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16 Fancy Literary Techniques Explained By Disney

Because why waste money on an English degree when you can just watch Disney movies?posted on July 7, 2013 at 8:50am EDT

[](http://www.buzzfeed.com/moerder)

[**Adam Moerder**](http://www.buzzfeed.com/moerder)BuzzFeed Partner Network Associate

1. Theme



*Disney / Via*[*lauraestaceysofficialblog.wordpress.com*](http://lauraestaceysofficialblog.wordpress.com/2012/06/30/disney-gals-spineless-damsels-in-distress-or-admirable-heroines-with-a-message/)

Definition: A common thread or repeated idea that is incorporated throughout a literary work.  
Example: “True love conquers all” is the main theme of *Sleeping Beauty*.

2. Symbolism



*Disney / Via*[*scienceblogs.com*](http://scienceblogs.com/startswithabang/2010/11/07/weekend-diversion-celebrating/)

Definition: An object, character, figure, or color that is used to represent an abstract idea or concept.  
Example: Dumbo’s “magic” feather represents courage and self-confidence. Once he truly believes in himself, he no longer needs it as a psychological crutch.

3. Dramatic Irony



*Disney / Via*[*fanpop.com*](http://www.fanpop.com/clubs/the-lion-king/images/31003421/title/scar-simba-photo)

Definition: Irony that occurs when the meaning of the situation is understood by the audience but not by the characters in the literary work.  
Example: Throughout most of *The Lion King*, Simba mopes around feeling guilty for his father’s death, unaware (as the audience is) that Scar actually killed Mufasa.

4. Archetype



*Disney / Via*[*thehollywoodnews.com*](http://www.thehollywoodnews.com/2013/03/29/disney-53-week-13-alice-in-wonderland/)

Definition: A constantly recurring symbol or motif in literature, painting, or mythology.  
Example: Alice must pass a series of tests as she makes her way through Wonderland. This kind of journey is a common archetype in Western literature and is best epitomized by Homer’s *The Odyssey*.

5. Foil



*Disney / Via*[*wakingsnowwhite.blogspot.com*](http://wakingsnowwhite.blogspot.com/2011/02/for-who-could-ever-learn-to-love-beast.html)

Definition: A character who illuminates the qualities of another character by means of contrast.  
Example: Gaston’s combination of good looks and terrible personality emphasizes Beast’s tragic situation. The former is a monster trapped inside a man; the latter a man trapped inside a monster.

6. Allusion



*Disney / Via*[*bslcrane.blogspot.com*](http://bslcrane.blogspot.com/2012/09/movie-review-of-disneys-hunchback-of.html)

Definition: A brief reference in a literary work to a person, place, thing, or passage in another literary work, usually for the purpose of associating the tone or theme of the one work with the other.  
Example: In *The Hunchback of Notre Dame*, the gargoyle Laverne tells a flock of pigeons to “Fly my pretties! Fly, Fly!” à la the Wicked Witch of the West in *The Wizard of Oz*.

7. Foreshadowing



*Disney / Via*[*themanwhonevermissed.blogspot.com*](http://themanwhonevermissed.blogspot.com/2009/08/trash-talkin.html)

Definition: A warning or indication of a future event.  
Example: Before she’s fatally shot by a hunter (and millions of childhoods are scarred), Bambi’s mother gives Bambi a stern lecture on the dangers of man.

8. Mood



*Disney / Via*[*filmfanatic.org*](http://filmfanatic.org/reviews/wp-content/uploads/2011/08/Fantasia-Night-on-Bald-Mountain.png)

Definition: The atmosphere that pervades a literary work with the intention of evoking a certain emotion or feeling from the audience.  
Example: Fantasia frequently uses music and setting to drastically shift the mood from light and playful to dark and foreboding.

9. Breaking the Fourth Wall



[*fuckyeahdisneymoments.tumblr.com*](http://fuckyeahdisneymoments.tumblr.com/post/555238873)

Definition: Speaking directly to or acknowledging the audience. The “fourth wall” refers to the imaginary “wall” at the front of the stage in a traditional three-walled box set in a proscenium theater.  
Example: Timon acknowledges the audience when he cuts off Pumbaa midsong: “Pumbaa, not in front of the kids!”

10. Exposition



*Disney / Via*[*thecomixverse.com*](http://thecomixverse.com/?p=41715)

Definition: The portion of a story that introduces important background information to the audience — for example, information about the setting, events occurring before the main plot, characters’ backstories, etc.  
Example: At the beginning of *Robin Hood*, the rooster Alan-a-Dale describes how Robin Hood has been robbing from the rich to give to Nottingham’s poor.

11. Conflict



*Disney / Via*[*dettoldisney.wordpress.com*](http://dettoldisney.wordpress.com/2011/12/08/the-jungle-book-vs-the-jungle-books/)

Definition: An inherent incompatibility between the objectives of two or more characters or forces.  
Example: When Shere Khan the man-eating tiger returns to the jungle, Mowgli must flee to the safety of human civilization.

12. Climax



*Disney / Via*[*ljrpaideia.blogspot.com*](http://ljrpaideia.blogspot.com/2012/02/ive-got-no-strings.html)

Definition: The turning point in the action (also known as the “crisis”) and/or the highest point of interest or excitement.  
Example: Pinocchio is transformed into a donkey and sold into labor before he saves Geppetto and proves himself worthy of being a real boy.

13. Anagnorisis



*Disney / Via*[*gengame.net*](http://gengame.net/2013/06/10-disney-worlds-that-would-be-great-to-see-in-kingdom-hearts-iii/)

Definition: The recognition or discovery by the protagonist of the identity of some character or the nature of his own predicament, which leads to the resolution of the plot.  
Example: Arthur, thinking he’s just a lowly squire, has no idea he’s the rightful heir to the throne until he pulls the sword from the stone.

14. Poetic Justice



*Disney / Via*[*disneyvillains.wikia.com*](http://disneyvillains.wikia.com/wiki/File:Genie_Jafar_-_Part_5.png)

Definition: A device in which virtue is ultimately rewarded or vice punished, often by an ironic twist of fate intimately related to the character’s own conduct.  
Example: Jafar is so power hungry he fails to realize that becoming a genie will cost him his freedom.

15. Deus Ex Machina



*Disney / Via*[*disney.wikia.com*](http://disney.wikia.com/wiki/The_Evil_Queen)

Definition: An unexpected power or event saving a hopeless situation, especially as a plot device in a play or novel, from the Latin “a god from a machine.”  
Example: In *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*, the Evil Queen is about to kill the dwarfs when a bolt of lightning comes out of nowhere, knocking her off the mountain to her death.

16. Denouement



*Disney / Via*[*leprojectfrancais.blogspot.com*](http://leprojectfrancais.blogspot.com/)

Definition: The final part of a play, movie, or narrative in which the strands of the plot are drawn together and matters are resolved.  
Example: At the end of *The Little Mermaid*, Ursula is killed, King Triton turns Ariel into a human, and Ariel marries Prince Eric. Then Sebastian sings over the closing credits. WIN.