

# Stylistic Devices / Rhetorical Devices

The list below explains some of the most important stylistic devices (also called rhetorical devices or figures of speech). They are not only useful for analysing texts, but also for creating your own texts. Stylistic devices make your speeches, essays etc. more interesting and lively and help you to get and keep your reader's / listener's attention.

**Group work:** Try to match the examples with the correct stylistic concept.

Stylistic device	Explanation	Example
1. Allegory	An extended metaphor (several metaphors all referring to a more general symbolic meaning)	
2. Alliteration	Repetition of the first consonant sound in a phrase.	
3. Anaphora	Repetition of word or phrase as the beginning of successive clauses	
4. Assonance	Repetition of vowel sounds (in stressed syllables) to create rhyming within phrases or sentences	
5. Antithesis	Repetition by negation.  <i>Sammenstilling af ord, der er modsætninger: "for better or for worse"</i>	
6. Apostrophe	Addressing a thing, an abstraction or a person.	
7. Archaism	Use of an archaic word (a word used in "oldfashioned" language, e.g. Shakespeare)	
8. Chiasmus	The word order in one clause is inverted in the other (inverted parallelism).	
9. Epistrophe	repetition of a word or expression at the end of successive clauses	
10. Euphemism	Substitution of a less offensive or more agreeable term for another	
11. Hyperbole	Use of exaggerated terms for emphasis	
12. Irony	Use of word in a way that conveys a meaning opposite to its usual meaning	

13. Litote	Understatement used with negation to express a positive attribute; a form of irony	
14. Metaphor	A comparison between two things	
	Dead metaphor	
	Standard metaphor (cliché)	
	Creative metaphor	
15. Metonymy	Substituting the name of one thing for that of another to which the former bears a known and close relation.	
16. Onomatopoeia	Words that sound like their meaning	
17. Paradox	Use of apparently contradictory ideas to point out some underlying truth	
18. Parallelism	Similarity of structure in a pair or series of related words, phrases, or clauses.	
19. Personification	Attributing human qualities to objects, animals, or natural phenomena	
20. Repetition	Repeated usage of word(s)/group of words in the same sentence to create a poetic/rhythmic effect	
21. Rhetorical question	Asking a question not for the sake of getting an answer but for asserting something	
22. Simile	A comparison between two things using like or as	
23. Superlative	Of the highest order, quality, or degree; surpassing or superior to all others.	
24. Tautology	A statement that is necessarily true	

## Examples

- a. LM: Oh my dear student, thou must meet your deadline!
- b. My bag weighs a ton today!
- c. I have a dream that (...) I have a dream today.
- d. He felt that life had cheated him.
- e. Click!  
Oink, oink!
- f. When LM believes her students have done a fantastic job, and she simply says, "Not bad, class."
- g. Oh, sweet smell of success!
- h. "But many that are first shall be last;  
and the last shall be first."
- i. "O Romeo, Romeo! Wherefore art thou Romeo?"
- j. Fables, or just parables told by Jesus (e.g. The Good Samaritan)
- k. The black man had the very best qualifications, yet he was unable to get a job,
- l. You look like a rose.
- m. You are a real man when you raise a child not when you make a baby.
- n. "Gentlemen, you can't fight in here! This is the War Room."  
(Peter Sellers as US President in *Dr. Strangelove*, 1964)
- o. She sat at the foot of the hill.
- p. Bush invaded Iraq (i.e. the US army invaded...)
- q. He loves eating chocolate éclairs, taking moonlit walks and singing classic jazz.
- r. On a proud round cloud in a white high night...
- s. He passed away (instead of "he died")
- t. You are the sweetest rose!
- u. The children gathered in a round circle
- v. All's well that end's well
- w. She painted the portrait streak upon streak.
- x. The doctor inspected the rash with a vulture's eye.
- y. She has the ugliest hair but the prettiest face.
- z. They say marriage is a wonderful institution, but who would want to live in an institution?