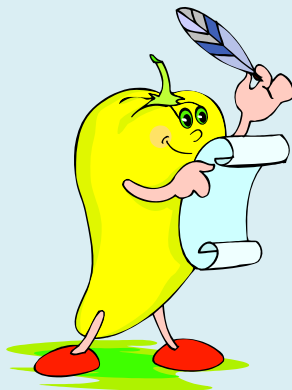


MR. HOT AND SPICY

Created by Elsa Pla (www.writecook.com), 2011



What makes a writer's work unique and memorable? Among other things (and perhaps most importantly), there's the writer's particular style (the way he/she utilizes words). Just like a cook selects seasonings, herbs, and spices to add flavor to his/her dishes, a writer selects what are known as rhetorical devices or writing techniques (tools and tricks) to make his/her work artistic and interesting. **The particular way a writer uses the tools and tricks of the writing craft will determine his/her individual style.**

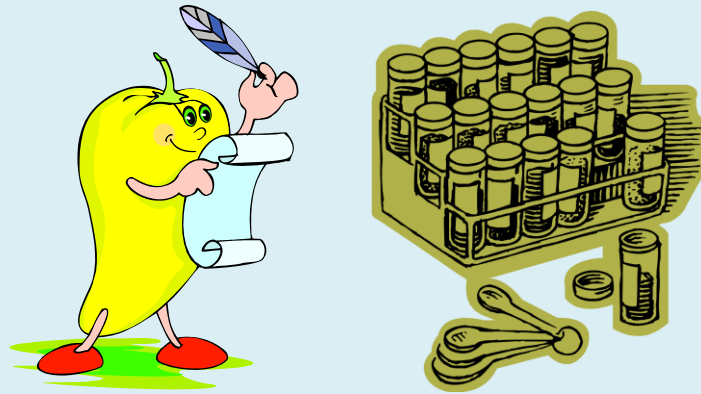
With the help of MR. HOT AND SPICY, we'll examine, one by one, some of the many tools and tricks (**the spices**) that writers have at their disposal.

Let's see what MR. HOT AND SPICY has in his pantry...



MR. HOT AND SPICY

- M** Metaphors, the Magic Three (or Rule of Three)
- R** Repetition (as a special effect), Rhythm and Rhyme (& other Elements of Poetry)
- H** Humor, Hyperbole, Hook, Hyphenated Modifiers
- O** Onomatopoeia, Oxymoron
- T** Transitions, a Terrific Title, Time Travel (Foreshadowing and Flashback)
- A** Alliteration, Action Moment (Expanded Moment), Allusion, Analogy, Anecdote
- N** Nifty Names
- D** Dialogue/Dialect, Key Details, Discriminating Descriptions (Zooming In)
- S** Similes, Sensory Details, Sarcasm, Symbolism, "Show, Don't Tell"
- P** Personification, Word-Play, Paradox, Parallelism
- I** Imagery, Idioms, Situational Irony, a Lasting Impression
- C** Colorful Words (nouns, verbs, adjectives, etc.), Connotation, Circular Ending
- Y** Yummy, Meaty Paragraphs



THE SPICE RACK:

M



1- A **metaphor** is a comparison of two unlike things without using the words "like" or "as."

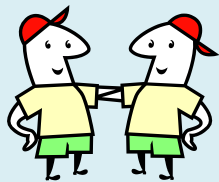
Example: "My dear woman, that doesn't make her a genius! It makes her a parrot!" (From *Matilda*)



2- The "**Magic Three**" (or "Rule of Three") is a recurring pattern of three elements in a sentence. It's a form of parallelism that's also known as "three items in a series."

Example: "The backpack contained his toothbrush, toothpaste, and a box of stationary his mother had given him." (From *Holes*)

R



3- **Repetition** of sounds, words, or phrases can be used as a special effect to add emphasis or create rhythm in a story or essay.

Example: María sat at her desk, unsheathed her pen, and wrote, wrote, wrote.



4- **Rhythm and rhyme** (and other elements of poetry) can be used as special effects in stories and essays.

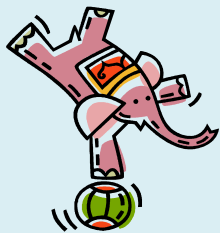
Example: "She found a hedgehog, and a snakeskin (but no snake), and a rock that looked just like a frog, and a toad that looked just like a rock." (From *Coraline*)

H



5- **Humor** in the form of puns, jokes, or comedy is another powerful special effect.

Example: What do you get when you cross a donkey and a hen? A chicken burrito!



6- A **hyperbole** is the use of exaggeration to express strong emotion, draw attention, or create a comical effect.

Example: The circus clown was as enormous as an elephant.



7- A **hook** is an attention-grabbing opening.

Example: "Marley was dead, to begin with." (From *A Christmas Carol*)



8- **Hyphenated modifiers** are single-thought modifiers (the modifiers are joined by hyphens).

Example: The Happy-Go-Lucky Holiday Train "It's all because of my no-good-dirty-rotten-pig-stealing-great-great grandfather" (from *Holes*)

1



9- **Onomatopoeia** is the use of words that sound like their meaning.

Example: honk, swish, gulp, hiss, buzz, smack, burp, plop, tinkle



10- An **oxymoron** is a combination of contradictory terms.
Example: a silent scream, the burning cold, the loud silence

T



11- **Transitions** are words that -- like a bridge -- help the writing flow logically from sentence to sentence, paragraph to paragraph, and event to event.

Example: To begin with,... Then,... Later,... Finally,... In conclusion,...



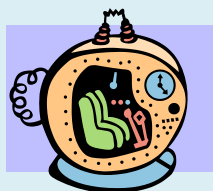
12- Adding a **terrific title** is an important part of writing.
Think of it as placing a cool hat on your finished work.

Example: *The Girl Who Circumnavigated Fairyland in a Ship of Her Own Making* by Catherynne M. Valente



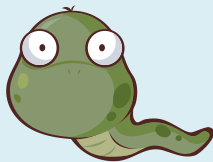
13- **Time Travel:** A **foreshadowing** is a hint or clue that reveals to the reader what will happen next in a story.

Example: "Up to twenty lizards may live in one hole. They eat small animals, insects, certain cactus thorns, and the shells of sunflowerseeds." (From *Holes*) From this information we can deduce what will happen after Stanley spills sunflower seeds in the hole he's digging.



14- **Time Travel:** A **flashback** is an interjected scene that takes a character or a story line back in time.

Example: The novel *Holes* is full of flashbacks that give the reader important information about Stanley's ancestors and explain the curse on Camp Green Lake.



15- **Alliteration** is the repetition of consonant sounds at the beginning of words.

Example: Slinky, the silly snake, watches the green glass grow.



16- An **action moment** (also known as an "expanded moment") is the "slowing down" of a description of a moment (usually an

action scene) so as to include lots of details. (Think of it as similar to a slow-motion martial arts scene.)

Example: "Stanley made a feeble attempt to punch Zigzag, then he felt a flurry of fists against his head and neck. Zigzag had hold of his collar with one hand and was hitting him with the other." (From *Holes*)



17- An **allusion** is a brief reference to a person, place, object, event, etc. that's of common knowledge.

Example: Dinky dunks that basketball just like Michael Jordan.



18- An **analogy** is a comparison of two similar things in order to understand one better.

Example: Ms. Pla says writing is similar to cooking because...



19- An **anecdote** is a brief story that is told to explain something or to make a point.

Example: The story will make sense if I begin by telling you about something extraordinary that happened to me last week.

N



20- **Nifty Names** - The names of the main characters in a story should be significant and/or quirky.

Example: The Wicked Witch of the West (from *The Wizard of Oz*)

D

21- **Dialogue/Dialect** - The conversation between the characters in a story should reveal their personalities, the time period, and their place of origin.

Example: "Y'all think you're so dang clever," Miss Catherine muttered.
"Like heck we do!" one of the urchins replied.



22- **Key details** (important facts) are necessary to understand and visualize what's happening in a story.

Example: The writer spent his summers hiding in a little log cabin up in the mountain town of Estes Park, Colorado.



23- **Discriminating descriptions** ("Zooming In") of significant traits of the characters and the setting help the reader understand the story better.

Example: "She had once been a famous athlete, and even now the muscles were still clearly in evidence. You could see them in the bull-neck, in the big shoulders, in the thick arms, in the sinewy wrists, and in the powerful legs." (From *Matilda*)

S

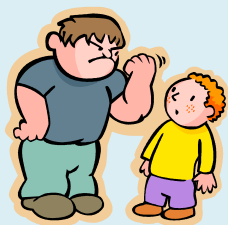
24- A **simile** is a comparison of two unlike things using the words like or as.

Example: "Myra's head is as empty as a flowerpot." (From *Holes*)



25- **Sensory details** are descriptions that appeal to one or more of the five senses.

Example: "There was an old rose garden, filled with stunted, flyblown rosebushes; there was a rockery that was all rocks; there was a fairy ring, made of squidgy brown toadstools which smelled dreadful if you accidentally trod on them." (From *Coraline*)



26- **Sarcasm** is an expression (often a praise) intended to mean the opposite of what it says. It is usually used to taunt, or mock, or put down somebody or something.

Example: Billy-the-Bully is *so* sweet and friendly.



27- **Symbolism** is the use of something to represent something else.

Example: Our flag symbolizes our country; a heart symbolizes love.



28- **Show, Don't Tell** - "Showing" is more powerful than "telling," because it allows the reader to visualize the action and reach his/her own conclusions about what's happening in the story.

Example: "As the roller coaster topped the first big hill, I could see mom down below. She looked so small. Then the coaster began to surge down the hill. My hands went up, my heart jumped into my throat, and I let out a sound that was half laugh and half scream." (From *Write*

Source) The writer doesn't tell us what the child is feeling, but we can infer from what's happening that she or he is both happy and afraid.

P



29- **Personification** is giving human characteristics to a nonhuman thing (an object, an animal, or an idea).

Example: "An enormous oak tree stood overshadowing the cottage. Its massive spreading branches seemed to be embracing the tiny building, and perhaps hiding it as well from the rest of the world." (From *Matilda*)



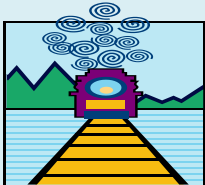
30- **Word play** is having fun with the meaning and sounds of words or making up funny words. A pun is an example of word play.

Example: To take a test with a broken pencil is pointless.



31- A **paradox** is a statement that appears to contradict itself.

Example: When you're in a terrible hurry, it's best to slow down.



32- **Parallelism** is a repeated pattern of words, phrases, or sentences. It helps the writing to flow and have rhythm.

Example: "And he, that robber-bandit, that safe-cracker, that highwayman standing over there with his socks around his ankles stole it and ate it!" (From *Matilda*)

I

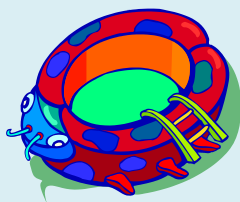
33- **Imagery** is the description of a visual image through the use of sensory details.

Example: "Stanley awoke in a meadow, looking up at the giant tower. It was layered and streaked with different shades of red, burnt orange, brown, and tan. It must have been over a hundred feet tall." (From *Holes*)



34- **Idioms** are cultural expressions that have a figurative meaning different from their literal meaning.

Example: She is the apple of my eye. "Time flies when you're having fun," said Magnet. (From *Holes*)



35- **Situational irony**: an incident in which the outcome is totally different from what was expected.

Example: The woman stepped aside to avoid getting sprinkled by the wet dog, and fell --splash! -- into a kiddie pool.



36- A **lasting impression** is the lingering impact that an ending of a story or essay has on the reader.

Example: "Miss Honey was still hugging the tiny girl in her arms and neither of them said a word as they stood there watching the big black

car tearing round the corner at the end of the road and disappearing forever into the distance." (From *Matilda*)

C



37- **Colorful words** such as precise nouns, vivid verbs, artful adjectives, astute adverbs, and amusing interjections make our writing more interesting and fun to read.

Example: "Suddenly the boy let out a gigantic belch which rolled around the Assembly Hall like thunder." (From *Matilda*)



38- The **connotation** of a word is the feeling or idea suggested by that word.

Example: A red rose reminds us of happiness and romantic love, while a white lily reminds us of sadness and funerals.



39- A **circular ending** is an ending that takes the reader back to the beginning of the story by completing an initial scene, answering an initial question, repeating an initial point, or describing a return from an adventure or a quest.

Example: The novel *The Hobbit or There and Back Again* begins with a description of Bilbo the hobbit and of his comfortable hobbit-hole, and ends -- as the title suggests -- with his glad and triumphant return after a long and dangerous adventure.

Y



40- **Yummy, meatY paragraphs** are stand-alone paragraphs containing "spicy" sentences that make the paragraphs interesting and fun to read. They're often compared to a hamburger: the top bun represents the topic sentence, the bottom bun represents the closing sentence, and the meat and all the yummy stuff in the middle represent the supporting details.

Example:

This hobbit was a very well-to-do hobbit, and his name was Baggins. The Bagginses had lived in the neighbourhood of The Hill for time out of mind, and people considered them very respectable, not only because most of them were rich, but also because they never had any adventures or did anything unexpected; you could tell what a Baggins would say on any question without the bother of asking him. This is a story of how a Baggins had an adventure, and found himself doing and saying things altogether unexpected. He may have lost the neighbours' respect, but he gained -- well you will see whether he gained anything in the end. (From *The Hobbit*)

The topic and closing sentences are highlighted in yellow and the supporting details are red. Does it look like a hamburger? Try to find the following "spicy" tricks in the paragraph:

- | | |
|------------------------|---------------|
| 1- Hyphenated Modifier | 4- Repetition |
| 2- Idiom | 5- Rhyme |
| 3- Key Details | |

MR. HOT AND SPICY'S SPICE RACK

M

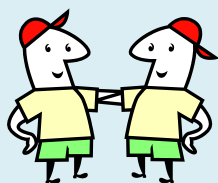


1- Metaphor



2- The "Magic Three"

R



3- Repetition



4- Rhythm and Rhyme (Poetry Elements)

H



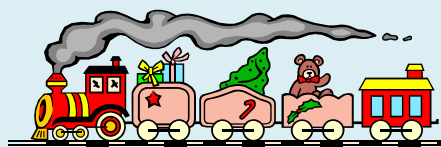
5- Humor



6- Hyperbole



7- Hook



8- Hyphenated Modifier



9- Onomatopoeia

I



10- Oxymoron



11- Transitions

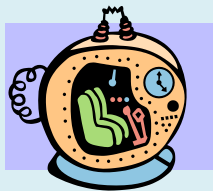
T



12- ATerrific Title



13- Time Travel: Foreshadowing



14- Time Travel: Flashback



15- Alliteration



16- The Action Moment



17- Allusion



18- Analogy



19- Anecdote



20- Nifty Names

A

N

D



21- Dialogue & Dialect



22- Key Details



23- Discriminating Descriptions

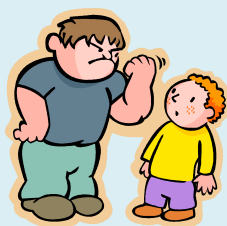


24- Simile

S



25- Sensory Details



26- Sarcasm



27- Symbolism



28- Show, Don't Tell



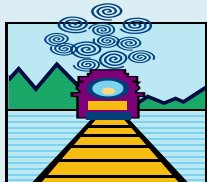
29- Personification



30- Word Play



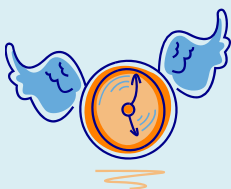
31- Paradox



32- Parallelism



33- Imagery



34- Idiom

P

I



35- Situational Irony



36- A Lasting Impression



37- Colorful Words



38- Connotation

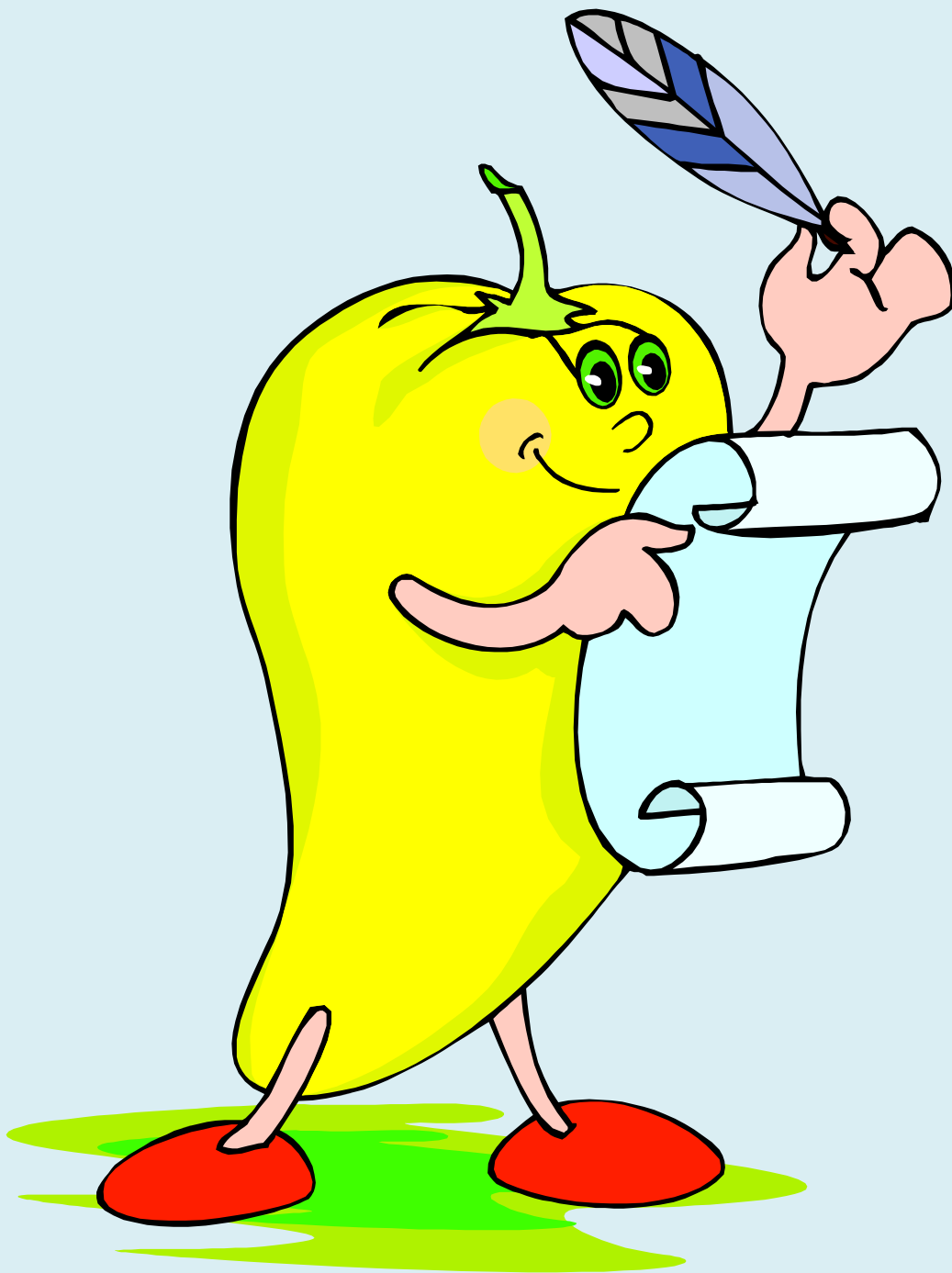


39- Circular Ending



40- Yummy, Meaty Paragraphs

MR. HOT AND SPICY



Bibliography

Atwell, Nancy. *Lessons That Change Writers*. Portsmouth: Heinemann, 2002.

Fletcher, Ralph. *Live Writing*. New York: Avon Books, Inc., 1999.

Kempner, Dave, Patrick Sebranek, and Verne Meyer. *Write Source*. Wilmington: Great Source Education Group, 2005.

Ledbetter, Mary. *All About Me!* Friendswood: Baxter Press, 2005.

Lee, Martin and Marcia Miller. *40 Elaboration Activities*. New York: Scholastic, 2007.

Caudle, Richard and Brad Caudle. *Writing Strategies DVD*. Conroe: Rock 'n Learn, Inc.

Means, Beth and Lindy Lindner. *Teaching Writing in Middle School*. Westport: Teacher Ideas Press, 1998.

Works Cited

Gaiman, Neil. *Coraline*. New York: Harper Trophy, 2002.

Kempner, Dave, Patrick Sebranek, and Verne Meyer. *Write Source*. Wilmington: Great Source Education Group, 2005.

Sachar, Louis. *Holes*. New York: Dell Yearling, 1998.

Tolkien, J.R.R. *The Hobbit*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2001.

Dahl, Roald. *Matilda*. New York: Puffin Books, 1990.

Dickens, Charles. *A Christmas Carol*. New York: Barnes & Noble Books, 2003.

Valente, Catherynne M. *The Girl Who Circumnavigated Fairyland in a Ship of Her Own Making*. New York: Feiwel and Friends, 2011.