

Checklist: Elements of Literary Style

- 1. Sentence Structure**
 - Are the sentences long or short? Why do they change?
 - Do they contain many subordinate clauses, or are they often fragments?
 - Are there any digressions or interruptions?
 - Is the word-order straightforward or unconventionally crafted?
- 2. Pace**
 - Is the writing heavily descriptive, with emphasis on setting and atmosphere, or does it focus on action and plot movement?
- 3. Expansive/Economical Diction**
 - Is the writing tight and efficient, or elaborate and long-winded?
 - When does the author use one or the other mode, and why?
- 4. Vocabulary**
 - Are the words simple or fancy? Are they technical, flowery, colloquial, cerebral, punning, obscure (and so on...)?
- 5. Figures of speech**
 - Are there any metaphors, similes, or symbols?
 - Are there any other uses of figurative language (personification, metonymy, and so on)?
- 6. Use of Dialogue**
 - How often does dialogue tell the story?
 - Do we see whole conversations or just fragments?
 - Does the conversation use slang or is it formal? Does it appear natural or contrived?
 - Does the dialogue give a sense of pacing, of pauses, of the unsaid?
 - How much does it substitute for narration?
- 7. Point of View**
 - Possibilities: first, second, third, omniscient, limited omniscient, multiple, inanimate, free indirect discourse.
- 8. Character development**
 - How does the author introduce characters, and how do we see their evolution in the story? What is their function and motivation?
 - What kinds of characters are they? Full/round? Stock characters? Stereotypes? Caricatures?
- 9. Tone**
 - What is the author's attitude? What is the mood of the story?
 - Does the author seem sarcastic? Aggressive? Wistful? Pessimistic? In love? Philosophically detached? Hopeful? Ironic? Bitter? (And so on...)
 - Whatever the tone, where is it visible in the narrative?
- 10. Word Color, Word Sound**
 - How much does the language call attention to or depend on the quality of its sound, e.g. through alliteration, assonance, consonance, dissonance, rhythm, unusual word choice, and so on?

**11. Paragraph /
Chapter Structure**

Are paragraphs very short, or are they enormous blocks running across many pages?

Are the chapters short or long? How many are there, how are they organized, and why is this important?

**12. Time Sequencing /
Chronology**

How has the author organized the chronology of events? To what effect? What is the work's structural "rhythm"?

13. Allusions

How and how often does the author refer to other texts, myths, symbols, famous figures, historical events, quotations, and so on?

**14. Experimentation
in Language**

Are there any unusual techniques, such as stream-of-consciousness, mixing styles and genres, unusual layout on the page, breaking rules of grammar and form, odd or unstable narrative perspectives, onomatopoeia, aporia, and so on?

**15. Metafictional
techniques**

Does the author call attention to his or her own process of narration?

Are the narrator's position, role, and thoughts as a storyteller mentioned explicitly in the text? What function does this serve?