

Codes and Conventions of Language

Codes are a rule-governed communication system of *signs* which have an agreed meaning and can be combined according to *agreed rules* to create meaning in socially recognizable ways within a culture, such as the English language, sign language, baseball coach's hand signals etc. Codes can be divided into three categories – technical, symbolic, and written. *Technical codes* are all the ways in which equipment is used to tell the story in a media text, for example the camera work, framing, and lighting in a film. *Symbolic codes* are the images and sounds that demand interpretation of what is beneath the surface of what we see. These include objects, setting, body language, clothing and colour. For example, a character's actions show you how the character is feeling. *Written codes* are the words (both written and spoken) that demand knowledge of the way texts are written / constructed and how words are used. For example, they come in the form of headlines, captions, speech bubbles and language style.

Conventions are the generally accepted ways of combining codes. There are general conventions in any medium, such as the use of interviewee quotes in a print article, but conventions are also genre specific such as scary music in a suspense thriller, or a twisted ankle for the victim in a horror film. **Codes and conventions** are used together in any study of genre – it is not enough to discuss a technical code used such as camera work, without saying how it is conventionally used in a specific genre. For example, the technical code of lighting is used in some way in all film genres. It is a convention of the horror genre that side and back lighting is used to create mystery and suspense – an integral part of any horror movie.

Structures and Features of Texts

Structure(s) is the organizational framework of a text: its skeleton. For example the organizational structure of a news report in an inverted pyramid whereby facts are written in order of importance and the lesser details are last so that editors can easily cut them for space or time constraints. Also, the structure of a research paper would follow an introduction w/ thesis, body and conclusion; the proofs would follow any number of organizational frameworks such as cause and effect, chronology, classification, compare/contrast etc. **Features** are the normally associated literary (textual and linguistic) techniques/devices/conventions which one would expect to find in such a text. For example in a news report, a journalist would use a catchy headline, byline, layout considerations, active voice, simple syntax, 9th grade vocabulary, eye-witness quotations, some background information. **Structures and features** are used together in any study of genre and its conventions (or what is traditionally expected in a given communication context). For example, in a freer text construction such as a personal essay one may find features of narration such as anecdotes, figurative language, nostalgic tone etc. or one may use/combine features of persuasion such as analogy, modals, emotional appeals, and hyperbole.

Literary Techniques / Devices / Conventions

These form the basis for literary criticism and language construction in ELA. Many of these can be used in media and multimodal texts as well such as hyperbole in a commercial. A solid basis in these **written codes** allows one to interpret and construct a variety of texts as well as appreciate author style and develop one's own style. At times they may form the structure of a text, for example a novel written in flashback or as a series of journal entries, or they may simply be the features used in the novel such as metaphor, symbolism and foreshadowing. Also, for example in a media text a spoof PSA would follow the structure of a PSA but use features such as parody, irony, and satire.

The 5 Literary Elements (applies only to narrative texts)

Setting: the total environment of a fictional work. Setting includes time period, place, historical milieu, which includes fashion, architecture, manners / social rituals, music and art, as well as the social, political, ideological and perhaps even spiritual/ religious realities.

Character(s): the fictional personage(s) through whom the story is told. **Three-dimensional** (major / central) characters are fully formed and there are 2 types: **1. Dynamic** (developing) **characters** usually learn something or grow and change permanently by the end of the story: this is called fulfilling a **character arc**. **2. Round** (developed) **characters** are already well developed and highly complex. **Two-dimensional** (minor / secondary) characters are not as fully formed: there are 2 kinds: **1. Flat characters** reveal only one, maybe two personality traits in a story, and these trait(s) do not change. Sometimes they are known as **stock characters** because they are based on instantly recognizable stereotypes. **2. Static characters** remain primarily the same throughout the story; nothing changes them in any way. The main hero/heroine is called the **protagonist**; the character working against him/her is called the **antagonist**. A protagonist on the opposite side of the law, or who is evil, is called an **anti-hero**. A **foil** is a character who enhances or illustrates the main character through contrast, or being significantly different from them. A **confidante** is someone in whom the central character confides.

Conflict: is the problem(s) that drives the action. All characters are motivated to act by conflict of some kind. There are **4** kinds of conflict, and most stories have more than one going on at the same time: **man vs. man**, **man vs. himself** (an internal conflict that often illustrates how man is his own worst enemy), **man vs. nature** (which often either illustrates man's insignificance in the face of the vastness of the universe OR tests a man's strength and will to live), and **man vs. society** (the hero challenges the values and customs by which society lives or takes for granted).

Plot: the order of events, action, and scenes of a story. Plot begins with the **rising action**, by which we learn about characters, setting, and conflict. The **turning point** or **crisis** is when opposing forces meet, intensifying the conflict. This happens at the same time or just before **the climax** or result of the crisis / high point of the story. The **falling action** leads to the story's end called **the denouement** or **resolution**. A subordinate or minor collection of events is called a **subplot**; these are usually connected to the main plot somehow, sometimes even merging to form the main plot. When the conclusion is not what was expected or is unsatisfying it is known as an **anti-climax** or **anti-climactic**. Unexpected events are called **plot twists** and often lead to a **surprise** or **twist ending**. A **cliffhanger** is an abrupt ending that leaves the main characters in a difficult or uncertain situation, creating suspense. An **ambiguous ending** is one with no resolution, or a resolution that must be inferred by the reader. **Nonlinear narration** works by revealing plot and character in non-chronological or non-sequitorial order (in either space or time), eg TV show *Lost*. **Reverse chronology** works by revealing the plot in reverse order, i.e., from final event to initial event, eg. TV show *CSI*. A **story arc** is an extended or continuing storyline in episodic media such as TV, comic strips, or films with sequels in which we follow a particular plotline over several episodes.

Theme: the main idea, message, or underlying meaning of a story; theme may be overtly stated or implied. It can also be a common thread or repeated idea (thematic motif) that is incorporated throughout the story. Generally, a theme *has to be extracted* as the reader explores the passages of a work. A writer uses the explicit elements of setting, character, conflict, and plot, as well as literary techniques to intertwine and reveal the theme throughout the work; in this way the full impact of the story and its theme are slowly realized as the reader processes the text.

Literary Techniques / Devices (common in ALL texts)

Connotation: a feeling, association or inference that goes with a particular word. Connotations relate not to a word's actual meaning, or **denotation**, but rather to the ideas or qualities that are *implied* by that word. For example, the word "gold" denotes, or literally means, a malleable, ductile, yellow element. The connotations, however, are the ideas associated with gold, such as greed or luxury.

Diction: the author's word choice or vocabulary used in the text. A writer consciously crafts and hones his work and so each word is specifically chosen to have an effect. This is known as "le mot juste" or finding just the right word to express an emotion, describe a character or setting, make a point, etc.

Tone: the writer's attitude toward the reader and the topic. Tone can be formal, informal, playful, ironic, optimistic, pessimistic, sarcastic, etc. It is only slightly related to "tone of voice" in that if you can 'hear' the writer's attitude as you read, you'll pick up their tone.

Mood: the atmosphere or ambience felt emotionally by the reader. Moods vary depending on the reader and their interpretation. They can be sad, depressing, hopeful, hopeless, etc.

Point of View: the "vantage point", perspective, viewpoint from which the text is told.

- a. In **fiction**, the POV is also known as the **narrator** or the character telling the story. One can never assume the narrator's ideas are those of the author, as the narrator is simply a constructed character in the story. A narrator who is biased in revealing information about certain characters is called an **unreliable narrator**. They always have their own motives for misleading the reader and they force you to re-evaluate what you thought you 'knew'. There are 4 types of narrator:
 - 1) **1st person** (I) narrator is a participant in the story and telling of her/his own experience
 - 2) **2nd person** (you) addresses the reader directly but speaks from a shared or general experience, so it has an informality to it that is intimate. It can also seem judgmental or accusatory.
 - 3) **3rd person limited** (he/she/they) is a narrator who is a real character in the story, and who is either an **observer** telling the story from what they see, or a **participant** telling the story from their perspective interacting with the other characters.
 - 4) **3rd person omniscient**, or all-knowing/all-seeing being (he/she/they) narrator is not a character in the story, but can describe and see into the hearts and minds of all the characters.
- b. In **non-fiction**, the **Point of View** (POV) is that of the author in relation to the audience, the topic, and the type of text being written – the same 3 persons exist 1st (I, we, us), 2nd (you), and 3rd (he/she, they, society, people, scientists, the author etc). Certain points of view are expected in different contexts, eg. a formal tone and academic distance are expected in argument and debate so they are usually written in the 3rd person, whereas speeches and persuasion are often very effective when more impassioned and intimate in the 1st person.

Voice: is the *constructed* representation or the persona / personality of the role the writer assumes in the text. Even in non-fiction, voice can never be assumed to be the writer's 'whole or true self', events and feelings are always edited (selected and/or hidden) for specific reasons. Some examples of roles include: the self in a journal, a child narrator in a story, an expert in a report, an editor at a newspaper, an advertiser selling a product, a reporter giving the news. In each case, the situation demands that the role *sound* a certain way to the reader, ie, the persona comes through. A great example is *The Colbert Report* in the sense that the show is named after Stephen Colbert and he essentially hosts, but his persona is the antithesis of his actual values and beliefs.

Syntax: the variety and organization of sentences in a piece of writing, including **punctuation**. Syntax can be very effective in creative writing in terms of the purposeful use of fragments, run-on sentences, lack of punctuation etc. for specific effect such as indicating the stream of consciousness thoughts of a character. Compound sentences are a mainstay of argument and essay as they help to logically link ideas. Phrases and clauses add detail about the noun or verb in a sentence and so serve to enhance the description or point. Also, active voice is used to give an impression of immediacy like in a news report, whereas passive voice is often more descriptive or formal.

1. **Simple sentence:** an independent clause that expresses a complete thought, either with:
 - a. a single **subject** and single **verb** = **I went** to the store.
 - b. a compound verb (one **subject**, more than one **verb**) = **I went** to the store and **deposited** a cheque in the bank.
 - c. compound subject (more than one **subject**, one **verb**) = **Linda and I went** to the store.NB. Simple sentences can be made quite long with the addition of *adverbial* and/or *adjectival phrases* (a phrase has NO verb) = *On my day off, I went* to the store *for some milk*.
2. **Compound sentence:** two simple sentences with 2 different **subjects** and 2 different **verbs** either:
 - a. joined by a conjunction such as *for, nor, so, and, but, or, yet,* = **I went** to the store *and* **Linda ducked** into the bank.
 - b. joined by a semi-colon and related in idea or sequence = **I went** to the store; **it was** very crowded.
NOT: I went to the store; my mother is insane – these two sentences are not linked at all.
 - c. joined by a semi-colon and using a transition such as *therefore, however, subsequently, thus, hence, on the other hand* = **I went** to the store; *however,* **they were** out of milk.
3. **Complex sentence:** one *independent clause* (simple sentence) combined with one **subordinate clause** (Clause has a verb – but is not a complete sentence). The clause always has a subordinator such as *because, since, after, although, or when* or a relative pronoun such as *that, who, or which* = *When I got* to the store, **I realized** I'd forgotten my wallet. OR Paul and Judy have a younger sister, *who* is really into surfing.
4. **Compound-complex sentence:** a combination of **compound** and *complex* sentences = *Though I went to the store to withdraw some cash, I forgot* to take out enough to cover my dinner with Judy, **so she had to pay for me**.
5. **Active voice:** sentence order wherein the subject of the sentence does the action; this is often more concise and direct = I hit a tree with my car. OR The man panted like a thirsty dog behind me; I felt his breath on my neck.
6. **Passive Voice:** sentence order wherein the action is done *passively* to the subject; this is often wordier and more indirect or descriptive, but can allow the writer to avoid using a pronoun as a subject, which is effective in formal papers = The tree's talon-like claws reached up from the pavement and clasped my car in its clutches. OR A thirsty dog's panting echoed in my ear from the man standing in line behind me; the delicate breeze of his breath slowly soothed my parched neck.
7. **Adverbial phrase (no verb) and clause (with a verb):** an incomplete sentence – often flanked by commas - which adds information or detail about **the action being done**, ie answering questions such as *When? Where? Why? How? Or to what extent?* = as soon as I got up..., because the milk had already soured...to the left...
8. **Adjectival phrase (no verb) and clause (with a verb):** an incomplete sentence – often flanked by commas - which adds information or detail about **the subject or object** of the sentence, ie. answering questions such as *What? (what kind, which one, how many? Who – describing the person, place or thing?* = ...which had to be skim for Linda, who loved her blue carton... who had blond hair.
9. **Sentence fragment:** the use of incomplete sentences, ie missing a verb or subject, for effect in narrative writing – everywhere else it is a grammatical error and must be avoided = Disgusting. Beads of sweat. Someone else's. On me. Yuk.

Literary Techniques / Devices (that VARY depending on text type and writer's style)

Acronym: a word formed from the first letters in a phrase. For example, AIDS stands for **A**cquired **I**mmune **D**eficiency **S**yndrome. At first, acronyms have periods like A.I.D.S. to show each letter stands for a separate word or idea. As the acronym becomes popularized, the periods slowly get dropped. Sometimes even the capitalization goes away as the word, like laser or radar, enters mainstream usage. An **alphabetism** is a word said aloud using the actual letters, such as the IRS (**I**nternal **R**evenue **S**ervice). These both allow the writer / speaker to create an efficient expression. With specialized language, the first time an acronym or alphabetism is used, it is always fully written out immediately followed by the letters in parentheses, such as Major League Baseball (MLB); afterward it may be used alone, MLB, throughout the paper.

Anagram: when the letters or syllables in a name, word, or phrase are shuffled to form a new word. For example, in the film *Angelheart* the devil uses the name Louis Cipher instead of Lucifer.

Alliteration: two or more words in a row, or in close proximity, which begin with the same letter. For example, in Dante's *Inferno*: "I saw it there, but I saw nothing in it, except the rising of the *boiling bubbles*" (261). The repetition of the "b" sounds represents the sounds of bubbling, or the bursting action of the boiling pitch. Writers may also use alliteration to call attention to a phrase and fix it into the reader's mind; thus, it is useful for emphasis, such as "The Shameless Sexualization of our Children". **Assonance** is the repetition of vowel sounds within words to create an internal rhyme, eg. "Do you like blue?" the "oo" (ou/ue) sound is repeated, or Poe's "Hear the mellow wedding bells". **Consonance** is the repetition of consonant sounds within or at the end of words, eg. In "pitter patter" the "tter" sound is repeated. Here is an example of all 3 in Poe's "The Raven": "And the silken sad uncertain rustling of each purple curtain".

Allegory: a complete narrative using extended metaphor to convey abstract ideas which have moral, social, religious, or political significance; objects, persons, and actions have meaning both in and outside the story which creates two meanings: literal and symbolic. Characters are often personifications of abstract ideas such as charity, greed, or envy. Many works contain allegories or are allegorical in part, but not many are entirely allegorical. Animals in Orwell's *Animal Farm* represent figures in the Russian Revolution. Literally, it's a story about pigs on a farm, symbolically, it's a commentary on the dangers of totalitarianism. Also, there is a messianic allegory in *The Matrix* in which Neo is a modern day Jesus, Morpheus a John the Baptist etc. dealing with ideas such a sacrifice, redemption, and reincarnation.

Allusion: a reference to a place, event, literary work, myth, or work of art, either directly or by implication. Eg. The literary allusion to *Alice in Wonderland* in *The Matrix*, the war in Iraq or Afghanistan and how USA handled it (Haliburton) in the film *War, Inc.*, the use of Da Vinci's "The Vitruvian Man" in Dan Brown's *The Da Vinci Code*.

Analogy: the use of a story/account/reference that contains similar characters, situations, settings, or verbal echoes to those found in a different story in order to make a comparison / illustrate a point. Analogies often focus on comparing relationships or experiences or phenomena. For example, "Being a Canadian entering an American supermarket is to be Alice entering Wonderland, Oprah in front of a funhouse mirror..." (S. Feschuk). The analogy here compares a common experience for Canadians cross-border grocery shopping to one which is small or distorted, which enhances the point of the sheer ridiculousness of consumption and fast / packaged food available in the USA.

Anecdote: a short narrative with its own point that is used to illustrate a larger point, such as in an essay, speech or novel; anecdotes may be funny, unusual, revealing, or interesting depending on the situation. For example, when your grandfather tries to convince you of how good you have it now, he may tell a little story about how when he was your age he had to trudge five miles through the snow, both ways, to get to and from school. Barefoot. There were no snow days, etc. His personal little story illustrates the bigger point more effectively than just telling you to appreciate the conveniences you have now.

Antithesis: using opposing words, ideas, or phrases close together. For example, “I burn and I freeze”, “Her character is white as sunlight, black as midnight”. Antithesis can also refer to big ideas / concepts or characters, such as The Devil is the antithesis of good, or true democracy is antithetical to a capitalistic society.

Aside: a speech an actor gives directly to the audience; it is not supposed to be heard by other actors on stage, and it is usually used to let the audience know what a character is about to do or what he or she is thinking. In essay writing, asides are usually in parentheses and offer extraneous information that the reader doesn't necessarily need but that the writer provides anyway.

Archetype: a recurring pattern of images / ideas / behaviours; archetypes persist due to the emotional resonance and power of their original incarnations and the value they hold / held for a society or culture. Examples of archetypes include:

1. **Recurring situations** such as the orphaned prince or the lost chieftain's son raised unaware of his heritage until he is rediscovered by his parents, or the damsel in distress rescued from a hideous monster by a handsome young man who later marries the girl. Also, the long journey, the difficult quest or search, the catalogue of difficult tasks, the pursuit of revenge, the descent into the underworld, redemptive rituals, fertility rites, the great flood, the End of the World / apocalypse...
2. **Recurring themes** such as the Faustian bargain or deal with the Devil (selling your soul); pride preceding a fall; the inevitable nature of death, fate, or punishment; blindness; madness; taboos such as forbidden love, patricide, or incest...
3. **Recurring characters** are generic versions of a personality, usually either stereotypes or epitomes (idealized versions) which because of their strong archetypal features are automatically recognizable and therefore, unconsciously resonate with a large audience, such as witches portrayed as ugly crones who cannibalize children, womanizing Don Juans, the hunted man, the *femme fatale*, the snob, the social climber, the wise old man as mentor or teacher, star-crossed lovers, the caring mother-figure, the helpless little old lady, the stern father-figure, the guilt-ridden figure searching for redemption, the braggart, the ingénue, the bully, the villain in black, the oracle or prophet, the mad scientist, the underdog who emerges victorious, the mourning widow...
4. **Symbolic colors** such as green as a symbol for life, vegetation, or summer; blue as a symbol for water or tranquility; white or black as a symbol of purity; or, red as a symbol of blood, fire, or passion and so on.
5. **Recurring images / symbols** such as blood, water, pregnancy, ashes, cleanness, dirtiness, caverns, the ruined tower, the rose, the lion, the snake, the eagle, the hanged man, the dying god that rises again, the feast or banquet, the fall from a great height. Phallic symbols (a sexualized representation of male potency, power, or domination--particularly through some object vaguely reminiscent of the penis. Common phallic symbols include sticks, staves, swords, clubs, towers, trees, missiles, and rockets) and Yonic symbols (a sexualized representation of femininity and reproductive power – particularly through some object vaguely reminiscent of the vagina. Common yonic symbols include cups, cauldrons, chalices, goblets, wells, caves, tunnels, circles, hoops, pots, and other containers)

Bathos: is a humorous technique arranging items in a list in an order that descends from important / real to unimportant / absurd. For example, “In the United States Osama Bin Laden is wanted for conspiracy, murder, terrorism, and unpaid parking tickets.”

Caricature: is a portrait / description that exaggerates or distorts or oversimplifies the essence of a person or thing to create an easily identifiable likeness. Caricatures can be insulting or complimentary and can serve a political purpose or be solely for entertainment.

Characterization: the ways by which an author chooses to reveal / develop the characters; by their looks and thoughts and feelings (description), by their actions, by their words (dialogue and dialect), and by other characters’ impressions of them.

Cliché: is a saying, expression, or idea which has been overused to the point of losing its original meaning, especially when at some earlier time it was considered distinctively meaningful or novel, rendering it a stereotype and/or predictable.

Comic relief: is the inclusion of a humorous character, scene or witty dialogue in an otherwise serious work, often to relieve emotional or other kind of tension. Comic relief often takes the form of the bumbling, wisecracking sidekick of the hero or villain in a work of fiction.

Dialect: the language of a particular district, class, or group of persons; it includes the sounds, spelling, grammar, and diction employed by a specific people as distinguished from other persons either geographically or socially. Dialect is a major technique of characterization that reveals the social or geographic status of a character. For example, Mark Twain uses exaggerated dialect in his *Huckleberry Finn* to differentiate between characters:

Jim: "We's safe, Huck, we's safe! Jump up and crack yo' heels. Dat's de good ole Cairo at las', I jis knows it."

Huck: "I'll take the canoe and go see, Jim. It mightn't be, you know."

Dialogue: conversation between two or more characters / people. Dialogue can move the action along and help to characterize the personality of the speakers in a story, which vary depending on their nationalities, jobs, social classes, and educations. It also gives literature, including creative non-fiction, a more natural, conversational flow, which makes it more readable and enjoyable.

Double entendre: an expression which relies on the multiple meanings of words, or different interpretations of them; it is often used to express potentially offensive opinions without actually doing so. For example, in *The Silence of the Lambs*, Dr. Hannibal Lecter states he is "having an old friend for dinner" — the statement innocently reads as him having invited the friend to share an evening meal, but awareness of the character's cannibalism suggests that he intends to eat the so-called ‘friend’.

Epithet: a glorified nickname created by using a descriptive word or phrase to accompany, or replace, the name of a person or thing, eg, “master of the war-cry” for Menelaus, or “whale-road” for the sea.

Euphemism: using a mild or less negative word or phrase instead of a harsh or blunt one, such as "pass away" instead of "die."

Flashback: when events that happened before the time of the current narration or the current events in the fiction are presented. Flashbacks include memories, dreams, stories of the past told by characters; they are useful for filling in the reader about a character or place, or about the background to a conflict. Its opposite is called a **flashforward** – such as a character’s premonition or vision of their future.

Foreshadowing: when the writer suggests, hints, or shows what will occur later in the story. For example, a movie director might show a clip in which two parents discuss their son's leukemia, then the camera briefly cuts to an extended close-up of a dying plant in the garden outside which foreshadows the child's death later in the movie.

Homage: is the sincere praising or honouring of another artist or work of art through imitation, typically by repeating/copying a recognizable scene or stylistic. It is different from allusion since homage doesn't just refer to another work, but actually mimics a part of it in detail; also it is different from parody in that it does not exaggerate characteristics for comic effect, but rather honours the original in earnest.

Hubris: is overwhelming pride or arrogance which often results in the hero's death or downfall. It also refers to any outrageous act or exhibition of pride or disregard for basic moral laws, often called an "act of hubris". Many action movie characters have this trait, which gets them both in and out of trouble, eg. John McClane in the *Die Hard* series, or Achilles in *Troy*.

Hyperbole: an extravagant exaggeration or overstatement, often used for humorous effect, emphasis or vivid description, eg. 'You've grown into a giant', 'I'm older than the hills' or 'I ate a gagillion tonnes.'

Imagery: the "mental pictures" a writer creates by appealing to the senses and sensations: sight, sound, touch, smell, taste, as well as thermal (heat and cold) and movement.

Irony: a mode of expression conveying a reality different from, and usually opposite to, appearance or expectation. **Verbal irony** occurs when the writer's meaning or attitude is different from what he says: "Why, no one would dare argue that there could be anything more important in choosing a college than its proximity to the beach." **Situational irony** would occur if a professional pickpocket had his own pocket picked just as he was in the act of picking someone else's pocket. **Dramatic irony** (where the audience has knowledge that gives additional meaning to a character's words) would be when King Oedipus, who has unknowingly killed his father, says that he will banish his father's killer when he finds him. **Cosmic irony** suggests that some unknown force brings about dire and dreadful events, such as in Shakespeare's *Othello* when Iago begs his wife to steal Desdemona's handkerchief so he can use it as proof that Cassio is having an affair with her. The play ends when Othello tells Iago's wife about the handkerchief, she confesses what Iago put her up to and Iago winds up being at Cassio's mercy. So, the very kerchief Iago thought would allow him to become lieutenant and ruin Cassio, actually ruined him and raised Cassio.

Juxtaposition: placing two or more ideas, characters, actions, settings, phrases, images, or words side-by-side for the purpose of comparison, contrast, rhetorical effect, suspense, or character development.

Metaphor: a comparison between two things that are literally not alike; it does not use "like" or "as" like a simile. Metaphor connects one object, event, or place, to another, uncovering new and intriguing qualities of the original thing that we may not normally notice or even consider important. Emily Dickinson's "My Life had stood – a Loaded Gun - / In corners – till a Day / The Owner passed – identified - / And carried me away". Of course, the narrator is not really a gun. The metaphor carries with it all the qualities of a "Loaded Gun".

Metonymy: a figure of speech in which a thing or concept is not called by its own name, but by the name of something intimately associated with it, eg, "sweat" for hard work, "the crown" for royalty, "he loves the bottle" for alcoholism, or The White House instead of the president.

Moral: is a message or a lesson to be learned from a story; it may be explicit or inferred. An example of an explicit maxim occurs at the end of Aesop's fable of the Tortoise and the Hare, the moral is "slow and steady wins the race". However, it can also be interpreted that arrogance or overconfidence in one's abilities may lead to failure or the loss of an event, race, or contest. Undermining another person's ability based on image is another message or moral being conveyed. The use of stock characters is a means of conveying the moral of the story by eliminating complexity of personality and so spelling out the issues arising in the interplay between the characters, enables the writer to generate a clear message. With more rounded characters, such as those typically found in Shakespeare's plays, the moral may be more nuanced but no less present, and the writer may point it up in other ways (see, for example, the Prologue to *Romeo and Juliet*.) Morals have typically been more obvious in children's literature, sometimes even being introduced with the phrase, "The moral of the story is ...". Some more examples are: "Better to be safe than sorry", "Don't judge people by the way they look".

Motif: a *recurring* object, concept, or structure in a work of literature. In the Book of Genesis, we see the motif of separation again and again throughout the story. In the very first chapter, God separates the light from the darkness. Abraham and his descendants are separated from the rest of the nation as God's chosen people. Joseph is separated from his brothers in order that life might be preserved. Another motif is water, seen in Genesis as a means of destroying the wicked and in Matthew as a means of remitting sins by the employment of baptism. Other motifs in Genesis and Matthew include blood sacrifices, fire, lambs, and goats. A motif is important because it allows one to see main points and themes that the author is trying to express, in order that one might be able to interpret the work more accurately.

Onomatopoeia: The use of words that describe a sound, eg. Brring! Brrrring the phone rang, seemingly incessantly OR The clackety clak clak of her heels hitting the concrete floor.

Oxymoron: is a figure of speech that combines two normally contradictory terms such as "jumbo shrimp" or "genuine imitation leather". What distinguishes oxymorons from other paradoxes and contradictions is that they are used intentionally, for rhetorical effect, to combine terms to provide a new expression of some concept, such as "cruel to be kind", "team of mavericks", or "simply complicated".

Palindrome: is a word that is spelled the same way backwards as forwards such as *Elle* (magazine.)

Paradox: a contradiction in statement and/or idea created through juxtaposition in order to expose an issue's complexity or inherent hypocrisy, show unexpected insight, or create tension, eg. Wilde's "I can resist anything except temptation" or that tragic heroes are both flawed and flawless. Statements such as and Chesterton's "spies do not look like spies" and Polonius' "though this be madness, yet there is method in it" are examples of rhetorical paradox.

Parody: also known as a *spoof*, is a humorous imitation of a work, genre, or author through ridicule by exaggerating specific characteristics, peculiarities in expressions, mannerisms etc for comic effect. For example, *Not Another Teen Movie* and *Scary Movie* are parodies of the teen movie and horror genres respectively. While parody is gentler than satire, it can be used as its basis or start. Parody can also be good-natured and seen as an homage in the proper context.

Pathos: When the author creates sympathy for a character, the reader feels pathos for them. If a character is “pathetic” it means we feel sorry for them and how awful their lot in life is compared to our own.

Personification: A figure of speech where animals, ideas or inorganic / inanimate objects are given human characteristics. One example of this is James Stephens’s poem "The Wind" in which wind performs several actions, “The wind stood up and gave a shout. He whistled on his two fingers.” Of course the wind did not actually "stand up," but this image of the wind creates a vivid picture of the wind's wild actions. By giving human characteristics to things that do not have them, it makes these objects and their actions easier to visualize for a reader.

Poetic justice: is a literary device in which virtue is ultimately rewarded or vice punished in such a way that the reward or punishment has a logical connection to the deed. In modern literature, this device is often used to create an ironic twist of fate in which the villain gets caught up in his/her own trap.

Pun: is a form of word play that deliberately exploits the ambiguity between similar-sounding words for humorous or rhetorical effect or where "two different sets of ideas are expressed, and we are confronted with only one series of words". For example, "Atheism is a non-prophet institution", "Being in politics is just like playing golf: you are trapped in one bad *lie* after another", or "You can tune a guitar, but you can't *tuna* fish. Unless of course, you play *bass*."

Red herring: is a false clue intended to lead investigators toward an incorrect solution. This device usually appears in detective novels and mystery fiction. The red herring is a type of misdirection, a device intended to distract the protagonist, and by extension the reader, away from the correct answer or from the site of pertinent clues or action. A red herring can also be used as a form of false foreshadowing. It can also be used in argument and debate to deliberately throw off the opposition, or lead the discussion down a less relevant, but more media-friendly path.

Rhetoric: is the art of using language as a means to persuade, to move audiences to action with arguments. In written texts it involves anticipating audience expectations and reactions and adjusting one’s register accordingly. There is a contemporary view of rhetoric as "empty speech" or "empty words", as in political rhetoric which separates rhetoric from knowledge in a bad way, eg. the rhetoric of fear under George Bush, or that of change and hope under Obama.

Sarcasm: A form of sneering criticism in which disapproval is often expressed as ironic praise, eg. If you drop your lunch tray and someone says, "Well, that was really intelligent."

Satire: holds up serious social events or issues to ridicule in order to make society ‘see the light.’ It does not simply "make fun" of a subject but seeks to inspire change by using humour to make a specific point. Satire often criticizes vice, folly and abuse, especially of those in power, and is often marked by anger or frustration and a desire to change or destroy what it attacks. As such, satire is always inescapably moral as it relies on an implicit moral code, understood by his audience but paid lip service to by them. By using techniques such as ridicule, irony, exaggeration, oxymoron, juxtaposition, and metaphor to compare and contrast the real with the ideal, the satirist is able to laugh scornfully at today’s society while being witty enough to allow the reader to laugh too, often revealing our own hypocrisy and inspiring change in a more relatable and less preachy manner. For example, the *Futurama* episode "A Big Piece of Garbage" is a *satire* of garbage disposal. Repeatedly, the characters voice their disdain for the short-sightedness of 20th-century people for letting their garbage get so out of control.

Simile: is a comparison between two otherwise un-alike objects or ideas by connecting them with the words "like" or "as". Eg. "And after him a finikin lass, Did shine like glistening gold". In this poem, the lass did not literally glisten like gold, but by comparing the lass to the gold the author emphasizes her beauty, radiance, and purity, all things associated with gold.

Suspense: When an author creates a sense of mystery and urgency in the story to keep the reader guessing and on their toes. It is especially effective in mystery and action stories, but can be used in any kind of narrative to create a mood, sense of ambiguity, or a feeling of unease in the reader.

Symbolism: The use of a word or object to stand for another word or object. There are two general types of symbols: *universal symbols* that embody universally recognizable meanings wherever used, such as light to symbolize knowledge, a skull to symbolize death, a dove to symbolize peace etc., and *constructed symbols* that are given symbolic meaning by the way an author uses them in a literary work, as the white whale becomes a symbol of evil in Moby Dick, or "The Blue Jar" of obsession in I. Dinesen's story.

Tragic flaw: is a flaw in the protagonist of a tragedy that brings the protagonist to ruin or sorrow.

Understatement: is when a lesser expression is used than what would be expected. This is not to be confused with euphemism, where a polite phrase is used in place of a harsher or more offensive one. For example, in *Monty Python's The Meaning of Life*, a suburban dinner party is invaded by Death, who wears a long black cloak and carries a scythe. He is the Grim Reaper; the party is over; the guests must all go with him. "Well," says one party guest, "that's cast rather a gloom over the evening, hasn't it?"

Verisimilitude: How fully the characters and actions in a work of fiction conform to our sense of reality. To say that a work has a high degree of verisimilitude means that the work is very realistic and believable--it is "true to life."

Media Codes and Conventions

Camera Language (the combination of technical codes to create still or moving images):

Composition: the arrangement of elements in a visual text so as to achieve a unified whole, eg. a photograph, painting, film scene etc. **Framing:** the edge of the viewable area or the amount of space between the image's edge and the subject. The framing is **tight** (tightly framed) when there is little space around the subject; it is **loose** (loosely framed) when there is a generous amount of space around the subject. When static shots are described, the framing height and width are somewhat determined by the type of shot chosen.

Shot Types (the distance between the camera and subject, either still or in a series):

1. *long shot* (LS) is a shot from some distance. The full body or the scene around an object is shown.
 2. *establishing shot* (ES) is often an extreme long shot or series of shots used to set the scene.
 3. *aerial shot* (AS) is an extremely high angle or 'bird's-eye' view shot from the air.
 4. *wide shot* (WS) is an extreme long shot, often panoramic and without people.
 5. *close-up* (CU) is a shot in which the image takes up 80% of the frame.
 6. *extreme close-up* (ECU) is a shot that focuses on one part of the body or a portion of an object.
 7. *medium shot* (MS) is a shot in between LS and CU; people are seen from the waist up.
 8. *over the shoulder* (OTS) is a shot in which the main subject is framed by the back of the head and shoulder of a foreground subject. This is common in filming conversation.
 9. *reaction shot* (RS) is a shot of a character's reaction, typically in dialogue and typically as an OTS in close up, while the foreground character is speaking.
 10. *two-shot* – a shot featuring two people, usually facing each other in dialogue.
- * *cutting height* – is the imaginary line either just below/above the armpits, the waist, the crotch or the knees, which, when framing a shot, creates a more natural view of the subject.

Camera Angles (the angle the camera is held in relation to the subject):

1. *low angle* (LA) – camera shoots subject from below, making subject look larger than normal either strong, powerful, or threatening.
2. *high angle* (HA) – camera shoots subject from above, making subject look smaller than normal either weak, powerless, or trapped.
3. *eye-level* (EL) – camera shoots even with the subject's eyes; 90-95% of shots seen because it is the most natural / realistic.
4. *dutch angle* - camera shoots subject tilted sideways on the horizontal line; used to add tension to a static frame or create a sinister or distorted view of a character.

Camera Movement:

1. *still* – stationary camera does not move; captures natural subject movement.
2. *pan* – stationary camera moves left or right following the subject's movement, can adjust pan speed to create mood.
3. *tilt* – stationary camera moves up or down, same effect as pan but vertical.
4. *zoom in/out* – stationary camera's lens moves out or in making subject look larger or smaller.
5. *dolly in/out* – refers to the movement of a camera mounted on a wheeled tripod, towards or away from the person or object being filmed.
6. *tracking* (or *trucking*) – accompanies the movements of the persons or objects in the shot. It sometimes involves a camera on a wheeled platform running along tracks. The camera may accompany the action from in front, beside, behind, above or below and may be mounted on cars, helicopters, cranes or hand carried or using a body harness with Steadicam or Panaglide to eliminate vibration and give a fluid movement.
7. *pedestal up/down* - is the raising or lowering of the camera mount often to accommodate the height of the operators or to give a higher or lower viewpoint.

Blocking: in traditional theatre is the arrangement of actors and major props with respect to the audience's location. In film, it is in respect to camera position.

Caption: a phrase, sentence, or short paragraph describing the contents of an illustration such as photos or charts. Photo captions are usually placed directly above, below, or to the side of the pictures they describe.

Colour (the use of colour in parts and or the whole of the text):

1. black and white – often connotes realism, truth, history.
2. sepia / aged - often connotes nostalgia.
3. colour (primary, bright, pastel etc) – depends on associations with colour, eg red = passion or anger.

Continuity: is the impression that events were filmed as they happened. For example, if the hero just dove into the water to rescue a little girl and was not wearing his watch, and then as soon as he gets out of the water we notice his watch and that maybe his hair / clothes are dry, continuity has been breached.

Editing (the process of selecting, arranging and modifying images and sound in sequence):

1. *cross-cut* – cuts back and forth between action happening simultaneously aka parallel editing
 2. *jump cut* - a set of shots to produce a general sense of choppiness, often used to portray events in a short amount of time.
 3. *cut-in* – shot inserted to highlight a specific part of the primary footage, eg. a close-up of a hand tapping nervously during an interview.
 4. *cut-away* – shot inserted to momentarily interrupt the general flow of action or primary footage, often used to explain something on the A roll or transition to the next scene or explain more about a character or the setting.
 5. *flashback* – moves to previous action, often by a change in music, voiceover narration or dissolve.
 6. *eye-line match* – shot series: person looking at something, cut to what is seen, cut back for reaction.
 7. *montage* – a collage of related shots of short duration
 8. *split screen* - two or more images displayed simultaneously in one frame.
 9. *crop* - to cut off or mask the unwanted parts of a print or negative.
 10. *jolt* - moments calculated to engage an audience's excitement; they can be generated by a broad comedy, a violent act, movement within a frame, a loud noise, rapid editing, a profanity or a sexually explicit representation.
- **Transitions** (how one shot /clip moves into / between another):
 1. *fade* – scene fades in or out to black or white, usually implies time has passed.
 2. *dissolve* – one image fades (dissolves) into another, creates a connection between the images.
 3. *segue*: a gradual transition between two audio/spoken sources, which may or may not overlap each other.
 4. *cut* – one shot ends and another begins immediately.
 5. *wipe* – a slow dissolve.

Emotional appeals: an advertising technique when advertisers appeal to those emotional needs experienced by all humans

Focal point: the central or principal point of focus, eg the center of attention in a photograph.

Graphics: visuals elements used to point readers to particular information, illustrate key points / concepts, eg. pictographs, icons, photographs, geometric designs.

Jingle: music and lyrics written essentially to sell products.

Layout: the visual arrangement of all elements on a page to make them eye-catching and effective in conveying their message. For example, titles, text, image, graphics, captions on a pamphlet or a news article. Composition of image, tagline, and other print text in an ad.

Lighting:

1. *low key* – scene is flooded with shadows and darkness; creates suspense / suspicion.
2. *high key* – scene is flooded with light; bright open looking scene.
3. *neutral* – neither bright nor dark, even lighting throughout the shot.
4. *bottom / side lighting* – subject is lit directly from below or one side; can show danger / evil.
5. *front / rear lighting* – soft, direct lighting on the face or behind the subject, often denotes innocence.

Masthead: the identification of the location, ownership, and management of newspapers and magazines. Same as station ID and call letters in electronic media.

Negative space: is the space around and between the subject(s) of an image and is a key element of composition. Usage of negative space can produce a silhouette of the subject. The balance between negative space (the absence of something) and positive space (the something) is considered good design offering the eye a place to rest. Negative space in music indicates silence within a piece.

Perspective: the illusion of depth on a two dimensional surface.

Sign: the use of signs and symbols for recognition factor (logo, rules) and/or to capitalize on the larger significance of an idea, eg. large diamond ring for wealth, Nike swoosh, stop sign or red octagon.

Sound:

1. diegetic or direct: any sound that can be heard logically by the participants while filming, can include natural sound effects, music as well as dialogue or on-the-spot narration.
2. non-diegetic or dubbed: any sound that cannot be heard by the participants often added to the production during editing.
 - voiceover / narration – either 3rd person ‘voice of God delivered by someone who does not reveal themselves by name or appearance (but whose voice may be recognizable, eg a famous person), or 1st person, usually the filmmaker
 - soundtrack / music – helps set the mood and establish pacing.
 - sound effects – to show action or situate the reader, glass breaking or a shot fired.

Subheadings: mini-headlines that appear in the text, breaking up the text, making it easier to read and helping direct the reader's attention.

Tagline: is a short phrase that follows the brand name in advertising; it is often at the end of a commercial or at the bottom of an ad and is intimately associated with the brand name / brand identity as it is used in everything the brand is associated with and lasts for a long time. Good taglines are famous, eg Ford: Quality is Job 1, Chevy: Like a Rock, Nike: Just Do It. A *slogan* is similar to a tagline but used only once with one specific advertising campaign. It defines the campaign not the brand. A *logo* is the copyrighted symbol used to represent a corporation, company or individual.

Text track: any written information in a film that is added later by the filmmaker such as titles, subtitles, identifications, headings, labels, graphs, statistics, etc... In advertising this is called **copy** and it includes the advertiser's name, sales message, trademark or slogan.

Theatrical elements: the combination of costumes, props, sets, and acting choices in evoking moods, story, and conveying a message.

Visual Track:

1. *A roll* – the primary footage captured by the filmmaker.
2. *B roll* – the secondary footage used as cutaway or cover from the A roll.
3. *archival (found) footage* – any footage the filmmaker did not create, eg. news broadcasts, home movies, news headlines.

Glossary of Media Terms

Background (programming): Radio or television content not directly encouraging viewer/listener involvement. Opposite of foreground programming.

Bias: the *obvious* slant / point of view presented either overtly or tacitly by a producer in a text.

Branding: The process by which a commodity in the marketplace is known primarily for the image it projects rather than any actual quality.

Censorship: The practice of suppressing a text or part of a text that is considered objectionable according to certain standards.

Cinema Verite: literally means 'film truth' and refers to the type of interactive film that tries to present a version of reality by documenting the encounters between the filmmaker and subject. **Direct cinema** is the opposite, describing films that present little interaction between filmmaker and subject.

Convergence: The merging of previously separate communication industries such as publishing, computers, film, music and broadcasting, made possible by advances in technology.

Cross-ownership: is ownership by one person or corporation of various forms of media.

Deconstruction: The process by which the audience identifies the elements that make up the construction of meaning within a text.

Demographics: the common characteristics used for population segmentation including age, gender, post code, and income. **Psychographics** are an analysis of people's attitudes, beliefs, desires, and needs.

Docudrama: a fiction film that is based on real-life events. A filmed dramatization based on fact that combines documentary and fictional elements. In the production process, "based on" allows the creators of the text wide creative latitude. At its best, a docudrama can be a skillful representation of a real person or event.

Documentary: a non-fiction film intended to inform and/or persuade the audience about an issue. **Observational documentaries** present a 'fly-on-the-wall' perspective minimizing the filmmaker's presence as much as possible. **Interactive documentaries** involve the filmmaker onscreen, often through interviews and narration. **Reflexive documentaries** are self-aware and as such often present the problems inherent in documentary filmmaking. **Direct address** uses narration and/or text track to clearly state the filmmaker's intent. **Poetic address** uses visuals, sound, and sometimes text to infer the film's intent.

Dominant reading: is when a text is read by the audience in a way that is intended by the creators of the text. **Oppositional reading** is a critical position that is in opposition to the values and ideology intended by the creators of a media text. **Negotiated reading** is the process by which members of the audience individually or collectively interpret, deconstruct and find meaning within a media text.

Ethnographic film: the filmmaker observes a culture, like an anthropologist, and presents findings to an audience unfamiliar with the culture.

Gatekeepers: are those in control of the flow of information. The gatekeeper can choose to accept or reject a piece of information for public consumption. Newspaper publishers, editors and reporters, television producers, press secretaries, government spokespersons, radio station owners and broadcasting executives have all been cited as examples of media gatekeepers.

Hegemony/hegemonic: When dominant groups persuade subordinate groups that the dominant ideology is in their own best interests. The media's function in this process is to encourage maintenance of the status quo.

Intertextuality: When a media text makes reference to another text that, on the surface, appears to be unique and distinct.

Mockumentary: a fiction film that intentionally takes on the style of a documentary, often for humour's sake.

Product Placement: The process by which manufacturers or advertisers pay a fee in order for branded products to be prominently displayed in a movie, TV show or other media production.

Production Values: Describes the quality of a media production—which is generally proportional to the money and technology expended on it.

Propaganda: Any media text whose primary purpose is to openly persuade an audience of the validity of a particular point of view; a no-holds-barred use of communication technology to propagate specific beliefs and expectations. *Black propaganda* is the deliberate and strategic transmission of lies. *Gray propaganda* is the transmission of information or ideas that might or might not be false. No effort is made to determine their validity. *White propaganda* is the intentional suppression of potentially harmful information and ideas, combined with deliberate promotion of positive information or ideas to distract attention from problematic events.

Realism: the degree of reality the filmmaker chooses to include. For example, obvious re-enactments do not have a high realism quotient, while raw, unedited footage feels more real to the audience.

Regulation: Agencies regulate media through laws and guidelines. Advertising is regulated through the Canadian Registered Trade Commission (CRTC). Media messages are also regulated through laws governing libel and self-regulated by business and professional organizations such as the Canadian Broadcast Standards Council (CBSC).

Representation: the way people / groups are presented in the media and popular culture, often through stereotypical images that affect our views of gender, race, class, age, and ability.

Sensationalism: Highly subjective, journalistic style is characterized by an emphasis on form (style) over content (substance), stories lean heavily towards sex, violence, gore and gossip.

Stereotype: is a form of social consensus rather than individual judgment based on characteristics, attitudes, behaviours, appearances related to members of class or set based on race, gender, religion, ethnicity, socio-economic class, disability, occupation, etc. While stereotypes may sometimes be positive, the term often carries a negative connotation as it often refers to an oversimplified, exaggerated, or demeaning assumption, and can often form the basis of prejudice.

Storyboard: a series of sketches of the frames of an event, with the corresponding audio information, and shot list.

Synergy: The combination of two separate media texts or products that share similar characteristics so that one helps market the other.

Transparency: The quality of a media text by which it appears to be natural rather than constructed.