

Figurative Language

Figurative Language: language that is not meant to be taken literally- metaphorical language- the words symbolic meaning and metaphorical are synonymous.

Literal Language: language that means exactly what it says- the objective meaning; the surface meaning; what is actually happening- a paraphrase takes only the literal meaning into account

Simile: a comparison of two unlike things using a comparison word, such as like or as- usually focuses on a single characteristic of comparison

Metaphor: a comparison of two unlike things without using a comparing word

While a simile generally points out one point of a comparison, a metaphor is broader and more complex in scope; metaphors can generally be found in three forms:

[noun] is (noun) (e.g. Juliet is the sun)

[noun] of [noun] (e.g. blanket of fog)

[adj.] [noun] (e.g. icy smile, iron fist)

Personification: a comparison in which human or animate qualities are given to objects, animals, or ideas

Allusion: a short reference to a famous person, a place, a historical event, or another work of literature (e.g. Biblical, mythological, literary, historical.)

Irony: the awareness (by an author, character, or reader) of a contrast between the way things seem or are expected to be and the way they really are

Verbal Irony: the speaker means something different from what they say

This irony is a result of using words ambiguously. Verbal irony is often a type of understatement where the words are expressed less emphatically than they could be.

Situational Irony: a situation including various aspects of the setting that is the opposite of what you or a character expect it to be

Dramatic Irony: occurs when the reader sees the situation clearly but the character does not and instead does or says things to indicate their ignorance

Cosmic Irony/Irony of fate: when a protagonist's expectations are unexpectedly destroyed by bad fortune or an uncaring god

Symbol: a person, place, thing, or action that has literal meaning but it also stands for something else (i.e. it has metaphorical meaning)

Usually the symbol is concrete (something you can perceive through the senses). and the thing it stands for is abstract.

Authorial Symbol: the author created the symbol

Textual Symbol: a symbol that is specific just to this text

Personal Symbol: a symbol that is particular or unique to the author

Conventional/Traditional Symbol: a symbol that comes down through the years / is passed on

Universal Symbol: symbols shared by all humanity (e.g. the sun as a source of life)

Cultural Symbol: symbol shared by a particular cultural group (e.g. the cross as the Christian symbol for sacrifice)

Hyperbole: a figure of speech involving great exaggeration generally for humorous or ironic effect

Meiosis/Understatement: a statement that approaches a serious subject with little or no emotion

Meiosis deliberately represents something as less than what it really is.

This is the opposite of an exaggeration, a hyperbole; generally an understatement has the opposite effect on the reader.

Paradox: a statement, often figurative, that seems to contradict itself but upon further investigation reveals an unexpected truth (conveys power and surprise)

Metonymy: a figure of speech in which one term is substituted for another term with which it has become closely associated (e.g. White House = president, campus = the school, Devil = mischief)

(Many people use metonymy to include synecdoche.)

Synecdoche: figurative language in which the whole is used for the part or vice versa (e.g. All hands on deck = whole sailor not just their hands, the law = police officers)

Apostrophe: a dramatic device in which the writer speaks to an object, an idea, a person who is unlikely to respond

It creates the situation of a public speech, and the reader is drawn in as the audience; it's often used in romantic poetry and in poems dealing with abstract qualities of life.

Diction

Diction: the author's choice of words

This includes denotation, connotation, and level of diction (formal vs. informal).

Denotation: the literal meaning, or dictionary definition, of a word

Connotation: the associations a word has that go beyond its literal meaning – the emotional, psychological, or social overtones of a word (e.g. childlike vs. childish, bum vs. unhoused person)

Ambiguity: anything that has more than one meaning

This technique allows for multiple interpretations and is often developed through contrast or

Inconsistencies: can create suspense, surprise, humor – placing readers in a state of uncertainty.

Imagery

Imagery: the collection of mental pictures in a literary work, helps make experiences tangible for readers

Image: a sensory experience that the writer creates with words which appeal to the senses
Imagery can be either literal or figurative (see literal/figurative language)

Types of images: **visual** - images that appeal to the sense of sight (most common)
 auditory - images that appeal to the sense of hearing
 olfactory - images that appeal to the sense of smell
 gustatory - images that appeal to the sense of taste
 tactile - images that appeal to the sense of touch

Images of motion: **kinetic imagery** - general motion
 kinesthetic imagery - human or animal activity

Synesthesia: an image that combines different senses to create an unusual effect (e.g. yellow cocktail music, a green thought)

Tone

Tone: the attitude that the writer takes toward their subject, characters, or audience.
Tone is an overall effect created by diction, dialogue, conflicts, and resolutions, imagery, etc.
Usually how you feel toward the subject/characters is how the speaker feels as well, but not always. You can't colormark tone. Tone is the result/effect of other techniques.

Speaker: the voice in a poem, rarely that of the poet, but usually of a fictional character
This speaker must be identified in terms of who, what, when, and why.

Sound

Alliteration: repetition of the same consonant sounds (but not necessarily the same letter) at the beginnings of successive words (initial alliteration) or in the middle of words (internal or hidden alliteration) or at the end of words (end alliteration) ... e.g. the babbling brook bubbled

Assonance: repetition of the same vowel sound -can be internal or initial. (e.g. lake-skate; holy rollers)

Consonance: a type of near rhyme when the consonant sounds are the same but the vowels are different

Onomatopoeia: the use of words whose sounds suggest their meaning (e.g. buzz, hiss, sizzle, fizz, meow)

Euphony: pleasing sounds; sounds of words working together in a pleasing, harmonious way
These sounds are typically created by long vowels and soft consonants (w, r, n, ng, as, in, ing, z, v, m, l, s, f, h). Most poetry is more euphonic than regular speech.
Note: Euphony is an effect/result of other sounds devices, not a device itself.

Cacophony: sharp, choppy, grating sounds (d, t, hard c, g, cl, ch).
Note: Cacophony is an effect, the result of other sounds devices (not a device itself).

Rhyme: the use of similar or identical sounds in the accented syllables of two or more words

End rhyme: occurs at the end of a line of poetry

Internal rhyme: within a line of poetry

Eye rhyme: words that look but do not sound alike (bough, tough; bone, none; good, food)

Near/Slant rhyme: words that almost rhyme (e.g. crash and catch)

Rhyme scheme: the order in which rhymed words recur at the ends of the lines

Inversion: a syntactical rearrangement of the usual order of the parts of a sentence, primarily for emphasis or to achieve a certain rhythm or rhyme

Repetition: a device used to emphasize important words or ideas, especially in poetry

Rhythm

Rhythm: the arrangement of stressed syllables in a poem

Accented/stressed syllables: those that are said loudly; indicated by a /

Unaccented/unstressed syllables: those that are said softly; indicated by a u

Meter: the rhythm in a verse produced by the pattern of stressed and unstressed syllables. To identify the meter, you must figure out the type of foot and the number of feet in a line.

Foot: unit composed of two or three stressed or unstressed syllables (types of feet).

Iambic - u / (most common)

Trochaic - / u

Anapestic - u u /

Dactylic - / u u

Number of feet dimeter - two feet
 trimeter - three feet
 tetrameter - four feet
 pentameter - five feet
 hexameter - six feet
 heptameter - seven feet
 octameter - eight feet

Scan/scansion: to figure out the meter, that is, the type of foot and the number of feet

e.g. In the scansion of the line above ...

 Examining the scansion of a poem is difficult when it's a work in translation ...

Enjambment: a run-on line of poetry that has no pause, that is, no punctuation at the end but flows into the next line to complete the thought

Caesura: the pause or break within a line of poetry, usually created by punctuation.

End-stopped line: when a line ends in a full pause as indicated by a mark of punctuation

Form

Stanza: a group of two or more lines whose pattern is repeated throughout the poem

Quatrain: a four line stanza with end rhyme (the most common length for a rhymed stanza)

Verse: a synonym for the word poetry; can also refer to one line of a poem

Couplet: two consecutive lines of poetry of any length or meter with end rhymes- usually a couplet contains a complete idea

English (Shakespearean) sonnet: uses iambic pentameter – *abab cdcd efef gg* – a four part argument expressing a single thought or emotion

Each quatrain usually contains a separate development of the sonnet's central idea with the couplet providing a conclusion.

Lyric: a short poem expressing the thoughts and feelings of a single speaker and achieving a single effect- often written in first person

Although it may relate an incident, it is a reflective poem in which little physical action takes place.

Narrative: a poem that tells a story, and consequently contains many elements of a short story

Refrain: a line or group of lines repeated at regular intervals

Free verse: a poem with lines that do not have regular meter and does not rhyme

Blank verse: unrhymed iambic pentameter