

A CREATIVE WRITER'S LANGUAGE TOOLBOX

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The ability to manipulate language can be a great asset. It can enable one to achieve tremendous results in activities such as creative writing, public speaking, journalism and scripting music lyrics. Good poets, for instance, manipulate language such that they achieve a refined and elevated expression characterised by language freshness, intensity, economy, elegance and decency. Through language manipulation, literary works are made to appeal to readers. Language manipulation also contributes to our ability to remember lines or whole stanzas in a book of poetry or sentences in a play, a novel or a short story.

Language manipulation in the sense here used is not arbitrary. There is a method to it. It is guided by discernable and describable conventions which can be learned, mastered and used to achieve exciting results in communication. In this document, I list and describe thirty-eight very useful language manipulation conventions.

I see each convention as tool; so, I have titled this document: "Creative Writers' Language Toolbox". I hope that the "box" contains a comprehensive collection of tools to give the aspiring writer the ability and confidence to make working with language an enjoyable and rewarding activity.

1. Metaphor

An implicit comparison between two things that have one or more attributes in common. The metaphor draws our attention to the fact that what the writer is talking about has a similarity to something else:

- i) Halima has been the centre-pole of this company since its inception
- ii) The springs of our mother's wisdom -----

An extended metaphor is an implicit comparison that stretches, develops or extends the idea of similarity between the two things being compared:

- i) Halima has been the centre-pole of this company since its inception. For a decade, she has enabled it withstand the whirlwinds of labour unrest and political upheavals.
- ii) From the springs of our mother's wisdom
We have drunk the respect for other cultures-----

2. Simile

Like a metaphor, a simile is a comparison of two things that have at least one attribute in common. But, unlike a metaphor, a simile uses words such as "like" and "as". In other

words, it is an explicit comparison.

- i) Her determination to soar into the sky of success
Was as solid as steel-----
- ii) Like the prodigal son, he begged for a parental pardon
Whereupon his father embraced him in the warmth of forgiveness
And blessed him with words as tender as the morning breeze-----

3. Personification

Giving human attributes to non-human living things and, sometimes, to non-living things as well:

- i) The infuriated waves violently rocked the boat
Whilst the sailors pleaded with the monsoon winds
To declare a truce on their all-out war against the sea
- (ii) Elated, we walked along golden beach
Hand in hand, our dreams interlocked
As the kind-hearted evening breeze
Tenderly kissed our happy limbs-----

4. Hyperbole

An exaggerated statement intended to intensify meaning:

- i) When she learnt that her son was no more
She cried rivers of tears
For he was her spring of happiness-----
- ii) The car, moving at an arrow's speed
Crashed into a heap of scrap metal-----

5. Paradox

A seemingly self-contradictory statement that nevertheless makes sense at a deeper level of interpretation and, in so doing, reveals the complexity of reality.

- i) My lie is the truth
- ii) His mother is his father

6. Synecdoche

When a part to represents the whole. The part may be a capital city of a country, a part of the body, a tool used in an occupation or trade or a myth or legend within a culture:

- i) Washington is at loggerheads with Beijing
- ii) Many hands are a must if this work is to be completed today.

7. Symbol

The use in a statement of something that stands for something else at a deeper level of interpretation:

- i) With iron determination, the citizens
Drove away the crocodile from the state mansions-----
- ii) Their undiluted greed for power
Brought darkness onto the land---

8. Oxymoron

Bringing together two expressions that are ordinarily incompatible to depict a situation:

- i) The living dead
- ii) Bitter honey
- iii) Dead life

9. Rhetorical Question

A question that does not require an answer but it's used to put emphasis on an issue:

- i) If people are not safe in their homes, where will they be?
- ii) Are human beings turning into beasts?

10. Irony

a) Verbal Irony

Saying the opposite of what is intended:

- i) My millionaire brother is so generous that he couldn't loan me ten dollars.
- ii) He is so time-conscious; he usually comes to class thirty minutes late.

b) Dramatic Irony

A situation whereby the audience has information that a character does not have:

- i) A police officer, while talking to his brother, is telling him how he determined to apprehend a criminal who committed an offence whereas, as a matter of fact, the brother is the criminal and the audience knows it

- ii) Someone whose pocket has been picked and the wallet stolen in full view of the audience want to buy a friend a meal telling him that he has money the money to do so because he has just been to the bank.

Dramatic irony has three stages, namely, installation, exploitation and resolution. Installation is the stage at which the audience gets the information that a character doesn't have; exploitation is the use of the information to create curiosity on the part of the audience (or the reader of a play; and resolution what happens when the character who was in the dark finally gets the information.

Tragic irony is a sub-type of dramatic irony. It occurs when a character says or does something that communicates to the audience something of which the character is unaware. An example of this would be removes his pistol from the holster and places careless in a house someone is frantically looking for the same gun so has to use it to kill the character.

c) Situational Irony

Situation occurs when there is a discrepancy between a happening and what is expected to happen. Examples include when a traffic police officer blatantly violates an obvious traffic rule or when a bishop knowingly engages in the most immoral of acts.

11. Metonymy

Expressing something by replacing it with something else with which it is associated:

- i) Poor, lonely Ben; he dates every skirt that crosses his path!
- ii) The blue jerseys are not playing rugby today

12. Allusion

Making indirect reference to something with which the reader or the listener is familiar:

- 1) With this brand of politics, we will never make it to Canaan.
(Alluding to the "promised land" in the Bible)
- ii) Although we are all equal, some eat eggs and drink milk while others don't.
(Alluding to the selfish behavior of the pigs in George Orwell's *Animal Farm*)

13. Alliteration

Using words with identical or similar sounds such that the recurrence of the sounds creates a rhythm:

- i) Bending over the bed behind the curtain
The new dubious doctor's deputy
Unleashed on the patient a short, sharp shock

- ii) Strolling on the streets of a strange town
The yesteryears strongman strayed into trouble

14. Parallelism

Repeating a linguistic pattern such that the repetition creates rhythm:

- i) I won't eat chips and sausages; I will wait for chicken and *chapati*
- ii) We swam in the sea, jogged on the beach, and played on the lawn.

15. Imagery

A picture created using words. It may depict, among others, human beings, artificial and/or natural objects, elements of nature or a situation or occasion. In so doing, the creative writer may succeed in creating a specific mental state and mental response in the reader. Other stylistic devices such as metaphors, personification and similes are sometimes employed in the construction of imagery:

- ii) He is the lion of his country's political jungle
When, agitated, he roars in the woods
Terror sends lesser animals scampering for safety

17. Antithesis

A juxtaposition of contrasting ideas especially arranged in parallel patterns

- i) They promised great peace but brought protracted war
- ii) She arrived a rich woman and left a dejected pauper
- ii) She did not marry the man willingly, she was married off forcefully.

18. Antimetabole

Inversion of ideas or words in repeated linguistic pattern so as to create opposites in meanings in the two parts of the expression:

- i) Ask not what your club is doing for you, but what you are doing for your club.
- ii) People do not live to eat, they eat to live.
- iii) Mary did not attack the man, the man attacked her

19. Apostrophe

Speaking to someone who is not physically present:

- i) Oh, my dear departed father, see how your actions have turned the family upside down.
- ii) My daughter, wherever you are, remember Mum and Dad love you most dearly

20. Periphrasis

Replacing a word with several words to make the expression less harsh or more dignified:

- ii) “Mental disturbance” instead of “insanity”
- iii) “Woman of loose morals” instead of “prostitute”

21. Litote

Making an understatement or expressing something by negative phrasing:

- i) “I wouldn’t mind some little food” instead of “I am very hungry”
- ii) “It’s not very warm in here” instead of “it’s chilly in here”

22. Anacoluthon

Breaking a sentence by the use of an insertion to create more impact

- i) This route, take it from me, will never get us to Mt. Kenya.
- ii) Young man, I assure you, they will catch up with you.

23. Aposiopesis

Stopping midstream in an utterance so that the expression is incomplete:

- i) MUGAMBI: You are the most incorrigible...[*Silence*].
KILONZO: What did say?
MUGAMBI: I didn’t say anything.
KILONZO: [*pointing a finger at him*] Guard your tongue lest it lands into big trouble!
- ii) BEN: I wish I had a --[*Silence*]. Never mind!

24. Apophasis

Expressing oneself while purporting not to do so:

- i) You are my first cousin, therefore, I dare not expose your negative character to the public. I am obliged not to announce to those present that you squander your money on alcohol and cheap leisure. Oh, yes, I dare not open my mouth and tell those listening to me that you’re forever broke, forever borrowing money that you’ll never pay. There’s no reason whatsoever why I should reveal that on two or three occasions, you have been roughened up for picking people’s pockets
- ii)As your best friend, I dare not tell those present here that you’re a quack; masquerading as a medical doctor whereas the truth is that your medical studies abruptly ended in the

second year of your training at the medical school.

25. Polyptoton

Creating emphasis by repeating a word or a phrase several times without any other intervening words or phrases:

- i) Damnation! Damnation! Damnation!
- ii) Victorious at last! Victorious at last!

26. Anadiplosis

Repeating the end of a line at the beginning of the next line:

- i) For ten years we have wallowed in agony
Agony that has left individuals and families
Clinging to a faint faith of better days ahead
- ii) He created fire with his own actions
Actions of prejudice and burning hatred

27. Isocolon

A form of parallelism whereby phrases or clauses of equal length and corresponding grammatical structure are repeated:

- i) The three brilliant girls sang the chorus while the five gifted boys recited the poem
- ii) I swam in the sea, jogged along the beach and danced on the lawn

28. Adynaton

Purporting words to be inadequate to express the feelings of the speaker:

- i) I won't express my appreciation for you; words won't be adequate for the job.
- ii) Let me say nothing about it for language is incapable of conveying what I feel.

29. Hysteron proteron

A reordering of the temporal sequence so that later occurrences precede earlier happenings:

- i) I was raised up and born in a small village by the great river
- ii) Our departure and the check-in were delayed for one hour

30. Epanalepsis

Ending a line with the word or words with which it began:

- i) Janet knows pretty well that I wouldn't disrespect Janet
- ii) Happiness for my children is my happiness

31. Auxesis

Arrangement of words, clauses or sentences in such a way that there is an ascending order of importance:

- i) He likes her; oh yes, he loves her.
- ii) I am hungry, famished, starving.

32. Chiasmus

Reversal of the order of grammatical units in parallel successive phrases or clauses:

- i) He arrived a happy man and a sad man he left
- ii) I swam in the sea and on the beach I jogged

33. Anaphora

Repetition of a word at the beginning of successive clauses or sentences:

- i) Laxity in implementing policies, laxity in fighting corruption, laxity in pushing forward reforms – laxity is our undoing as a country.
- ii) Green cities, green villages, green schools and hospitals – green is our biggest dream as an organisation

34. Euphemism

A socially acceptable or inoffensive word or phrase used in the place of one that is considered a taboo, offensive or hurtful:

- i) He got so frightened that he soiled his clothes
- ii) He went berserk when his wife denied him intimacy.

35. Sarcasm

A word, phrase or sentence that is demeaning or insulting or conveys scorn:

- i) I admire your discipline as a lady; I have never seen anyone eat so fast!
- ii) I like your punctuality; you are always the last student to come to class.

36. Anthimeria

Substituting one part of speech for another; for example, a noun for a verb or an adjective for a noun:

- i) He has fathered six children with her
- ii) She has been the main force behind greening the city

37. Antanaclasis

Repetition of a word, each time using it with a different meaning

- i) We should not bank on his words; this is the time to choose another bank.
- ii) Please note that I'm not joking; I will send you a note tomorrow.

38. Hypallage

Reversal of words which results in the change of meaning:

- i) Is the car still working on the mechanic?
- ii) Alcohol has been consuming him for the last two decades.

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