

## Diction

### Definition:

- Diction is the style of speaking or writing determined by the choice of words by the poet or author.
  - Diction must be appropriate for the scenario in which it is used (*Huckleberry Finn* would not contain old English).
  - Diction is what sets apart different authors, trends, movements, and genres, such as Romantic diction versus Gothic diction.
  - The most common difference in diction is the author's choice to write in formal or informal language.
  - A certain choice of words can create a certain mood or attitude. For example, using a large amount of expletives creates an abrasive, rough, and perhaps humorous mood.

### Examples:

1. "Ode to the Grecian Urn", by John Keats, uses formal diction to create a formal and respectful mood.

Thou still unravish'd bride of quietness,  
Thou foster-child of silence and slow time,  
Sylvan historian, who canst thus express  
A flowery tale more sweetly than our rhyme:  
What leaf-fring'd legend haunts about thy shape  
Of deities or mortals, or of both,  
In Tempe or the dales of Arcady?  
What men or gods are these? What maidens loth?  
What mad pursuit? What struggle to escape?  
What pipes and timbrels? What wild ecstasy?

There are simpler words and phrases to replace the underlines ones, but by using older phrasing and more complicated words, the poet creates an air of knowledge and respect.

2. In *The Catcher in the Rye*, J.D. Salinger uses common, teenage vernacular with plenty of expletives to mimic the teenage mind.

"They're nice and all. I'm not going to tell you my whole goddam autobiography or anything"

By using phrases such as "and all" and "or anything" to end a sentence, the author is creating dialogue that resembles teenage conversation, which makes the book and Holden's thoughts more realistic.

### Helpful Links:

- <http://literarydevices.net/diction/>
- <http://grammar.about.com/od/d/g/disctionterm.htm>
- [http://studentacademichelp.blogspot.com/2009/03/language-of-catcher-in-rye\\_5309.html#ixzz2uXjOZcm3](http://studentacademichelp.blogspot.com/2009/03/language-of-catcher-in-rye_5309.html#ixzz2uXjOZcm3)