

# Stylistic Devices in Different Literary Extracts: A Stylistic Study

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**Abstract:** *This present study makes an attempt to define stylistic devices and explains how they function in different literary extracts. It also elucidates the nature of stylistic devices and the effects they produce on the readers and listeners. Stylistic devices are tools of language that are used by writers and authors to create beauty, uniqueness, and novelty in the language. The expressive means of a language refer to the arrangement of sentences, clauses, words, and the choice of words that not only convey the idea to the reader or listener, but simultaneously provoke the desired emotional reaction from him. They are inherent in a language and used in ordinary speech by any speaker or writer, irrespective of stylistic purposes and effects. But the expressive means of a language may be employed with a definite stylistic aim and function in view. In such cases they are deliberately selected and arranged so as to create a certain stylistic effect. Any expressive means may be used in this way for specific artistic purposes, and when so employed, it is described as a stylistic device. The stylistic devices may be considered as an artistic transformation of an ordinary language phenomenon. They are linguistic resources that are used and employed deliberately to fulfill a stylistic function. Utterances usually communicate certain ideas and may also produce definite effects or arouse an emotion in the reader or listener. The aim of this paper is to discuss some stylistic devices at the levels of phonology, syntax and semantics. The discussion is provided by definitions of stylistic devices, nature, functions and the special effects they produce in literary texts.*

**Keywords:** stylistic devices, stylistic functions, stylistic effects, phonology, syntax, semantics.

## INTRODUCTION

Stylistics, a branch of applied linguistics, is more precisely called 'linguistic stylistics'. Halliday (1985) defines linguistic stylistics as the description of literary text by methodologies derived from general linguistic theory, using the categories of the description of language as a whole. The main concern of stylistics is to find out those features of a literary composition which give to it an individual stand, marking it as the work of a particular author and producing a certain effect upon the reader.

Stylistics is a modern approach to the study of literature deriving its methods and frame of reference from linguistics. It contributes to literary criticism in the sense that many subjective impressions of literary critics can be explained and described scientifically in the light of linguistics. Stylistics is an attempt to make literary criticism much more scientific, objective, and precise. It emphasizes the need to build up a literary grammar of language.

More technically, Stylistics is the study of linguistic devices of a literary text, at the phonological, lexical, syntactic, morphological, semantic and discourse levels. The authors and writers exploit these levels of linguistics in the process of their creative activities. Consequently, certain uniqueness in the language becomes apparent that we may call 'stylistic device'.

Stylistic devices are some sort of language tools which are used by authors and writers to create beauty, novelty and uniqueness in the language. The use of these stylistic devices make the language of a writer different from the language of another writer. Furthermore, the exclusiveness and uniqueness of a writer lies in using the stylistic devices in his/her literary work. When a writer makes special use of language, his work of literature becomes very attractive and beautiful and people highly appreciate it. The stylistic devices, thus, are employed to make a piece of literature a work of beauty so that the readers while reading it could go through an aesthetic experience. Lehtsalu et al. (1973:18) comment as 'Besides communicating certain ideas an utterance may also produce a definite effect or arouse an emotion in the listener or reader. Linguistic resources used deliberately to fulfill a stylistic function called stylistic devices or expressive means of the language.'

Stylistic devices are too many in number, but we shall discuss only those which can be explained and described linguistically. Such stylistic devices are divided into three main categories, namely; sound, structure, and meaning according to their level of language. Under each level of language some of very important stylistic devices will be discussed.

## Discussion and Analysis

### Phonological stylistic devices

#### 1. Alliteration

In a literary diction, when two or more words begin with the same sound, this technique is called alliteration. Wales (2014:14) uses the term 'initial rhyme' for this and states "Alliteration is the repetition of the initial consonant in two or more words". Generally, alliteration sometimes adds emotional colouring to the utterance. It may suggest the attitude of the writer towards the subject.

An example can be given by Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*. Romeo says:

How silver-sweet sound lover's tongues by night,  
Likes softer music to attending ears.

(Act II Scene II)

In the first line, the consonant sound /s/ is repeated initially in words silver-sweet and sound, hence it aligns alliteration. This technique is also used to produce a musical effect.

## 2. Assonance

Abrams (2008:9) defines assonance as “a sound pattern related to the repetition of vowel sounds in words occurring nearby one another”. It is the occurrence of homogenous vowels in adjacent words in a poetic line. Vowel sounds are considered to be very melodious to pronounce and effective in creating musical notes in a text. For example,

On thy cold gray stones, O Sea! (Tennyson: Break Break Break)

The diphthong sound /əʊ/ is repeated in the words ‘cold’ and ‘stones’ in this line. Such repetitions of sound elements in words are important to make two words bring close to each other in a poem. A poet forms a connection between words by assonance and other sound patterns (Leech, 1969:96). The repetition of diphthongs in the poem helps relate the words cold and stone to each other and think about the possible semantic relation existing between them. Wales (2014:35) states that “Assonance also contribute to the linguistic unity or cohesion of a poem.”

## 3. Consonance

“From Lat. ‘to harmonize’, consonance in literary criticism refers to a kind of Half-Rhyme or end-alliteration or consonantal assonance whereby final consonants are repeated, but with different preceding vowels, e.g. sing, rang, sin, run, etc”(Wales, 2014 :82). According to Abrams (2008), Consonance is the repetition of two or more consonants with changing overlapping vowels.

For example:

Licked its tongue into the corners of the evening (Eliot: The love song of J. Alfred Prufrock).

In this line, the final consonant/ ŋ / is repeated at the end of the words ‘tongue’ and ‘evening’. This brings about a sense of partial rhythm in the line.

## 4. Onomatopoeia

Lehtsalu et al. (1973:83) mention that onomatopoeia signifies the use of words or combinations of words, the sound of which is an imitation of a natural sound, e.g. cuckoo, bang, mew, and the like. According to Clark (1996), Onomatopoeia is a device in which the sound of a thing can be imitated by the sound of a word. For example, the sound of the expressions ‘whisper’, ‘hiss’ etc.

## 5. Rhyme

According to Jeffries and McIntyre (2010:38), “When there are two (or more) words which end with a stressed syllable, where the vowel and the final consonant(s) are the same is called rhyme”. Bradford (1997) defines rhyme as the repetition of the phonemic sound of a single syllable at the end of a line. Different types of rhyme may be distinguished from the point of view of sound and that of structure. With regard to the similarity of sounds one can distinguish:

1. Full rhymes such as finding, binding
2. Imperfect rhymes (or eye-rhymes) such as love, move; brood, blood, etc.
  - With regard to their structure rhymes may be divided into:
    1. Masculine (or single) rhymes; the rhyme is created by the repetition of one stressed syllable such as song, long; fun, sun, etc.
    2. Feminine (or double) rhymes; the rhyme is created by one stressed syllable followed by one unstressed syllable such as morning, scorning; daughter, water etc.
    3. Dactylic (or triple) rhymes; based on the repetition of one stressed syllable followed by two unstressed syllables such as utility, futility; affection reflection etc.

Masculine and feminine rhymes are the most frequently used in English poetry because they lend themselves to all poetic measures. Sometimes a rhyme occurs in the middle of a line. This type of rhyme is called internal rhyme e.g.

The fair breeze blew, the white foam flew, (S.T. Coleridge)

## 6. Rhythm and meter

Simpson (2004: 15) states that “Rhythm is therefore a patterned movement of pulses in time which is defined both by periodicity (it occurs at regular time intervals) and repetition (the same pulses occur again and again).” According to Wales (2014: 372) “In phonetics and prosody rhythm is generally described as the perceptual pattern of accented or stressed and unaccented or unstressed syllables in a language.” Meter is a number of feet in each poetic line but the rhythm is the musical effect that is caused by the poetic meter. Furthermore, poetry as a form of literature makes use of one phonological unit (metrical line) which does not occur in other forms of language. The Greek names for feet in a metrical line are the following:

Monometre: one foot      Dimetre: two feet      Trimetre: three feet  
Tetrametre: four feet      Pentametre: five feet      Hexametre: six feet  
Heptametre: five feet      Octametre: eight feet

Of all these types of feet the Pentametre is found to be the more used form of versification in English poetry.

### The five main feet of English prosody:

The following are the five metres mainly used in English poetry:

(1) Iambic: (– ∪). It consists of an unstressed syllable followed by a stressed syllable. For example:

–    ∪    –    ∪    –    ∪    –    ∪  
The Sun now rose upon the right:

–    ∪    –    ∪    –    ∪  
Out of the sea came he, (S. T. Coleridge)

(2) Trochaic ( ∪ – ). It has first syllable stressed and the second one unstressed.

(3) Anapestic: (– – ∪). It consists of first two syllables unstressed and the third one stressed.

(4) Dactylic: ( ∪ – – ). It consists of a stressed syllable followed by two unstressed syllables.

(5) Amphibrachic: ( – ∪ – ). It has a stressed syllable between two unstressed syllables.

### Some other feet in English prosody:

(1) Spondee: ( ∪ ∪ ). It consists of two stressed syllables.

(2) Pyrrhic: ( – – ). It consists of two unstressed syllables.

(3) Amphimac: ( ∪ – ∪ ). It is a metrical foot of three syllables, consisting of one unstressed syllable between two stressed syllables.

(4) Choriambus: ( ∪ – – ∪ ). It is a foot of verse consisting of two stressed syllables flanking two unstressed syllables.

## 8. Enjambment

According to Wales (2014: 137), “Enjambment is observed as the striding over of a sentence from one line of poetry to the next”. Enjambed lines appear opposed to end-stopped lines or line juncture. Galperin (1977) suggests that enjambment is a kind of transfer from the norms of classic verse. It refers to the transfer of a part of a syntagm from one line to the following one. Leech (2008: 62) also defines enjambment (or run-on lines) as “a lack of fit between metrical and syntactic units, such that a

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line-end occurs at a point where there is no major grammatical boundary”. See below how the enjambed example occurs by S.T. Coleridge in his major poem ‘The Rime of the Ancient Mariner’.

Merrily did we **drop**  
**Below** the Kirk, below the hill,

## Syntactic stylistic devices

### 1. Parallelism

According to Jakobson (1960) and Wales (2014), parallelism or parallel construction is a syntactical feature which refers to parallel linguistic constructions. When a syntactic structure in two or more sentences or in part of a sentence is similar or identical, it is called parallelism. There are two types of parallelism: complete parallelism and partial parallelism.

#### (a) Complete parallelism

A complete parallelism is also known as ‘balance’ maintains the principle of identical structure within the corresponding sentences. For example:

**Her lips were red, her looks were free,** (S. T. Coleridge)

(S + Predicator + Complement), (S + Predicator + Complement)

#### (b) Partial parallelism

This type refers to the repetition of some identical and similar parts of successive sentences or clauses. For example:

“If a ship comes near the island they may not notice us. So **we must make smoke on top of the mountain. We must make a fire.**” (William Golding)

(S + Predicator + Adjunct), (S + Predicator)

### 2. Stylistic inversion

“Stylistic inversion or emphatic inversion is a syntactic stylistic device consisting in the placing of a word or a phrase in an unusual position in a sentence” (Lehtsalu et al. 1973: 58). Galperin (1977) points out some patterns of stylistic inversion which are most frequently seen in both English prose and poetry, and they comprise the most common and recognized models of inversion.

#### (a) Position of the object at the beginning of the sentence

The object is placed at the beginning of the sentence (O + S + Pr.) like,

**The light-house top** I see. (S. T. Coleridge)

#### (b) Placement of the predicate before the subject

For example: **Said** the Hermit Cheerily.

Upon the whirl, where **sank** the ship. (S.T. Coleridge)

#### (c) Placement of the adverbial modifier at the beginning of the sentence

For example: **Slowly** the sounds came back again. (S. T. Coleridge)

#### (d) Both modifier and predicate stand before the subject

For example: **Slowly and smoothly went** the ship. (S.T. Coleridge)

Based on the examples of stylistic inversion given above, we notice that it aims at attaching logical stress or additional emotional colouring to the surface meaning of the construction. Therefore a specific intonation pattern is the inevitable satellite of inversion.

### 3. Repetition

Repetition is also a syntactic stylistic device by which words or phrases are repeated more than once in a sentence or a text in order to emphasize certain important elements in the mind of the reader or listener. Therefore, it displays the state of the mind of the speaker when he faces strong emotion or he is under the stress of strong emotion.

Galperin (1977) classifies repetition in figure (1) given below according to compositional pattern. He divides repetition into four main types namely; anaphora, epiphora, framing and anadiplosis.

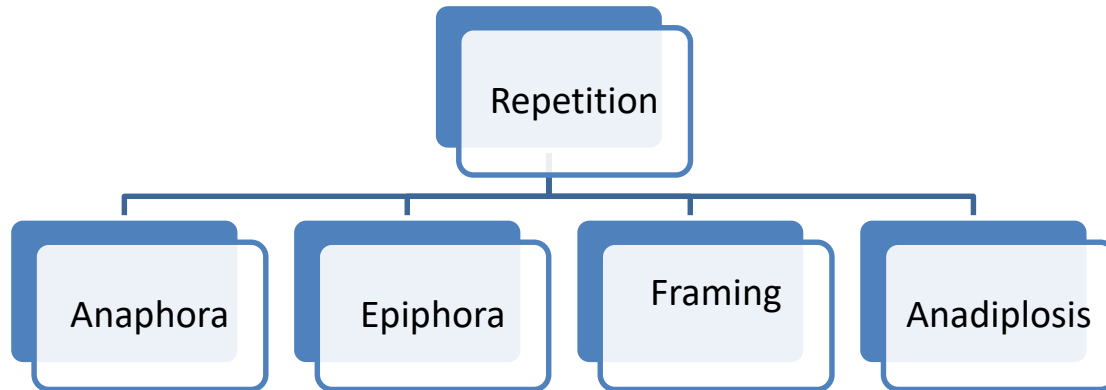


Figure (1): Types of repetition

#### (a) Anaphora (Epanaphora)

According to Chapman (1973) Anaphora is generally known as a kind of verbal repetition. It is also found in verse and prose. If the repeated word or phrase comes at the beginning of two or more consecutive sentences, clauses or phrases, it is called 'Anaphora'. For example,

The ice was here, the ice was there,  
The ice was all around; (S.T. Coleridge)

#### (b) Epiphora (Epistrophe)

Wales (2014) defines epiphora as the repeated unit at the end of successive sentences, clauses or phrase. Therefore, it is regarded as the opposite of anaphora. For example,

"We all drink cocktails. Is it too early to have a cocktail?  
 How about a drink, George? Come on and we'll have a cocktail." (E. Hemingway)

#### 4. Framing

Framing is a technique or device in which the initial part of the first sentence is also repeated at the end of the successive sentences that follow for a desired effect of emphasis. For example,

Down dropt the breeze, the sails dropt down. (S.T. Coleridge)

#### (d) Anadiplosis

Leech (1969: 80) describes Anadiplosis as "The last part of one unit is repeated at the beginning of the next. Its formula as (.....a) (a....)". It is the repetition of the last part of one sentence or clause at the beginning of the next unit so that the two parts are linked to one another to intensify and stress the most important part of the utterance. For example,

"Do not think about sin, he thought. There are enough problems now without sin. Also I have no understanding of it. I have no understanding of it and I am not sure that I believe in it." (E. Hemingway)

#### 4. Chiasmus

Galperin (1977: 209) describes Chiasmus as "reversed parallel construction, the word-order of one of the sentences being inverted as compared with that of the other". According to Abrams (2001:150) "Chiasmus is a sequence of two phrases or clauses which are parallel in syntax, but with reversal in



the order of the words”. A literary writer uses this device to put the stress on the second part of the utterance which is usually opposite to the first part. For example:

Down dropt the breeze, the sails dropt down. (S.T. Coleridge)

### 5. Rhetorical question

A rhetorical question is a stylistic device that is put for a rhetorical effect in the shape of a question. The information of a rhetorical question is not necessary and the implied answer or meaning is usually understood by the reader in the context of a question. Moreover, the interaction between the two meanings syntactically is recognized simultaneously by the reader. A question mark (?), exclamation mark (!) and full stop (.) are occasionally employed according to some style of writing. For example:

“**Why am I so thoughtless?** I must get him another shirt and a jacket for the winter and some sort of shoes and another blanket”. (E. Hemingway)

### 6. Litotes

Leech (1983) describes litotes as another type of structural meaning transference. It consists of a peculiar use of a negative construction. The purpose of the negation is to establish a positive attribute in a person or a thing. The negative structures have a stronger impact on the reader than the affirmative ones because the former have additional connotation whereas the latter does not have. For example:

‘It is not a bad thing, it is a good thing’.

‘He is no coward, he is brave.’

Another variant of litotes is a construction with two negations, as in ‘not unlike,’ ‘not unpleased’, etc. For example: “Now, he said. “I am still an old man. **But I am not unarmed.**” (E. Hemingway)

### 7. Enumeration

Galperin (1977: 216) discusses the nature of enumeration in which different things are mentioned one by one. These objects are in the same syntactic position and show a kind of semantic homogeneity. He states “ Enumeration is a stylistic device by which separate things, objects, phenomena, properties, actions are named one by one so that they produce a chain, the links of which being syntactically in the same position (homogeneous parts of speech) are forced to display some kind of semantic homogeneity, remote though it may seem”. For example:

‘The shake was made of the tough bud-shields of the royal palm which are called guano and in it there was a bed, a table, one chair and a place on the dirt floor to cook with charcoal.” (E. Hemingway)

### 8. Polysyndeton

According to Leech (1986), Polysyndeton refers to the repetition of the connectives (mostly conjunctions and prepositions) between sentences, phrases or words. It has a disintegrating function because it makes each member of a string of facts stand out conspicuously. It differs from enumeration in the sense that, polysyndeton shows objects isolated whereas enumeration shows them united. For example:

It moved **and** moved, **and** took at last

A certain shape, I wist.

(S.T. Coleridge)

## 9. Asyndeton

“Asyndeton is a syntactic stylistic device consisting in the deliberate avoidance of conjunctions. Differently from the connection of separate clauses by means of conjunctions, asyndeton is based on implied relations between them” (Lehtsalu et al. 1973: 69).

The aim and function of asyndeton is to make parts of a sentence or logically connected separate sentences more emphatic owing to their syntactical independence. It occurs most frequently within the range of compound sentences, the conjunctions between them being omitted. It can mostly be found with causative or explanatory relations between the coordinated sentences, the conjunction ‘for’ being omitted and the sentences being separated by means of a comma, semicolon, colon or dash. For example:

“The Anglo-Saxon genius for parliamentary government asserted itself: there was a great deal of talk and no decisive action;” (H. G. Wells)

## Semantic stylistic devices

### 1. Metaphor

Metaphor emphasizes the interaction of dictionary meaning and contextual imposed-meaning. This device is based on the principle of identification of two objects, in which, the author identifies two objects which have nothing in common and they are no way similar but in which he /she subjectively sees a function or a property that makes the readers perceive these two objects as similar. Simpson (2004: 41) defines metaphor as “a process of mapping between two different conceptual domains. The different domains are known as the target domain and the source domain. The target domain is the topic or concept that you want to describe through the metaphor while the source domain refers to the concept that you draw upon in order to create the metaphorical construction”. For example:

‘**You are my alarm clock**,’ the boy said,  
‘**Age is my alarm clock**’. The old man said”. (E. Hemingway)

### 2. Metonymy

Metonymy also indicates the interaction of dictionary meaning and contextual imposed-meaning. It is based on the principle of substitution of one thing for another, in which, the writer finds it possible to substitute one thing for another on the ground that there is some kind of relation between the two corresponding objects. Traditional examples of metonymy are ‘Crown’ and ‘Cup’, in which, ‘Crown’ is a symbol for king or queen and ‘cup’ or ‘glass’ for containing drink.

Galperin (1977) attempted to pinpoint the types of relation metonymy is based on. Among them the following are most common:

(a) A concrete thing used instead of an abstract notion. In this case the thing becomes a symbol of the notion. For example,

‘**My heart went down**’. “You are sure? I mean the tall blonde English young lady.”(E. Hemingway)  
Here, the bold clause is a concrete thing but it represents the notion of being disappointed because of not finding his beloved in the expected place.

(b) The container instead of the thing contained, as in:

We were the first that ever burst  
Into that **silent Sea** (S.T. Coleridge)

(c) The relation of proximity, as in:



“**The water was white** where his tail beat it and three-quarters of his body was clear above the winter when the rope came taut, shivered, and then snapped”.

(E. Hemingway)

(d) The instrument which the doer uses in performing the action instead of the action or the doer himself, such as:

“He holds him **with his glittering eye-**

The Wedding-Guest stood still,”

(S.T. Coleridge)

### 3. Irony

Irony is based on the principle of contrary concept, in which, a certain property or quality of an object is used in an opposite sense. Searle (1979: 122) defines irony in the following effect: “Utterance meaning is arrived at by going through sentence meaning and then doubling back to the opposite of sentence meaning.” The stylistic effect of irony lives in the fact that the contextual meaning does not oust the denotational one but merges into the latter, thus revealing the inner contradiction of a phenomenon.

For example: It is hard to get rich in Canada.

But it is easy to make money.

(E. Hemingway)

### 4. Interjections

Interjections are words and expressions we use when we express our feelings strongly and which may be said to exist in language as conventional symbol of human emotion. Their role is to create emotive meaning in a definite context. For example,

The planks looked warped! And see those sails,

How thin they are and sere! (S.T. Coleridge)

It must be noted that some adjectives, nouns and, adverbs can also take on the function of interjection. For example, Terrible! Awful! Wonderful! Great! Splendid!.

### 5. Oxymoron

Cuddon (1998: 627) defines oxymoron as “a figure of speech, which combines incongruous and apparently contradictory words and meanings for a special effect”. Galperin (1977: 162-63) states as “oxymoron is a combination of two words (mostly an adjective and a noun or an adverb with an adjective) in which the meaning of the two words clashes, being opposite in sense”. For example, sweet sorrow, low skyscraper, horribly beautiful, etc.

### 6. Epithet

Epithet is a figure of speech denoting a permanent or temporary quality of a person, thing, idea or phenomenon and characterizing it from the point of view of subjective perception. An epithet can be expressed by an attributive word, phrase, combination of words or sometimes by a whole sentence. It has always an emotional meaning or connotation. In poetry epithets may be rightfully regarded one of the main stylistic devices. A stanza of P.B. Shelley’s lyric poem “Autumn” might serve as an example of the use of a series of epithets to produce a desired impression in the reader.

“The warm sun is failing, **the bleak wind** is wailing,

**The bare boughs** are sighing, **the pale flowers** are dying, etc.” (P.B Shelley)

## 7. Simile

“Simile is a figure of speech which draws a comparison between two different things in one or more aspects. The aim of using a simile is to attain a more figurative or graphic characterization of one of the objects compared” (Lehtsalu et al. 1973: 48). The comparison in a simile is formally expressed by words like ‘as, like, as if, seem, as though, etc’. For example:

My heart is like a singing bird  
Whose nest is in the watered shoot; (Ch. G. Rossetti)

## 8. Personification

Personification is a figure of speech consisting in the attribution of personal nature, quality or character to inanimate objects or abstract notions. For example,

“The mist took pity on the fretted structures of earlier generations;” (S. Lewis)

“There are three doctors in an illness Dr. Rest, Dr. Diet and Dr. Fresh Air,”

(D.E. Cusack)

## 9. Hyperbole

Hyperbole as a stylistic device has the function of intensifying one certain feature of the object. It can be defined as a deliberate overstatement or exaggeration of a property essential to the object. In its extreme form this exaggeration is carried to an illogical degree (Leech: 1983). Grice (1975) emphasizes that hyperbole is a case of conversational implicature in which the first maxim of quality is flouted. For example:

‘Dissolve, thick cloud, and rain; that I say.  
The gods themselves do weep!’ (Shakespeare)

## 10. Zeugma

Abrams (2001: 272) states “Zeugma in Greek means ‘Yoking’; in the most common present usage, it is applied to expression in which a single word stands in the same grammatical relation to two or more other words, but with an obvious shift in its significance. Sometimes the word is literal in one relation and metaphorical in the other”.

The main stylistic function of zeugma is to attain a more graphic description. In works of fiction it often acquires a humorous or satirical overtone. For example: “When they departed, she had taken a deep breath and her telephone receiver from the Chinese tea chest; (J. Galsworthy)

## CONCLUSION

Stylistic devices are linguistic tools used and employed by writers to bring about beauty and attraction in their literary works. As it has been shown above, stylistic devices are of different types of which some are related to sound, others to structure and meaning. Stylistic devices mostly occur in all levels of language such as phonology, morphology, syntax, semantics, pragmatics, discourse, etc. All these types of stylistic devices and techniques attempt to contribute to the formation of style in a literary work. They make texts more interesting and lively and help you to get and keep your reader’s /listener’s attention. The stylistic devices create cohesion and coherence and make a literary text sensible.

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