Literary Focus

Objectives

Students will learn how literary devices, irony, and figurative language affect a writer's style.

Preteach

Build Background Point out that students most likely already have the tools to assess style—their own, or that of friends, celebrities, visual artists, musicians, or athletes—in other contexts. Discuss the elements that affect style in these contexts. Then, explain that authors use literary devices to express their unique personalities through their writing.

Direct Teach

Guided Practice

Style

- Have students read the "Style" section.
- Model for students how to identify tone and mood in the opening of "The Tell-Tale Heart" by reading the first sentence aloud. Tell students that Poe breaks up the text with punctuation. The tone is conversational, yet erratic. This creates a suspenseful, eerie mood.

Literary Focus

by **Sara Kajder**

How Do You Determine an Author's Style?

When you hear the word *style,* you may immediately think of the way your friends dress or the way a baseball player swings a bat. That's because a person's style is created by *how* he or she does something—such as wear clothes or play a sport. You can determine an author's style by looking at how he or she uses language.

Style

Every writer has a style, though some styles are more easily recognized than others. Dr. Seuss, for example, is known for his regular rhythm, rhyme patterns, and invented words.

Word Choice Most writers do not try to come up with a new style. Rather, their style comes from the choices they make when they put words on a page. A long word or a short one? A simple sentence or one that is long and complex? The decisions they make determine their styles.

Tone and Mood A writer's word choice sets the work's **tone** (or attitude) and **mood** (or feeling). Edgar Allan Poe, for example, chooses scary words that establish an eerie mood in "The Tell-Tale Heart."

> True!—nervous—very, very nervous I had been and am; but why *will* you say that I am mad? The disease had sharpened my senses—not destroyed—not dulled them. Above all was the sense of hearing acute.
>
> from "The Tell-Tale Heart" by Edgar Allan Poe

Literary Devices

Another way to determine an author's style is to examine his or her use of **literary devices.** These include imagery, dialect, and symbols.

Imagery Language that creates word pictures and appeals to our senses is called **imagery.** Images make us feel as if we are seeing (or hearing, touching, tasting, or smelling) what the writer is describing.

Dialect **Dialect** is a way of speaking that is characteristic of a particular place or group of people. Stories written in dialect convey an instant sense of time and place.

Symbols People, places, or events that have meaning in themselves but that also stand for something else are called **symbols.** In Francisco Jiménez's "The Circuit," cardboard boxes are used to carry the family's belongings, but they also symbolize the frequent moves the family makes to earn a living.

SKILLS FOCUS pp. 366–367

Literary Skills

- Understand style.
- Understand literary devices.
- Understand figurative language.
- Understand irony.

Resources

Collection 4 Resources, Literary Focus Skill Builder, p. 3

PowerNotes, interactive lesson presentation with activities

Teacher One Stop™, on-level lesson plans and all print resources

Differentiating Instruction

English-Language Learners/ Readers Gaining Proficiency

Help students acquire vocabulary to describe mood and tone by providing them with a word bank.

- Write the words *playful, funny, sad, hopeful, happy, scary,* and *serious* on the board. Students can use these words to describe the mood and tone of a story. Have students use a thesaurus to look up each word to increase vocabulary.
- Ask students to review stories in the textbook. List the titles of the stories on the board. Briefly review the plot of each story.

Figurative Language

An important part of many writers' style is their use of **figures of speech**—expressions that are not literally true but that suggest similarities between usually unrelated things. **Similes** compare two unlike things using a word of comparison such as *like, than, as,* or *resembles.*

> . . . I'm on my back looking at the sky, trying to pretend I'm in the country, but I can't because even grass in the city feels hard as sidewalk.
>
> from "Raymond's Run" by Toni Cade Bambara

Metaphors compare unlike things directly, without using a specific word of comparison.

> Suddenly I felt the weight of hours, days, weeks, and months of work.
>
> from "The Circuit" by Francisco Jiménez

Personification speaks of a nonhuman or inanimate thing as if it had human or lifelike qualities.

> I saw that dreaming coming into her eyes. I saw the fire that said to practice.
>
> from "Dancer" by Vickie Sears

Idioms are expressions that mean something different from the literal meanings of the words.

> "That new girl should give you a run for your money."
>
> from "Raymond's Run" by Toni Cade Bambara

Irony

Another aspect of writers' style is **irony**—what happens when reality contradicts what we expect.

Verbal irony occurs when we say one thing and mean something else. For example, a friend might say, "That's just great" in a disgusted tone.

Situational irony is a situation that turns out to be the opposite of what we'd expect; for example, a police chief is arrested for burglary.

Dramatic irony occurs when we know something that a character doesn't know; for example, we don't want the heroine to go down the dark hall because we know what she'll find there.

Your Turn

Read this passage, and identify which statement below correctly describes its style.

> But what bothered him even more was when his father's eyes went away.
>
> Usually it happened when it didn't cause any particular trouble. Sometimes during a meal his father's fork would stop halfway to his mouth, just stop, and there would be a long pause while the eyes went away, far away.
>
> from "Stop the Sun" by Gary Paulsen

Style 1	Style 2
The writer uses imagery and idioms to create a light tone about a serious subject.	Repetition and vivid imagery help show a young man's struggle to understand his father.

Learn It Online

To learn how to recognize these literary elements in longer works, visit *NovelWise* at:

go.hrw.com L8-367 Go

Guided Practice

Literary Devices

- Have students read the section on symbols.
- Model for students how to interpret the symbol of cardboard boxes in "The Circuit" by telling them that cardboard can be used to store and move objects. However, for a family forced to move many times, a cardboard box can also symbolize the process of moving and the many challenges involved.

Irony

- Have students read the section on irony. Point out that sarcasm is a form of verbal irony that students may be familiar with.
- Ask students to brainstorm examples of verbal irony. You might say: "For example: You notice that your least favorite meal is on today's lunch menu and say, 'Oh, wonderful, my favorite!'"

Assess

Independent Practice

Your Turn

Answer:

Style 2 is correct. Paulsen repeats the word "away" and uses vivid imagery to create a word picture of what happens to his father.

- For each story, ask students: "How did you feel when you read this story?" Have students use the word bank for their responses.
- Tell students to add to the word bank by brainstorming additional adjectives to describe mood and tone.

Advanced Learners

Acceleration Point out that poetry and song lyrics often contain abundant examples of simile, metaphor, and personification.

- Ask students to volunteer examples of each type of figurative language from popular music and poetry. Discuss how each example helps define the writer's style.
- Challenge students to write a poem or song that uses all three types of figurative language.
- Have students share their work, and discuss how each student's use of figurative language reveals his or her writing style.

Learn It Online

The **NovelWise** mini-site includes instruction on videos; it also contains guides and PowerPoint presentations. Preview at **go.hrw.com**.

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