

ORNAMENTATION (BASICS)

When we discussed "style," we often mentioned the author's choices in grammar, usage, and punctuation. Some choices in this respect are made to preserve the sound of the author's tone.

These choices are often made with rhetoric in mind. That said, other times, an author will make choices with respect to aesthetics (literally, for the purpose of beauty and/or effect beyond the message). Sometimes, authors like to "play" with language to make things more interesting or more beautiful. In some sense, author's will do this to engage their own intellects or to come across with a certain sense of sophistication. This "play" is something we often refer to as "ornamentation" or "embellishment."

Below is a list of different types of ornaments used by authors. This list is by no means comprehensive. In fact, scholars have worked since the dawn of time to categorize every type of written and visual ornament, and there are just too many. So, here is a simplified list. Take a moment and make yourself familiar with these. Some of these will be very familiar, while others may be new.

EMOJIS/EMOTICONS

Emojis & Emoticons (also called smileys) are facial expressions formed by using typographic punctuation symbols or through computer encoding languages (such as unicode, etc.), which have specific keystrokes (or keyboard shortcuts... i.e., a combination or sequence of keys) for assigning them.

Example:

:)
:(
;))
:-)
:p

The use of emojis and emoticons in formal communication is usually unfavorable. However, in more informal text-based communication, emoticons may be useful in showing different emotions and even non-typical tones (such as sarcasm). In cases such as these, typically the emoticon appears after the clause.

Example:

You are such a loser, Gary! :)

I can't believe your parents just bought you a car. : P

CAPITALIZATION

On the Internet, a person may use highlighting to emphasis a scream or a very important statement.

Example:

Lisa better not visit MY HOUSE. Otherwise, she will be in BIG TROUBLE.

AFFECTATION

Affectation is the deliberate use of language to elicit a solely negative, intimidated, or surprised response.

Example: He is one stupid son of a b---h! That a--hole cut me off! He's a m-therf--ker.
-versus-

He is one inconsiderate person.

EUPHEMISMS

Euphemisms are expressions which are deliberately formed to be inoffensive to others.

Example: Used Car = Pre-Owned Car Old people = Senior Citizens Teenager = Young Adult Die = Pass On To Pee = Urinate To Crap = Defecate To Have Sex = To Consummate

LISTING

Listing is a common ornament. Basically, a list is something to help evoke thoughts in the reader and stimulate them intellectually. Many forms of poetry and fiction use lists to bridge different parts of the work. Also, essays use lists to make points and control the pace of the reader (or the speed of reading).

Example:

War is tough, and regardless of how you look at war, one can be assured of murder, rape, pillaging, burning, hatred, revenge, and all of the evils of man.

Notice how the list is used to add another dimension to this very simple idea: War is tough on people.

LITERARY ALLUSION

The simple definition of Literary Allusion is anything which reminds the reader of something else.

Example:

Thou shalt not steal thy girlfriend's boyfriend.

Notice how the phrasing of this line is borrowed from the traditional Christian commandments of the Old Testament (e.g., Thou shalt not kill, thou shalt not steal, etc.). Even the meaning of the phrasing is borrowed to fit a more contemporary audience.

METAPHORS

The deliberate pairing of two unlike things

Example:

My girlfriend is a rose.

ALLEGORY/EXTENDED METAPHORS

The continuous use of a metaphor for longer than a few lines

Example:

My girlfriend is a rose. She is sweet. She has thorns. She is life.

SIMILE

Another variety of metaphor containing the words "like" or "as" for the comparison

Example:

Life is like a box of chocolates... You never know what you are going to get?

PERSONIFICATION

Is an expression which provides inorganic objects organic properties (and vice versa)

Example:

Make your car happy. Buy Our New Premium Fuel Additives, and leave your car with a smile on its face.

The computer sang a sour tune when it detected a virus.

RHETORICAL QUESTION

A question without an answer, which is used to solicit a profound sense of thought rather than a response (Unanswerable question)

Example:

What is the purpose of life?

Will they ever find a cure for this disease?

HYPERBOLE (EXAGGERATION)

Is an expression which shows an exaggeration

Example:

The poodle ate my arm off...

Luke, our quarterback, looks like he could lift a truck over his head...

LITOTES (UNDERSTATEMENT)

Litotes use understatement.

Example: Burning down people's houses is no big deal; after all, arson is a petty crime. (Notice that Arson is not a petty crime, but the use of understatement attempts to make it seem as though it is)

OXYMORON

Oxymorons are two terms put together which are contradictory.

Example: Jumbo Shrimp

ANAPHORA

Is deliberate repetition found at the beginning of successive clauses

Example: We live in a great state. We live in a great nation. We live in the United States of America.

EPISTROPHE

Is deliberate repetition found at the end of successive clauses

Example:

I was not there on that night. I could not have been there on that night. I would seem illogical to consider me there on that night.

I have a friend who dates guys and then throws them away. Why would you date guys and throw them away?

ALLITERATION

Is the repetition of consonant letters at the beginning of successive words

Example:

The cat cradled its claw on the couch.

She ate the succulent strawberry shortcake with super sweet sauce.

ANTITHESIS

Is the intentional use of opposing words, phrases, clauses, or concepts in close proximity to each another

Example:

Ask not what your country can do for you; ask what you can do for your country.

That's one small step for man, one giant leap for mankind.