

Introduction to Poetic Devices

Tell your tutee that today you'll be learning about different ways that poets use words in their poems. Has your tutee read poetry before? What makes it different from other kinds of writing? Work with your tutee to generate a list. Perhaps you can talk about how poetry is often shorter than other kinds of writing, it may rhyme, it may have a particular rhythm, etc.

Introduce the term "poetic devices". Talk about how these are ways that poets use words to get across their idea, their experience- how they take what's inside their head and help you put it in your head, too. These are the poet's tools- an EMT has medical supplies, a carpenter has a power drill, and poets have these. You might recognize some right away, and some might be new.

Read the list of poetic devices on the "Some Common Poetic Devices" sheet with your tutee. Together, take a pen (or highlighter) and underline the poetic device as it's used in each example (eg, in the first example, you'll want to underline each "s") Encourage the tutee to explain each term back to you in his/her own words to check for understanding.

Pick a poem or two from the readings files, from a favorite poet of yours, from an interesting book you found in the library, wherever a poem grabs you (or better yet, pick several poems and give your tutee a choice of which to read). You'll want to look them over beforehand, to make sure that at least a couple poetic devices are used. Read them together, out loud. You can read in unison, take turns reading stanzas out loud, whatever, but please don't read silently, nothing kills a poem faster. Read the poem(s) all the way through first, to enjoy them, before you start analyzing it. Then go back, and hunt, line by line, for the poetic devices. When you find one, copy it onto the "Poetic Devices- Find Them!" sheet.

****Creative Extension****

Now, it's your tutee's turn to be the poet. Together, brainstorm a topic that your tutee feels strongly about- it can be a very clear memory of an important event, it can be a feeling he/she wants to express, whatever. Write the topic at the top of the "Poetic Devices- Do it yourself!" worksheet. (Better yet, make two copies of this, and do this activity alongside your tutee- very motivational). Referring back to the original definition sheet if necessary, try to come up with a line or two using each poetic device. String them together and you've got a poem (for dramatic emphasis, cut the paper up so each poetic device is on its own strip of paper. Drop them into a hat, or shuffle them around on the table, and pick up one at a time. Rewrite them in this order on a sheet of paper. Instant poetry!) If you have time (or next time) you can polish it up, proofread, make a final draft, distribute to family and friends.

Some Common Poetic Devices

ALITERATION - the repeating of consonants at the beginning of words.

*I am Super Samson Simpson,
I'm superlatively strong*

ASSONANCE - the repeating of a specific vowel sound or group of vowel sounds throughout a poem.

Cocoa Mocha Macaroni

HYBERBOLE - an exaggeration of the truth.

*Chocolate ice cream tastes like prunes
December's come to stay.
They've taken back the Mays and Junes
Since Hanna moved away.*

INTERNAL RHYME- A rhyme contained within a line, rather than at the more traditional ends of lines. (Very popular in song lyrics- think Eminem)

Butter brickle Pepper pickle

METAPHOR - an association of two completely different objects as being the same thing. Does not use "like" or "as".

*Hold fast to dreams
For if dreams die
Life is a broken-winged bird
That cannot fly*

NEOLOGISM - to make up a word or give new meaning to an old word.

*who used to
ride a watersmooth-silver
stallion*

ONOMATOPEIA - the use of a word to indicate a sound.

*Thump, thump, thump, went his foot on the floor
He played a few chords then he sang some more--*

PERSONIFICATION - A description of a non-human (object, animal) or its actions that seem to give it human characteristics.

When the stars threw down their spears

SIMILE - a comparison of two completely different objects using "like" or "as".

*You may kill me with your hatefulness,
But still, like air, I'll rise.*

Poetic Devices- Find them!

ALITERATION

ASSONANCE

HYBERBOLE

INTERNAL RHYME

METAPHOR

NEOLOGISM

ONOMATOPEIA

PERSONIFICATION

SIMILE

Poetic Devices- Make up your own! Topic: _____

ALITERATION

ASSONANCE

HYBERBOLE

INTERNAL RHYME

METAPHOR

NEOLOGISM

ONOMATOPEIA

PERSONIFICATION

SIMILE