

Falcon Claws

1. **Magic 3** - three parallel groups of words, usually separated by commas, that create a poetic rhythm or add support for a point, especially when the three word groups have their own modifiers.

If I had a ketchup stain on my shirt, or if my hair looked like a mad scientist, or if I had black pepper stuck between my teeth, she would tell me the truth no matter what!

Sometimes I wonder why it is that the smart guys always get picked on. It's always, *"Hey, look, it's the nerd coming carrying all those library books," or "What do you think you're doing? This is OUR lunch table!" or "Brainy, will you do my homework for me?"*

2. **Figurative Language** - comparisons such as similes, metaphors, and personification - add "spice" to writing and can help paint a more vivid picture for the reader.

It was a hot August morning, and the last few days of summer vacation were slipping past *faster than an Indy racecar on the circular track.* In other words, I only had two short weeks before the *dreaded schoolwork monsters* took over my daylight hours and my *life, as I now knew it would cease to exist!*

3. **Specific Details for Effect** - instead of general, vague descriptions, specific sensory details help the reader visualize the person, place, thing, or idea that you are describing.

It was the first day of seventh grade, and I wasn't at all ready for it. *I took a deep breath, threw my backpack over my shoulder, and then crumbled onto my bed. Picking up my favorite pillow, I just sat there, tears rolling down my cheeks. "Would they like me? Would I make it to class on time after athletics? Would I even make the team?"* Just then my mom opened my bedroom door. I jumped up and ran past her before she could see my tear streaked face.

4. **Repetition for Effect** - writers often repeat specially chosen words or phrases to make a point, to stress certain ideas for the reader.

There she was - the perfect date for my first prom. *How lovely* she looked in that pink satin gown, *how lovely* her hair flowed down onto her bare shoulders, *how lovely* her pearl necklace circled her neck, and *how lovely* her face shown as she smiled across the room at me.

5. **Expanded Moment** - instead of "speeding" past a moment, writers often emphasize it by "expanding" the actions.

As the sweat soaked through my deep blue uniform, and my heart began to beat like a horse's legs thumping against the coarse sand of a racetrack, with a face distinguished by fear, but the heart of a champion, I stepped up to the plate. As the pitcher made his wind up my throat began to crack and crumble and my socks began to wither. My knees began to knock and a lion came alive inside of me. (Craig Bartosh)

6. **Humor** – professional writers know the value of laughter.

My daughter has been driving for three days, five hours and 17 minutes. I find myself sitting around in the evening, and for no apparent reason I will lift up my right foot and jam it down on an imaginary brake pedal.

Sometimes I will lay down my fork and say mechanically, “I don’t wish to excite you, but would you mind turning off your windshield wipers? They are tickling the neck of the pedestrian riding on your hood whom we picked up going down the opposite direction of a one-way street.”

The nights are the worst. The other night I dreamt she got her license. (Erma Bombeck)

7. **Hyphenated Modifiers** – sometimes a new way of saying something can make all the difference; hyphenated adjectives often cause the reader to “sit up and take notice.”

Little did I know that when Mom asked if I liked the new neighborhood in town that that one innocent question would be the beginning of the destruction of my life. I was going to choose “yes” as my answer, but I had one of those **I-don’t-want-to-lose-my-friends** looks. (Fontenot, Brian)

8. **Full-Circle Ending** – sometimes students need a special ending, one that effectively “wraps up” the piece. One “trick” is to repeat a phrase from the beginning of the piece.

Do I seem mad to you?

I’m not mad!

I’m furious!

Does my face seem as red as an apple?

It’s not! My face is a fire!

The divorce was taking my heart and
crushing it into oblivion.

My tears were a flowing stream,
my brain an exploding bomb.

My dad had this

I-don’t-care-about-my-family kind of look.

But do I seem mad?

He used to have my sister and me in his back pocket,

but now he has his new I-like-you-right-now-but-when-we-get-serious-I’ll-stab-you-in-the-back “perfect” girlfriend there
instead

But do I seem mad?

Dad just got married.

They had been dating for about an hour and he popped the question.

But do I seem mad?

I just sit there with my fake smile

while she puts on the biggest show and says,

“Oh, I love your kids. They’re so cute,” and fake smiles back at me.

But do I seem mad?

My dad used to be my best friend and protector of my childhood

Now he is my enemy.

But do I seem mad?

His new wife has me in her death-grip
waiting for me to do something bad.

She is a cobra waiting to strike

But do I seem mad?

I’m not mad!

I’m furious!

(Odom, Ed)