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Sarcasm

The use of invectives or harsh terms to indicate weakness or fault. Sarcasm can be cutting and cynical and may be displayed by an action as well as by words.

Example: George Orwell uses sarcasm to chastise government in both *Animal Farm* and *1984*.

Simile

Indirect comparison between two unlike objects using the words “like” or “as”. The comparison helps create an effective word picture. **Example:** In John Hersey’s *Hiroshima*, Dr. Fujii is “squeezed...like a morsel between two huge chopsticks” (11).

Synecdoche

A metaphor that presents a part of a person or item as used for the whole or the whole as used for a part.

Example: In *The Great Gatsby*, Fitzgerald refers to groups or classes of wealthy people as East Egg and West Egg, indicating where their communities of homes were located.

Trope

A word picture or figure of speech. **Example:** Similes, metaphors, metonymy, irony, synecdoche, personification, and hyperbole are all considered tropes.

Stylistic Techniques

Allusion

An author’s reference to a person, place, event, or piece of literature which he expects his audience to recognize or understand. **Example:** In John Steinbeck’s *Grapes of Wrath*, the author assumes his readers’ familiarity

In Media Res

A Latin expression that means that the story actually starts in the middle of the action. **Example:** Since the *Odyssey* starts *in Media Res*, with Odysseus imprisoned, an audience already familiar with the character Odysseus can forego mention of his background and go to the heart of the action.

Irony

A literary device in which action or language stands in contrast to what appears to be true or expected. **Example:** “Dr. Fujii hardly had time to think that he was dying before he realized that he was alive...” (11). From John Hersey’s *Hiroshima*.

Types of Irony

Cosmic Irony

A literary device that contrasts what a character attempts to become and what actually happens, due to forces of the universe. **Example:** When protagonist Henry in Stephen Crane’s *The Red Badge of Courage* thinks he has survived he instead is suddenly “war” confronted with the true attack or second assault.

Dramatic Irony

Also called Tragic Irony, this occurs when what a character says or believes contradicts what the audience knows to be true. In these circumstances, a character’s words and actions have one meaning for the character and an entirely different meaning for the audience. **Example:** In Arthur Miller’s *The Crucible*, when

An exaggeration of emotions, behaviors, and events is often evident in a melodrama. **Example:** Melodramas often use a serialized story line, damsels in distress, and characters who are clearly good or evil, as in the early silent film, “The Perils of Pauline”.

Pathos

Pathos is the manner in which a play or story’s action causes the audience to feel pity for a character. In drama, it occurs mainly in tragedy, but can be found in comedy, too. **Example:** Readers often come to sympathize with, and then pity, Jonas in Lois Lowry’s *The Giver*, as more and more implications of Elsewhere are revealed.

Poetic Diction

A manner of speaking or expression that is used mainly in poetry and not in casual conversation. **Example:** William Wordsworth’s poem, “Ode: Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood,” provides a classic example of the elevated language of some poetry.

Poetic License

The privilege of a writer to take liberties with grammatical rules and structure for desired poetic effects. **Example:** e. e. Cummings is a poet who has made the most of the freedoms of poetic license.

Theme

The overriding or dominant idea in a story that is a universal statement about humanity. The theme is the central meaning in a piece of writing and the message that the author wishes the audience to *understand* and *take away*. Theme may be represented in an indirect