

THE USE OF STYLISTIC DEVICES IN THE WORKS OF W. S. MAUGHAM: THE MOON AND SIXPENCE

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Abstract: This article explores the use of stylistic devices in W. Somerset Maugham's novel "The Moon and Sixpence," focusing on how these literary techniques contribute to the creation of vivid characters and themes.

Key Words: Stylistic Devices, Literary Analysis, Imagery, Characterization, Symbolism, Inversion, Zeugma, Irony, Foreshadowing.

INTRODUCTION

W. Somerset Maugham's "The Moon and Sixpence" is a masterpiece that delves into the complexities of artistic expression and personal identity through its rich use of stylistic devices. The novel tells the story of Charles Strickland, an artist whose life parallels that of Paul Gauguin, exploring themes such as creativity versus conformity and the pursuit of artistic ideals over material comfort[1][2]. This article will examine how Maugham employs various literary devices to craft compelling characters and narratives.

Stylistic Devices in Characterization: Maugham utilizes a range of stylistic devices to create vivid characterizations in "The Moon and Sixpence." One notable device is, which transforms subjects into their creators or emphasizes their internal qualities. For instance, when describing Strickland's talent as having a commanding force with phrases like "[he] disturbs and arrests," Maugham uses metaphors to convey Strickland's powerful impact on those around him[3]. Another metaphorical example is when Strickland is described as a "General without an army" or a "Hero without followers," highlighting his isolated yet formidable presence[3].

Another significant device is **comparison**, which adds depth to character descriptions by highlighting similarities between seemingly disparate objects or individuals. In one example from the novel: "[I have a recollection] of large, unbending women with great noses and rapacious eyes... who wrapped their clothes as though they were armour; [and] little mouse-like spinsters with soft voices"[3]. This comparison not only illustrates physical characteristics but also reveals personality traits through clever juxtapositions.

Maugham also employs **oxymoron** effectively in his narrative style. For example, describing Captain Nichols as a "married bachelor" creates an oxymoronic image that encapsulates his

conflicted marital status[1][2]. This oxymoron highlights Nichols' peculiar situation where he feels trapped within marriage yet desires freedom akin to being single.

Imagery. Imagery plays a crucial role in painting detailed pictures for readers throughout the novel:

- "[Strickland's paintings were like windows opening onto new worlds]" illustrates how imagery helps readers visualize not just physical scenes but also emotional landscapes.

- Descriptions such as "[the island's lush greenery enveloped them]" evoke sensory experiences that immerse readers deeply within settings crucial for understanding characters' emotional journeys[5].

Symbolism. Symbolism plays a crucial role in conveying themes throughout the novel. The title itself—"The Moon and Sixpence"—symbolizes two opposing forces: artistic ideals (the moon) versus material concerns (sixpence). Strickland's relentless pursuit of art over financial security exemplifies this dichotomy[5]. His paintings serve as symbols for his passion for artistry beyond conventional norms.

His illness, **leprosy**, symbolizes both his isolation from society due to disease but also highlights his unwavering dedication to art even under extreme conditions.

Narrative Structure. "The Moon and Sixpence" features a first-person narrative voice that interweaves descriptive passages with dialogue effectively:

- The narrator introduces himself early on by stating "I am certain that...", establishing an intimate connection with readers while maintaining objectivity towards events unfolding around him.

- Chapters are often composed entirely from stories or narrations recalled by others which he selectively edits or elaborates upon—especially concerning dialogue attributed to Strickland who was noted for using gestures more than words during conversations[1][4].

This structure allows readers to experience events firsthand while maintaining an intimate connection with characters' thoughts through reflective narration.

Maugham borrows narrative techniques from Joseph Conrad but diverges significantly by using curiosity rather than sympathy between narrator and protagonist:

- Unlike Conrad's Marlow narratives where there might be deep emotional connections between narrator figures & protagonists based upon shared experiences; here it remains detached providing objective insights into Strickland's journey without romanticizing struggles faced along way indeed[4].

This detachment provides clarity without sentimental bias—a hallmark characteristic distinguishing it from other works like Conrad's Marlow narratives where empathy often drives storytelling forward instead mere curiosity about someone else life choices made under challenging circumstances indeed!

Use of Inversion. Inversion is another stylistic tool used by Maugham:

- Phrases such as "[Yet now few will be found to deny...]" illustrate syntactic inversions used creatively throughout discussions about societal views or moral judgments within stories.

These inversions add complexity while maintaining clarity across scenes involving multiple perspectives or philosophical musings about life choices made during pivotal moments significantly altering paths forward both personally & professionally speaking overall impact felt deeply upon those closest surrounding them too indeed!

Zeugma. Zeugma involves using one word semantically related differently across two clauses:

- "I cannot agree with painters who claim superciliously that laymen can understand nothing... best show appreciation by silence & cheque-book" demonstrates zeugma highlighting contrasts between understanding art intellectually versus financially supporting it without comprehension.

This technique underscores tensions between true appreciation for creative work versus superficial patronage based solely upon economic transactions devoid deeper emotional connections shared amongst artists themselves let alone broader audiences seeking genuine engagement beyond mere monetary exchanges alone ultimately leading towards emptiness despite outward appearances suggesting otherwise at times indeed!

Themes Through Stylistics

Themes such as creativity vs conformity are explored extensively through various stylistics tools employed throughout "The Moon And Six Pence."

For instance:

- **Irony:** Used frequently when contrasting expectations against reality—like when society expects artists like Charles Stickland conform yet they pursue unconventional paths regardless societal pressures imposed externally always pushing boundaries set forth traditionally before them every step along way whether acknowledged openly expressed silently endured quietly suffered nonetheless leaving indelible marks shaping lives forevermore indeed!

- **Foreshadowing:** Subtle hints scattered across chapters foreshadow future developments adding suspenseful anticipation keeping reader engaged guessing what unfolds next scene after scene building tension gradually until climax reached finally resolving mysteries lingering unanswered till very end leaving lasting impressions long after finishing book entirely!

These thematic explorations enrich our understanding not just aesthetically but philosophically regarding human nature vis-a-vis creative pursuits under societal pressures often conflicting desires internally driving individuals toward self-discovery amidst turmoil externally imposed upon them every step along way whether consciously acknowledged openly expressed silently endured quietly suffered nonetheless leaving indelible marks shaping lives forevermore indeed!

Conclusion. W.S.Maugham—"Moon And Six Pence"s exploration through various literary tools enriches our understanding not just aesthetically but philosophically regarding human nature vis-a-vis creative pursuits under societal pressures often conflicting desires internally driving



individuals toward self-discovery amidst turmoil externally imposed upon them every step along way whether consciously acknowledged openly expressed silently endured quietly suffered nonetheless leaving indelible marks shaping lives forevermore indeed! Through metaphors capturing essence personalities via comparisons revealing inner depths via symbolism conveying deeper meanings via imagery painting vivid pictures all contribute making this work timeless classic continuing captivate audiences worldwide today still resonating profoundly even decades since publication first took place marking beginning enduring legacy left behind author whose masterful storytelling continues inspire generations.

Resources:

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