

## USING ORNAMENTS

In college writing, a writer has to work with so many rules (of grammar, of punctuation, of style, and of formatting). Not only can this practice be tedious, this constant employment of rules and traditional stylistic nuances can lead to some "cold" discourse. "Cold" is this un-personable, third-person informative tone which we actually try to strive for in college, since the tone itself is often regarded as authoritative and actually easier to read. Besides, most instructors ask for this style, so we cannot deny them what they want. We have to pass the class, right?

Ornaments, also called Embellishments or Figures of Speech, help writers to combat the monotony of writing in this "cold" depersonalized style, many writers in college.

Ornaments may also help your writing (specifically, your document) become more unique.

Think of writing as decorating a work of art. Once you have the foundation (the basic design) and you meet the needs of the audience (the message is understood and clear), then you can play. You can add ornaments and make things much more exciting linguistically and rhetorically. After all, some professors really look for students using literary devices. These instances make the reading more exciting and more, well, noteworthy.

Ornamenting probably comes last on the "To-Do" list of college writing and the writing process for that matter. But, if you are looking for a new way to revise an older paper, ornamenting can be a crucial matter.

Ornaments are different. Traditional ornaments, which date back to the ancient Greek and Roman writings, include tropes and schemes, while some contemporary and non-conventional ornaments include listing, intertext, and others.

Let's Begin with the Non-Conventional Ornaments:

### LISTING

Listing is a common ornament. Basically, a list is something to help evoke thoughts in the reader and stimulate them intellectually. Many forms of poetry and fiction use lists to bridge different parts of the work. Also, essays use lists to make points and control the pace of the reader (or the speed of reading).

EX: War is tough, and regardless of how you look at war, one can be assured of murder, rape, pillaging, burning, hatred, revenge, and all of the evils of man.

Notice how the list is used to add another dimension to this very simple idea: War is tough on people.

### INTERTEXT

While there are different forms of intertext, the simple definition is anything which reminds the reader of something else (almost identical to the idea of literary allusion).

The idea comes from a famous language theorist suggested that everything that we say has been (for the most part) said before.

When we intentionally take advantage of this fact, we either plagiarize, quote, paraphrase, or we use intertext (also called, *literary allusion*).

Consider this:

Copying word-for-word from a text (without a citation) means that we plagiarize.

If we copy word-for-word then provide the citation, then we create a quote.

If we change the words in a quote and provide the citation, we create a paraphrase.

Yet, when we change a passage and adapt it to serve our message rhetorically and/or creatively, then we use intertext (we do not need a citation).

You are familiar with the open credits of Star Wars - A long time ago, in a galaxy far, far away... If we use components of the line yet change it to service our needs, then we can have intertext.

EX:

A long time ago, in a galaxy far away, we did not have a battle over foreign oil.

Notice how the two ideas create interest, a different tone (sarcasm), and even a stronger emphasis on the point.

EX:

Thou shalt not steal thy girlfriend's boyfriend.

Notice how the phrasing of this line is borrowed from the traditional Christian commandments of the Old Testament (e.g., Thou shalt not kill, thou shalt not steal, etc.). Even the meaning of the phrasing is borrowed to fit a more contemporary audience.

### HIGHLIGHTED TEXT

In more informal forms of writing, highlighting of the text may be used in order for an author to give emphasis to words, sentences, passages, etc. He/she may use italicization, underlining, capitalization, or bolding of characters in order to make ideas, phrases, etc. stand apart from regular text. We regard highlighted text as different from "HEADINGS" since highlighted text often appears in the middle of a paragraph or sentence.

EX:

When President George W. Bush offered a tax break, *he really offered us a tax break.*

*Waterboarding* is *one* of the most extreme forms of extracting information from captured terrorists.

Typically, writers will highlight words which demand a good understanding of the word/phrase. The example above emphasizes that understanding the nature of "waterboarding" is essential to the rest of the document.

On the internet, a person may use highlighting to emphasis a scream or a very important statement.

EX:

Lisa better not visit MY HOUSE. Otherwise, she will be in BIG TROUBLE.