

Style

Style is the impact of how an author uses words and literary elements, and it is important to understand the meaning and intention of a text. Every writer has a specific style based on choices about words and phrases, sentence structure, literary devices, and rhythm. Some writers use simple words and short sentences or sentence fragments, whereas others use more complex words and longer, more complicated sentences. The writer's style is also characterized by the choice of literary devices such as for example imagery, repetition, symbolism, personification and sound devices.

When analysing style, the important focus is on the effect of the style the writer has chosen. What does the style do to the way the reader understands the meaning of the text? What does the writer want to achieve?

What is characteristic of the way the text was written and what is the effect of it?

What is your immediate reaction to the style used in the following quotations?

1. “– Banghapper now! Yes, third planet back.
Yuleeda will go back blue, white, brown
nowhanna! There is no more talk.”
2. “It matters not how strait the gate,
How charged with punishments the scroll,
I am the master of my fate,
I am the captain of my soul.”
3. “It was very early; not many keepers were about. Quickly I opened the cage and in a moment we were in the street. I took a taxi; at the house, everyone was in bed. In my room, I brought out the gown I was supposed to wear that evening. It was a little long, and the hyena walked with difficulty in my high-heeled shoes.”

You may find it useful to ask some of the following questions:

- **Vocabulary.** Are the words simple or special? Are they technical, descriptive, colloquial, formal, intellectual, or...? Do they create a specific mood or tone? Do the words reveal something about the characters or the setting? What is the general effect of the choice of words?
- **Sentence structure.** Are the sentences long or short? Are there many subordinate clauses or are they often fragments? Is the word order straightforward or unconventional? What is the effect of the choice of sentence structure?

- **Figures of speech.** Is imagery used? Metaphors, similes, or symbols? Are there any other uses of figurative language (e.g. personification)? Does it create a specific mood or feeling? How do the figures of speech impact on the reader?
- **Use of dialogue.** How often is dialogue used? What kind of language is used in the dialogue? What does the dialogue reveal about the characters?
- **Word sound.** Are there significant uses of sound e.g. through alliteration, assonance, onomatopoeia, rhyme, rhythm? What is the effect of the sounds? Do they highlight something or suggest something?
- **Allusions.** Does the writer for example refer to other texts, myths, symbols, famous characters or historical events? What does the writer achieve by those references?
- **Tone.** What is the writer's attitude to the subject? What atmosphere or mood does the writer want to create in the reader's mind? Does the writer seem humorous, passionate, sarcastic, condescending, hopeful, or...? Where do you see this in the text?
- **Experimentation in language.** Are there for example any unusual techniques, unusual words, incorrect grammar, strange layout? How does it influence the reader's response to the text?
- **The structure of the text.** Does the text start with a dramatic event? Is the text told in chronological order? Are there flashbacks? Are there high-tension elements? What do the writer want to achieve by this?
- **Point of view.** Is it a first, second, third, omniscient point of view? What is the purpose of this? Is the text told from the same perspective throughout the text? What is the effect?

Ask some of the questions to analyse the three excerpts above.

Make a note of the quotation you find interesting, the effect it has on you, and how this effect was achieved, i.e. which tools were used by the writer.

Quotation	Effect	Tools