

# THE LONG GUIDE TO STYLISTIC ANALYSIS

**STYLE:** The manner in which ideas are expressed, the combination of distinctive or unique features characterizing a writer or a person. The term style can classify (Gothic style) or it can evaluate (The poor guy has no style).

There are four areas to consider in analyzing an author's writing style:

1. Diction
2. Sentence Structure (Syntax)/Structure of Form
3. Treatment of Subject Matter
4. Figurative Language

1. **Diction:** Analysis of word choice. Word choice conveys voice or the author's or character's personality through the choice of idiom.
  - a. Monosyllabic or polysyllabic?
  - b. Colloquial (conversational), informal (personal writing), formal (academic, literary), archaic (old fashioned, out of use)?
  - c. Concrete or abstract?
  - d. Denotative (dictionary meaning) or connotative (emotional meaning)?
  - e. Euphonious (pleasant sounding) or cacophonous (harsh sounding)?
2. **Sentence Structure:** Syntax is the sentence structure of the passage, the arrangement of the words to form meaning. It includes whether the sentence structure relies on prepositional phrases, clauses, or other structures. Consider the following:
  - a. **Length**
    - i. Telegraphic (fewer than five words)
    - ii. Short (approximately five words)
    - iii. Medium (approximately eighteen words)
    - iv. Long and involved (30 words or more)
    - v. Does length vary?
    - vi. Why is sentence length effective? How is it effective in this situation?
    - vii. How does this sentence structure fit the subject matter?
  - b. **Patterns**
    - i. Is there variety?
    - ii. Is there a pattern?
      1. Functional: Declarative, imperative, interrogative, exclamatory
      2. Grammatical: Simple, compound, complex, compound-complex
      3. Rhetorical: **Loose** (independent clause comes at the beginning of the sentence), **periodic** (independent clause comes at the end of the sentence), **balanced** (likeness of structure, meaning, length), **inverted word order**, **juxtaposition** (unassociated ideas, words, or phrases next to each other creating surprise, wit, clever statement), **parallel**

**structure**, repetition (words, sounds, or ideas to enhance rhythm or to create emphasis), **antithesis** (contrasting words, phrases, or clauses)

- c. Structure also includes the organization or the form of the passage, which in prose might be stream of consciousness or in poetry, a sonnet. Structure also includes the methods of organization, which might range from general to specific, etc.

### 3. Treatment of Subject Matter

#### a. Point of view

- i. Participant point of view (1<sup>st</sup> person): can be a major or minor character
- ii. Non-participant point of view (3<sup>rd</sup> person): **omniscient** (enters the minds of others), **limited** (limited to the minds of one or several characters), **objective** (enters no character's minds; tells only what can be seen or heard)

#### b. Tone

- i. The writer's or speaker's attitude toward the subject or tone of voice. The speaker can be a character or the author, depending upon the passage and its point of view.
- ii. Diction, imagery, details, and figurative language determine tone

#### c. Irony

#### d. Mood or atmosphere

- i. Mood is the state of mind, the feeling or impression the reader derives from the passage.
- ii. Atmosphere is the direct impression the setting produces on the reader. The terms are closely aligned.

#### e. Support of Main Idea

- i. Opinion
- ii. Experiences
- iii. Observation
- iv. Reading
- v. Expert witness
- vi. Statistical data

### 4. Figurative Language

- a. Alliteration
- b. Assonance
- c. Consonance
- d. Simile and Metaphor
- e. Conceit
- f. Imagery
- g. Personification
- h. Onomatopoeia
- i. Hyperbole
- j. Understatement
- k. Paradox
- l. Oxymoron
- m. Pun
- n. Irony
- o. Antithesis
- p. Apostrophe
- q. Allusion
- r. Symbolism
- s. Synecdoche
- t. Metonymy
- u. Enjambment
- v. Litotes