **This is what distinguishes symbol from metaphor**; please do not confuse the two).

      g.   **Allegory** (a narrative—often medieval—or any kind of description that is constructed on a system of symbols. For example, a story about a knight named Virtue who kills a demon named Evil and rescues the damsel in distress named Faith is allegorical, because every element here represents something else beyond the literal storyline).

5.   **Allusion** (a reference, either explicit or implicit, to something in literature or in history; e.g. Cardi B alluding to "bloody shoes" in "Bodak Yellow" is making a reference to a specific kind of shoe manufactured by Christian Louboutin. This may seem obvious to you now, but students 200 years from now who will study her genius lyrics in classes on great literature will most likely have to look up this allusive reference. Please do not confuse "allusion" with "illusion").

6.   **Tone** (a writer's or speaker's attitude to the subject matter or to the audience; it is the emotional coloring of a work. This is the most difficult device to pin down, and should be described using adjectives. Maybe the tone is happy or sad or ironic or serious or funny or light-hearted or angry, etc.).

7.   **Irony** (incongruity or discrepancy in language. As fellow New Yorkers, you should all have the art of irony mastered. If someone rushes past you and makes you

spill your coffee, and you shout in response, "Thanks a lot!" you are not, in fact, thanking this person at all, but using the word "thanks" as an insult—the exact opposite of what this word means. So yes, sarcasm is an example of irony.)

     8.   **Paradox** (statement or situation containing apparently contradictory or incompatible elements. When the witches in *Macbeth* say, "Fair is foul and foul is fair," they are equating opposite terms, which is a paradox. Do not confuse this with irony).

     9.   **Hyperbole** (exaggeration; e.g. "The world is going to end because I chipped a nail").

     10.   **Litotes** (understatement; saying less than one means; e.g. "The landlord said he hardly had any money when, in fact, he was a millionaire." This word is iambic and is pronounced as "LiTOEtees").

FICTION

1.   **Setting**
       a.   Time
       b.   Place

2.   Means of **characterization**:
       a.   Reactions of other characters
       b.   Externals (dress, etc.)
       c.   Speech
       d.   Action
       e.   Author's statement
       f.   Revelation of a character's thoughts

3.   **Narrative Perspective**:
       a.   **1st person** (the protagonist of the story is narrating their own story, e.g. Albert Camus' *The Stranger*)
       b.   **3rd person limited** (someone else is narrating the story, but closely following the perspective of the protagonist, e.g. Franz Kafka's *The Metamorphosis*)
       c.   **3rd person omniscient** (someone removed from the story's action has a full narrative control over what every character says, thinks, and feels, e.g. George Eliot's *Middlemarch*)

4.   Elements of **Plot**
       a.   **Exposition** (introduction to the story)
       b.   **Conflict** (identification of what the protagonist wants, and what the obstacles are to these desires)
       c.   **Rising Action / Complications** (emerge from the protagonist pursuing what they want)
       d.   **Climax** (turning-point; point of highest tension, discovery, or character realization; the protagonist realizes that they get or do not get what they want, or there is a "plot twist" that reveals something else that derails the character or the story)
       e.   **Falling Action**
       f.   **Resolution**

5.   What drives plot?
         Conflict

6.   Prevalent **conflicts** in literature
      a.   person vs. person
      b.   person vs. people
      c.   person vs. society
      d.   person vs. self
      e.   person vs. higher power (nature/fate; God/gods, etc.)

7.   By what means does an author create a sense of inherent probability?
      a.   Handling of time
      b.   Motivation (of character)
      c.   Foreshadowing

8.   How might an author manipulate the tempo or pace of the text?
      a. Narration of action (fast/moderate/slow)
      b. Dialogue (fast/moderate/slow)
      c. Description → shift in point of view / inserting characters other than the central ones, so when the reader returns to them, we feel that sufficient time has gone by to allow for character development

9.   Author's **style** is revealed through:
      a.   **Diction** (the choice of vocabulary)
      b.   **Syntax** (the grammatical arrangement of words)

10.   3 types of **irony**:
      a. **Verbal irony** (say opposite of what you mean, e.g. sarcasm)
      b. **Irony of circumstance** (discrepancy between what seems to be and what is; when an individual expects one thing to occur only to discover that the opposite happens)
      c. **Dramatic irony** (discrepancy between what characters know and what readers know; e.g. when Oedipus doesn't realize that he is pronouncing harsh judgments against himself, but the audience realizes it)

• •

Successful essays on literature focus on concrete devices and structural observations, exploring how the formal features illuminate your understanding of the text. Consider these strong thesis statements that take slightly different approaches toward understanding tone, for example:

e.g. 1: In this passage from *The Scarlet Letter*, Nathaniel Hawthorne uses rhetorical devices, including metaphors, visual imagery, and paradox to create a tone of frantic despondency that reflects the emotional turmoil of Arthur Dimmesdale.

e.g. 2: In *The Scarlet Letter*, Nathaniel Hawthorne employs irony, biblical allusions, and syntactical devices to convey a guilty and pitiful tone in a chaotic and destructive world.

e.g. 3: Nathaniel Hawthorne manipulates rhetorical devices of syntax, imagery, and diction in *The Scarlet Letter* to achieve a remorseful tone of anguish and burden. Integrating these rhetorical devices allows the narrator to fully paint a picture of Arthur Dimmesdale's "self-acknowledged shame" (page number).

STUDYDADDY

Get Homework Help From Expert Tutor

Get Help