

Crafting Meaningful Obituaries

Literary Devices

There are dozens of literary devices. Here are the ones most likely to be useful in an obituary.

Alliteration (repetition of initial consonants in nearby words)

“Known as a math maven, she could solve complex quantitative problems in her head.”

Caution: Alliterations can come off as forced or too cute. Be careful.

Hyperbole (exaggeration for effect)

“A constant editor, he took bad grammar as a personal assault, punishable by jail time.”

Caution: Run the hyperbolic phrase by someone to make sure that a) it comes off as intentional exaggeration, and b) it doesn't insult the decedent.

Imagery (invokes the senses)

“Irene was a vibrant member of the Red Hat Society, embracing life with joy and forming treasured friendships along the way. Her favorite color, blue, reflected her gentle spirit and the peace she carried with her.”

Caution: Be original! “A ray of sunshine” may seem like good imagery, but it will likely fall flat as the reader thinks, “Oh, *that* old phrase.”

Simile, Metaphor, and Analogy (see next page for a Venn diagram illustrating the commonalities and differences)

Simile (an explicit comparison needing little interpretation)

“Angela was like a she-wolf, fending off danger while teaching self-sufficiency.”

Metaphor (a transfer of identity)

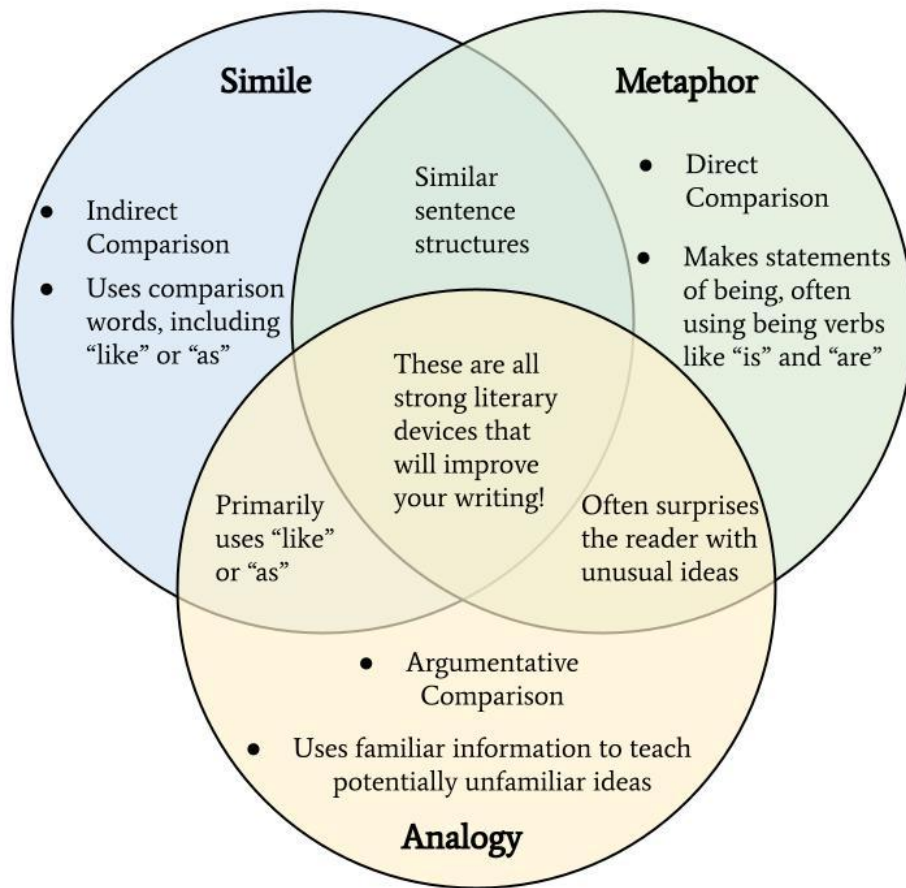
“Angela was a she-wolf, fending off danger while teaching appropriate pack behavior.”

Analogy (though technically a type of argument, it can work as a literary device)

“Angela guarded her children the way a she-wolf protects her pups.”

Caution: Literary devices lend themselves to clichés. Be original!

Words must work to earn space on a page. Do not employ a literary device just for the sake of having one.



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