

Pastiche

Pastiche Definition

Pastiche is a literary piece that imitates a famous literary work by another writer. Unlike [parody](#), its purpose is not to mock, but to honor the literary piece it imitates.

This literary device is generally employed to imitate a piece of literary work light-heartedly, but in a respectful manner. The term pastiche also applies to a literary work that is a broad mixture of things – such as themes, concepts, and characters – imitated from different literary works. For instance, many of the pastiche examples are in the form of detective novels that are written in the [style](#) of the original *Sherlock Holmes* stories. It features either Sherlock Holmes, or a different main [character](#) that is like him.

Examples of Pastiche in Literature

Example #1: *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead* (By Tom Stoppard)

Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead – a [tragicomedy](#) written by Tom Stoppard – is one of the best examples of pastiche. It develops upon two minor characters: Rosencrantz, and Guildenstern, who appear for a brief moment in Shakespeare's play *Hamlet*. The title is taken from *Hamlet*'s Act 5, Scene 3, when an ambassador from England announces, "Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are dead." The two characters, standing behind the curtains, express their confusion on the events of the main play "Hamlet" enacted on the stage.

Example #2: *The British Museum Is Falling Down* (By David Lodge)

David Lodge's comic novel *The British Museum Is Falling Down* contains imitations of ten different novelists. He gives reference to each particular writer in the text before he starts imitating their style. For example, in Chapter 3, the character Adam Appleby, hero of the novel, is riding his scooter, and gets stuck in traffic on his way to the British Museum Library. He tells us about "Mrs. Dalloway's booming out the half hour" (a reference to Virginia Woolf's novel "Mrs. Dalloway"). Then, we get to read a passage that comically imitates Woolf's style:

"It partook, he thought, shifting his weight in the saddle, of metempsychosis, the way his humble life fell into moulds prepared by literature. Or was it, he wondered, picking his nose, the result of closely studying the sentence structure of the English novelists? One had resigned oneself to having no private language any more, but one had clung wistfully to the [illusion](#) of a personal property of events. A find and fruitless illusion, it seemed, for here, inevitably came the limousine, with its Very Important Personage, or Personages, dimly visible in the interior. The policeman saluted, and the crowd pressed forward, murmuring 'Philip', 'Tony', 'Margaret', 'Prince Andrew'."

We see the merging of the outer and inner realities in the passage that is so typical of Virginia Woolf, especially the [induction](#) of the reporting clauses "he thought," and "he wondered," in the middle of the reported clauses.

Example #3: *The Traveler* (By Dave McClure)

Dave McClure's poem *The Traveler* is a comical imitation written after Edgar Allan Poe's poem *The Raven*. Look at McClure's opening [stanza](#):

"Long ago upon a hilltop (let me finish then I will stop)
I espied a curious traveler where no traveler was before.
As I raised an arm in greeting all at once he took to beating
at the air like one entreating passing boats to come ashore
like a castaway repeating empty movements from the shore
or an over-eager whore."

It keenly imitates the arrangement of words used by Poe in the original poem. Likewise, it echoes the same rhyming scheme. Read the opening lines from Poe's *The Raven* for a better [comparison](#):

“Once upon a midnight dreary, while I pondered, weak and weary,
Over many a quaint and curious volume of forgotten lore,
While I nodded, nearly napping, suddenly there came a tapping,
As of someone gently rapping, rapping at my chamber door.
” ‘Tis some visitor,” I muttered, “tapping at my chamber door –
Only this, and nothing more.”

The only remarkable difference between the two poems that we can recognize is the serious tone of the original poem contrasts the humorous tone of the imitation.

Function of Pastiche

Pastiche may be comic in its content, but it does not mock the original works. In pastiche, the writers imitate the style and content of a literary piece to highlight their work, as the original piece is accepted by the vast majority of readers as landmarks of their age. So, imitation in such works celebrates the works of the great writers of the past.