

Checklist: Elements of Literary Style

From <http://teachers.lakesideschool.org/us/english/ErikChristensen/WRITING%20STRATEGIES/LiteraryStyles.htm>

Sentence Structure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are the sentences long or short? Why do they change? • Do they contain many subordinate clauses, or are they often fragments? • Are there any digressions or interruptions? • Is the word-order straightforward or unconventionally crafted?
Pace	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is the writing heavily descriptive, with emphasis on setting and atmosphere, or does it focus on action and plot movement?
Expansive/Economical Diction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is the writing tight and efficient, or elaborate and long-winded? • When does the author use one or the other mode, and why?
Vocabulary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are the words simple or fancy? Are they technical, flowery, colloquial, cerebral, punning, obscure (and so on...)?
Figures of speech	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are there any metaphors, similes, or symbols? • Are there any other uses of figurative language (personification, metonymy, and so on)?
Use of Dialogue	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How often does dialogue tell the story? • Do we see whole conversations or just fragments? • Does the conversation use slang or is it formal? Does it appear natural or contrived? • Does the dialogue give a sense of pacing, of pauses, of the unsaid? • How much does it substitute for narration?
Point of View	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Possibilities: first, second, third, omniscient, limited omniscient, multiple, inanimate, free indirect discourse.
Character development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How does the author introduce characters, and how do we see their evolution in the story? What is their function and motivation? • What kinds of characters are they? Full/round? Stock characters? Stereotypes? Caricatures?
Tone	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is the author's attitude? What is the mood of the story? • Does the author seem sarcastic? Aggressive? Wistful? Pessimistic? In love? Philosophically detached? Hopeful? Ironic? Bitter? (And so on...) • Whatever the tone, where is it visible in the narrative?
Word Color, Word Sound	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How much does the language call attention to or depend on the quality of its sound, e.g. through alliteration, assonance, consonance, dissonance, rhythm, unusual word choice, and so on?
Paragraph / Chapter Structure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are paragraphs very short, or are they enormous blocks running across many pages? • Are the chapters short or long? How many are there, how are they organized, and why is this important?
Time Sequencing / Chronology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How has the author organized the chronology of events? To what effect? What is the work's structural "rhythm"?
Allusions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How and how often does the author refer to other texts, myths, symbols, famous figures, historical events, quotations, and so on?
Experimentation in Language	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are there any unusual techniques, such as stream-of-consciousness, mixing styles and genres, unusual layout on the page, breaking rules of grammar and form, odd or unstable narrative perspectives, onomatopoeia, aporia, and so on?
Metafictional techniques	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does the author call attention to his or her own process of narration? • Are the narrator's position, role, and thoughts as a storyteller mentioned explicitly in the text? What function does this serve?

