

II/ Figures of Speech

What is a figure of speech?

Language that uses figures of speech is known collectively as figurative language. You will find examples of figurative language in novels, poems, essays, and plays. The opposite of figurative language is literal language. Literal language is the type of straightforward writing you'll find on road signs, in office memos, and in research papers.

Types of figures of speech

1 Alliteration

Alliteration is the repeating of consonant sounds right next to each other, which creates a memorable or melodic effect.

Example: She sells seashells by the seashore.

2 Euphemism

A euphemism is a way to say something in an understated manner, often to avoid difficult topics—like money, death, or sex.

Example: Death can be an uncomfortable subject, so we've developed many euphemisms to avoid confronting it head-on. Rather than telling a friend that a relative died, you might say they "kicked the bucket," "passed away," or are "no longer with us."

3 Hyperbole

Hyperbole is a deliberate exaggeration that adds emphasis, urgency, or excitement to a statement.

Example: If I don't eat soon, I'm going to die of hunger.

4 Metaphor

A metaphor is the direct comparison of dissimilar things to create more vivid imagery or understanding.

Example: He was an onion; to understand him, she had to peel back the layers.

5 Onomatopoeia

Onomatopoeia is a word that sounds like what it means.

Example: When a character is exasperated, they might exclaim, "Sheesh!" That's both a word to show exasperation and a sound that happens when you sigh loudly.

6 Oxymoron

An oxymoron is a phrase that uses two contradictory words to create a new meaning.

Example: That strawberry cake was awfully good.

7 Personification

Personification is assigning human attributes to nonhuman things.

Example: The floorboards groaned under the weight of each step.

8 Simile

A simile compares two dissimilar things using "like" or "as." The goal of simile is to give the reader a more vivid understanding of something.

Example: It was the first real day of summer, and by the time she came back indoors, she was as red as a tomato.

9 Synecdoche

Synecdoche is when a smaller unit is used to signify a larger unit or vice versa.

Example: New England won the game by a touchdown. (Here, New England means New England's football team.)