

## Image

What is an image? This is a question that philosophers and poets have asked themselves for thousands of years and have yet to definitively answer. The most widely used definition of an image these days is: "...an intellectual and emotional complex in an instant of time." (Ezra Pound)

**Imagery** is used in literature to refer to descriptive language that evokes sensory experience.

### *Forms of imagery*

Imagery can be in many forms such as metaphors and similes

A **simile** is a literary device where the writer employs the words "like" or "as" to compare to different ideas. It can be a strong word to use as a describing word in a simile or metaphor.

1. He flew like a dove.
2. I am as bold as a lion.
3. He has a heart as big as the outdoors.
4. Her eyes sparkle like a crystal.

A **metaphor** is similar to a simile, however this literary device makes a comparison without the use of "like" or "as".

1. He has a hyena's laugh.
2. Her face is a garden.
3. Her hair stood on end.
4. His breath was on fire.
5. The sea surges with laughter.

**Concrete detail** - A detail in a poem that has a basis in something "real" or tangible, not abstract or intellectual. It is based more in things than in thought.

**Sensory detail** - A detail that draws on any of the five senses. This is very often also a concrete detail.

### *Literary Devices*

Literary devices refers to specific aspects of literature, in the sense of its universal function as an art form which expresses ideas through language, which we can recognize, identify, interpret and/or analyze. Literary devices collectively comprise the art form's components; the means by which authors create meaning through language, and by which readers gain understanding of and appreciation for their works. They also provide a conceptual framework for comparing individual literary works to others, both within and across genres. Both literary elements *and* literary techniques can rightly be called literary devices.

**Character:** The people who inhabit and take part in a story. When discussing character, as distinct from **characterization**, look to the essential *function* of the character, or of all the characters as a group, in the story as a whole.

**Characterization:** The author's means of conveying to the reader a character's personality, life history, values, physical attributes, etc. Also refers directly to a description thereof.

**Conflict:** A struggle between opposing forces which is the driving force of a story. The outcome of any story provides a resolution of the conflict(s); this is what keeps the reader reading. Conflicts can exist between individual characters, between groups of characters, between a character and society, etc., and can also be purely abstract (i.e., conflicting ideas).

**Dialogue:** Where characters speak to one another; may often be used to substitute for exposition.

**Figurative language:** Any use of language where the intended meaning differs from the actual literal meaning of the words themselves. There are many techniques which can rightly be called figurative language, including metaphor, simile, hyperbole, personification, and verbal irony.

**Imagery:** Language which describes something in detail, using words to substitute for and create sensory stimulation, including visual imagery and sound imagery. Also refers to specific and recurring types of images, such as food imagery and nature imagery. (Not all descriptions can rightly be called imagery; the key is the appeal to and stimulation of specific senses, usually visual. It is often advisable to specify the *type* of imagery being used, and consider the significance of the images themselves, to distinguish imagery from mere description.)

**Metaphor:** A direct relationship where one thing or idea substitutes for another.

**Personification (I)** Where inanimate objects or abstract concepts are seemingly endowed with human self-awareness; where human thoughts, actions, perceptions and emotions are *directly* attributed to inanimate objects or abstract ideas.

**Personification (II)** Where an abstract concept, such as a particular human behavior or a force of nature, is represented as a person.

**Plot:** Sequence of events in a story. Most literary essay tasks will instruct the writer to "avoid plot summary;" the term is therefore rarely useful for response or critical analysis. When discussing plot, it is generally more useful to consider and analyze its **structure**, rather than simply recapitulate "what happens."

**Point-of-view:** The identity of the narrative voice; the person or entity through whom the reader experiences the story—may be third-person or first-person. Point-of-view is a commonly misused term; it does *not* refer to the author's or characters' feelings, opinions, perspectives, biases, etc.

**Setting:** The time and place where a story occurs. The setting can be specific (e.g., New York City in 1930) or ambiguous (e.g., a large urban city during economic hard times). Also refers directly to a description thereof. When discussing or analyzing setting, it is generally insufficient to merely identify the time and place; an analysis of setting should include a discussion of its overall impact on the story and characters.

**Simile:** An indirect relationship where one thing or idea is described as being similar to another. Similes usually contain the words "like" or "as," but not always.

**Speaker:** The “voice” of a poem; *not* to be confused with the poet him/herself. Analogous to the narrator in prose fiction.

**Symbolism:** The use of specific objects or images to represent abstract ideas. This term is commonly misused, describing any and all representational relationships, which in fact are more often metaphorical than symbolic. A **symbol** must be something tangible or visible, while the idea it **symbolizes** must be something abstract or universal. (In other words, a **symbol** must be something you can hold in your hand or draw a picture of, while the idea it symbolizes must be something you *can't* hold in your hand or draw a picture of.)

**Theme:** The main idea or message conveyed by the piece. A theme should generally be expressed as a complete sentence; an idea expressed by a single word or fragmentary phrase is usually a **motif**.

**Tone:** The apparent emotional state, or “attitude,” of the speaker/narrator/narrative voice, as conveyed through the language of the piece. Tone refers *only* to the narrative voice; not to the author or characters. It must be described or identified in order to be analyzed properly; it would be incorrect to simply state, “The author *uses* tone.”

**Verbal irony:** Where the meaning of a specific expression is, or is intended to be, the exact opposite of what the words literally mean. (**Sarcasm** is a tone of voice that often accompanies verbal irony, but they are not the same thing.)