**Миколаївський національний університет**

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**Кафедра англійської мови і лiтератури**

**Словник-довідник зі стилістики англійської мови**

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**МНУ імені В. О. Сухомлинського**

**2017**

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Рекомендовано вченої радою Миколаївського національного університету імені В.О. Сухомлинського

«Словник-довідник зі стилістики англійської мови» (частина ІІ, І―L), спрямований на надання допомоги викладачам та студентам факультетів іноземних мов вищих навчальних при роботі з критичною літературою, а також при аналізі творів художньої літератури англійською мовою. Він може використовуватися на практичних заняттях з англійської мови, при підготовці до практичних занять зі стилістики англійської мови та написанні курсових та дипломних робіт. Крім того, «Словник» може бути корисним для вчителів англійської мови середніх шкіл та учнів шкіл з викладанням ряду предметів англійською мовою.

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**Передмова**

«Словник-довідник зі стилістики англійської мови» (частина ІI, I―L), укладений Філіпп’євої Т.І. спрямований на надання допомоги викладачам та студентам при роботі з критичною літературою, а також при аналізі творів художньої літератури англійською мовою.

В основу побудови «Словника-довідника зі стилістики англійської мови» покладено загальноприйнята структура за принципом словникових статей.

Дефініції стилістичних термінів пояснюються великою кількістю прикладів, що є особливістю даної розробки та сприяє повному розумінню змісту того або іншого терміна і його засвоєнню.

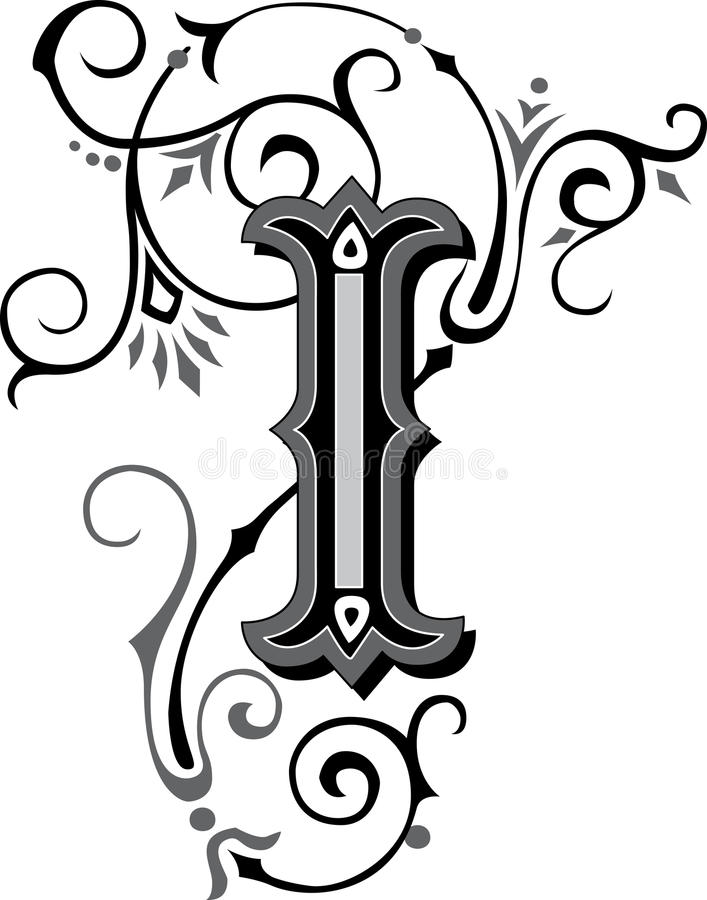
«Словник» адресован викладачам та студентам факультетів іноземних мов вищих навчальних. Він може використовуватися при підготовці до практичних занять зі стилістики англійської мови та написанні курсових та дипломних робіт, а також на практичних заняттях з англійської мови,.

«Словник» призначений для використання студентами як під час навчальних занять, так і в ході самостійної роботи.

Крім того, «Словник» може буде корисним для вчителів англійської мови середніх шкіл та учнів шкіл з викладанням ряду предметів англійською мовою.

Відбір термінів визначений практичним призначенням «Словника», тож автор планує продовжити і розширити роботу у цьому напрямі.

При написанні «Словника» були використані лексикографічні джерела англійською, українською та російською мовами, а також дослідження і посібники з теорії та історії літератури і стилістики. Бібліографія складає понад 70 джерел.



**Idiom**

The term idiom refers to a set expression or a phrase comprising two or more words. The definition of idiom comes from originally from the Greek word idíōma, which means *“a special feature, a special phrasing, or a peculiarity.”*

An interesting fact regarding the device is that the expression is not interpreted literally. An idiom is a figure of speech that means something different than a literal translation of the words would lead one to believe.

For example, *"it's raining cats and dogs"* is a common idiom in English, but it's not meant to be taken literally: Household pets are not falling from the sky! It's a colorful way of saying that it’s raining really hard outside.

The phrase is understood to mean something quite different from what individual words of the phrase would imply. Alternatively, it can be said that the phrase is interpreted in a figurative sense. Further, idioms vary in different cultures and countries.

So an idiom is a saying, phrase, or fixed expression in a culture that has a figurative meaning different from its literal meaning. An idiom gains that meaning through [repetition](http://www.literarydevices.com/repetition/) in a culture, and is often introduced via literature, media, famous people, or associations that originally make sense but lose their literal meaning.

There are examples of idiom in almost all languages, and many thousands unique to English.

It can be fun and difficult to learn idioms in other languages, which introduce us to different ways of thinking and challenge our own idiomatic understanding of things in our own language.

For example, in English they say something is a *“piece of cake”* when it’s easy; Spanish speakers may say something is *“pan comido”* when it’s easy, which means *“bread that’s eaten.”*

Some idioms may be popular in, for example, New York, but completely unknown in London. Thus, some idioms are dependent on [dialect](http://www.literarydevices.com/dialect/) and [colloquialism](http://www.literarydevices.com/colloquialism/).

Writers and public speakers use idioms generously. The purpose behind this vast use of idioms is to elaborate their language, to make it richer and spicier, and to help them in conveying subtle meanings to their intended [audience](https://literarydevices.net/audience/).

Not only do idioms help in making the language beautiful, they also make things better or worse through making the expression good or bad. For example, there are several idioms that convey the death of a person in highly subtle meanings, and some do the same in very offensive terms.

They are also said to be exact and more correct than the literal words, and sometimes a few words are enough to replace a full sentence. They help the writer make his sense clearer than it is, so that he could convey maximum meanings through minimum words and also keep the multiplicity of the meanings in the text intact.

It has also been seen that idioms not only convey subtle meanings, but also ideas not conveyed through normal and everyday language, and they keep the balance in the communication. Furthermore, they provide textual [coherence](https://literarydevices.net/coherence/), so that the reader could be able to piece together a text that he has gone through and extract meanings the writer has conveyed.

Common Examples of Idiom

There are many thousands of idiom examples in English. Many of these we use every day.

* *Play it by ear.*

Meaning: Playing something by ear means that rather than sticking to a defined plan, you will see how things go and decide on a course of action as you go along. Example: *“What time shall we go shopping?” “Let’s see how the weather looks and play it by ear.”*

Origins: This saying has its origins in music, as *“playing something by ear”* means to play music without reference to the notes on a page. This sense of the phrase dates back to the 16th century, but the present use only came into being in mid-20th century America, primarily referring to sports.

These days, the expression has lost this focus on sports and can be used in any context.

* *Raining cats and dog*.

Meaning: Brits are known for our obsession with the weather, so they couldn’t omit a rain-related idiom from this list. It’s *“raining cats and dogs”* when it’s raining particularly heavily. Example: *“Listen to that rain!” “It’s raining cats and dogs!”*

Origins: The origins of this bizarre phrase are obscure, though it was first recorded in 1651 in the poet Henry Vaughan’s collection Olor Iscanus. Speculation as to its origins ranges from medieval superstition to Norse mythology, but it may even be a reference to dead animals being washed through the streets by floods.

* *Can’t do something to save my life.*

Meaning: *“Can’t do something to save your life”* is a hyperbolic way of saying that you’re completely inept at something. It’s typically used in a self-deprecating manner or to indicate reluctance to carry out a task requested of one. Example*: “Don’t pick me – I can’t draw to save my life.”*

Origins: Anthony Trollope first used this expression, in 1848 in Kellys and O’Kellys, writing, *“If it was to save my life and theirs, I can’t get up small talk for the rector and his curate.”*

* *Turn a blind eye.*

Meaning: To *“turn a blind eye”* to something means to pretend not to have noticed it. Example: *“She took one of the cookies, but I turned a blind eye.”* Origins: Interestingly, this expression is said to have arisen as a result of the famous English naval hero Admiral Horatio Nelson, who, during the Battle of Copenhagen in 1801, is alleged to have deliberately raised his telescope to his blind eye, thus ensuring that he would not see any signal from his superior giving him discretion to withdraw from the battle.

* *Fat chance.*

Meaning: The expression *“fat chance”* is used to refer to something that is incredibly unlikely. Bizarrely, and contrary to what one might expect, the related expression *“slim chance”* means the same thing. Example: *“We might win the Lottery.” “Fat chance.”*

Origins: The origins of this expression are unclear, but the use of the word *“fat”* is likely to be a sarcastic version of saying *“slim chance”.* A similar expression is *“Chance would be a fine thing”,* which refers to something that one would like to happen, but that is very unlikely.

* *Once in a blue moon.*

Meaning: The phrase refers to something that happens very infrequently. Example: *“I only see him once in a blue moon.”*

Origins: Confusingly, a blue moon doesn’t refer to the actual colour of the moon; it refers to when we see a full moon twice in one month. This happens every two to three years. It’s thought that the word *“blue”* may have come from the now obsolete word *“belewe”,* which meant *“to betray”*; the *“betrayer moon”* was an additional spring full moon that would mean people would have to fast for an extra month during Lent. The saying in its present meaning is first recorded in 1821.

* *Head in the clouds.*

Meaning: Used to describe someone who is not being realistic, the expression *“head in the clouds”* suggests that the person isn’t grounded in reality and is prone to flights of fancy. The opposite expression would be something like *“down to earth”,* meaning someone who is practical and realistic. Example: *“He’s not right for this role, he has his head in the clouds.”*

Origins: In use since the mid-1600s, the origins of this expression are unclear beyond the obvious imagery of someone who is a bit of a fantasist (having one’s head in the clouds is clearly impossible – or at least it was in the days before aviation!).

* *Driving me up the wall.*

Meaning: This expression is used when something (or someone) is causing extreme exasperation and annoyance. A similar expression meaning the same thing is *“driving me round the bend”.* Example: *“That constant drilling noise is driving me up the wall.”*

Origins: The saying evokes someone trying desperately to escape something by climbing up the walls. However, it’s unknown when it was first used.

* *Call it a day.*

Meaning: This means to stop doing something for the day, for example work, either temporarily or to give it up completely. Example: *“I can’t concentrate – let’s call it a day.”*

Origins: The expression was originally *“call it half a day”,* first recorded in 1838 in a context meaning to leave one’s place of work before the working day was over. *“Call it a day”* came later, in 1919.

* *Knight in shining armour.*

Meaning: A knight in shining armour is a heroic, idealised male who typically comes to the rescue of a female. Example: *“He saved me from humiliation – he’s my knight in shining armour.”*

Origins: The phrase harks back to the days of Old England, when popular imagination conjures up images of chivalry and knights coming to the rescue of damsels in distress. Much of this is likely to be Victorian fantasy, as this was a period when interest in the legend of King Arthur and the Court of Camelot was high. The earliest use of the expression was in a poem by Henry Pye in 1790, which referred to *“No more the knight, in shining armour dress’d”.*

* *Know the ropes.*

Meaning: Someone who *“knows the ropes”* is experienced at what they are doing. *“Showing someone the ropes”* means to explain to them how something is done. Example: *“Ask John, he knows the ropes around here.”*

Origins: This phrase has its origins in the golden age of sailing, when understanding how to handle the ropes necessary to operate a ship and its sails was an essential maritime skill. By the mid-19th century it was a common slang expression, and it survives to this day.

* *Larger than life.*

Meaning: The phrase *“larger than life”* refers to a flamboyant, gregarious person whose mannerisms or appearance are considered more outlandish than those of other people. Example*: “His colourful waistcoats and unusual taste for hats made him a larger-than-life character in the local community.”* Origins: First recorded in the mid-20th century, the phrase was famously used by The New Yorker to describe wartime Prime Minister Sir Winston Churchill.

* *Extend the olive branch.*

Meaning: To extend the olive branch is to take steps towards achieving peace with an enemy (or simply someone with whom you have fallen out). Example: *“I thought it was about time I went over there and extended the olive branch.”* Origins: This expression has biblical origins, and was seen as an emblem of peace. In Genesis, a dove brings an olive branch to Noah to indicate that God’s anger had died down and the flood waters had abated.

* *A red herring.*

Meaning: Often used in the context of television detective shows, a red herring refers to something designed to distract or throw someone off a trail. Hence in a detective show, a clue that appears vital to solving a mystery is often added to heighten suspense, but may turn out to have been irrelevant; it was a red herring. Example: *“It seemed important, but it turned out to be a red herring.”* Origins: A herring is a fish that is often smoked, a process that turns it red and gives it a strong smell. Because of their pungent aroma, smoked herrings were used to teach hunting hounds how to follow a trail, and they would be drawn across the path of a trail as a distraction that the dog must overcome.

* *Barking up the wrong tree*.

Meaning: If someone is *“barking up the wrong tree”*, they are pursuing a line of thought or course of action that is misguided. Example*: “I’m certain that he was responsible.” “I think you’re barking up the wrong tree. He was elsewhere at the time.”*

Origins: The saying refers to a dog barking at the bottom of a tree under the mistaken impression that its quarry is up it, suggesting that the phrase has its origins in hunting. The earliest known uses of the phrase date back to the early 19th century.

* *Bite off more than you can chew.*

Meaning: If you *“bite off more than you can chew”,* you have taken on a project or task that is beyond what you are capable of. Example: *“I bit off more than I could chew by taking on that extra class.”*

Origins: This saying dates back to 1800s America, when people often chewed tobacco. Sometimes the chewer would put into their mouth more than they could fit; it’s quite self-explanatory!

* *Blow one’s own trumpet.*

Meaning: *“Blowing one’s own trumpet”* means to boast about one’s own achievements. Example: *“Without meaning to blow my own trumpet, I came top of the class.”*

Origins: Though phrases meaning the same thing had been in use for centuries, the actual expression is first recorded by Anthony Trollope in his 1873 work Australia and New Zealand.

* *In stitches.*

Meaning: If you’re *“in stitches”,* you’re laughing so hard that your sides hurt. Example: *“He was so funny – he had me in stitches all evening.”*

Origins: Presumably comparing the physical pain of intense laughter with the prick of a needle, *“in stitches”* was first used in 1602 by Shakespeare in Twelfth Night. After this, the expression isn’t recorded again until the 20th century, but it’s now commonplace.

Some more examples of idioms and their meaning.

* *It’s all Greek to me.* = I don’t understand it; it’s as if it were written in the incomprehensible language of Greek.
* *It costs an arm and a leg.* = It’s expensive.
* *You should bite your tongue*. = You should be quiet.
* *Break a leg!* = Good luck, as said to performers (it’s considered a jinx to directly wish a perform *“Good luck!”)*
* *You’re close, but no cigar*. = You’re close to the solution, but not quite there.
* *Don’t cry over spilt milk*. = Don’t worry about something that’s already happened.
* *I’ll play devil’s advocate.* = I’ll argue the opposite side of something, just to push the [argument](http://www.literarydevices.com/argument/) further.
* *Don’t put all your eggs in one basket.* = Don’t put all your hope in one thing, as it may not work out.
* *Excuse my French*. = Excuse my curse word.
* *She has an axe to grind.* = She has a problem she wants to dispute with someone.
* *Hold your horses!* = Wait!
* *It takes two to tango.* = There isn’t just one person to blame in this situation.
* *Let’s let bygones be bygones.* = Let’s put the past behind us.
* *I’m on pins and needles.* = I’m waiting anxiously.

Because idioms are such interesting ways to get a point across, they're often seen in literature. In fact, many of the most common idioms we use today were originally coined by great writers as a unique metaphor; then people liked them enough to start using them in everyday conversation.

Great literature has always been filled with idioms to describe characters and settings in vivid, memorable terms. Authors may sometimes be the originator of idioms. This is especially true of William Shakespeare, who coined many hundreds of new words in English and created phrases that are still in use today.

Authors also may use idioms in their works of literature in [dialogue](http://www.literarydevices.com/dialogue/) to show a character’s nature and speech patterns. Whether the authors were the first to coin a phrase or were simply making the best use of the language they heard around them, idioms add sparkle and wit to the works in which they are employed. If writers are lucky, their sentiments will be memorable enough to continue being used for hundreds of years.

William Shakespeare was a master of using the English language in new ways, and many of the figures of speech we use today come from his plays. William Shakespeare is credited with coining more than 2,000 words, infusing thousands more existing ones with electrifying new meanings and forging idioms that would last for centuries: *‘A fool’s paradise,’ ‘at one fell swoop,’ ‘heart’s content,’ ‘in a pickle,’ ‘send him packing,’ ‘too much of a good thing,’ ‘the game is up,’ ‘good riddance,’ ‘love is blind,’ and ‘a sorry sight,’ to name a few.*

* *Break the ice.*

This phrase was first used in *The Taming of the Shrew*. Tranio encourages Petruchio to *"break the ice"* with Katherine to get to know her, suggesting that he may like her better — and get her to like him.

Today this phrase is used to refer to relieving tension or getting to know someone better, usually by making small talk, or a kind gesture to start a new relationship.

* *Wear my heart upon my sleeve.*

This saying was first used in Othello when Iago describes how he would be vulnerable if he revealed his dislike of Othello. In the play, the phrase continues to state that the *“daws”,* or crows, would be able to peck at his heart if he revealed it.

Today, people use this phrase to mean that they are showing their real feelings about something.

* *Set my teeth on edge.*

In Henry IV, Part 1, Hotspur complains about how much he hates poetry, saying, *"And that would set my teeth nothing an edge, nothing so much as mincing poetry."*

Today the phrase is used to express distaste for something, particularly annoyance, and also discomfort, like the noise of nails dragging on a chalkboard.

* *There's method in my madness.*

In *Hamlet*, Polonius observes Hamlet's antics and says, *"Though this be madness, yet there is method in it."* He suspects Hamlet isn't behaving as irrationally as he seems to be on the surface. The phrase has changed slightly, but the meaning is the same: Even though your action seems random, you have a purpose to them.

* *Dead as a doornail.*

Though this phrase is perhaps better known as the opening description of Ebenezer Scrooge's partner Jacob Marley in *A Christmas Carol,* it was previously used by Shakespeare. In Henry IV, Part 2 Jack Cade says *“I have eaten no meat these five days; yet, come thou and thy five men, and if I do not leave you all as dead as a doornail, I pray God I may never eat grass more.”* The phrase is still used emphatically, implying that something is so dead it's as if it were never alive in the first place.

* *The world is my oyster.*

In *"The Merry Wives Of Windsor",* when Falstaff refuses to lend Pistol money Pistol draws his sword and says, *"Why, then the world's mine oyster, which I with sword will open.”* Today the phrase is full of optimism rather than violence and is used to say the world is full of possibilities and you can do anything.

* *Prince of Morocco.*

*All that glitters is not gold;*

*Often have you heard that told:*

*Many a man his life hath sold*

*But my outside to behold:*

*Gilded tombs do worms enfold.* (from *The Merchant of Venice* by William Shakespeare).

This example of idiom comes William Shakespeare’s *The Merchant of Venice;* suitors from around the world have come to try for Portia’s heart. The princes must solve a [riddle](http://www.literarydevices.com/riddle/) of choosing the correct casket of three. The Prince of Morocco chooses the golden casket, and inside he finds the message beginning *“All that glitters is not gold.”* He has chosen incorrectly. He assumed that the golden casket was the most valuable, and thus would be the correct one, but this idiom means that not everything superficially attractive is valuable.

Examples of Idiom in Literature

Many other authors either coined their own idioms or used idioms in their works to great effect. Idioms often help make dialogue more realistic and make clear a character's personality, education or background.

* *I can't do [X] to save my life.*

This phrase can be traced back to English novelist Anthony Trollope in *The Kellys and the O'Kellys*. The original version is *"If it was to save my life and theirs, I can’t get up small talk for the rector and his curate."* Here the speaker explains that he's so bad at small talk he couldn't do it even to save his life. It’s still used to indicate someone is no good at an activity, often in a self-deprecating way.

* *Pot calling the kettle black.*

This phrase comes from the Spanish novel *Don Quixote* by Cervantes. It referred to the fact that pots and kettles of the time were made of cast iron and got blackened in the fire and is used to suggest that one shouldn't accuse or criticize another of something they're also guilty of.

* *Love is blind.*

First seen in writing in Chaucer’s *The Canterbury Tales*. *“For love is blind all day, and may not see”* − this phrase means that true love is not superficial and also captures the idea that love can be unexpected or random.

* *Live off the fat of the land.*

Though a version of this phrase exists in the *Book of Genesis,* it's perhaps most famously used in John Steinbeck's novel *Of Mice and Men*. George tells Lenny they'll live off the fat of the land and have rabbits when they make enough money to stop traveling around for work. The phrase means getting the best of everything without having to work hard for it.

* *Extend an olive branch.*

This phrase hearkens back to the Greek myth of Athena who gifted the olive tree to the Athenians and the Biblical story of Noah, when a dove came back bearing an olive branch to show the great flood waters had receded and the animals could safely leave the ark. Today the phrase means to offer peace or a truce after a disagreement.

* *Mad as a hatter.*

This expression is said to refer to the use of mercury to set felt hats which was thought to drive hat makers crazy. Though the expression predates his work, Lewis Carroll created his Mad Hatter character in Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland in reference to this English idiom.

* *Every cloud has its silver lining but it is sometimes a little difficult to get it to the mint* (by Don Marquis).

The statement quoted above uses *“silver lining”* as an idiom which means some auspicious moment is lurking behind the cloud or the difficult time.

* *Kirk: “If we play our cards right, we may be able to find out when those whales are being released.”*

*Spock: “How will playing cards help?”*

[Dialogue](https://literarydevices.net/dialogue/) between characters Captain James T. Kirk and Spock in *Star Trek IV: The Voyage Home,* 1986. Here, *“if we play our cards right”* means *“if we avail our opportunities rightly.”*

Idioms vary in their degree of *‘transparency’*: that is, whether their meaning can be derived from the literal meanings of the individual words. For example, *make up [one’s] mind* is rather transparent in suggesting the meaning *‘reach a decision*,’ while *kick the bucket* is far from transparent in representing the meaning *‘die.'*

Modal idioms are idiosyncratic verbal formations which consist of more than one word and which have modal meanings that are not predictable from the constituent parts (compare the non‑modal idioms *kick the bucket*). Under this heading *have got [to], had better/best, would rather/sooner/as soon, and be [to]* may be included.

* *“Old Black Joe started crowing out in the henhouse. Then Mother’s rocking chair cricked for all the world like she was sitting in it. You know I don’t take truck with that but it set me minding backwards, you know how you do sometimes”.* (from East of Eden by John Steinbeck).

There are several examples of idiom in this short excerpt from John Steinbeck’s *East of Eden*, though it may not appear that way at first glance. Consider the following phrases, though: “*For all the world,” “I don’t take truck,” and “Set me minding backwards.”* These are all idioms. *“For all the world”* means definitely seeming a certain way. *“I don’t take truck”* means to not have a problem with something. *“Set me minding backwards”* means to remember something. This comes from a letter in which the character Charles is rambling in a somewhat strange way, and Steinbeck’s usage of idioms portrays his state of mind and everyday speech patterns.

* *[Jay Gatsby:] “Well, this would interest you. It wouldn’t take up much of your time and you might pick up a nice bit of money. It happens to be a rather confidential sort of thing.”*

*[Nick Carraway:] “I’ve got my hands full,” I said. “I’m much obliged but I couldn’t take on any more work.”* (from The Great Gatsby by F. Scott Fitzgerald).

Nick Carraway uses the common idiom “*I’ve got my hands full*” in this excerpt from F. Scott Fitzgerald’s *The Great Gatsby.* This is a simple way of saying that he’s too busy. He’s trying to cut Gatsby off, who is offering him a shady business deal. Though Carraway needs the extra money, he bluffs by saying he has no time so that he doesn’t get mixed up in a bad business deal.



**Imagery**

Imagery means to use [figurative language](https://literarydevices.net/figurative-language/) to represent objects, actions, and ideas in such a way that it appeals to our physical senses.

In a literary text imagery is an author's use of vivid and descriptive language to add depth to their work. It appeals to human senses to deepen the reader's understanding of the work. Powerful forms of imagery engage all of the senses.

Short Examples of Imagery.

* *The old man took the handful of dust, and sifted it through his fingers.*
* *The starry night sky looked so beautiful that it begged him to linger, but he reluctantly left for home.*
* *The fragrance of spring flowers made her joyful.*
* *The sound of a drum in the distance attracted him.*
* *The people traveled long distances to watch the sunset in the north.*
* *The stone fell with a splash in the lake.*
* *The sound of bat hitting the ball was pleasing to his ear.*
* *The chirping of birds heralded spring.*
* *There lay refuse heaps on their path that were so smelly that it maddened them.*
* *The silence in the room was unnerving.*
* *The blind man touched the tree to learn if its skin was smooth or rough.*
* *When he was on the way to work, he heard the muffled cry of a woman.*
* *The beacons of moonlight bathed the room in ethereal light.*
* *The wild gusts of cold wind pierced her body.*
* *The burger, aromatic with spices, made his mouth water in anticipation of the first bite.*
* *I could hear the popping and crackling as mom dropped the bacon into the frying pan, and soon the salty, greasy smell wafted toward me.*
* *Glittering white, the blanket of snow covered everything in sight.*
* *The golden yellow sunlight filtered down through the pale new leaves on the oak trees, coming to rest on Jessica's brown toes that were splayed in the red Georgia mud.*

The function of imagery in literature is to generate a vibrant and graphic presentation of a scene that appeals to as many of the reader’s senses as possible. It aids the reader’s imagination to envision the characters and scenes in the literary piece clearly.

Apart from the above-mentioned function, images drawn by using figures of speech like metaphor, simile, personification, and onomatopoeia, serve the function of beautifying a piece of literature.

Usually it is thought that imagery makes use of particular words that create visual representation of ideas in our minds. The word *“imagery”* is associated with mental pictures.

However, this idea is but partially correct. Imagery, to be realistic, turns out to be more complex than just a picture.

* *It was dark and dim in the forest.*

The words *“dark”* and *“dim”* are visual images.

* *The children were screaming and shouting in the fields.*

*“Screaming*” and *“shouting”* appeal to our sense of hearing, or auditory sense.

* *He whiffed the aroma of brewed coffee.*

*“Whiff”* and *“aroma”* evoke our sense of smell, or olfactory sense.

* *The girl ran her hands on a soft satin fabric.*

The idea of *“soft”* in this example appeals to our sense of touch, or tactile sense.

* *The fresh and juicy orange is very cold and sweet.*

*“Juicy”* and *“sweet”* – when associated with oranges – have an effect on our sense of taste, or gustatory sense.

Some more examples of imagery.

* Imagery using visuals:

*“The night was black as ever, but bright stars lit up the sky in beautiful and varied constellations which were sprinkled across the astronomical landscape.*

In this example, the experience of the night sky is described in depth with color *(black as ever, bright*), shape *(varied constellations*), and pattern *(sprinkled*).

* Imagery using sounds:

*“Silence was broken by the peal of piano keys as Shannon began practicing her concerto.”*

Here, auditory imagery breaks silence with the beautiful sound of piano keys.

* Imagery using scent:

*“She smelled the scent of sweet hibiscus wafting through the air, its tropical smell a reminder that she was on vacation in a beautiful place.”*

The scent of hibiscus helps describe a scene which is relaxing, warm, and welcoming.

* Imagery using taste:

*“The candy melted in her mouth and swirls of bittersweet chocolate and slightly sweet but salty caramel blended together on her tongue.”*

Thanks to an in-depth description of the candy’s various flavors, the reader can almost experience the deliciousness directly.

* Imagery using touch:

*“After the long run, he collapsed in the grass with tired and burning muscles. The grass tickled his skin and sweat cooled on his brow”.*

In this example, imagery is used to describe the feeling of strained muscles, grass’s tickle, and sweat cooling on skin.

Imagery needs the aid of figures of speech like [simile](https://literarydevices.net/simile/), [metaphor](https://literarydevices.net/metaphor/), [personification](https://literarydevices.net/personification/), and [onomatopoeia](https://literarydevices.net/onomatopoeia/), in order to appeal to the bodily senses.

Because we experience life through our senses, a strong composition should appeal to them through the use of imagery. Descriptive imagery launches the reader into the experience of a warm spring day, scorching hot summer, crisp fall, or harsh winter. It allows readers to directly sympathize with [characters](https://literaryterms.net/character/) and narrators as they imagine having the same sense experiences.

Imagery commonly helps build compelling [poetry](https://literaryterms.net/poetry/), convincing narratives, vivid plays, well-designed film sets, and descriptive songs.

There are seven major types of imagery, each corresponding to a sense, feeling, action, or reaction:

* Visual imagery pertains to graphics, visual scenes, pictures, or the sense of sight. Visual imagery describes what we see: comic book images, paintings, or images directly experienced through the narrator’s eyes.

Visual imagery may include:

* color, such as: burnt red, bright orange, dull yellow, verdant green, and Robin’s egg blue;
* shapes, such as: square, circular, tubular, rectangular, and conical;
* size, such as: miniscule, tiny, small, medium-sized, large, and gigantic;
* pattern, such as: polka-dotted, striped, zig-zagged, jagged, and straight.
* Auditory imagery pertains to sounds, noises, music, or the sense of hearing. This kind of imagery may come in the form of [onomatopoeia](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Onomatopoeia). Auditory imagery describes what we hear, from music to noise to pure silence.

Auditory imagery may include:

* enjoyable sounds, such as: beautiful music, birdsong, and the voices of a chorus;
* noises, such as: the bang of a gun, the sound of a broom moving across the floor, and the sound of broken glass shattering on the hard floor;
* the lack of noise, describing a peaceful calm or eerie silence.
* Olfactory imagery pertains to odors, scents, or the sense of smell. Olfactory imagery describes what we smell.

Olfactory imagery may include:

* fragrances, such as perfumes, enticing food and drink, and blooming flowers;
* odors, such as rotting trash, body odors, or a stinky wet dog.
* Gustatory imagery pertains to flavors or the sense of taste. Gustatory imagery describes what we taste.

Gustatory imagery can include:

* sweetness, such as candies, cookies, and desserts;
* sourness, bitterness, and tartness, such as lemons and limes;
* saltiness, such as pretzels, French fries, and pepperonis;
* spiciness, such as salsas and curries;
* savoriness, such as a steak dinner or thick soup.
* Tactile imagery pertains to physical textures or the sense of touch. Tactile imagery describes what we feel or touch.

Tactile imagery includes:

* temperature, such as bitter cold, humidity, mildness, and stifling heat;
* texture, such as rough, ragged, seamless, and smooth;
* touch, such as hand-holding, one’s in the grass, or the feeling of starched fabric on one’s skin;
* movement, such as burning muscles from exertion, swimming in cold water, or kicking a soccer ball.
* Organic imagery / subjective imagery, pertains to personal experiences of a character's body, including emotion and the senses of hunger, thirst, fatigue, and pain.
* Kinesthetic imagery pertains to movements. Kinesthesia is used in poetry and [prose](https://literarydevices.net/prose/) to describe the vivid physical actions or movements of characters and objects. It is used as a graphic and vibrant technique of scenes that appeal to the senses of the readers. Besides, it helps the imagination of a reader to envision the scenes and characters in literary works.

Kinesthesia could be used in two forms: *descriptive and figurative*. In addition, writers not only employ kinesthesia for physical movements, they also create images based on the intensity of feelings and depth of meaning.

Kinesthetic imagery is further divided into various [categories](https://literarydevices.net/community/categories/):

* touch − like running fingers on silk fabric;
* physical movement − gives feelings of involvement in an activity, like walking on grass;
* temperature − it might involve sunlight falling over the body;
* feelings − internal feelings, like being angry, sad, happy, peaceful, and calm.

Imagery Examples in Literature.

* Imagery of light and darkness is repeated many times in Shakespeare’s *Romeo and Juliet.* “An example from Act I, Scene V:

*“O, she doth teach the torches to burn bright!*

*It seems she hangs upon the cheek of night*

*Like a rich jewel in an Ethiope’s ear …”*

Romeo praises Juliet by saying that she appears more radiant than the brightly lit torches in the hall. He says that at night her face glows like a bright jewel shining against the dark skin of an African. Through the contrasting images of light and dark, Romeo portrays Juliet’s beauty.

* John Keats’ *To Autumn* is an ode rich with auditory imagery examples. In the last five lines of his ode he says:

*“Or sinking as the light wind lives or dies;*

*And full-grown lambs loud bleat from hilly bourn;*

*Hedge-crickets sing; and now with treble soft*

*The redbreast whistles from a garden-croft,*

*And gathering swallows twitter in the skies.”*

The animal sounds in the above excerpt keep appealing to our sense of hearing. We hear the lamb bleating and the crickets chirping. We hear the whistles of the redbreast robin and the twitters of swallows in the skies. Keats call these sounds the song of autumn.

* In [prose](https://literarydevices.net/prose/), imagery aids writers to accomplish a vivid description of events. Here is an example of an effective use of imagery from E. B. White’s *Once More to the Lake.*

“*When the others went swimming my son said he was going in, too. He pulled his dripping trunks from the line where they had hung all through the shower and wrung them out. Languidly, and with no thought of going in, I watched him, his hard little body, skinny and bare, saw him wince slightly as he pulled up around his vitals the small, soggy, icy garment. As he buckled the swollen belt, suddenly my groin felt the chill of death.”*

The images depicting the dampness of clothes, in the above lines, convey a sense of the chilly sensation that we get from wet clothes.

* In *Great Expectations*, written by Charles Dickens, Pip (the hero of the novel) uses many images to describe a damp morning in a marsh.

*“It was a rimy morning, and very damp. I had seen the damp lying on the outside of my little window… Now, I saw the damp lying on the bare hedges and spare grass, … On every rail and gate, wet lay clammy; and the marsh-mist was so thick, that the wooden finger on the post directing people to our village—a direction which they never accepted, for they never came there—was invisible to me until I was quite close under it.”*

The repeated use of the words *“damp”* and *“wet”* makes a reader feel how miserable it was for him that damp and cold morning. The thick *“marsh-mist”* aids his imagination to visualize the scene of morning in a marshland.

* *“Brookfield he had liked, almost from the beginning. He remembered that day of his preliminary interview—sunny June, with the air full of flower scents and the plick-plock of cricket on the pitch. Brookfield was playing Barnhurst, and one of the Barnhurst boys, a chubby little fellow, made a brilliant century. Queer that a thing like that should stay in the memory so clearly.”*

This is an excellent example of the use of imagery in *Goodbye Mr. Chips* by James Hilton. First the word *sunny* refers to the visual imagery. The *flower scent* refers to the sense of smell, and then *the plick-plock* refers to the sense of hearing.

* “*I wandered lonely as a cloud*

*That floats on high o’er vales and hills,*

*When all at once I saw a crowd,*

*A host, of golden daffodils;*

*Beside the lake, beneath the trees,*

*Fluttering and dancing in the breeze.”*

This is a very good example of imagery in Wordsworth’s *Daffodils*. The poet uses the sense of sight to create a host of golden daffodils beside the lake. Their fluttering and dancing also refers to the sight.

* *“My Sorrow, when she’s here with me,*

*Thinks these dark days of autumn rain*

*Are beautiful as days can be;*

*She loves the bare, the withered tree;*

*She walked the sodden pasture lane.”*

The poem *My November* *Guest* by Robert Frost is yet another good example of imagery. In the second line, the poet uses darkdays, which is an instance of the use of visual imagery. In the fourth line, the bare, withered treeuses the imagery of sight. In the fifth line, the sodden pastureis also an instance of tactile imagery.

* The excerpt from Elizabeth Bishop’s poem “*The Fish”* describing a fish:

*“his brown skin hung in strips*

*like ancient wallpaper,*

*and its pattern of darker brown*

*was like wallpaper:*

*shapes like full-blown roses*

*stained and lost through age”.*

This excerpt from Elizabeth Bishop’s poem “*The Fish”* is brimming with visual imagery. It beautifies and complicates the image of a fish that has just been caught. A reader can imagine the fish with tattered, dark brown skin *“like ancient wallpaper”* covered in barnacles, lime deposits, and sea lice. In just a few lines, Bishop mentions many colors including brown, rose, white, and green.

* *“A taste for the miniature was one aspect of an orderly spirit. Another was a passion for secrets: in a prized varnished cabinet, a secret drawer was opened by pushing against the grain of a cleverly turned dovetail joint, and here she kept a diary locked by a clasp, and a notebook written in a code of her own invention. … An old tin petty cash box was hidden under a removable floorboard beneath her bed.”*

In this excerpt from Ian McEwan’s novel *Atonement*, a reader can almost feel the cabinet and its varnished texture or the joint that is specifically in a dovetail shape. He can also imagine the clasp detailing on the diary and the tin cash box that’s hidden under a floorboard. Various items are described in-depth, so much so that the reader can easily visualize them.

* The poem *"I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud"* by William Wordsworth uses imagery throughout:

*“A host, of golden daffodils;*

*Beside the lake, beneath the trees,*

*Fluttering and dancing in the breeze.*

*Continuous as the stars that shine*

*And twinkle on the milky way,*

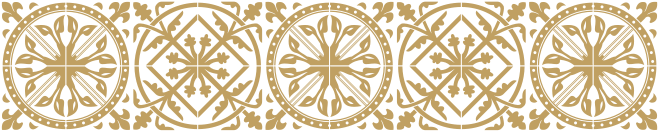
*They stretched in never-ending line*

*Along the margin of a bay:*

*Ten thousand saw I at a glance,*

*Tossing their heads in sprightly dance”.*

* *Charlotte's Web*, a [children's novel](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Children%27s_literature) by American author [E. B. White](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/E._B._White), is full of imagery, such as this passage describing the fair: *"In the hard-packed dirt of the midway, after the glaring lights are out and the people have gone to bed, you will find a veritable treasure of popcorn fragments, frozen custard dribblings, candied apples abandoned by tired children, sugar fluff crystals, salted almonds, popsicles, partially gnawed ice cream cones and wooden sticks of lollipops."*



**Inner monologue**

Inner monologue, in dramatic and nondramatic fiction, is one of the narrative techniques that exhibits the thoughts passing through the minds of the protagonists. These ideas may be either loosely related impressions approaching free association or more rationally structured sequences of thought and emotion.

Internal monologue or self-talk refers to a person's inner voice that provides a running monologue while we are awake. It reflects both conscious and unconscious beliefs. Self-talk influences how a person reacts to a situation—both how they feel and what they do. This is called the [cognitive model](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cognitive_model). Self-talk can be positive, neutral or negative.

Positive self-talk (also known as helpful self-talk) involves noticing the reality of the situation, overriding beliefs and biases that can lead to negative self-talk. Positive self-talk is not delusional, as it does not involve having thoughts that are not based on reality.

Coping self-talk is a particular form of positive self-talk that helps improve performance. It is more effective than generic positive self-talk. and improves engagement in a task. It has three components:

* it acknowledges the emotion the person is feeling;
* it provides some reassurance;
* it is said in non-first person.

An example of coping self-talk is, *"John you're anxious about doing the presentation. Most of the other students are as well. You will be fine."* Coping self-talk is a [healthy coping strategy](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Coping_Planning).

Instructional self-talk focusses attention on the components of a task and can improve performance on physical tasks that are being learnt, however it can be detrimental for people who are already skilled in the task.

Negative self-talk (also known as unhelpful self-talk) refers to inner critical dialogue. It is based on beliefs about ourselves that develop during childhood based on feedback of others, particularly parents. These beliefs create a lens through which the present is viewed. Examples of these core beliefs are lead to negative self-talk are: *"I am worthless", "I am a failure", "I am unlovable".*

Internal or inner monologue is a useful literary device. Dialogue reveals character relationships, their converging or competing goals. Inner monologue gives readers an x-ray view of characters’ more private feelings and dilemmas.

A *‘monologue’* literally means *‘speaking alone’*. In a play, a monologue is often used to reveal a character’s secret thoughts or intentions, for example, in Shakespeare’s *Othello* when the villain Iago expresses his wicked plans to the audience.

In prose fiction, inner monologue is used more typically to reveal a character’s private impressions, desires, frustrations or dilemmas. It is used to show characters’ unspoken thoughts.

In many cases, the protagonist, if he is also the narrator, might simply state how he feels in narration. For example: “*I was apprehensive when I approached the derelict building.”*, or it may be used to show the [third person’s limited point of view](https://www.nownovel.com/blog/how-to-start-a-novel-in-third-person/): *“Luisa was apprehensive when she approached the building.”*

Sentence [fragments](https://www.thoughtco.com/what-is-a-fragment-sentence-1690871) may be treated as interior monologue ([direct speech](https://www.thoughtco.com/what-is-direct-speech-1690393)) or regarded as part of an adjoining stretch of free [indirect speech](https://www.thoughtco.com/what-is-indirect-speech-1691058). Interior monologue may also contain traces of non-verbal thought.

While more formal interior monologue uses the [first-person](https://www.thoughtco.com/first-person-point-of-view-1690861) [pronoun](https://www.thoughtco.com/pronoun-definition-1691685) and [finite verbs](https://www.thoughtco.com/what-is-a-finite-verb-1690860) in the [present tense](https://www.thoughtco.com/present-tense-grammar-1691674). For example: *“He [Stephen] lifted his feet up from the suck [of the sand] and turned back by the mole of boulders. Take all, keep all. My soul walks with me, form of forms. [. . .] The flood is following me. I can watch it flow past from here.”* (from *Ulysse* by James Joyce)

Inner monologue may also create immediacy, an engaging sense of a character’s state, by making characters’ actual thoughts intrude on the scene. Here’s an example from David Mitchell’s *Cloud Atlas*. The character Luisa Rey, an investigative journalist, has found out about a dangerous environmental coverup. This example occurs when her boss is berating her for missing a meeting:

*“Grelsch glares at her.*

*‘I got a lead, Dom.’*

*‘You got a lead.’*

*I can’t batter you, I can’t fool you, I can only hook your curiosity. I phoned the precinct where Sixsmith’s case was processed.”*

Here, a reader read Luisa’s thoughts about her boss while she’s in trouble. The monologue reveals the power Grelsch has over Luisa as his employee – it shows Luisa’s awareness of the balance of power in this conversation and Luisa’s knack for using stories to get herself out of trouble. Inner monologue here, by revealing Luisa’s unspoken thoughts mid-dialogue, adds to her character as well as illustrating her relationship with her boss.

Inner monologue can help describe others from a character’s point of view. When the protagonist is the [first-person narrator](https://www.nownovel.com/blog/how-to-start-story-first-person/) in a story, he can describe other characters simply in narration. But in the third person limited, a little internal monologue can be a useful filtering device for slipping into a character’s private consciousness and describing their impressions. Here is an example from David Mitchell’s *Cloud Atlas:*

*“The elevator doors close just as Luisa Rey reaches them, but the unseen occupant jams them with his cane. ‘Thank you,’ says Luisa to the old man. ‘Glad the age of chivalry isn’t totally dead.’ He gives a grave nod of acknowledgment. ‘Hell, Luisa thinks, he looks like he’s been given a week to live.”*

This internal monologue gives a reader a keen sense of Luisa’s and it succinctly reveals a key detail about the other character’s appearance.

Inner monologue is useful for showing characters’ [private dilemmas, their internal conflicts](https://www.nownovel.com/blog/difference-external-internal-conflict-writing/) and also reveals characters’ self perceptions.

As thinking, a person [often engages in self-talk](http://thewritepractice.com/self-talk/). Inner monologue in a story may be used to reveal a character’s self-speak and preoccupations. For example, in a story there may be a scene where a character is looking in a mirror, preparing for a job interview:

*“He lifted his chin, pulling the knot in his tie a little tighter. You’ve got this. He winked. Stop, definitely don’t wink at them. He pulled a stern face. No, you look like you’re interviewing to be someone’s damn body guard.”*

These lines convey that the character is nervous about the interview and self-conscious about how he will come across visually.

The two varieties of interior monologue found in a novel are long ones and short ones.

A short interior monologue tends to happen in the middle of a scene. Here is an example of a short interior monologue from Nick Hornby’s novel *Juliet, Naked.* The viewpoint character, a man called Tucker, is having a talk with his son.

*“Jackson was in his room, bashing the hell out of the buttons on a cheap computer game. He didn’t look up when Tucker opened the door. ‘You want to come back downstairs?’ ‘No.’ ‘It’ll be easier if the three of us talk.’ ‘I know what you want to talk about.’ ‘What?’ ‘”Mummy and Daddy are having problems, so we’re going to split up from each other. But it doesn’t mean we don’t love you, blah blah blah.” There. Now I don’t have to go.’ Jesus, thought Tucker. Six years old and already these kids can parody the language of marital failure. ‘Where did you get all that from?’ ‘Like, five hundred TV shows, plus five hundred kids at school. So that’s a thousand, right?’ ‘Right. Five hundred plus five hundred makes a thousand.’ Jackson couldn’t prevent a tiny flicker of triumph crossing his face. ‘OK. You don’t have to come down. But please be kind to your mother.’*

There is one short paragraph of interior monologue: ‘*Jesus, thought Tucker. Six years old and already these kids can parody the language of marital failure.’*

It helps a reader to experience what it feels like to be standing there in the father’s shoes, but it doesn’t affect the pace of the scene significantly. If you re-read the passage but leave out the monologue, the effect is cooler and more distant.

A long interior monologue tends to happen during the slower bits in between action scenes.

An example of a long interior monologue (or the very beginning of one), from Nick Hornby’s novel *Juliet, Naked:*

*“On the way to the airport, Jackson chatted about school, baseball and death until he fell asleep, and Tucker listened to an old R&B mix-tape that he’d found in the trunk. He only had a handful of cassettes left now, and when they were gone, he’d have to find the money for a new truck. He couldn’t contemplate a driving life without music. He sang along to the Chi-Lites softly, so as not to wake Jackson, and found himself thinking about the question that woman had asked him in her email: ‘It isn’t you really, is it?’ Well, it was him, he was almost positive, but for some reason… “.* And off the character goes on a lengthy interior monologue.

Novel writers can keep these longer internal monologues going for several pages if necessary. Any internal monologues in the middle of a scene will generally take the form of one-liners, while the internal monologues in the interludes can run on for pages.

Interior monologue may mirror all the half thoughts, impressions, and associations that impinge upon the character’s [consciousness](https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/consciousness), it may also be restricted to an organized presentation of that character’s rational thoughts. Closely related to the [soliloquy](https://www.britannica.com/art/soliloquy) and [dramatic monologue](https://www.britannica.com/art/dramatic-monologue), the interior monologue was first used extensively by [Édouard Dujardin](https://www.britannica.com/biography/Edouard-Dujardin) in Les Lauriers sont coupés (1887; [*We’ll to the Woods No More*](https://www.britannica.com/topic/Well-to-the-Woods-No-More)) and later became a characteristic device of 20th-century [psychological novels](https://www.britannica.com/art/psychological-novel).

Inner monologue is associated with Modernist authors such as Virginia Woolf and James Joyce. Here is a passage of internal monologue in Virginia Woolf’s novel *“To the Lighthouse”:*

*“But what have I done with my life? thought Mrs. Ramsay, taking her place at the head of the table, and looking at all the plates making white circles on it. ‘William, sit by me,’ she said. ‘Lily,’ she said, wearily, ‘over there.’ They had that – Paul Rayley and Minta Doyle – she, only this – an infinitely long table and plates and knives […] And meanwhile she waited, passively, for someone to answer her, for something to happen. But this is not a thing, she thought, ladling out soup, that one says.”*

It’s clear from Ramsay’s inner monologue that she has mixed feelings about the confinement of her life to serving dinners and entertaining guests. This piece of monologue suggests Ramsay associates domestic life with lack *(‘she, only this – an infinitely long table’).*

Virginia Woolf’s use of stream of consciousness – and by extension, inner monologue – is effective because a reader sees characters’ complex psychology.

Inner monologue shows a character’s personal associations. It is often used interchangeably with ‘[stream of consciousness](https://www.britannica.com/art/stream-of-consciousness)’, a [narrative mode](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Narrative_mode) or method that attempts to depict the multitudinous thoughts and feelings which pass through the mind, but, according to some linguists, [stream of consciousnes](https://www.britannica.com/art/stream-of-consciousness) is the more general term. Interior monologue, strictly defined, is a type of stream of consciousness. As such, it presents a character's thoughts, emotions, and fleeting sensations to the reader.

Interior monologue is appropriate with nonfiction, provided there’s fact to back it up. A reader can’t get into a character’s head because he supposes, or imagines, or deduces that’s what he or she would be thinking. He has to know.

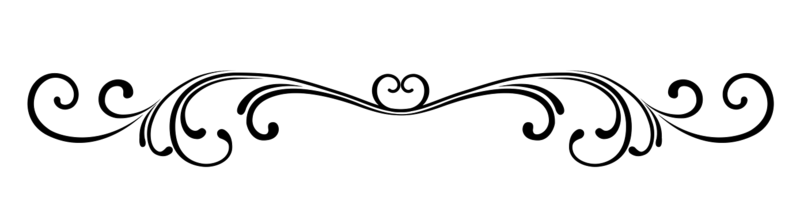
Tom Wolfe in his book about the space program, *The Right Stuff* explains at the outset that his [style](https://www.thoughtco.com/style-rhetoric-and-composition-1692148) was developed to grab the readers’ attention, to absorb them. He wanted to get into the heads of his characters, even if this was nonfiction. And so, at an astronauts’ press conference, he quotes a reporter’s question on who was confident about coming back from space. He describes the astronauts looking at one another and hoisting their hands in the air. Then, he’s into their heads: *“It really made you feel like an idiot, raising your hand this way. If you didn’t think you were ‘coming back,’ then you would really have to be a fool or a nut to have volunteered at all.”*

He goes on for a full page, and in writing this way Tom Wolfe has transcended usual nonfiction style. He’s offered characterization and motivation, two fiction writing techniques that can bring the reader in lockstep with the writer.

Interior monologue provides a chance to *‘see inside’* the heads of characters, and the more familiar a reader is with a character, the more the reader embraces that character.

Some More Examples of Inner Monologues in Literature

* *“I looked into the reception room. It was empty of everything but the smell of dust. I threw up another window, unlocked the communicating door and went into the room beyond. Three hard chairs and a swivel chair, flat desk with a glass top, five green filing cases, three of them full of nothing, a calendar and a framed license bond on the wall, a phone, a washbowl in a stained wood cupboard, a hatrack, a carpet that was just something on the floor, and two open windows with net curtains that puckered in and out like the lips of a toothless old man sleeping.”* ."(from Raymond Chandler’s, *The High Window*, 1942).
* *"The same stuff I had had last year, and the year before that. Not beautiful, not gay, but better than a tent on the beach."(*from Raymond Chandler’s, *The High Window*, 1942)
* *"How much better is silence; the coffee cup, the table. How much better to sit by myself like the solitary sea-bird that opens its wings on the stake. Let me sit here for ever with bare things, this coffee cup, this knife, this fork, things in themselves, myself being myself. Do not come and worry me with your hints that it is time to shut the shop and be gone. I would willingly give all my money that you should not disturb me but let me sit on and on, silent, alone."* (from Virginia Woolf’s, *The Waves*, 1931)



**Interjections and Exclamatory Words**

Interjections are words which are used to express our feelings strongly and which may be said to exist in language as conventional symbols of human emotions, so interjection is a word with strong emotive meaning.

The term *interjection*, entered the English language probably in the 13th or 14th century from Latin *interjicere (-jacere*) with the meaning *“to throw or cast between”,* from *inter “*between” + *jacere “*to throw”.

Interjections are sound sequences, words, typical phrases or clauses which can be realized as utterances signalled in speech by being produced with greater intensity, stress and pitch, and as sentences in writing by an exclamation mark. Examples*: Wow! This looks wonderful!*

Interjections can appear as a single phrase, word, or short clause. The most critical function of an interjection is its ability to convey emotions that might otherwise go ignored in a sentence.

Through interjections, writers can express emotions, such as joy, excitement, surprise, sadness, or even disgust. They can also exaggerate those emotions through the use of an exclamation point.

Though interjections may seem trivial, their function as a part of speech is significant. It is often difficult to express emotions in the written language, and without interjections it might otherwise be impossible.

The meaning of interjection *Oh* in the following examples:

* The interjection *Oh* may be regarded as a signal indicating emotional tension in the following utterance: *Oh, where are you going to, all you Big Steamers?* (from *“Big Steamers”* by R.Kipling).
* The same may be observed in the use of the interjection *oh* in the following sentence from *"A Christmas Carol"* by Dickens:

*"Oh! but he was a tight-fisted hand at the grind-stone, Scrooge."*

The *Oh* here is a signal indicating the strength of the emotions of the author, which are further revealed in a number of devices, mostly syntactical, like elliptical sentences, tautological subjects, etc.

The interjection *Oh*, by itself may express various feelings such as regret, despair, disappointment, sorrow, surprise and many others.

So interjections radiate the emotional element over the whole of the utterance, provided that they precede it.

Interjections can be divided into primary and derivative. Primary interjections are generally devoid of any logical meaning. Derivative interjections may retain a modicum of logical meaning, though this is always suppressed by the volume of emotive meaning*. Oh! Ah! Bah! Pooh! Gosh! Hush! Alas!* are primary interjections, though some of them once had logical meaning.

*'Heavens!', 'good gracious!', 'dear me!', 'God!', 'Come on!', 'Look here!', 'dear!', 'by the Lord!', 'God knows!', 'Bless me!', 'Humbug!'* and many others of this kind are not interjections as such. A better name for them would be exclamatory words and word-combinations generally used as interjections, that is their function is that of the interjection.

Some adjectives, nouns and adverbs can also take on the function of interjections, for example, such words as *terrible!, awful!, great!, wonderful!, splendid!, fine!, man!, boy!* With proper intonation and with an adequate pause such as follows an interjection, these words may acquire a strong emotional colouring and are equal in force to interjections.

Men-of-letters, possessing an acute feeling for words, their meaning, sound, possibilities, potential energy, etc., are always aware of the emotional charge of words in a context.

An instance of such acute awareness is the following excerpt from Somerset Maugham's *"The Razor's Edge"* where in a conversation the word *God* is used in two different senses: first in its logical meaning and then with the meaning of the interjection:

*"Perhaps he won't. It's a long arduous road he's starting to travel, but it may be that at the end of it he'll find what he's seeking."*

*"What's that?"*

*"Hasn't it occurred to you? It seems to me that in what he said to you he indicated it pretty plainly. God."*

*"God!" she cried. But it was an exclamation of incredulous surprise. Our use of the same word, but in such a different sense, had a comic effect, so that we were obliged to laugh. But Isabel immediately grew serious again and I felt in her whole attitude something like fear.”*

The change in the sense of the word *god* is indicated by a mark of exclamation, by the use of the word *'cried'* and the words *'exclamation of incredulous surprise'* which are ways of conveying in writing the sense carried in the spoken language by the intonation.

Interjections always attach a definite modal nuance to the utterance. But it is impossible to define exactly the shade of meaning contained in a given interjection, though the context may suggest one.

Interjections can express the meaning of:

* anger: *“damn!”, “the devil!”;*
* annoyance: *“bother!”, “mercy!”;*
* approval: *“hear! hear!”, ”hubba-hubba!”;*
* contempt: *“faugh!”, “yech!”;*
* delight: *“ach!”, “coo!”;*
* disgust: *“bah!”, “pshaw!”;*
* enthusiasm: *“wahoo!”, “zowie!”;*
* fear: *“eeeek!”, “oh! oh, no!”;*
* impatience: *“chut!”, “tut-tut!”;*
* indignation: *“here!”, “why!”;*
* irritation: *“corks!”, “lordy!”;*
* joy: *“heyday!”, “whoop!”;*
* pain: *“ouch!”, “wow!”;*
* pity: *”alas!”, “lackaday!”;*
* pleasure: *“crazy”, “doggone!”;*
* relief: *“whew!”, “whoof!”;*
* sorrow: *“alas!”, “wellaway!”;*
* surprise: *“blimey!”, “gracious”;*
* sympathy: *“now!”, “tsk!”;*
* triumph: *“hurrah!”, “ole!”;*
* wonder: *“blimey”, “wow!”.*

A few lines from Byron's *"Don Juan"* may serve as an illustration to specify the emotions expressed by some of the interjections.

* *"All present life is but an interjection*

*An 'Oh' or 'Ah' of joy or misery, Or a 'Ha! ha!' or 'Bah!'—a yawn or 'Pooh!'*

*Of which perhaps the latter is most true."*

Interjections, like other words in the English vocabulary, bear features which mark them as bookish, neutral or colloquial. Thus *oh, ah, Bah* and the like are neutral; *alas, egad* (euphemism for *'by God'*, archaic), *Lo, Hark* are bookish; *gosh, why, well* are colloquial, but the border-line between the three groups is broad and flexible.

Sometimes therefore a given interjection may be considered as bookish by one scholar and as neutral by another, or colloquial by one and neutral by another. However, the difference between colloquial and bookish will always be clear enough.

In evaluating the attitude of a writer to the things, ideas, events and phenomena he is dealing with, the ability of the reader to pin-point the emotional element becomes of paramount importance.

It is sometimes hidden under seemingly impartial description or narrative, and only an insignificant lexical unit, or the syntactical design of an utterance, will reveal the author's mood. But interjections are direct signals that the utterance is emotionally charged.

According to the meaning of the Latin root and the denotation of the word interjection, the position of these linguistic elements is between other structural units of language.

It is not always very easy, particularly in connected speech, to decide whether a particular interjection makes a separate utterance of its own or the initial part of another one, for example: *“Oh! I did not realize that.”* Or *“Oh, I did not realize that.”* Greater independence of the first interjected utterance can be marked by a longer pause between utterances in speech.

The usual sentential position of interjections is at the beginning of the sentence and this position is often said to be independent, which means that they are not grammatically or functionally related to any other word classes of the sentence, nor do they have any syntactical relation to another clause. They are independent elements of sentences/ utterances, only loosely linked with the sentence they appear in, if they are separated from the rest with a comma.

An interjection can be a part of a simple statement that makes a proposition of sorts, not necessarily ended with an exclamation mark: *“Oh, you wanted to add something. I am sorry to have interrupted you.”*

Interjections can also initiate exclamatory sentences, anticipating the contents and the type of utterance. In this case, interjections could be said to be functioning as loose adjuncts or disjuncts: *“Oh, what a nuisance!”*

It is also possible to have interjections at the very end of sentences, separated from the central part by a comma. This usually holds for the infrequent cases of using the rather obsolete interjection *Alas!*: *”They have arrived too late, alas!”*

Everyday Use of Interjections

Depending on the emotions being conveyed by a sentence, interjections can be expressed in a variety of ways such as:

* exclamation point (for expressing strong emotion)

*Hey! Stop playing tricks on me!*

*Ouch! That hurts!*

* comma or ellipses (for expressing weaker emotion)

*Well, it’s time to move forward.*

*Man…it does not look good.*

* question mark (for expressing disbelief or uncertainty)

*How can you say that?*

*What? You haven’t completed your task yet?*

Examples of Interjections in Literature

* “*And there she lullèd me asleep,*

*And there I dream’d – ah! woe betide!*

*The latest dream I ever dream’d*

*On the cold hill’s side.”*

(from *La Belle Dame Sans Merci* by John Keats).

Keats has used a short clause as an interjection. The exclamation points show extreme suffering on the part of the speaker. The speaker’s expression emphasizes the medieval romantic setting of a cave, where a woman lulls a knight to sleep and he begins to dream.

* “*Iago: Awake! what, ho, Brabantio! thieves! thieves! thieves!*

*Look to your house, your daughter and your bags!*

*Thieves! thieves!”*

(from *Othello* by William Shakespeare).

In these lines, Iago tries to stir up trouble for Othello by awakening Brabantio with news of Desdemona and Othello’s elopement. The emotion being expressed here is Iago’s surprise.

* “*Oh, give me back my heavenly child,*

*My love!” the rose in anguish cried;*

*Alas! the sky triumphant smiled,*

*And so the flower, heart-broken, died.”*

(from *Mother and Child* by Eugene Field)

Field has employed different forms of interjections here. In the first line, he has used an exclamation point to express surprise, while in the second line he has used the noun phrase *“my love”* as an interjection. In the third line, the word *“Alas!”,* complete with exclamation point, is used to express the sadness of a grieving mother.

* *Vladimir: “Oh pardon! I could have sworn it was a carrot. (He rummages again in his pockets, finds nothing but turnips.) All that’s turnips…”*

(from *Waiting for Godot* by Samuel Beckett).

At the beginning of this excerpt, Vladimir has used the short clause “oh pardon” as an interjection to show weak emotion.

* “*Forlorn! the very word is like a bell*

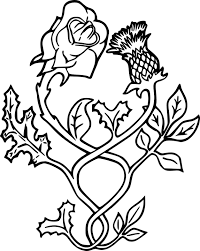
*To toll me back from thee to my sole self!*

*Adieu! the fancy cannot cheat so well…*

*Adieu! adieu! thy plaintive anthem fades”*

(from *Ode to Nightingale* by John Keats).

In this final stanza of this poem, Keats uses the term “*forlorn”* as the sound of a ringing bell, to bring the speaker out of his reverie about the nightingale, and back to real life. Keats uses this interjection, as well as the term “adieu” to indicate the speaker’s sorrow.



**Irony**

Irony is a stylistic device in which the underlying meaning of a statement or a situation is in contrast with what is apparent. The word *irony* comes from Greek *eironia* in which *eiron* means *dissembler.*

Irony occurs when a person says one thing but really means something else. Therefore, irony does not exist outside the context. The context is arranged so that the qualifying word reverses the direction of the evaluation, and the word positively charged is understood as a negative qualification and (much rarer) vice versa. Irony is a wide-ranging phenomenon and may be achieved both by linguistic and extra-linguistic means.

Verbal (or linguistic) irony is the simplest form of irony, in which the speaker says the opposite of what he or she intends. There are several forms, including [euphemism](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Euphemism), [understatement](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Understatement), [sarcasm](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sarcasm), and some forms of humor.

Besides, irony can be based on stylistic incongruity. It happens when high-flown, elevated linguistic units are used in reference to insignificant, socially low topics. Like all other figures of speech, irony brings about some added meanings to a situation.

Ironical statements and situations in literature develop readers’ interest. Irony makes a work of literature more intriguing, and forces the readers to use their imaginations to comprehend the underlying meanings of the texts. Moreover, real life is full of ironical expressions and situations. Therefore, the use of irony brings a work of literature to the life.

In case that there is an extra-linguistic factor that underlines an ironical statement it can help to recognise irony. An example could be saying *“What a lovely day!‟* when standing outside in the pouring rain. The extra-linguistic factor (in this case the rain) shows the contrast between the speaker’s statement and its „real meaning‟. This example shows that the context helps to recognise irony. Extra-linguistic irony often is extended over a whole story.

Thus, irony makes it possible to suggest meanings without stating them. It can be used to convey both the seriousness and humour of situations.

Common Examples of Irony from our daily life.

* *I posted a video on YouTube about how boring and useless YouTube is.*
* *The name of Britain’s biggest dog was “Tiny.”*
* *You laugh at a person who slipped stepping on a banana peel, and the next thing you know, you’ve slipped too.*
* *The butter is as soft as a slab of marble.*
* *Oh great! Now you have broken my new camera.*
* *Short Examples of Verbal Irony*
* *The doctor is as kind hearted as a wolf.*
* *He took a much-needed vacation, backpacking in the mountains. Unfortunately, he came back dead tired.*
* *His friend’s hand was as soft as a rock.*
* *The desert was as cool as a bed of burning coals.*
* *The student was given ‘excellent’ on getting zero in the exam.*
* *The roasted chicken was as tender as a leather boot.*
* *He was in such a harried state that he drove the entire way at 20 miles per hour.*
* *He enjoyed his job about as much as a root canal.*
* *My friend’s kids get along like cats and dogs.*
* *Their new boss was as civilized as a shark.*
* *The new manager is as friendly as a rattlesnake.*
* *The weather was as balmy as a winter day in Siberia.*
* *A vehicle was parked right in front of the no-parking sign.*
* *The CEO of a big tobacco company said he did not smoke.*
* *The fear of long words is called “Hippopotomonstrosesquippedalio phobia.”*

Types of Irony

* Verbal irony.

In verbal irony, a speaker says something that differs from what he actually means. Generally, it happens due to the ignorance of the speaker of a larger context to his words of which he is not conscious.

* Verbal irony in *The Scarlet Letter* by Nathaniel Hawthrone.

Chapter *The Recognition. Dimmesdale to Hester.*

*“…Hester, though he were to step down from a high place, and stand there beside thee, on thy pedestal of shame, yet better were it so than to hide a guilty heart through life. What can thy silence do for him, except it tempt him yea, compel him, as it were to add hypocrisy to sin . . . Take heed how thou deniest to him who, perchance, hath not the courage to grasp it for himself the bitter, but wholesome cup that is now presented to thy lips!”*

Later in the book a reader sees that it is Dimmesdale predicting his future in these lines. He did *‘add hypocrisy to sin’* by staying quiet about his affair with Hester, and that he *‘hath not the courage to grasp it for himself, the bitter but wholesome cup’* due to which he suffered in silence and had to endure guilt and loneliness.

* Dramatic or tragic irony.

Dramatic irony is when the reader knows something important about the story that one or more characters in the story do not know. In dramatic irony the contrast is between what a character says and what the reader knows to be true.

The value of this kind of irony lies in the comment it implies on the speaker or the speaker's expectations.

* In [William Shakespeare](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/William_Shakespeare)'s [*Romeo and Juliet*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Romeo_and_Juliet)*,* the drama of Act V comes from the fact that the audience knows Juliet is alive, but Romeo thinks she's dead. If the audience had thought, like Romeo, that she was dead, the scene would not have had anywhere near the same power.
* In [Edgar Allan Poe](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Edgar_Allan_Poe)'s *"The Tell-Tale Heart",* the energy at the end of the story comes from the fact that a reader knows the narrator killed the old man, while the guests are oblivious. If we were as oblivious as the guests, there would be virtually no point to the story.
* In the same story the murderer poses that he is a wise and intelligent person, who takes each step very carefully to kill the victim. However, the way the old’s man eye prompts him to murder the victim is very ironic. He behaves absolutely insanely throughout the story.
* Another instance of irony in the same story is that the killer himself confesses his crime without being asked by the police. The police are there just to investigate the shriek some neighbor has reported. However, their delayed stay makes the killer very nervous, and he confesses his crime of murder in their presence. He even tells where he has buried the dead body.

Dramatic irony is used especially in plays. When a character, in ignorance, says something that has a different meaning from what he intends to express, then it is an instance of dramatic irony. Later, the character comes to know about the true nature of his actions, which leads to tragedy.

Dramatic irony was mostly used in ancient Greek plays where the spectators were fully aware of the plot, intentions and situation whereas the characters weren’t. In such a setting, characters said things without knowing their larger significance.

* In *Othello* by Shakespeare, Othello is suspicious of his wife, Desdemona, when there is no cause for suspicion. The characters are oblivious of the truth, but the readers can see the advance of tragedy.
* In *Romeo and Juliet* by Shakespeare, Romeo kills himself after he believes that Juliet is dead.
* Structural irony.

When an ironic voice is continued through a work by means of a narrator or a character whose viewpoint is unreliable or wrong, then it’s called structural irony.

* Jonathan Swift’s satirical essay *The Modest Proposal* uses structural irony.
* *Candide*, a French satire by Voltaire, has a character named Candide, who has blind optimism, but later becomes disillusioned.
* Socratic Irony.

This is just being clever, and there is little irony in it. When a person or a character feigns ignorance to extract a secret or expose a person, then he is using Socratic irony. Through the use of Socratic irony, you can very cleverly have a person reveal things that he intends to hide.

* Louis Theroux in television series *When Louis Met*… is a perfect example of Socratic irony.
* Cosmic Irony.

If you believe that God or a Supreme Being is manipulating events or humans for fun or some other motive, then you might be knocking on Cosmic Irony. In short, you hope, God dashes them.

* A short story titled *The Open Boat* by Stephen Crane deals with cosmic irony.
* Roman irony

When someone purposely uses words that have double meaning to consciously stir a particular response in a listener or a reader, then he’s using roman irony. The difference between Socratic irony and Roman irony is that the speaker doesn’t expect the listeners to participate in the dialogue directly. That is basically for politicians or such as Antony of Shakespeare’s play Julius Caesar, who need to juggle a lot of balls. What explanation won’t do, example will.

* Example from *Julius Caeser* by William Shakespeare

*Antony –*

*“…The noble Brutus*

*Hath told you Caesar was ambitious:*

*If it were so, it was a grievous fault,*

*And grievously hath Caesar answer’d it.*

*Here, under leave of Brutus and the rest*

*For Brutus is an honourable man;*

*So are they all, all honourable men*

*Come I to speak in Caesar’s funeral.*

*He was my friend, faithful and just to me:*

*But Brutus says he was ambitious;*

*And Brutus is an honourable man.*

*He hath brought many captives home to Rome*

*Whose ransoms did the general coffers fill:*

*Did this in Caesar seem ambitious*

*When that the poor have cried, Caesar hath wept:*

*Ambition should be made of sterner stuff:*

*Yet Brutus says he was ambitious;*

*And Brutus is an honourable man.*

*You all did see that on the Lupercal*

*I thrice presented him a kingly crown,*

*Which he did thrice refuse: was this ambition*

*Yet Brutus says he was ambitious;*

*And, sure, he is an honourable man.*

*I speak not to disprove what Brutus spoke,*

*But here I am to speak what I do know.*

*You all did love him once, not without cause:*

*What cause withholds you then, to mourn for him*

*O judgment! thou art fled to brutish beasts,*

*And men have lost their reason. Bear with me*

*My heart is in the coffin there with Caesar,*

*And I must pause till it come back to me.”*

* Situational irony.

When the expected outcome of a situation is in contrast with what actually results from it, then that’s called situational irony.

In irony of situation (or irony of life) the discrepancy is between appearance and reality, or between expectation and fulfillment, or between what is and what would seem appropriate. This is when the author creates a surprise that is the perfect opposite of what one would expect, often creating either humor or an eerie feeling.

In fiction, the reader might know beforehand that the situation will unfold not as the characters think it will, but in some unexpected way.

This technique will make the reader feel for the character who is expecting something very different from what he will actually have to deal with.

Also, the outcome may be hidden from the reader till it actually happens so that the reader will be surprised by the unexpected outcome, and so will the character.

* For example, in Steinbeck's novel *The Pearl*, one would think that Kino and Juana would have become happy and successful after discovering the *"Pearl of the World",* with all its value. However, their lives changed dramatically for the worse after discovering it.
* Similarly, in Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, the title character almost kills King Claudius at one point, but resists because Claudius is praying and therefore may go to heaven. As Hamlet wants Claudius to go to hell, he waits. A few moments later, after Hamlet leaves the stage, Claudius reveals that he doesn't really mean his prayers *("words without thoughts never to heaven go"),* so Hamlet should have killed him after all.
* Romantic or philosophical irony

In romantic irony, the human ability to create art consciously rather than naturally, like plants create fruits etc, is seen in contrast with the outcome of such art. The outcome of art is seen as a fall because then it takes on a definite form whereas the creative process can be seen, criticized, changed, progressed by the human mind.

There are endless possibilities in the creative process, but when it becomes a poem or any other art form, it loses all of that and becomes inert; giving just what the author intended it to.

* Comic irony

When there is a serious underlying meaning, a contrast or a generalization under a witty, humorous or light statement, then it is called comic irony.

* The first sentence of *Pride and Prejudice* by Jane Austen is a perfect example of comic irony.

*“It is a truth universally acknowledged, that a single man in possession*

*of a good fortune must be in want of a wife.”*

However, soon it becomes clear that what is actually true is that women are always in search of a single man with a good fortune, and not otherwise.

* Comic irony in *Great Expectations* by Charles Dickens.

*“Here! Give me your fork, Mum, and take the baby,” said Flopson.*

*“Don’t take it that way, or you’ll get its head under the table.”*

*Thus advised, Mrs. Pocket took it the other way, and got its head upon the table; which was announced to all present by a prodigious concussion.*

*“Dear, dear! Give it back, Mum,” said Flopson; “and Miss Jane, come and dance to baby, do!”*

* Irony-filled *Ironic* by Alanis Morissette

*An old man turned ninety-eight*

*He won the lottery and died the next day*

*It’s a black fly in your Chardonnay*

*It’s a death row pardon two minutes too late*

*And isn’t it ironic…dontcha think*

*It’s like rain on your wedding day*

*It’s a free ride when you’ve already paid*

*It’s the good advice that you just didn’t take*

*Who would’ve thought…it figures*

*Mr. Play It Safe was afraid to fly*

*He packed his suitcase and kissed his kids goodbye*

*He waited his whole damn life to take that flight*

*And as the plane crashed down he thought*

*“Well isn’t this nice…”*

*And isn’t it ironic…dontcha think*

*A traffic jam when you’re already late*

*A no-smoking sign on your cigarette break*

*It’s like ten thousand spoons when all you need is a knife*

*It’s meeting the man of my dreams*

*And then meeting his beautiful wife*

*And isn’t it ironic…dontcha think*

*A little too ironic…and yeah I really do think…*

Some More Irony Examples in Literature

* Irony examples are not only found in stage plays, but in poems too. In his poem *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*, Coleridge wrote:

*“Water, water, everywhere,*

*And all the boards did shrink;*

*Water, water, everywhere,*

*Nor any drop to drink.”*

In the above-stated lines, the ship – blown by the south wind – is stranded in the uncharted sea. Ironically, there is water everywhere, but they do not have a single drop of drinkable water.

* The example of situational irony from *“The Gift of Magi”* by W.H.Auden, in which the wife sells her most prized possession – her hair – to get her husband a Christmas present; and the husband sells his most dear possession – the gold watch – to get his wife a Christmas present.

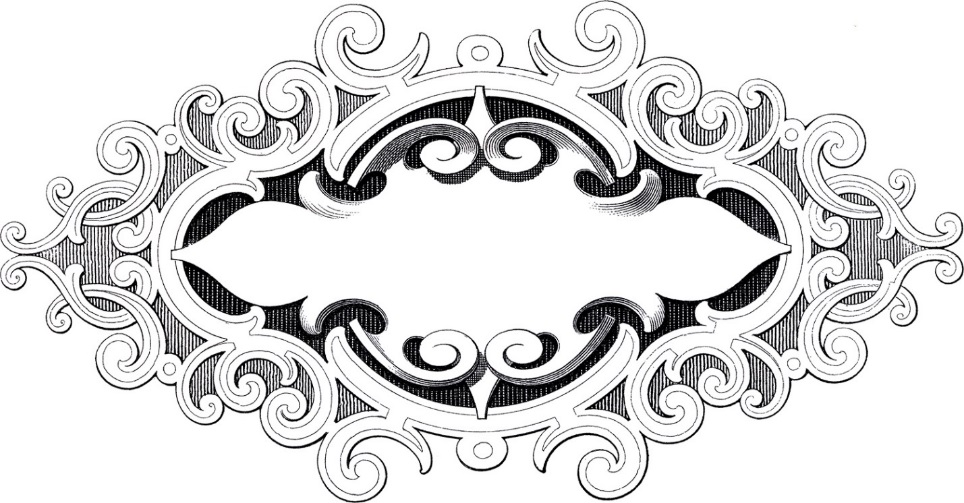
By the end, it is revealed that neither has the utility of the present bought by the other, as both sell their best things to give the other one a gift. Combs, the gift for the wife, is useless because she has sold her hair. The gold watch chain, the gift for the husband, is useless because he has sold the watch to get the combs. The situation becomes ironic for such an incident.

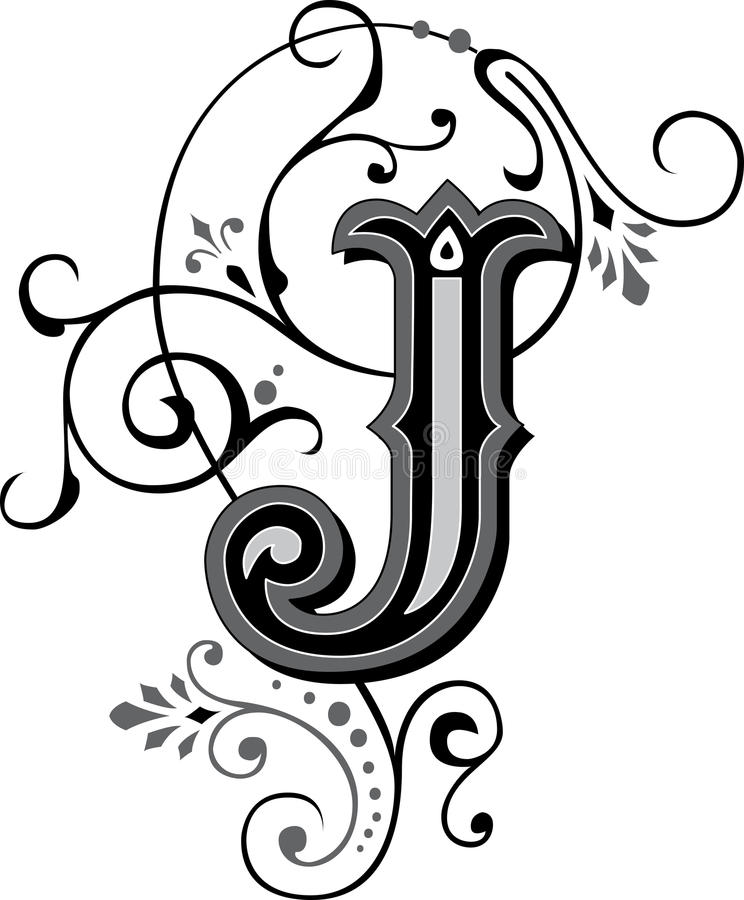
Difference between Irony and Sarcasm

Though there are many similarities between verbal irony and [sarcasm](http://www.literarydevices.com/sarcasm/), they are not equivalent. However, there are many dissenting opinions about how, exactly, they are different. For example, the Encyclopedia Britannica simply explains that sarcasm is non-literary irony. Others have argued that while someone employing verbal irony says the opposite of what that person means, sarcasm is direct speech that is aggressive humor.

For example, when Winston Churchill told Bessie Braddock that “*I shall be sober in the morning, and you will still be ugly,”* he was being sarcastic and not employing any irony.

Irony is a powerful tool in literature and writing. When used correctly, it has the power to connect to the audience on a whole other level that could not have been otherwise established.





**Jargon**

Jargon is a literary term that is defined as the use of specific phrases and words in a particular situation, profession, or trade. These specialized terms are used to convey hidden meanings accepted and understood in that field. Jargon examples are found in literary and non-literary pieces of writing.

The word *jargon* originally comes from the Latin term *gaggire*, which means *“to chatter.”* Chatter was language which the listener didn’t understand, like the chatter of birds.

This term was adopted into French and then Middle English, in which there was a verb*, jargounen,* with the same meaning as the Latin. Thus, the definition of jargon comes from a sense of the listener being unable to understand the meaning behind the noise.

The use of jargon becomes essential in [prose](https://literarydevices.net/prose/) or [verse](https://literarydevices.net/verse/) or some technical pieces of writing, when the writer intends to convey something only to the readers who are aware of these terms.

Therefore, jargon was taken in early times as a trade language, or as a language of a specific profession, as it is somewhat unintelligible for other people who do not belong to that particular profession. In fact, specific terms were developed to meet the needs of the group of people working within the same field or occupation.

Common Examples of Jargon.

* *On cloud nine*: Extremely happy
* *Sweet tooth*: Someone who loves sweets is said to have a sweet tooth.
* *Shrink:* Psychiatrist
* *Gumshoe/Private Eye*: Detective
* *Poker face*: Blank or unreadable expression
* *Ball park figure*: A value that is numerically estimated
* *UFO:* Unidentified Flying Object
* *Back Burner*: Low priority given, something put off till a date

There are many different industries and groups which have their own jargon.

* Architecture Jargon.
* *Chimera*: a fantastical or grotesque figure used for decorative purposes in a building.
* *Molding:* decorative finishing strip at transitions between surfaces.
* *Narthex:* a passage between the main entrance and main body of a church.
* Mathematical Jargon.
* *Q.E.D:* Quod erat demonstrandum in Latin, meaning *“which was to be demonstrated,”* and placed at the end of mathematical proofs.
* *Vanish:* to take on the value of 0.
* *Deep vs. elementary*: a proof is deep if it requires concepts more advanced than the original concept to explain that original concept, while it is elementary if the proof only needs fundamental concepts to explain something.
* Musical Jargon.
* *Allegro:* Cheerful or brisk tempo.
* *Coda:* Ending section of music.
* *Piano vs. forte:* Quiet vs. loud.
* Football Jargon.
* *Safety:* a slightly rarer form of scoring points, in which an offensive player is tackled in his own end zone while holding the football; worth 2 points.
* *Facemask:* a penalty of gripping an opponent’s protective mask over his mouth; worth 15 yards.
* *Wide receiver:* a player on the offense who generally runs downfield to catch the football.

Football jargon also includes terms like *touchdown, territory, scrambling, loose ball, kickoff, man-in-motion, down, end zone, goal line, hand-off, offside, picked off, recovery, audible, blitz, clipping, down.*

* Baseball Jargon.

*Big league, pickoff, pinch hitter, position, power hitter, loud out, at bat, good eye, grand slam, rally, relay, sacrifice hunt, strike zone, take a pitch, tea party, tipping pitches, MVP, bases loaded, Hall of Fame, hit by pitch, home run, stayed alive, stolen base, golfing, caught looking, changeup, balk, choke up, go-ahead run, position, alley (or gap), sacrifice fly, dig it out, assist, advance a runner, ahead in the count, etc.*

* Poker Jargon.
* *River:* the final card dealt in a poker hand (in Texas hold ‘em [style](http://www.literarydevices.com/style/), this is the fifth card placed in the center of the table).
* *Call:* to match a bet from another player.
* *Big blind*: the larger of two set amounts of betting.
* Jargon at Work Place.
* *Land and expand.*
  + - Workplace jargon meaning to sell a small solution to a client and then once the solution has been sold, to expand upon the same solution in the client's environment
* *Blue-sky thinking.*
* A visionary idea without always having a practical application
* *Think outside the box.*
* This term means to not limit your thinking; it encourages creativity with regards to your job description
* *The helicopter view.*
* An overview of a job or a project
* *Get our ducks in a row*.
* Order and organize everything efficiently and effectively
* *Drink our own champagne*.
* A term meaning that a business will use the same product that they sell to their customers. The champagne is an indicator a good product.
* *End-user perspective*.
* What the customer thinks about a product or service. It also is an indicator of a how a client would feel after having used the product or service.
* *Pushing the envelope.*
* This basically means to go outside of what is seen as normal corporate boundaries in order to attain a goal or secure a target
* *Moving forward.*
* Workplace jargon meaning getting things accomplished or making progress
* *Boil the ocean*.
* To attempt to do something that is impossible
* *Heavy lifting*.
* This refers to the most difficult aspects of a project, as in, *"Bill is doing all the heavy lifting for us!"*
* *Face time*.
* The time spent with a customer or client in person as opposed to on the phone or online
* *Hard copy.*
* A physical print-out of a document rather than an electronic copy
* *No call, no show*.
* An individual who neither shows up for the day nor calls in with a reason
* *Hammer it out*.
* To type something up.
* *Get our ducks in a row.*
* Getting prioritized in order to ensure that efficient and effective organization of everything in the work place.
* Jargon in Business
* *Ahead in the count*: signifies that you are doing well and are ahead of your peer competitors.
* *Get your ducks in a row*: indicates you are all ready and planned for the project that you are about to undertake shortly.
* *Connect ear-to-ear*: this simply means to speak about the project over the phone.
* *Plug and play*: deals with anything that does not require much thinking for the implementation of the product.
* *Cookies*: specifies computer jargon referring to the saved web passwords, websites and your shopping cart preferences.

Business jargon also includes terms like, *core competency, brain dump, bullish, free lunch, food chain, hired guns, behind the eight ball, ball park, bait and switch, actionable, circular file, best practice, face time, fall guy, game changer, head count, fall guy, in the black, in the loop, in the red, push back, traction, talk turkey, time frame, value added, put to bed, rubber check, not invested here, stake holders, out of pocket, zero sum game, etc.*

* Computer Jargon **(**both mail and chat jargon).
* *BTW* − By The Way
* *IMHO* − In My Humble Opinion
* *MOTD* − Message Of The Day
* *FAQ* − Frequently Asked Questions
* *CYA* − See You Around
* *HTH* − Hope This Helps
* *FYI*  − For Your Information
* *LOL* − Laugh Out Loud
* *PFA*  − Please Find Atached

Computerjargon also includes terms like *browser, folder, network, fragmentation, CPU, crash, database, download, resolution, keyboard shortcuts, mouse, virus, URL, upload, software, plug and play, interface, file, driver, cache, chip, cookie, freeware, gopher, hardware, operating system, spam.*

* Police Jargon
* *Suspect* − A person whom the police think may have committed a crime
* *10-4* − Radio jargon meaning Okay or I understand
* *Code Eight* − Term that means officer needs help immediately
* *Code Eleven* − A code that means the individual is at the scene of the crime
* *FTP* − The failure of an individual to pay a fine
* *Assumed room temperature*: An individual has died

Some examples of usage of jargon.

* *I need a script in order to pick up the medicine.* (medical jargon for *"prescription").*
* *I need a nurse to room 12 stat.* (medical jargon for "*in a hurry").*
* *Your objection is overruled*. (legal jargon)
* *We need to take data points to determine if there has been a response to the intervention.* (educational jargon).
* *The suspect is headed west on Route 10. All available units, respond.* (police jargon).

Jargon is sometimes wrongly confused with [slang](https://literarydevices.net/slang/), and people often take it in the same sense but a difference is always there.

Slang is a type of informal category of language developed within a certain [community](https://literarydevices.net/community/), and consists of words or phrases whose literal meanings are different than the actual meanings. Hence, it is not understood by people outside of that community or circle. Slang is more common in spoken language than written.

Jargon, on the other hand, is broadly associated with a subject, occupation, or business that makes use of standard words or phrases, and frequently comprised of abbreviations, such as *LOC* (loss of consciousness), or *TRO* (temporary restraining order).

However, unlike slang, its terms are developed and composed deliberately for the convenience of a specific profession, or section of society.

* *Did you hook up with him?* (slang).
* *Getting on a soapbox* (jargon).

Jargon in literature is used to emphasize a situation, or to refer to something exotic. In fact, the use of jargon in literature shows the dexterity of the writer, of having knowledge of other spheres.

Writers sometimes use jargon to appeal to a specific group, or to embed a hidden meaning behind their writing that only certain groups would understand. Jargon is also used as a method of characterization.

When characters use jargon it tells us something about that character and his/her interests and profession. Writers use jargon to make a certain [character](https://literarydevices.net/character/) seem real in [fiction](https://literarydevices.net/fiction/), as well as in plays and poetry.

Examples of Jargon in Literature

* Hamlet to Horatio: *“Why, may not that be the skull of a lawyer? Where be his quiddities now, his quillities, his cases, his tenures, and his tricks? Why does he suffer this mad knave now to knock him about the sconce with a dirty shovel, and will not tell him of his action of battery? Hum! This fellow might be in’s time a great buyer of land, with his statutes, his recognizances, his fines, his double vouchers, his recoveries: is this the fine of his fines, and the recovery of his recoveries, to have his fine pate full of fine dirt? Will his vouchers vouch him no more of his purchases and double ones too, than the length and breadth of a pair of indentures? The very conveyances of his lands will scarcely lie in this box; and must the inheritor himself have no more, ha?”* (from *Hamlet* by William Shakespeare)

Here, we can see the use of words specifically related to the field of law at the time of Shakespeare.

* *“Certain medications can cause or worsen nasal symptoms (especially congestion). These include the following: birth control pills, some drugs for high blood pressure (e.g., alpha blockers and beta blockers), antidepressants, medications for erectile dysfunction, and some medications for prostatic enlargement. If rhinitis symptoms are bothersome and one of these medications is used,* [*ask*](https://literarydevices.net/community/ask/) *the prescriber if the medication could be aggravating the condition.”* (from *Patient Education: Nonallergic Rhinitis* by Robert H Fletcher and Phillip L Lieberman).

This passage is full of medical jargon, such as those shown in bold. Perhaps only those in the medical community would fully understand all of these terms.

* *“In August 2008, 19 individuals brought a putative class action lawsuit in the U. S. District Court for the Northern District of California against Facebook and the companies that had participated in Beacon, alleging violations of various federal and state privacy laws. The putative class comprised only those individuals whose personal information had been obtained and disclosed by Beacon during the approximately one-month period in which the program’s default* [*setting*](https://literarydevices.net/setting/) *was opt out rather than opt in. The complaint sought damages and various forms of equitable relief, including an injunction barring the defendants from continuing the program.”* (from *Marek v Lane* by U.S. Supreme Court Ruling)

This ruling by the U.S. Supreme Court is full of modern legal jargon. The terms shown in bold are a good example of jargon that is not likely to be understood by the typical person.

Some more examples from literature.

* *On an afternoon in 1969 the platoon took sniper fire. It only lasted a minute or two and nobody was hurt, but even so Lieutenant Jimmy Cross got on the radio and ordered an air strike.* (From Tim O'Brien's *The Things They Carried*).
* *All the spectators were as relaxed as Judge Taylor, except Jem. His mouth was twisted into a purposeful half-grin, and his eyes happy about, and he said something bout corroborating evidence, which made me sure he was showing off.* (from *The Merchant of Venice* by William Shakespeare)
* PORTIA: Why doth he pause? take thy forfeiture.

*SHYLOCK: Give me my principal, and let me go.*

*BASSANIO: I have it ready for thee; here it is.*

*PORTIA: He hath refused it in the open court:*

*He shall have merely justice and his bond.*

(from *The Merchant of Venice* by William Shakespeare)

In this example of jargon, William Shakespeare sets a very important scene in a courtroom. Several characters use different legal terms in this short excerpt, including *“forfeiture,” “principal,” and “bond.”* All of these terms are specific to the act of lending and borrowing and carry specific legal meaning.

* *The Ministry of Truth, which concerned itself with news, entertainment, education, and the fine arts. The Ministry of Peace, which concerned itself with war. The Ministry of Love, which maintained law and order. And the Ministry of Plenty, which was responsible for economic affairs. Their names, in Newspeak: Minitrue, Minipax, Miniluv, and Miniplenty.* (from *1984* by George Orwell)

George Orwell created some interesting examples of jargon in his dystopian novel *1984*. In this quote from the novel, Orwell shows how the jargon both obfuscates the real purpose of each ministry and how their abbreviations can further make them incomprehensible to regular people.

* *The things they carried were largely determined by necessity. Among the necessities or near-necessities were P-38 can openers, pocket knives, heat tabs, wristwatches, dog tags, mosquito repellent, chewing gum, candy, cigarettes, salt tablets, packets of Kool-Aid, lighters, matches, sewing kits, Military Payment Certificates, C rations, and two or three canteens of water. Together, these items weighed between 15 and 20 pounds, depending upon a man’s habits or rate of metabolism. Henry Dobbins, who was a big man, carried extra rations; he was especially fond of canned peaches in heavy syrup over pound cake. Dave Jensen, who practiced field hygiene, carried a toothbrush, dental floss, and several hotel-sized bars of soap he’d stolen on R&R in Sydney, Australia. Ted Lavender, who was scared, carried tranquilizers until he was shot in the head outside the village of Than Khe in mid-April. By necessity, and because it was SOP, they all carried steel helmets that weighed 5 pounds including the liner and camouflage cover. They carried the standard fatigue jackets and trousers. Very few carried underwear. On their feet they carried jungle boots—2.1 pounds—and Dave Jensen carried three pairs of socks and a can of Dr. Scholl’s foot powder as a precaution against trench foot.* (from *“The Things They Carried”* by Tim O’Brien)

Tim O’Brien is a Vietnam War veteran, and brilliantly uses jargon examples in this famous short story, *“The Things They Carried.”* O’Brien alternates between the very specific items that only war veterans would really understand, such as *“P-38 can openers”, “Military Payment Certificate”,* and *“SO”,* and ordinary items that everyone can comprehend, like chewing gum and dental floss. In this way, he both makes the war seem relatable and completely foreign to the average reader.



**Juxtaposition**

As a literary technique, the juxtaposition definition is *to place two concepts, characters, ideas, or places near or next to each other in a* [*narrative*](https://literarydevices.net/narrative/) *or a poem, for the purpose of developing comparisons and contrasts.*

The word *juxtaposition* comes from the Latin *juxta* meaning *"next"* and the French *poser* meaning *"to place"* that became standardized into English. This combination suggests juxtaposition's meaning: *"to place next to."*

Common Examples of Juxtaposition

* *Beauty and ugliness.*
* *Belief and denial.*
* *Bigotry and tolerance.*
* *Calm and chaos.*
* *Civilization and wilderness.*
* *Dark and light.*
* *Despair and hope.*
* *Fact and fiction.*
* *Foolish and serious.*
* *Good and bad.*
* *Hot and cold.*
* *Leader and follower.*
* *Poverty and wealth.*
* *Success and failure.*
* *Summer and winter.*
* *Weakness and strength.*
* *Young and old.*

Many proverbs in English include examples of juxtaposition, as the contrasts between concepts.

* *What’s good for the goose is good for the gander****.*** In this case, the female goose is a contrast to the male gander, yet what is good for one is good for the other. This means that whatever is good for an individual is for the good of all.
* *When it rains, it pours.*In this case, there is a contrast of magnitude. The literal meaning is that when it rains, one can expect a downpour. The proverbial meaning is that when one thing goes right many things will go right, or, conversely, when one thing goes wrong everyone goes wrong.
* *All’s fair in love and war****.*** Love and war are opposites, and yet this proverb shows that they have one thing in common which is that anything goes. This juxtaposition demonstrates that there is more alike between the concepts of love and war than one might originally think.
* *Better late than never.*While being late is a negative thing, the possibility of something never happening or someone never arriving is much worse. Therefore, this juxtaposition puts things into perspective.
* *Beggars can’t be choosers.*To beg and to choose are opposite functions, and this proverb implies that in fact one cannot be both desperate and have any choice in the decision or result.
* *Making a mountain out of a molehill****.*** Once again, this is a juxtaposition of magnitude. A molehill is almost invisible compared to a mountain. This proverb warns not to magnify a problem that is, in fact, not such a big deal.
* *When the cat’s away the mice will play.*In this contrast, the cat is an authority figure while the mice are the subservient creatures, being the natural prey of cats. This proverb means that without an authority figure watching over people will do what they want. This can be either a positive negative thing, depending on the usage (for example, it can be a positive thing to remove a repressive authorial force, yet it can be negative if chaos breaks out without order enforced).
* *You can’t teach an old dog new tricks****.*** In this contrast between old and new, the proverb indicates that once someone has gotten either literally too old or metaphorically too stuck in a way of thinking there is no way to change that person’s mind or manners.

In literature, juxtaposition is a useful device for writers to portray their characters in great detail, to create [suspense](https://literarydevices.net/suspense/), and to achieve a rhetorical effect. Writers employ the literary technique of juxtaposition in order to surprise their readers and evoke their interest, by means of developing a comparison between two dissimilar things by placing them side by side. The comparison drawn adds vividness to a given image, controls the [pacing](https://literarydevices.net/pacing/) of the poem or a narrative, and provides a logical connection between two vague concepts. It is a human quality to comprehend one thing easily by comparing it to another. Therefore, a writer can make readers sense *“goodness”* in a particular [character](https://literarydevices.net/character/) by placing him or her side-by-side with a character that is predominantly *“evil.”* Consequently, goodness in one character is highlighted by evil in the other character. Juxtaposition in this case is useful in the development of characters. So, juxtaposition is an important technique for any writer, and can serve a variety of purposes:

* to draw a comparison between two ideas;
* to create contrast, highlighting the difference between two elements;
* to create an absurd or surprising effect (i.e., by inserting an element into a setting where it seems wildly out of place);
* to make one element stand out (i.e., by painting a white dove on a red background);
* to bring differing perspectives together in one story;
* to suggest a link between two seemingly unrelated things or images.

Examples of Juxtaposition from Literature.

* Much of the [drama](http://www.literarydevices.com/drama/) in Shakespeare’s play Othello hinges on the bigoted attitudes that characters have about the interracial relationship between Othello the Moor and Desdemona, a Venetian beauty. There are several instances throughout the play that juxtapose Othello’s dark skin with Desdemona’s light skin, implying a moral judgment about the divergent natures of the two lovers. In this excerpt, the villain Iago refers to Othello as *“an old black ram”* and Desdemona as a *“white ewe”* to inflame the anger of Desdemona’s father. Though Othello was well respected in Venice before his relationship with Desdemona, the juxtaposition of his darkness with Desdemona’s lightness casts a shadow over Othello’s character and there is an assumption that he has ruined her innocence.

IAGO: “*Zounds, sir, you’re robbed! For shame, put on your gown.*

*Your heart is burst, you have lost half your soul.*

*Even now, now, very now, an old black ram*

*Is tupping your white ewe. Arise, arise,*

*Awake the snorting citizens with the bell*

*Or else the devil will make a grandsire of you.*

*Arise, I say!”* (from *Othello* by William Shakespeare)

* Juxtaposition in Shakespeare's *Henry IV* Part 1.

In Shakespeare's history play [Henry IV Part 1](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/henry-iv-part-1), a monologue of Prince Henry's reveals that Henry himself is thinking in terms of juxtaposition. In the speech, he outlines how his current reputation as a reckless youth will make his eventual *"reformation"* into a responsible king look even better: he imagines his changed behavior as shining *"like bright metal on a sullen ground".*

*“... nothing pleaseth but rare accidents.*

*So, when this loose behavior I throw off*

*And pay the debt I never promised,*

*By how much better than my word I am,*

*By so much shall I falsify men's hopes;*

*And like bright metal on a sullen ground,*

*My reformation, glittering o'er my fault,*

*Shall show more goodly and attract more eyes*

*Than that which hath no foil to set it off”.*

* Juxtaposition of light and darkness in William Shakespeare”s *Romeo and Julie*.

*“O, she doth teach the torches to burn bright!*

*It seems she hangs upon the cheek of night*

*Like a rich jewel in an Ethiope’s ear.”*

Here, the radiant face of Juliet is juxtaposed with a black African’s dark skin. Romeo admires Juliet by saying that her face seems brighter than brightly lit torches in the hall. He says that, at night, her face glows like a bright jewel that shines against the dark skin of an African.

* *It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness, it was the epoch of belief, it was the epoch of incredulity, it was the season of Light, it was the season of Darkness, it was the spring of hope, it was the winter of despair, we had everything before us, we had nothing before us, we were all going direct to Heaven, we were all going direct the other way – in short, the period was so far like the present period, that some of its noisiest authorities insisted on its being received, for good or for evil, in the superlative degree of* [*comparison*](http://www.literarydevices.com/comparison/) *only.*

(from *A Tale of Two Cities* by Charles Dickens).

This famous opening to Charles Dickens’s novel *A Tale of Two Cities* contains many juxtaposition examples. There are many functions that these juxtapositions play. The title already sets up the idea of comparison, in that there are two cities, and indeed the entire novel is full of doubles. This passage sets up the expectation of that [theme](http://www.literarydevices.com/theme/) continuing, while also showing the intense struggle between love and hatred, freedom and oppression, and good and evil that lead up to the French Revolution.

* *“Two roads diverged in a wood, and I—*

*I took the one less traveled by,*

*And that has made all the difference”.*

(from *“The Road Not Taken”* by Robert Frost)

Robert Frost’s poem *“The Road Not Taken”* contains the literal juxtaposition of two paths, which translates into the metaphorical juxtaposition of two potential decisions. Frost regrets not being able to try both options, but ends up choosing the road that looks less traveled. Though many understand the poem to encourage readers to choose the less popular option, the poem is titled *“The Road Not Taken”,* meaning that the speaker still wonders what would have happened if he had made the other choice. The juxtaposition in the poem shows that one cannot have it both ways.

* Juxtaposing *God* and *Satan* in *Paradise Lost* by John Milton.

John Milton’s *Paradise Lost* is one of the narrative poems that can be used as an example of juxtaposition. This well-crafted literary piece is clearly based on the juxtaposition of two characters: *God* and *Satan*. Frequently in the poem, the bad qualities of Satan and the good qualities of God are placed side-by-side, and the [comparison](https://literarydevices.net/comparison/) made brings to the surface the [contrast](https://literarydevices.net/contrast/) between the two characters. The juxtaposition in this poem helps us to reach the conclusion that Satan deserved his expulsion from the paradise because of his unwillingness to submit to God’s will.

* Juxtaposition of the struggle for life and the acceptance of death.

*“Grave men, near death, who see with blinding sight*

*Blind eyes could blaze like meteors and be gay,*

*Rage, rage against the dying of the light.*

*And you, my father, there on the sad height,*

*Curse, bless, me now with your fierce tears, I pray.*

*Do not go gentle into that good night.*

*Rage, rage against the dying of the light.”*

(from *Do not Go Gentle into that Good Night* by Dylan Thomas).

In Dylan Thomas’ poem *Do not Go Gentle into that Good Night*, the [speaker](https://literarydevices.net/speaker/) is asking his father not to give up, like ordinary dying men, but to fight against it to survive. The juxtaposition is in the action of struggle for life, to put off death by not merely lying down to wait for death.

* Juxtaposition in Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein.*

In [*Frankenstein*](https://www.litcharts.com/literary-devices-and-terms/juxtaposition), Mary Shelley creates a few jarring juxtapositions that serve to accentuate the monstrosity as well as the humanity of the Creature that Victor Frankenstein brings to life. The Creature learns to speak in part by reading Milton's [*Paradise Lost*](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/paradise-lost), and so his language is ornate and elevated, full of *thee's, thy's,* and *thou's.* The juxtaposition of this elegant, formal speech with the Creature's ugly, deformed features and terrible strength creates an uncanny, terrifying effect that, at the same time, increases the reader's understanding of the Creature's tragedy, since we see his clear intelligence. Over the course of the novel, Shelley also juxtaposes the actions of the Creature, who eventually responds to the world's scorn with a violent urge for revenge, with those of Victor Frankenstein, whose arrogant recklessness created the Creature in the first place and whose lack of mercy or empathy condemned the Creature to lonely isolation. This juxtaposition begs the question: who is the real monster?

* Juxtaposition in T.S. Eliot's *"The Waste Land".*

One of T.S. Eliot's most well-known poems, *"The Waste Land",* is a patchwork of different [allusions](https://www.litcharts.com/literary-devices-and-terms/allusion) and striking [imagery](https://www.litcharts.com/literary-devices-and-terms/imagery), as Eliot uses juxtaposition to knit together a dizzying range of sources and ideas. Eliot juxtaposes April, a springtime month, with winter, and uses [irony](https://www.litcharts.com/literary-devices-and-terms/irony) to reverse the reader's expectation for this comparison (calling April cruel and winter warm).

There is also a second juxtaposition in the image of blooming lilacs in the *"dead land",* two contrasting images that bring out one another's features.

*“April is the cruellest month, breeding*

*Lilacs out of the dead land, mixing*

*Memory and desire, stirring*

*Dull roots with spring rain.*

*Winter kept us warm, covering*

*Earth in forgetful snow, feeding*

*A little life with dried tubers.”*

* Juxtaposition in Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring.*

In Rachel Carson's [*Silent Spring*](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/silent-spring), one of the foundational works of the modern environmental movement, juxtaposition plays an important role in Carson's framing of her argument. The first chapter of the book, "*A Fable for Tomorrow*" presents a beautiful small town *"in the heart of America,"* at first stressing its natural abundance: *“Along the roads, laurels, viburnum and alder, great ferns and wildflowers delighted the traveler's eye through much of the year.”* Soon, though, a blight descends, and spring, which normally brings with it new life, is instead filled with eerie silence: *“The roadsides, once so attractive, were now lined with browned and withered vegetation as though swept by fire.”* The juxtaposition of the natural, wholesome beauty of the present with the devastation of environmental collapse is meant as a warning for Carson's readers. The title itself, *Silent Spring,* is a condensed version of this juxtaposition, since it's meant to signify the vanishing of songbirds.

* Juxtaposing the angst of loving someone.

*“I thoroughly hate loving you.*

*Your heart is a perfectly-carved stone;*

*Set deep into your chest, soft as granite.*

*I grip you gently with angels' claws;*

*Icy breath scorching your warm, shivering skin.*

*Your hard topaz eyes shimmer liquidly”.* (Author unknown).

* Juxtaposing violence with goodness.

*“You will soon be asked to do great violence in the cause of good”.*

(from *The Yellow Birds* by Kevin Powers).

* Bruchac’s poem *“Prints”* is a short and simple example of juxtaposition.

“Seeing photos of ancestors a century past

*is like looking at your own fingerprints—*

*circles and lines you can’t recognize*

*until someone else with a stranger’s eye*

*looks close and says that’s you”.*

In this poem, Bruchac juxtaposes two points of view. First, he invites the reader to consider looking at oneself and how difficult it is to recognize oneself by certain details and characteristics. Then, he remarks on how much better a stranger is at recognizing these details in you. With this juxtaposition, Bruchac challenges the common notion that we know ourselves well with the [argument](https://literaryterms.net/argument/) that strangers may see us more truly or clearly than we see ourselves.

Juxtaposition and Related Terms.

Because juxtaposition is such a broad concept, covering the contrast created between all sorts of different things when placed in close proximity, there are a number of terms that overlap with it or fall under its broader umbrella. Three of the most common of these terms are *foil,* [*antithesis*](https://www.litcharts.com/literary-devices-and-terms/antithesis)*, and* [*oxymoron*](https://www.litcharts.com/literary-devices-and-terms/oxymoron)*.*

Juxtaposition and Foils

A foil is one specific form of juxtaposition having to do with contrasts between characters. When a writer creates two characters that possess opposite characteristics, it's often with the intention of highlighting some specific about one or both of the characters by juxtaposing their qualities. Such characters are foils of one another. The *tortoise* and the *hare*, from the famous folk tale, are examples of foils. "Juxtaposition" describes the writer's action of placing these two characters next to one another for the purposes of comparing them, while foil is a word that describes the characters themselves (the *hare* is a foil to the *tortoise*, and vice-versa).

Juxtaposition and Antithesis.

[Antithesis](https://www.litcharts.com/literary-devices-and-terms/antithesis)is also a specific type of juxtaposition. Antithesis is a narrower term than juxtaposition in two key ways.

* Antithesis involves opposites: the things that are contrasted in antithesis are always pretty strong and clear opposites. Juxtaposition can involve such oppositional things, but also can involve the contrast of more complicated things, like two characters or themes.
* Antithesis involves a specific grammatical structure: it is a [figure of speech](https://www.litcharts.com/literary-devices-and-terms/figure-of-speech) that involves a very specific [parallel](https://www.litcharts.com/literary-devices-and-terms/parallelism) sentence structure. Juxtaposition is a literary device that simply refers to a contrast set up between two things in some way, but it does not necessarily have to involve a defined grammatical structure.

An example of antithesis is Neal Armstrong's first words when he reached on the surface of the moon: *"That's one small step for a man, one giant leap for mankind."*

This is a clear pairing of opposites, expressed in a parallel grammatical structure. In contrast, now imagine a description of Neal Armstrong's figure foregrounded against the night sky: The tiny figure of Armstrong in his pristine white suit stood out against the expansive darkness of the universe beyond him.

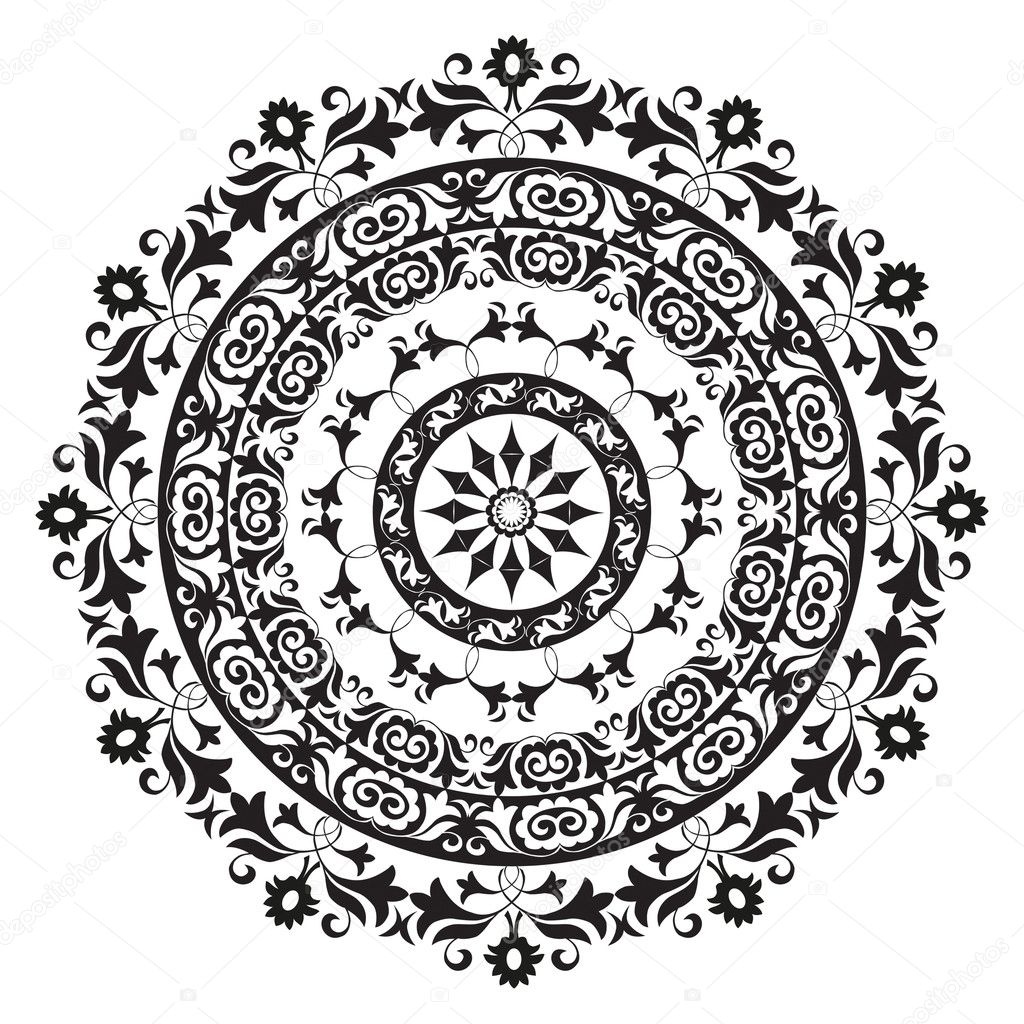
This description involves juxtaposition rather than antithesis, for two reasons:

* it does not contain parallel grammatical structure,
* the comparison goes beyond opposition.

The white of the suit contrasts with the darkness of space in a clear contrast of opposites, but the sentence also contains a comparison between Armstrong's small size and the overwhelming magnitude of the universe, between the human and the non-human, even between the temporary and the eternal. These effects, which amount to a feeling of awe and loneliness, come from the choice to place Armstrong and the universe next to one another—it comes from their juxtaposition.

Juxtaposition and Oxymoron.

An [oxymoron](https://www.litcharts.com/literary-devices-and-terms/oxymoron) is a [figure of speech](https://www.litcharts.com/literary-devices-and-terms/figure-of-speech) in which two contradictory terms or ideas are paired together in order to reveal a deeper truth. Put another way, an oxymoron uses the juxtaposition of its two words to imply something deeper than either word individually could convey. For instance, it's an oxymoron when, in [*Romeo and Juliet*](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/romeo-and-juliet), Juliet says that *"parting is such sweet sorrow."* The juxtaposition of these two words, *"sweet sorrow",* captures the complexity of love and passion, that it is capable of inspiring both pain and joy at the same time.





**Kenning**

A kenning, which is derived from Norse and Anglo-Saxon poetry, is a stylistic device defined as a two-word phrase that describes an object through metaphors. A Kenning poem is also defined as a [riddle](https://literarydevices.net/riddle/) that consists of a few lines of kennings, which describe someone or something in confusing detail.

It is also described as a *“compressed* [*metaphor*](https://literarydevices.net/metaphor/)*”,* which means *meanings “illustrated in a few words.* For example, a two-word phrase *“whale-road”* represents the sea.

A literary piece may be considered as a kenning example if it possesses the following defining characteristics:

* it is used to describe an object in detail;
* the two parts of a compound word represent a relationship between subjects and objects, which creates associations in an abstract and concise way;
* it is also called a compressed metaphor.

A kenning is a type of [circumlocution](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Circumlocution), in the form of a [compound](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Compound_(linguistics)) that employs figurative language in place of a more concrete single-word [noun](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Noun). Kennings are strongly associated with [Old Norse](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Old_Norse_poetry) and later [Icelandic](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Icelandic_literature#Skaldic_poetry) and [Old English](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Old_English_literature#Poetry) poetry.

They usually consist of two words, and are often hyphenated. For example, Old Norse poets might replace *sverð "*[*sword*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sword)*"* with an abstract compound such as *"wound-hoe"* or a [genitive](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Genitive) [phrase](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Phrase) such as *randa ís "ice of shields".*

Modern scholars have also applied the term kenning to similar [figures of speech](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Figure_of_speech) in other languages, especially [Old English](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Old_English).

The word was adopted into English in the nineteenth centuryfrom medieval Icelandic treatises on poetics, in particular the [*Prose Edda*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Prose_Edda) of [Snorri Sturluson](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Snorri_Sturluson), and derives ultimately from the Old Norse verb *kenna "know, recognise; perceive, feel; show; teach", etc.,* as used in the expression *kenna við "to name after; to express [one thing] in terms of [another]", "name after; refer to in terms of"*, and *kenna til "qualify by, make into a kenning by adding".*

Figures of speech similar to kennings occur in Modern English (both in literature and in regular speech), and are often found in combination with other poetic devices. For example, the [Madness](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Madness_(band)) song "[The Sun and the Rain](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Sun_and_the_Rain)" contains the line "standing up in the falling-down", where "the falling-down" refers to rain and is used in juxtaposition to "standing up".

Some recent English writers have attempted to use approximations of kennings in their work. [John Steinbeck](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_Steinbeck) used kenning-like figures of speech in his 1950 novella [*Burning Bright*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Burning_Bright)*,* which was adapted into a Broadway play that same year.

According to Steinbeck biographer [Jay Parini](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jay_Parini), *"The experiment is well-intentioned, but it remains idiosyncratic to the point of absurdity. Steinbeck invented compound phrases (similar to the Old English use of kennings), such as 'wife-loss' and 'friend-right' and 'laughter-starving,' that simply seem eccentric."*

Kenning is related to dialects as well, wherein it works as a showcase example of regional or local [dialect](https://literarydevices.net/dialect/). Also, metaphorical usage of kenning makes the poetic language more vibrant, and increases thought-provoking vocabulary. Hence, it tends to keep readers engaged.

Examples of Kenning in Literature

* *“May I for my own self song’s truth reckon,*

*Journey’s* [*jargon*](https://literarydevices.net/jargon/)*, how I in harsh days*

*Hardship endured oft.*

*Bitter breast-cares have I abided,*

*Known on my keel many a care’s hold,*

*And dire sea-surge, and there I oft spent.*

*That he on dry land loveliest liveth,*

*List how I, care-wretched, on ice-cold sea,*

*Deprived of my kinsmen;*

*Over the whale’s acre, would wander wide*

*Eager and ready, the crying lone-flyer,*

*Whets for the whale-path the heart irresistibly.”*

The *Seafarer* is one of the best examples of kenning poems. Here, *“whale-path,” “whale-road,” and “whale’s acre”* refer to the ocean. “*Breast-hoard*” refers to the heart.

* *“… and its yellowing, ribbed*

*impressions in the grass –*

*a small ship-burial.*

*As dead as stone*

*flint-find,*

*nugget of chalk*

*I touch it again*

*I wind it in*

*the sling of mind*

*to pitch it at England*

*and follow its drop*

*to strange fields …*

*Bone-house:*

*a skeleton*

*in the tongue’s*

*old dungeons … “*(from *Bone Dreams* by Seamus Haney).

This poem is also a very good example of kenning. Here, the words which are used as metaphors are *“ship-burial”, “flint-find”,* and *“bone-house”.* The two-word phrases give descriptions of objects in as alternative way. Though complex, kennings can make a poem more enjoyable.

* *“There is a singer everyone has heard,*

*Loud, a mid-summer and a mid-wood bird*

*Who makes the solid tree trunks sound again.*

*He says that leaves are old and that for flowers*

*Mid-summer is to spring as one to ten*

*He says the early petal-fall is past*

*When pear and cherry bloom went down in showers*

*On sunny days a moment overcast…”* (from *The Oven Bird* by Robert Frost).

In the given example, Frost has also employed kenning. For instance, *“mid-wood”* refers to a bird. And the second obvious kenning is *“petal-fall,”* which represents autumn or the fall season.

* *“I returned to deafened voices*

*warning me, lifted again*

*in violence and* [*epiphany*](https://literarydevices.net/epiphany/)*…*

*was buoyant with hindsight—*

*it said Thor’s hammer swung*

*to geography and trade,*

*thick-witted couplings and revenges,*

*the hatreds and behind-backs*

*of the althing, lies and women,*

*Were ocean-deafened voices*

*warning me, lifted again*

*in violence and* [*epiphany*](https://literarydevices.net/epiphany/)*…*

*was buoyant with hindsight—*

*it said Thor’s hammer swung*

*to geography and trade,*

*thick-witted couplings and revenges,*

*the hatreds and behind-backs*

*of the althing, lies and women,*

*exhaustions nominated peace…*

*It said, ‘Lie down*

*in the word-hoard, burrow*

*the coil and gleam*

*of your furrowed brain…”*

*“… a long strand*

*Were ocean-“* (from *North* by Seamus Heaney).

Here Heaney has utilized kenning. The two word phrases include: *“ocean-deafened,”* which refers to inaudible and warning voices, and other metaphors such as *“thick-witted*” and *“word-hoard,”* for erudition and books respectively.

* *“what came to me in the middle of the night*

*when voice-bearers dwelled in rest.*

*It seemed to me that I saw a more wonderful tree …*

*That beacon was entirely … likewise there were five*

*upon the cross-beam. All those fair through creation.*

*Wondrous was the victory-tree, and I srained with sins,*

*wounded with guilts … “*

This is an example of kenning from an old Anglo-Saxon poem. Here, the phrases “*voice-bearer,” “cross-beam,*” and *“victory-tree”* serve as metaphors. These help in describing an object’s detail by employing compound words.

Modern Examples of Kennings

* *Ankle-biter* = a very young child
* *Bean counter* = a CPA or accountant
* *Bookworm* = someone who reads a lot
* *Brown noser* = person who does anything to gain approval
* *Fender bender* = slight car accident
* *First Lady* = wife of the president
* *Four-eyes* = someone who wears glasses
* *Head twister* = owl
* *Hot potato* = something no one wants
* *Mind-reader* = A person who knows what you are thinking
* *Motor mouth* = person who talks a lot and/or fast
* *Pencil pusher* = person with a clerical job
* *Pig-skin* = a football
* *Postman chaser* = dog
* *Rug rat* = toddler or crawling baby
* *Show-stopper* = performance receiving long applause
* *Tree hugger* = an environmentalist
* *Tree swinger* = monkey
* *Tummy slider* = penguin

Kennings Related to Weather

* *Boreas’s burning* = snow blindness
* *Elf-glory* = the sun
* *Feather’s fall* = falling snow
* *Frozen road* = ice-covered river
* *Northern kiss* = cold wind
* *Ship of night* = the moon
* *Sky-candle* = sun
* *Sky’s black cloak* = nightfall
* *Thor’s laughter* = thunder
* *Weather of wolves* = harsh winter
* *White death* = killed by an avalanche
* *Winter’s blade* = cold wind
* *Winter’s blanket* = snow
* *Winter spear* = icicle

Kennings Related to Battle

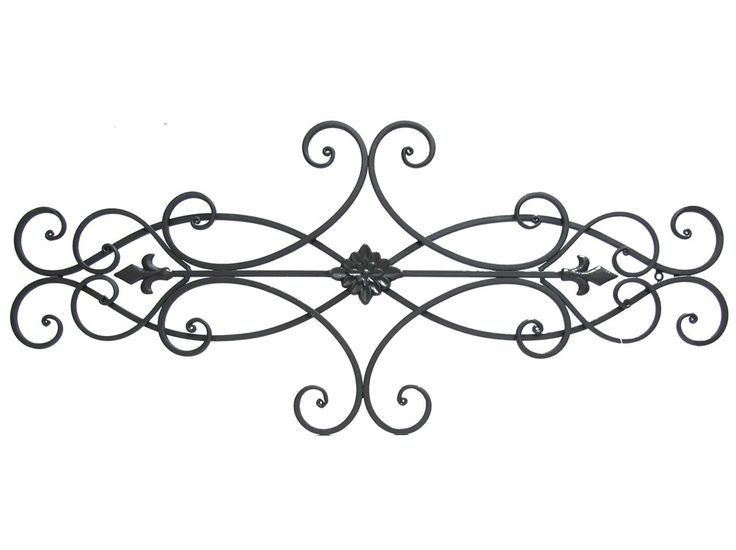
* *Battle metal* = weapons
* *Battle-sweat* = blood
* *Black song* = reaver’s war cry
* *Blood-ember* = axe
* *Bone-beak* = axe
* *Dew of slaughter* = blood
* *Feeding the eagle* = killing enemies
* *Light-of-battle* = sword
* *Mind's worth* = honor
* *Toast of ravens* = blood
* *Traveling the Hel road* = dying
* *War needles* = arrows
* *Weather of weapons* = large-scale battle
* *Wound-hoe* = sword

Kennings Related to People

* *Bear shirt* = berserker (Norse warrior)
* *Bringer of rings* = chieftain or king
* *Children of battle* = soldiers
* *Feller of the life-webs* = slayer
* *Feeder of eagles/ravens* = warrior
* *Fire beater* = smith
* *Forseti’s favored* = diplomat
* *Girl of the houses* = wife
* *Lord of laughter* = composer, poet or Norse god Loki
* *Ring giver* = chief
* *Rune caller* = wizard
* *Shield-gnawer* = berserker (Norse warrior)
* *Slayer of giants* = Thor

Miscellaneous Kennings

* *Balder’s gift* = mistletoe
* *Bane of wood* = fire
* *Branches of fjord* = ship
* *Dragon’s bile* = poison
* *Draught of giants* = sudden realization
* *Forseti’s failure* = unjust decisions
* *Frigg’s lapse* = mistletoe
* *Lindworm claws* = skates
* *Mimir’s warning* = prophecy of doom
* *Mind's worth* = honor
* *Odin’s furrows* = runes
* *Ribs of Ull* = skis
* *Ring-rich* = a generous person
* *Serpent's lair* = gold
* *Sindri’s gift* = wealth
* *Strong brew* = mistletoe as an ingredient
* *Uncut thread* = destiny to be fulfilled
* *Wind racers* = horses
* *Wolf’s joint* = wrist
* *Ancestor’s watch* = a stone circle
* *Green clearing* = shaman’s gathering place
* *Swan-road* = the sea
* *Valley-trout* = serpent
* *Wave-swine* = ship
* *Whale-road* = the ocean
* *Whale-way* = the sea



**Kinesthia**

Kinesthesia is a type of [imagery](https://literarydevices.net/imagery/) that is used as a poetic device. It is a poetic device that gives a feeling of natural, or physical bodily movement or action like a heartbeat, a pulse, and breathing. It also refers to tension along with the movement.

Since the word kinetic means motion or movement, kinesthetic imagery is the representation of the actions and movements of an object or a [character](https://literarydevices.net/character/). Famous authors William Shakespeare and William Wordsworth, respectively, wrote the following examples of kinesthesia:

* *“This sensible warm motion to become*

*A kneaded clod; and the delighted spirit*

*To bathe in fiery floods, or to reside*

*In thrilling region of thick-ribbed ice…”*

(from *Measure for Measure* by William Shakespeare)

Shakespeare presents the phrases *“warm motion,”* and *“clod”* as kinesthetic imagery.

* *“Ten thousand saw I at a glance,*

*Tossing their heads in sprightly dance…”*

(from *I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud*, by ‎William Wordsworth)

Kinesthetic imagery is further divided into various [categories](https://literarydevices.net/community/categories/)/

* Touch: like running fingers on silk fabric.
* Physical movement: gives feelings of involvement in an activity, like walking on grass.
* Temperature: for example, it might involve sunlight falling over the body.
* Feelings: internal feelings, like being angry, sad, happy, peaceful, and calm.

Kinesthesia is used in poetry and [prose](https://literarydevices.net/prose/) to describe the vivid physical actions or movements of characters and objects. It is used as a graphic and vibrant technique of scenes that appeal to the senses of the readers.

Besides, it helps the imagination of a reader to envision the scenes and characters in literary works. Kinesthesia is imagery in a text that describes or depicts movement. This imagery helps us to *"see"* the movement of persons or things in the text, and often creates a sense of movement in the text.

Kinesthesia could be used in two forms: descriptive and figurative. In addition, writers not only employ kinesthesia for physical movements, they also create images based on the intensity of feelings and depth of meaning.

Examples of Kinesthesia in Literature

* *“With a wild rattle and clatter, and an inhuman abandonment of consideration not easy to be understood in these days, the carriage dashed through streets and swept round corners, with women screaming before it, and men clutching each other and clutching children out of its way. At last, swooping at a street corner by a fountain, one of its wheels came to a sickening little jolt, and there was a loud city from a number of voices, and the horses reared and plunged.”*

(from *A Tale of Two Cities* by Charles Dickens).

In this example, kinesthesia is used as the movements of a carriage that is constantly moving along the streets, and the physical actions of women and children.

* *“The gray sea and the long black land;*

*And the yellow half-moon large and low;*

*And startled little waves that leap*

*In fiery ringlets from their sleep,*

*As I gain the cove with pushing prow,*

*And quench its speed i’ the slushy sand.*

*Then a mile of warm sea-scented beach;*

*Three fields to cross till a farm appears;*

*A tap at the pane, the quick sharp scratch*

*And blue spurt of a lighted match,*

*And a* [*voice*](https://literarydevices.net/voice/) *less loud, thro’ its joys and fears,*

*Than the two hearts beating each to each!”*

(from *Meeting At Nig*ht by Robert Browning).

The [speaker](https://literarydevices.net/speaker/)’s descriptions of the physical features of the landscape are good Kinesthesia examples. The speaker is sailing in a boat, which is described as a *“pushing prow.”* There are other words suggesting physical actions, like *“speed,” “cross,”* and finally, *“two hearts beating.”*

* “*Continuous as the stars that shine*

*And twinkle on the milky way,*

*They stretched in never-ending line*

*Along the margin of a bay:*

*Ten thousand saw I at a glance,*

*Tossing their heads in sprightly dance.”*

(from *I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud* by W. Wordsworth)

Wordsworth describes the beautiful daffodils and their movement as dancing. He explains how they grow, and their physical movement. Kinesthesia is used as in words, such as *“stretched,” “tossing” their heads,* and *“dance.”*

* *“At this, through all his bulk an agony*

*Crept gradual, from the feet unto the crown,*

*Like a lithe serpent vast and muscular*

*Making slow way, with head and neck convulsed*

*From over-strained might…”* (from *Hyperion* by John Keats)

Here, kinesthetic imagery is used as an awareness of the movement and muscle tension. This excerpt is a perfect example of kinesthesia. Keats beautifully describes muscular agony, and feelings of exhaustion.

* *“Where the sea meets the moon-blanched land,*

*Listen! you hear the grating roar*

*Pebbles which the waves draw back, and fling,*

*As their return, up the high strand,*

*Begin, and cease, and then again begin,*

*With tremulous cadence slow, and bring*

*The eternal note of sadness in.”*

(from *"Dover Beach"* by Matthew Arnold).

The extract describes the ebb and flow of the waves on the beach.

* *“They stretched in never-ending line*

*Along the margin of a bay:*

*Ten thousand saw I at a glance,*

*Tossing their heads in sprightly dance.”*

(from *"I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud"* by William Wordsworth).

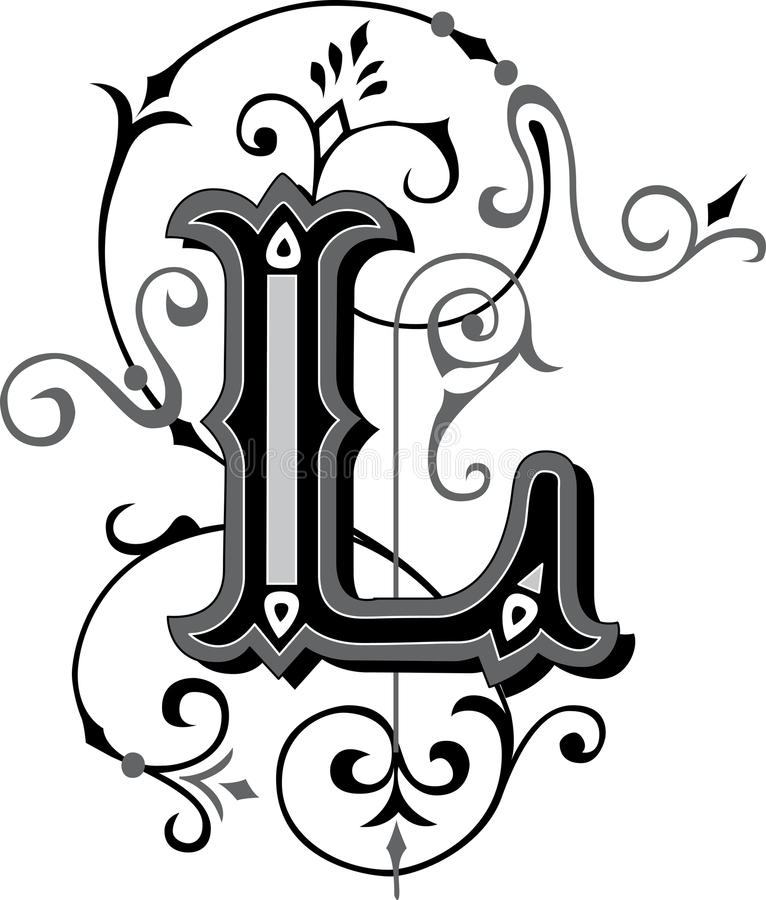
The extract describes the movement of the daffodils.

Kinesthesia and proprioception

Kinesthesia: awareness of the position and movement of the parts of the body by means of sensory organs in the muscles and joints. The perception of the movement of one's own body, its limbs and muscles etc. The word *kinesthesia* or *kinæsthesia* (kinesthetic sense) strictly means movement sense

Proprioception: The unconscious perception of movement and spatial orientation arising from stimuli within the body itself. In humans, these stimuli are detected by nerves within the body itself, as well as by the semicircular canals of the inner ear. The ability to sense stimuli arising within the body regarding position, motion, and equilibrium. Even if a person is blindfolded, he or she knows through proprioception if an arm is above the head or hanging by the side of the body. It is the sense of the relative position of neighbouring parts of the body and strength of effort being employed in movement.





**Litotes**

Litotes, is a figure of speech that employs an understatement by using double negatives or, in other words, a positive statement expressed by negating its opposite expressions.

The word *litotes* comes from the Greek for *“plainness”* or *“simplicity”* and is derived from the Greek word *litos*, meaning *“plain,” “small,”* or *“meager.”* Note that litotes is not a plural word.

For example, using the expression *“not too bad”* for *“very good”* is an understatement, as well as a double negative statement that confirms a positive idea by negating the opposite meaning *it’s good*, by saying *it’s not bad*. Similarly, saying *“She is not a beauty queen,”* means *she is ugly*, or saying *“I am not as young as I used to be,”* in order to avoid saying *I am old*. Litotes, therefore, is an intentional use of understatement that renders an ironic effect.

Litotes uses ironic understatement in order to emphasize an idea or situation, rather than minimizing its importance. It rather discovers a unique way to attract people’s attention to an idea, and that is by ignoring it.

J.R. Bergmann, in his book *Talk at Work: Interaction in Institutional Settings,* talks about litotes in the following words:

*“I want to claim that the rhetorical figure litotes is one of those methods which are used to talk about an object in a discreet way. It clearly locates an object for the recipient, but it avoids naming it directly.”*

In other words to ignore an object and still talk about it in a negative way is the best way to make it appear important and prominent.

Key details about litotes.

* Litotes is pretty simple in the way it works: instead of stating something directly, you state that the contrary statement is not true.
* Typically, the contrary statement will be phrased as some sort of superlative, for example, *"he's not the sharpest tool in the shed*". This is part of what makes litotes an example of understatement, since what's actually being expressed is *"He's far from the sharpest tool in the shed."*
* Litotes must contain a negative statement as in, *"not the best weather".*

Common Litotes Examples.

In everyday life, it is common to experience litotes in conversations, though not many people are aware of this term and its usage.

* *They do not seem the happiest couple around.* (They are unhappy).
* *It's not rocket science.* (It's about as simple as it gets.)
* *He's no spring chicken.* (He's getting older.)
* *It's not my first rodeo.* (I'm very experienced.)
* *He isn't the brightest bulb in the box.* (He's somewhat dumb.)
* *You won't be sorry you bought this knife set.* (You'll be happy you bought this knife set.)
* *I don't deny that it was wrong.* (I admit that it was wrong.)
* *The trip wasn't a total loss.* (The trip was mostly bad with some good elements.)
* *He doesn't always have the best sense of direction.* (He has a lousy sense of direction.)
* *Graduating from college was no mean feat.* (Graduating from college was a major achievement.)
* *Parties just aren't my cup of tea.* (I hate parties.)
* *He's not without his reasons for leaving.* (He has reasons for leaving.)
* *You won't be sorry!*
* *The casserole wasn't too bad.*
* *The trip was not a total loss.*
* *I cannot disagree with your point.*
* *Karen is not unlike her father.*
* *The game is not likely to be rained out.*
* *The ice cream was not too bad.*
* *New York is not an ordinary city.*
* *Your comments on politics are not useless.*
* *You are not as young as you used to be.*
* *I cannot disagree with your point of view.*
* *William Shakespeare was not a bad playwright at all.*
* *He is not the cleverest person I have ever met.*
* *She is not unlike her mother.*
* *Ken Adams is not an ordinary man*
* *A million dollars is no small amount.*
* *You are not doing badly at all.*
* *Your apartment is not unclean.*
* *He’s not the friendliest person.*
* *It’s not exactly a walk in the park.*

The use of understatement in the above litotes examples adds emphasis to the ideas, rather than decreasing their importance. This is due to the ironic effect produced by the understatement.

A statement is litotes if it possesses the following characteristics.

* Litotes is always a form of understatement.Litotes is a form of understatement, the intentional presentation of something as smaller, worse, or lesser than it really is. While some phrases might look like litotes at first glance, if they do not contain understatement, then they do not count as litotes. For instance, the expression *"leave no stone unturned"* contains a double negative and resembles certain examples of litotes such as, *"She wasn't unconvinced".* But there's actually no understatement in *"leave no stone unturned,"* only a command to be thorough.
* Litotes always involves negation. If the phrase is an understatement, but does not contain negation, then it's not litotes. For example, if you said of a disgusting dish *"it's edible,"* then your assessment would be understatement but not litotes. *"It's not inedible"* would be the litotic example.
* Litotes usually works by negating a superlative or extreme statement. Litotes works by making its understatement obvious. It usually does this by negating a statement that is either extreme or involves words that are superlative, such as *"best"* or *"most."* For example, *"I'm not starving"* uses litotes by negating the extreme word *"starving."* It communicates that, while you may not be starving, you are in fact pretty hungry. In contrast, it's hard to imagine anyone ever successfully using the sentence *"I'm not hungry"* as a form of ironic understatement that actually communicates that they are, in fact, hungry. The presence of the extreme word, or of a superlative like *"most"* or *"best"* is usually necessary to make litotes work.
* Litotes can depend on context.Whether a particular sentence does or doesn't function as litotes can depend on the context in which it's said. Some negative phrases might be litotes in one context, and just a plain old sentence in a different context. For example: The sentence *"It's not a Picasso"* is just a regular sentence that contains no litotes if it's said in response to someone mistaking a Monet painting for a Picasso. But *"it's not a Picasso"* is litotes if someone is criticizing their badly-painted amateur artwork, with the implication being that the painting is far from being a Picasso.
* Litotes can depend on intonation and other quirks of speech. Just as the context of a sentence can impact whether a statement is or isn't litotes, so can a speaker's intonation, pauses, or other features of their speech. For example: *That play was not the best. That play was... not the best.*

The first sentence above might simply mean that the play was just okay, in which case it is not a case of litotes because it means exactly what it says—it wasn't the best. The second sentence, with its pause and emphasis on *"not,"* though, seems to imply that the play was actually terrible. That second example would be litotes.

* Litotes can risk lack of clarity.A common grievance about litotes is that, since it avoids directness, precision, and clarity, it can obscure what the writer really means to say. For instance, in the sentence, *"Ten thousand dollars is not an inconsiderable sum of money,"* the writer seems to avoid stating that ten thousand dollars is actually a considerable sum of money. The statement might come across as timid or coy rather than direct, which can be frustrating for readers.

Similarly, negative statements in particular can lack clarity because, instead of affirming a truth, they simply negate a possibility. In other words, to say *"She wasn't unhappy with her new car,"* if used as litotes, implies that the recipient of the car was, to some extent, happy. However, it's unclear what her exact reaction was: was she just a bit happy, or ecstatic? Litotes, then, allows the speaker to avoid making statements with the precision of a statement in the affirmative such as, *"She was thrilled by the car,"* or *"She was surprised to get a car".*

Litotes and verbal irony.

Litotes is a special form of verbal irony. Like litotes, verbal irony is a figure of speech in which the statement expressed is contrary to what is meant though the true meaning is typically understood by the listener/reader. However, unlike litotes verbal irony does not have to involve understatement or the affirmation of something through the negation of its contrary. For example, after a catastrophic dinner party:

* A verbally irony statement could be: *"Well, that went smoothly."*
* A statement using litotes could be: *"Well, that wasn't the best dinner party."*

Verbal irony simply has to involve a meaning other than the literal meaning of the stated phrase. Verbal irony can involve sarcasm, overstatement, or understatement. To sum up, then: litotes is a particular type of verbal irony.

Writers use litotes to invoke the absence of a thing or quality, to soften harsh phrases, and sometimes for a bitingly ironic touch.

Litotes describes things by invoking what they aren't.In litotes, things are somewhat paradoxically described in terms of what they are not. This effect is especially useful in showing, in literature, what could have been.

Litotes can be polite. Litotes is often used as a milder, gentler way of navigating requests, criticism, and conversation in general. For example, the phrase, *"I wouldn't say no to a drink"* may seem less demanding (though more indirect) than *"I'd like a drink."*

Further, the harsh sound of criticism can often be softened through the use of litotes. For example, *"He's not as young as he used to be"* is more tactful than *"He's gotten old,"* and *"She isn't exactly a world class chef"* takes the edge off the statement *"She's a poor cook."* This effect is related to euphemism, in which soft or indirect phrasing is used in place of blunt phrasing.

It can have a comic or snarky effect. While litotes can be polite, it is also frequently a tool used in comic or snarky statements. *"Unfortunately the senator isn't a genius"* is an ironic way of insulting a senator's intelligence.

Rather than being polite, it's a deliberately snarky and demeaning statement that uses irony and understatement to enhance its bite. So while litotes can help those who want to sound polite, it can also give a cutting edge to those who want to use it to win laughs or insult someone.

Litotes examples have been found in many different languages and cultures. Litotes were common in Anglo-Saxon, so it goes back quite a ways.

It’s also common in other languages as diverse as Turkish, Spanish, and Mandarin Chinese. The usage of litotes was important in works such as the Bible, the Iliad, and in Old Norse sagas.

Authors and speakers use litotes for many reasons, one of which is to display restraint or display modesty in describing something amazing rather than boasting of how incredible it is.

Litotes may also be used to downplay enthusiasm or as a witty way of making the reader understand the opposite sentiment to the plainer one being expressed.

Litotes is more common in everyday speech than it is in literature, where examples of litotes are oftentimes so subtle that they go unnoticed.

Examples of Litotes in Literature

In literature, writers and poets use this type of figure of speech in their texts in order to vividly communicate novel ideas to readers.

* *“I am not unaware how the productions of the Grub Street brotherhood have of late years fallen under many prejudices.”* (from *A Tale of a Tub* by Jonathan Swift).

Swift used double negatives to emphasize the point that he is totally aware of it. The irony is that he is aware, but he is saying it as if he is unaware that he is not.

* *“Some say the world will end in fire,*

*Some say in ice.*

*From what I’ve tasted of desire*

*I hold with those who favor fire.*

*But if I had to perish twice,*

*I think I know enough of hate*

*To say that for destruction ice*

*Is also great*

*And would suffice.”* (from *Fire and Ice* by Robert Frost)

If to read this short piece by Robert Frost very carefully, it will become clear that the destruction caused by ice *“great”* which is balanced by an opposing statement *“would suffice,”* is an understatement.

* *“Indeed, it is not uncommon for slaves even to fall out and quarrel among themselves about the relative goodness of their masters, each contending for the superior goodness of his own over that of the others.”* (from *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass: an American Slave* by Frederick Douglass).

Mr. Douglass was an African-American social reformer and a writer. He has effectively used litotes to stress his point that even slaves used to seek dominance over other slaves by holding out that their respective masters were much better than those of the other slaves.

* In this excerpt from the iconic poem *"The Lovesong of J. Alfred Prufrock"* by T.S. Eliot, the self-conscious middle-aged man insists on his insignificance in the world by using litotes:

*“But though I have wept and fasted, wept and prayed,*

*Though I have seen my head (grown slightly bald) brought in upon a platter,*

*I am no prophet—and here's no great matter.”*

In that final sentence, the speaker is using litotes to communicate that he's an ordinary human *-"I am no prophet"-,* and that the subject on which he fixates is insignificant *-"here's no great matter".* Further, because the poem comments on the stifled decorum of civilized society, the air of politeness that litotes brings to this passage serves the poem's tone perfectly.

* In an extreme case of understatement, the character Mercutio in *Romeo and Juliet* by WilliamShakespeare ironically understates the size and depth of the wound he's received from Tybalt through litotes.

*“No, 'tis not so deep as a well*

*nor so wide as a church-door,*

*but 'tis enough, 'twill serve.*

*Ask for me tomorrow,*

*and you shall find me a grave man.”*

* The first stanza from Charles Wolfe's poem arguably contains an example of litotes, depending on how it's read. The poet remarks on the absence of drums, funeral music, and soldiers' farewell shots to suggests a silent, unceremonious burial for *"our hero."*

*“Not a drum was heard, not a funeral note,*

*As his corse to the rampart we hurried;*

*Not a soldier discharged his farewell shot*

*O'er the grave where our hero was buried.”* (from Charles Wolfe's *"The Burial of Sir John Moore after Corunna")*

By mentioning the absence of these specific sounds, Wolfe draws the reader's attention to them, inviting the reader to at once imagine the sounds what could have been under different circumstances even as he makes clear that there were no such sounds at this funeral.

While this passage could be read as making an understatement about how silent the funeral was, it could also be read as a simple statement of fact there were no drums, no music, no firing of guns, in which case it would not be considered an example of litotes.

* This excerpt from the memoir *The Glass Castle* illustrates the subtle way that the irony in litotes can have a cutting, rather than polite, effect.

*“He looked at the dishes. I knew what he was thinking, what he thought every time he saw a spread like this one. He shook his head and said, "You know, it's really not that hard to put food on the table if that's what you decide to do."*

*"Now, no recriminations," Lori told him.”* (from Jeannette Wall's *The Glass Castle)*

Brian, the adult child of negligent parents, uses litotes here to reprimand his parents for failing to perform a task that he considers to be easy. Brian's tone might be less bitter or less sharp if he hadn't used litotes. For example, he could have said, more politely, *"feeding a family is easy if you make it a priority."*

* “*Once he’s led you to Achilles’ hut,*

*that man will not kill you—he’ll restrain*

*all other men. For he’s not stupid,*

*blind, or disrespectful of the gods.*

*He’ll spare a suppliant, treat him kindl”.* (from *The Iliad* by Homer, as translated by Ian Johnston).

This litotes example comes from the Classical Greek text of *The Iliad,* written by Homer. Here Iris, a messenger from Zeus, is describing Achilles’ qualities to King Priam of Troy, and says, *“he’s not stupid, blind, or disrespectful of the gods.”* This line is also sometimes translated as, *“he is neither unthinking, nor unseeing”.* Iris wants to emphasize that Achilles will not injure Priam, which she does so by listing off negative qualities that Achilles does not possess.

* *“Hildeburh had little cause*

*To credit the Jutes: son and brother,*

*She lost them both on the battlefield.*

*She, bereft and blameless, they*

*Foredoomed, cut down and spear-gored. She,*

*The woman in shock, Waylaid by grief,*

*Hoc’s daughter–How could she not*

*Lament her fate when morning came*

*And the light broke on her murdered dears?”* (from *Beowulf* as translated by Seamus Heaney).

There are many examples of litotes in the Old English epic of *Beowulf.* The first line of this excerpt contains the litotes: *“Hildeburh had little cause to credit the Jutes.”* This is a clear understatement, as the following lines describe the loss of her son and husband due to the Jutes. This is a subtler example of litotes, as it does not follow the usual pattern of *“not un-.”* However, it is still litotes in that it expresses the opposite of a statement; Hildeburh does not credit the Jutes for she had *“little cause”* to do so.

* *“I shall now therefore humbly propose my own thoughts, which I hope will not be liable to the least objection. I have been assured by a very knowing American of my acquaintance in London, that a young healthy child well nursed, is, at a year old, a most delicious nourishing and wholesome food, whether stewed, roasted, baked, or boiled; and I make no doubt that it will equally serve in a fricasie, or a ragoust.”* (from *A Modest Proposal* by Jonathan Swift)

Jonathan Swift’s famous essay A Modest Proposal is a piece of satire in which he puts forth the idea of eating the children of Ireland to combat both the problems of hunger and of overpopulation. Knowing that the public will react with horror to this proposal, Swift preempts it with the litotes, *“I hope will not be liable to the least objection.”* Of course, there would be huge objections to the proposal, and Swift ironically downplays the significance of what he’s about to say.

* *“I lived at West Egg, the — well, the less fashionable of the two, though this is a most superficial tag to express the bizarre and not a little sinister contrast between them.”* (from *The Great Gatsby* by F. Scott Fitzgerald).

The difference between the neighborhoods of East Egg and West Egg is an important theme in F. Scott Fitzgerald’s novel *The Great Gatsby.* The narrator Nick Carraway and his neighbor Jay Gatsby live at West Egg. Here, Nick gives a foreboding sense of how this difference will affect the events of the novel. Instead of just calling them different, Nick says that there is a *“bizarre and not a little sinister contrast between them.”* This sets up expectations of the reader to find out what is, in fact, quite sinister in this part of the world.



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