

# Colloquialism

## Colloquialism Definition

In literature, colloquialism is the use of informal words, phrases, or even [slang](#) in a piece of writing. Colloquial expressions tend to sneak in as writers, being part of a society, are influenced by the way people speak in that society. Naturally, they are bound to add colloquial expressions to their vocabulary.

However, writers use such expressions intentionally too, as it gives their works a sense of [realism](#). For instance, in a [fiction](#) story depicting American society, a greeting “what’s up?” between friends will seem more real and appropriate than the formal “How are you?” or “How do you do?”

## Colloquialism Examples in Everyday Life

Colloquial expressions vary from region to region. Below is a list of some colloquialism examples of American origin:

- Bamboozle – to deceive
- Bo bananas, or go nuts – go insane or be very angry
- Wanna – want to
- Gonna – going to
- Y’all – you all
- Be blue – to be sad
- Buzz off – go away

## Examples of Colloquialism in Literature

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### Example #1: *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (By Mark Twain)

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Mark Twain, in *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, used black-American [vernacular](#) to realistically show how the “negroes” [Black Americans] talked:

“I didn’t want to go back no more. I had stopped cussing, because the widow didn’t like it; but now I took to it again because pap hadn’t no objections... But by-and-by pap got too handy with his hick’ry, and I couldn’t stand it. I was all over with welts. He got to going away so much, too, and locking me in. Once he locked me in and was gone three days. It was dreadful lonesome.”

The use of double negatives is evident in the above passage, and was used as a typical characteristic of black-American vernacular.

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### **Example #2: *The Sun Rising* (By John Donne)**

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John Donne uses colloquialisms in his poem *The Sun Rising*:

“Busy old fool, unruly Sun,  
Why dost thou thus,  
Through windows, and through curtains, call on us?  
Must to thy motions lovers’ seasons run?  
Saucy [pedantic](#) wretch...”

The poet addresses the sun in an informal and colloquial way, as if it were a real human being. He asks the sun in a rude manner why he had appeared and spoiled the good time he was having with his beloved. Not finishing there, he commands the “saucy pedantic sun” to go away.

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### **Example #3: *Burro Genius* (By Victor Villasenor)**

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We cite the use of colloquial expressions in the play *Burro Genius*, by Victor Villasenor:

“‘I don’t understand!’ roared my father, putting his money back in his pocket. ‘Hell, I’ve forgotten more than you or most people will EVER UNDERSTAND!’

‘Salvador,’ said my mother as quietly as she could, ‘why don’t you and *Mundo* go outside and let me talk to this woman alone.’

‘Damn good idea!’ said my father.”

In this passage, Salvador’s father uses colloquial words like “hell” and “damn,” which gives insight into his aggressive and harsh nature. The idea of using colloquialisms is to put diversity into the characters.

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#### **Example #4: *Of Mice and Men* (By John Steinbeck)**

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Yet another instance of colloquialism can be seen in *Of Mice and Men*, by John Steinbeck:

“‘Sure I will, George. I won’t say a word.’

‘Don’t let him pull you in—but—if the son-of-a-bitch socks you—let ‘im have it.’

‘Never mind, never mind. I’ll tell you when. I hate that kind of guy. Look, Lennie, if you get in any kind of trouble, you remember what I told you to do?’

Lennie raised up on his elbow. His face contorted with thought. Then his eyes moved sadly to George’s face. ‘If I get in any trouble, you ain’t gonna let me tend the rabbits.’”

In the above example, the writer shows how vulgar colloquial expressions can be, depending upon who uses them, and how they use them. The above colloquial expressions are realistic enough as they are uttered by middle-aged men of a working class who are not well educated or refined.

### **Function of Colloquialism**

Colloquial expressions in a piece of literature may give us deep insights into the writer’s society. They tell us about how people really talk in their real lives. Therefore, they help a writer to form strong connections with readers. Colloquial expressions impart a sense of realism to a piece of literature, which again attracts readers as they identify it with their real life. Moreover, they add variety to the characters which makes them more interesting and memorable.