Literary Devices and Literary Terms

Introduction

Commonly, the term *Literary Devices* refers to the typical structures used by writers in their works to convey his or her message(s) in a simple manner to his or her readers. When employed properly, the different literary devices help readers to appreciate, interpret and analyze a literary work.

Two Kinds of Literary Devices

Literary Devices have two aspects. They can be treated as either *Literary Elements* or *Literary Techniques*. It will be convenient to define them separately.

Literary Elements have an inherent existence in literary piece and are extensively employed by writers to develop a literary piece e.g. plot, setting, narrative structure, characters, mood, theme, moral etc. Writers simply cannot create his desired work without including *Literary Elements* in a thoroughly professional manner.

Literary Techniques, on the contrary, are structures usually a word s or phrases in literary texts that writers employ to achieve not merely artistic ends but also readers a greater understanding and appreciation of their literary works. Examples are: metaphor, simile, alliteration, hyperbole, allegory etc. In contrast to *Literary Elements, Literary Techniques* are not unavoidable aspect of literary works.

To have a better understanding of *Literary Devices*, it is useful to look at their definition and examples:

Common Literary Elements

Plot: It is the logical sequence of events that develops a story.
Setting: It refers to the time and place in which a story takes place.

Protagonist: It is the main character of story, novel or a play e.g. Hamlet in the play Hamlet
Antagonist: It is the character in conflict with the Protagonist e.g. Claudius in the play Hamlet
Narrator: A person who tells the story.
Narrative method: The manner in which a narrative is presented comprising plot and setting.
Dialogue: Where characters of a narrative speak to one another.
Conflict. It is n issue in a narrative around which the whole story revolves.
Mood: A general atmosphere of a narrative.
Theme: It is central idea or concept of a story.

Common Literary Techniques

1. *Imagery:* It is the use of figurative language to create visual representations of actions, objects and ideas in our mind in such a way that they appeal to our physical senses. For example:

> *The room was dark and gloomy.* –The words "dark" and "gloomy" are visual images.
> *The river was roaring in the mountains.* – The word "roaring" appeals to our sense of hearing.

2. *Simile and Metaphor:* Both compare two distinct objects and draws similarity between them. The difference is that Simile uses "as" or "like" and Metaphor does not. For example:

> *"My love is like a red red rose"* *(Simile)*
> *He is an old fox very cunning. (Metaphor)*

3. *Hyperbole:* It is deliberate exaggeration of actions and ideas for the sake of emphasis. For example:

> *Your bag weighs a ton!*
> *I have got a million issues to look after!*

4. *Personification:* It gives a thing, an idea or an animal human qualities. For example:

> *The flowers are dancing beside the lake.*
> *Have you see my new car? She is a real beauty!*

5. *Alliteration:* It refers to the same consonant sounds in words coming together. For example:

> Better butter always makes the batter better.
> She sells seashells at seashore.

6. *Allegory:* It is a literary technique in which an abstract idea is given a form of characters, actions or events. For example:

> "Animal Farm", written by George Orwell, is an example allegory using the actions of animals on a farm to represent the overthrow of the last of the Russian Tsar Nicholas II and the Communist Revolution of Russia before WW II. In addition, the actions of the animals on the farm are used to expose the greed and corruption of the Revolution.

7. *[Irony](#):* It is use of the words in such a way in which the intended meaning is completely opposite to their literal meaning. For example:

> The bread is soft as a stone.
> So nice of you to break my new PSP!

Function of Literary Devices

In general, the literary devices are a collection of universal artistic structures that are so typical of all works of literature frequently employed by the writers to give meanings and a logical framework to their works through language. When such works are read by readers, they ultimately recognize and appreciate them. Because of their universality, they also allow the readers to compare a work of one writer to that of the other to determine its worth. They not only beautify the piece of literature but also give deeper meanings to it, testing the very understanding of the readers along with providing them enjoyment of reading. Besides, they help motivating readers' imagination to visualize the characters and scenes more clearly.