

Literary phrases or sentences from literature or newspapers where the use of adjectives is significant.

1. Creating vivid imagery

a. Charles Dickens, *Bleak House*

“It was a *raw, cold, dull, damp* day in the winter of the year.”

→ The adjectives *raw, cold, dull, damp* layer the atmosphere with a tangible bleakness.

b. F. Scott Fitzgerald, *The Great Gatsby*

“In his *blue gardens*, men and girls came and went like moths among the whisperings and the champagne and the stars.”

→ The adjective *blue* creates a surreal, dreamlike setting.

c. Virginia Woolf, *To the Lighthouse*

“The window was *starred* with frost, and through it one could see a *cold, white* world.”

→ The adjectives *cold* and *white* evoke isolation and stillness.

2. Revealing emotion or tone

a. Emily Brontë, *Wuthering Heights*

“He’s more myself than I am. Whatever our souls are made of, his and mine are the *same*.”

→ The adjective *same* here is emotionally loaded — expressing unity rather than mere similarity.

b. Toni Morrison, *Beloved*

“124 was *spiteful*. Full of a baby’s venom.”

→ The anthropomorphic adjective *spiteful* gives the house a haunting, emotional presence.

c. Ernest Hemingway, *A Farewell to Arms*

“The *dark* and *wet* world was sadness itself.”

→ The adjectives define mood through minimal, heavy imagery.

3. Character description through adjectives

a. Jane Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*

“He was the proudest, most *disagreeable* man in the world, and everybody hoped that he would never come there again.”

→ The adjectives *proudest* and *disagreeable* reveal both character and social judgment.

b. James Joyce, *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*

“His soul was swooning into some *vague, misty* Eden of *dusky* and *brilliant* color.”
→ Adjectives here express confusion and sensuality simultaneously.

4. Journalism – tone and persuasion through adjectives

a. The New York Times (on a storm, 2021)

“The *relentless* storm battered the *fragile* coastline, leaving behind a trail of *splintered* homes and *silent* streets.”
→ The adjectives *relentless*, *fragile*, *splintered*, and *silent* carry emotional and visual power.

b. The Guardian (on political leadership)

“In a *fractured* nation, his *measured* words offered a rare sense of *steady* calm.”
→ *Fractured*, *measured*, and *steady* shape tone and political stance.

5. Poetic or stylistic emphasis

a. Dylan Thomas, *Fern Hill*

“And as I was *green* and *carefree*, famous among the barns...”
→ The adjectives *green* and *carefree* convey youth and vitality through color and emotion.

b. Sylvia Plath, *The Bell Jar*

“I felt very *still* and *empty*, the way the eye of a tornado must feel, moving dully along in the middle of the surrounding *hullabaloo*.”
→ The adjectives *still* and *empty* heighten the sense of detachment.

1. Emotional Tone — Adjectives That Reveal Feeling

These adjectives express *inner states* — sadness, joy, anger, nostalgia — shaping how we perceive a scene or character.

a. Charlotte Brontë, *Jane Eyre*

“A *sad, melancholy* evening; the cold light of the moon glared through the frosty panes.”

→ *Sad* and *melancholy* immediately cast emotional gloom; even the light feels emotionally cold.

b. Albert Camus, *The Stranger*

“It was a *bright, hot* morning, and the glare on the white road was *blinding*.”

→ These adjectives evoke not joy but *emotional numbness* — heat as emptiness.

c. Kazuo Ishiguro, *The Remains of the Day*

“It is a *great* privilege to have *served* such a *distinguished* gentleman.”

→ The adjectives *great* and *distinguished* sound respectful but carry *ironic restraint*, reflecting repression.

d. Newspaper example – *The Washington Post*, on a memorial service (2022)

“The *solemn, hushed* crowd stood beneath the *gray* skies, each face a portrait of *quiet* grief.”

→ Adjectives here channel collective emotion with gentle restraint.

2. Sensory Description — Adjectives That Paint with the Senses

These adjectives appeal to *sight, sound, touch, taste, or smell* — giving language its physicality.

a. Thomas Hardy, *Far from the Madding Crowd*

“The *red, wrinkled, crimson* sunset lighted the *rough* slopes of the fields.”

→ Layered color adjectives (*red, crimson*) and texture (*rough, wrinkled*) immerse the reader.

b. James Joyce, *Ulysses*

“The *snotgreen, scrotumtightening* sea.”

→ Inventive compound adjectives — shockingly tactile and visual — show Joyce’s sensory daring.

c. Zadie Smith, *White Teeth*

“A *sweet, sharp, metallic* taste filled her mouth.”

→ The adjectives shift sense by sense — taste (*sweet, metallic*) and touch (*sharp*).

d. The New York Times, food review (2023)

“The *buttery, flaky* crust gives way to a *silky, fragrant* filling that hums with *warm* spice.”

→ Adjectives turn culinary description into sensory experience.

3. Persuasive Journalism — Adjectives That Shape Opinion or Tone

Here, adjectives don’t just describe — they *position* the reader emotionally or morally toward an idea.

a. The Guardian, on climate policy (2022)

“A *timid* response to a *monumental* crisis will not avert *catastrophic* warming.”

→ *Timid* condemns; *monumental* and *catastrophic* amplify urgency.

b. The Economist, on global markets

“Investors are showing *cautious* optimism amid *volatile* conditions.”

→ *Cautious* and *volatile* calibrate tone — factual yet subtly opinionated.

c. The Atlantic, on democracy (2023)

“In a *polarized* era, *careful, truthful* reporting is both a *moral* and *practical* necessity.”

→ The adjectives frame journalism as ethically vital — persuasive through value language.

d. The New York Times, editorial on education

“The *crumbling* infrastructure of public schools reflects a *neglected* promise.”

→ *Crumbling* and *neglected* generate empathy and moral critique.

4. Vivid Imagery — Adjectives that Paint with Light, Texture, and Emotion

These adjectives make us *see, feel, and smell* the world of the text. They often combine sensory and emotional registers.

a. Charles Dickens – *Bleak House*

“Fog everywhere. Fog up the river, where it flows among green aits and meadows; fog down the river, where it rolls defiled among the tiers of shipping and the waterside pollutions, and *dismal* houses on the river.”

→ The adjective *dismal* fuses visual and emotional imagery — we *see* and *feel* decay. Dickens’s repetition of *fog* gives texture, while *dismal* seals the mood.

b. Joseph Conrad – *Heart of Darkness*

“The air was *thick, warm, heavy, sluggish*.”

→ A cluster of tactile adjectives compresses the oppressive atmosphere into a single breath. We can almost *feel* the density of the jungle.

c. F. Scott Fitzgerald – *The Great Gatsby*

“The lights grow *brighter* as the earth lurches away from the sun, and now the orchestra is playing *yellow cocktail music*.”

→ *Brighter* and *yellow* turn sound and light into visual color. The adjective *yellow* captures artificial gaiety — the shimmer of decadence.

d. John Keats – “To Autumn”

“Season of mists and *mellow* fruitfulness.”

→ The adjective *mellow* softens both the ear and the eye — the ripeness of harvest becomes a feeling of temporal warmth and decline.

e. Zadie Smith – *On Beauty*

“The *blue-black* sheen of his skin caught the morning light like a mirror.”

→ *Blue-black* is visually precise but also sensual — it draws attention to both beauty and individuality.

* Observations on Vivid Imagery:

- Writers often **stack adjectives** (e.g. *thick, warm, heavy, sluggish*) to **slow rhythm** and **immerse the senses**.
 - Adjectives often **blend senses** (synesthesia): e.g., *mellow* (touch + mood), *yellow music* (color + sound).
 - Even a single adjective can **transform tone**: *bright* can suggest joy or falsity, depending on context.
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♀ 5. Character Description — Adjectives that Define Personality and Perception

In character writing, adjectives reveal not only appearance but also **social judgment, emotional bias, and moral texture**.

a. Jane Austen – *Pride and Prejudice*

“Mr. Darcy soon drew the attention of the room by his fine, tall person, handsome features, noble mien — and the report which was in general circulation within five minutes of his entrance, of his having ten thousand a year.”

→ *Fine, tall, handsome, noble* project ideal masculine beauty and social authority — but Austen uses them ironically, reflecting society’s obsession with surface.

b. Emily Brontë – *Wuthering Heights*

“A *dark-skinned* gypsy in aspect, in dress and manners a gentleman — that was my first impression of him.”

→ The adjectives *dark-skinned* and *gypsy* immediately signal otherness; Brontë uses them to mark Heathcliff’s magnetic, dangerous energy.

c. George Orwell – *1984*

“He was a *smallish, frail* figure, the *meagerness* of his body merely emphasized by the *blue overalls*.”

→ The adjectives *smallish, frail, meager* make Winston’s weakness visible; his physical fragility mirrors his political vulnerability.

d. Toni Morrison – *Sula*

“She had *close-set, gray eyes*, a *wide* mouth, and *delicate* hands.”

→ Morrison’s adjectives move between contrasts: *wide* vs. *delicate*, *gray eyes* that seem emotionless yet searching — complexity through precision.

e. Ernest Hemingway – *The Old Man and the Sea*

“The old man was *thin* and *gaunt* with deep wrinkles in the back of his neck.”

→ *Thin* and *gaunt* give visual sparseness, but they also symbolize endurance and dignity stripped bare.

* Observations on Character Description:

- Adjectives reveal not just **what characters look like**, but **how the narrator sees them** (e.g., Austen’s ironic adjectives).
 - Juxtaposed adjectives (*wide / delicate*) suggest *inner conflict or complexity*.
 - Sparse adjectives (Hemingway) emphasize the *moral clarity* or *austerity* of a character.
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