

When You Are Old Literary Devices

Writer: William Butler Yeats | Generated: Jan 26, 2026

In "[When You Are Old](#)" by [W.B. Yeats](#), literary devices enrich the poem's meaning and impact. Some significant literary devices in the poem include:

Imagery: The poem is rich in visual imagery, mainly depicting the person in their old age, sitting by the fire and reading. There is also a vivid image of Love fleeing and hiding among the stars. It contributes to the overall emotional tone of the poem.

Symbolism: It conveys a repository of emotions and nostalgia for the reader to reflect upon in their old age. The "crowd of stars" symbolizes the vastness of the universe and the idea that Love is now beyond reach.

Metaphor: The "pilgrim soul" concept represents a person's enduring, spiritual essence. It contrasts with the transience of physical beauty, symbolizing a more profound, spiritual connection that transcends the superficial aspects of life.

Repetition: The repetition of "loved" highlights the multitude of admirers the person had in their youth. This repetition emphasizes the contrast between the shallow, fleeting Love of many and the deep, enduring Love of one.

Personification: The poem personifies Love, giving it human-like qualities by suggesting that it "fled" and "hid" its face. This personification allows us to convey the idea that Love can be elusive and unattainable.

Alliteration: The use of alliteration, such as in "glowing bars," makes a pleasing and rhythmic effect in the poem, enhancing its musical quality and drawing attention to specific words or phrases.