**Definition of Figurative Language**

Figurative language uses figures of speech to be more effective, persuasive, and impactful. Figures of speech such as metaphors, similes, and allusions go beyond the literal meanings of the words to give readers new insights. On the other hand, alliterations, imageries, or onomatopoeias are figurative devices that appeal to the senses of the readers.

Figurative language can appear in multiple forms with the use of different literary and rhetorical devices. According to Merriam Webster’s Encyclopedia, figurative language has five different forms:

1. [Understatement](https://literarydevices.net/understatement/) or Emphasis
2. Relationship or Resemblance
3. Figures of Sound
4. Errors and
5. Verbal Games

**Types of Figurative Language**

The term *figurative language* covers a wide range of [literary devices](https://literarydevices.net/literary-devices/) and techniques, a few of which include:

* [Simile](https://literarydevices.net/simile/)
* [Metaphor](https://literarydevices.net/metaphor/)
* [Personification](https://literarydevices.net/personification/)
* [Onomatopoeia](https://literarydevices.net/onomatopoeia/)
* [Oxymoron](https://literarydevices.net/oxymoron/)
* [Hyperbole](https://literarydevices.net/hyperbole/)
* [Allusion](https://literarydevices.net/allusion/)
* [Idiom](https://literarydevices.net/idiom/)
* [Imagery](https://literarydevices.net/imagery/)
* Symbolism
* [Alliteration](https://literarydevices.net/alliteration/)
* [Assonance](https://literarydevices.net/assonance/)
* [Consonance](https://literarydevices.net/consonance/)
* [Metonymy](https://literarydevices.net/metonymy/)
* [Synecdoche](https://literarydevices.net/synecdoche/)
* [Irony](https://literarydevices.net/irony/)
* [Sarcasm](https://literarydevices.net/sarcasm/)
* [Litotes](https://literarydevices.net/litotes/)
* Pun
* [Anaphora](https://literarydevices.net/anaphora/)
* [Tautology](https://literarydevices.net/tautology/)
* Understatement

## Function of Figurative Language

The primary function of figurative language is to force readers to imagine what a writer wants to express. Figurative language is not meant to convey literal meanings, and often it compares one concept with another in order to make the first concept easier to understand. However, it links the two ideas or concepts with the goal of influencing the [audience](https://literarydevices.net/audience/) to understand the link, even if it does not exist.

Poets and [prose](https://literarydevices.net/prose/) writers use this technique to bring out emotions and help their readers form images in their minds. Thus, figurative language is a useful way of conveying an idea that readers cannot understand otherwise, due to its complex and abstract nature. In addition, it helps in analyzing a literary text.

**CHAPTER – I (Figurative Language)**

**Definition of Simile**

A simile is a [figure of speech](https://literarydevices.net/figure-of-speech/) that makes a [comparison](https://literarydevices.net/comparison/), showing similarities between two different things. Unlike a [metaphor](https://literarydevices.net/metaphor/), a simile draws resemblance with the help of the words “like” or “as.” Therefore, it is a direct comparison.

**Examples of Simile**

* Our soldiers are as brave as lions.
* Her cheeks are red like a rose.
* He is as funny as a monkey.
* The water well was as dry as a bone.
* He is as cunning as a fox.
* The glow of the tube-light was as bright as sunshine.
* In winter, when it rained he climbed into bed, and felt as snug as a bug in a rug.
* At exam time, the high school student was as busy as a bee.
* The beggar on the road looked as blind as a bat.
* When the examination finished, the candidate felt as light as a feather.
* When the teacher entered the class, the 6th-grade students were fighting like cats and dogs.
* The diplomat said the friendship of the two countries was as deep as an ocean.
* The desert traveler’s hopes were dashed, as when at last he reached a well, it was as dry as a bone.
* His opponent was trying to infuriate him, but he remained as cool as cucumber.
* The laborer remained busy at work all day long, and slept like a log that night.
* The [audience](https://literarydevices.net/audience/) listened to his spellbinding speech as quietly as mice.
* The young athlete looked as strong as an ox.
* The student moved as fast as lightning after getting permission from the teacher for an early release.
* The history paper was as tricky as a labyrinth.
* The boys in the playing field were feeling as happy as dogs with two tails.

## Function of simile

From the above discussion, we can infer the function of similes, both in everyday life, and in literature. Using similes attracts attention, and appeals directly to the senses of listeners or readers, encouraging their imaginations to understand what is being communicated. In addition, it rhythm life-like quality in our daily speech, and in the characters of [fiction](https://literarydevices.net/fiction/) or poetry.

Simile allows readers to relate the feelings of a writer or a poet to their personal experiences. Therefore, the use of similes makes it easier for readers to understand the subject matter of a literary text, which may have been otherwise too demanding to be comprehended. Like metaphors, similes also offer variety in our ways of thinking and offer new perspectives on the world.

## Definition of Metaphor

Metaphor is a [figure of speech](https://literarydevices.net/figure-of-speech/) that makes an implicit, implied, or hidden [comparison](https://literarydevices.net/comparison/) between two things that are unrelated, but which share some common characteristics. In other words, a resemblance of two contradictory or different objects is made based on a single or some common characteristics.

For instance, calling a person a “night owl,” or an “early bird,” or saying “life is a journey,” are common examples of metaphors heard and understood by most of us. Below are some more conventional metaphors we often hear in our daily lives:

* My brother was **boiling mad**. (This implies he was too angry.)
* The assignment was a **breeze**. (This implies that the assignment was not difficult.)
* It is going to be **clear skies** from now on. (This implies that clear skies are not a threat and life is going to be without hardships)
* The skies of his future began to **darken**. (Darkness is a threat; therefore, this implies that the coming times are going to be hard for him.)
* Her [voice](https://literarydevices.net/voice/) is **music to his ears**. (This implies that her voice makes him feel happy)
* He saw the **soul of dust** when passing through the dust storm.
* Chaos is **the breeding ground of order**.
* War is the **mother of all battles**.
* Her dance is **a great** [**poem**](https://literarydevices.net/poem/).
* A new **road to freedom** passes through this **valley of death**.
* My conscience is my barometer.
* His white face shows his concern.
* His kisses are like roses.
* He married her to have a trophy wife.
* Laughter is the best medicine.
* Words are daggers when spoken in anger.
* His words are pearls of wisdom.

## Function of Metaphor

From the above arguments, explanations, and examples, we can easily infer the function of metaphors; both in our daily lives and in a piece of literature. Using appropriate metaphors appeals directly to the senses of listeners or readers, sharpening their imaginations to comprehend what is being communicated to them. Moreover, it gives a life-like quality to our conversations, and to the characters of the [fiction](https://literarydevices.net/fiction/) or poetry. Metaphors are also ways of thinking, offering the listeners and the readers fresh ways of examining ideas and viewing the world.

## Metonymy Definition

Metonymy is a [figure of speech](https://literarydevices.net/figure-of-speech/) that replaces the name of a thing with the name of something else with which it is closely associated.

* “England decides to keep check on immigration.” (*England* refers to the government.)
* “The pen is mightier than the sword.” (*Pen* refers to written words, and *sword* to military force.)
* “The Oval Office was busy in work.” (The *Oval Office* is a metonymy, as it stands for people who work in the office.)
* “Let me give you a hand.” (*Hand* means help.)

## Function of Metonymy

Generally, metonymy is used in developing literary [symbolism](https://literarydevices.net/symbolism/), meaning it gives more profound meanings to otherwise common ideas and objects. By using metonymy, texts exhibit deeper or hidden meanings, thus drawing readers’ attention. In addition, the use of metonymy helps achieve conciseness. For instance, “Rifles were guarding the gate” is more concise than “The guards with rifles in their hands were guarding the gate.”

## Definition of Personification

Personification is a [figure of speech](https://literarydevices.net/figure-of-speech/) in which a thing – an idea or an [animal](https://animals.net/) – is given human attributes. The non-human objects are portrayed in such a way that we feel they have the ability to act like human beings. For example, when we say, “The sky weeps,” we are giving the sky the ability to cry, which is a human quality. Thus, we can say that the sky has been personified in the given sentence.

**Examples of Personification**

1. Look at my car. She is a beauty, isn’t she?
2. The wind whispered through dry grass.
3. The flowers danced in the gentle breeze.
4. Time and tide wait for none.
5. The fire swallowed the entire forest.
6. The shadow of the moon danced on the lake.
7. There was a heavy thunderstorm, the wind snorted outside, rattling my windowpanes.
8. The flowers were blooming, and the bees kissed them every now and then.
9. The flood raged over the entire village.
10. The tread of time is so ruthless that it tramples even the kings under its feet.
11. It was early morning – I met a cat yawning and stretching in the street.
12. The skyscraper was so tall that it seemed to kiss the sky.
13. The tree was pulled down, and the birds lamented over its dead body.
14. The tall pines in the hilly area fondled the clouds.
15. The long road to his home was a twisting snake, with no visible end.
16. The full moon peeped through partial clouds.
17. His car suffered a severe stroke in the middle of the road, and refused to move forward.
18. The ship danced over the undulating waves of the ocean.
19. When he sat the test, the words and the ideas fled from his mind.
20. When he came out of the house of his deceased friend, everything looked to him to be weeping.

## Function of Personification

Personification is not merely a decorative device, but serves the purpose of giving deeper meanings to literary texts. It adds vividness to expressions, as we always look at the world from a human [perspective](https://literarydevices.net/perspective/). Writers and poets rely on personification to bring inanimate things to life, so that their nature and actions are understood in a better way. Because it is easier for us to relate to something that is human, or which possesses human traits, its use encourages us to develop a perspective that is new as well as creative.

## Onomatopoeia Definition

Onomatopoeia, pronounced on-uh-mat-uh–**pee**–uh, is defined as a word which imitates the natural sounds of a thing. It creates a sound effect that mimics the thing described, making the description more expressive and interesting.

**Examples of Onomatopoeia**

* The **buzzing** bee flew away.
* The sack fell into the river with a **splash**.
* The books fell on the table with a loud **thump**.
* He looked at the **roaring**
* The **rustling** leaves kept me awake

## Function of Onomatopoeia

Generally, words are used to tell what is happening. Onomatopoeia, on the other hand, helps readers to hear the sounds of the words they reflect. Hence, the reader cannot help but enter the world created by the poet with the aid of these words. The beauty of onomatopoeic words lies in the fact that they are bound to have an effect on the readers’ senses, whether that effect is understood or not.

## Definition of Oxymoron

Oxymoron is a [figure of speech](https://literarydevices.net/figure-of-speech/) in which two opposite ideas are joined to create an effect. The common oxymoron phrase is a combination of an adjective proceeded by a noun with contrasting meanings, such as “cruel kindness,” or “living death”.

**Examples of Oxymoron**

1. Open secret
2. Tragic [comedy](https://literarydevices.net/comedy/)
3. Seriously funny
4. Awfully pretty
5. Foolish wisdom
6. Original copies
7. Liquid gas

 There was a **love-hate** relationship between the two neighboring states.

 The professor was giving a lecture on **virtual reality**.

 **Paid volunteers** were working for the company.

 The channel was repeating the **old news** again and again.

 The contractor was asked to give the **exact estimate** of the project.

 A lot of soldiers have been killed in **friendly fire**.

 The doctor was **absolutely unsure** of the nature of his illness.

 All the politicians **agreed to disagree**.

 There was an employee in the office who was **regularly irregular**.

 The [hero](https://literarydevices.net/hero/) of the play was so dejected that he was the perfect embodiment of being **alone in a crowd**.

 The heads of state gathered to determine an **approximate solution** to the crisis.

## Function of Oxymoron

Oxymoron produces a dramatic effect in both [prose](https://literarydevices.net/prose/) and poetry. For instance, when we read or hear the famous oxymoron, “sweet sorrow,” crafted by Shakespeare, it appeals to us instantly. It provokes our thoughts, and makes us ponder the meaning of contradicting ideas.

## Synecdoche Definition

Synecdoche is a literary device in which a part of something represents the whole, or it may use a whole to represent a part. Synecdoche may also use larger groups to refer to smaller groups, or vice versa. It may also call a thing by the name of the material it is made of, or it may refer to a thing in a container or packaging by the name of that container or packing.

* The word “bread” refers to food or money, as in “Writing is my bread and butter,” or “He is the sole breadwinner.”
* The phrase “gray beard” refers to an old man.
* The word “sails” refers to a whole ship.
* The word “suit” refers to a businessman.
* The word “boots” usually refers to soldiers.
* The term “coke” is a common synecdoche for all carbonated drinks.
* “Pentagon” is a synecdoche when it refers to a few decision makers.
* The word “glasses” refers to spectacles.

## Function of Synecdoche

Literary [symbolism](https://literarydevices.net/symbolism/) is developed by the writers who employ synecdoche in their literary works. By using synecdoche, writers give otherwise common ideas and objects deeper meanings, and thus draw readers’ attention. Furthermore, the use of synecdoche helps writers to achieve brevity. For instance, saying “The soldiers were equipped with steel” is more concise than saying “The soldiers were equipped with swords, knives, daggers, and arrows.”

## CHAPTER – II : Language and Emotion

## Definition of Hyperbole

Hyperbole, derived from a Greek word meaning “over-casting,” is a [figure of speech](https://literarydevices.net/figure-of-speech/) that involves an [exaggeration](https://literarydevices.net/exaggeration/) of ideas for the sake of emphasis.

**Examples of Hyperbole**

* My grandmother is as old as the hills.
* Your suitcase weighs a ton!
* She is as heavy as an elephant!
* I am dying of shame.
* I am trying to solve a million issues these days.
* He saw a man as tall a power poll.

 He saw his childhood friend after ages.

 The weather was so hot that literally everything was on fire.

*  The boy was dying to get a new school bag.

## Function of Hyperbole

The above arguments make clear the use of hyperbole. In our daily conversation, we use hyperbole to create an amusing effect, or to emphasize our meaning. However, in literature it has very serious implications. By using hyperbole, a writer or a poet makes common human feelings remarkable and intense to such an extent that they do not remain ordinary.

## Definition of Irony

Irony is a [figure of speech](https://literarydevices.net/figure-of-speech/) in which words are used in such a way that their intended meaning is different from the actual meaning of the words. It may also be a situation that ends up in quite a different way than what is generally anticipated. In simple words, it is a difference between appearance and reality.

## Types of Irony

On the grounds of the above definition, we distinguish two basic types of irony: (1) [verbal irony](https://literarydevices.net/verbal-irony/), and (2) [situational irony](https://literarydevices.net/situational-irony/). Verbal irony involves what one does not mean. For example, when in response to a foolish idea, we say, “What a great idea!” This is verbal irony. Situational irony occurs when, for instance, a man is chuckling at the misfortune of another, even when the same misfortune is, unbeknownst to him, befalling him.

**Examples of Irony**

some interesting examples of irony from our daily life:

* I posted a video on YouTube about how boring and useless YouTube is.
* The name of Britain’s biggest dog was “Tiny.”
* You laugh at a person who slipped stepping on a banana peel, and the next thing you know, you’ve slipped too.
* The butter is as soft as a slab of marble.
* “Oh great! Now you have broken my new camera.”

 The doctor is as kind hearted as a wolf.

 He took a much-needed vacation, backpacking in the mountains. Unfortunately, he came back dead tired.

 His friend’s hand was as soft as a rock.

 The desert was as cool as a bed of burning coals.

 The student was given ‘excellent’ on getting zero in the exam.

 The roasted chicken was as tender as a leather boot.

 He was in such a harried state that he drove the entire way at 20 miles per hour.

 He enjoyed his job about as much as a root canal.

 My friend’s kids get along like cats and dogs.

 Their new boss was as civilized as a shark.

 The new manager is as friendly as a rattlesnake.

 The weather was as balmy as a winter day in Siberia.

 A vehicle was parked right in front of the no-parking sign.

* The CEO of a big tobacco company said he did not smoke.

## Function of Irony

Like all other figures of speech, irony brings about some added meanings to a situation. Ironical statements and situations in literature develop readers’ interest. Irony makes a work of literature more intriguing, and forces the readers to use their imaginations to comprehend the underlying meanings of the texts. Moreover, real life is full of ironical expressions and situations. Therefore, the use of irony brings a work of literature to the life.

## Understatement Definition

An understatement is a [figure of speech](https://literarydevices.net/figure-of-speech/) employed by writers or speakers to intentionally make a situation seem less important than it really is.

An understatement usually has an ironic effect, as an equally intense response is expected in severe situations, but the statement in response is the opposite of what was expected. For instance, your friend returns your new coat with a large wine stain on the front of it. In response, you make an understatement, “It doesn’t look too bad.” Therefore, an understatement is opposite to another figure of speech, [hyperbole](https://literarydevices.net/hyperbole/), which is an [overstatement](https://literarydevices.net/overstatement/).

**Common Understatement Examples**

* “Deserts are sometimes hot, dry, and sandy.” – Describing deserts of the world.
* “He is not too thin.” – Describing an obese person.
* “It rained a bit more than usual.” – Describing an area being flooded by heavy rainfall.
* “It was O.K.” – Said by the student who got the highest score on the test.
* “It is a bit nippy today.” – Describing the temperature, which is 5 degrees below freezing.

## Function of Understatement

An understatement is a tool that helps to develop other figures of speech, such as [irony](https://literarydevices.net/irony/) and [sarcasm](https://literarydevices.net/sarcasm/), by deliberately decreasing the severity of a situation, when an intense response is expected by the listeners or the readers.

## Pathetic Fallacy Definition

Pathetic [fallacy](https://literarydevices.net/fallacy/) is a literary device that attributes human qualities and emotions to inanimate objects of nature. The word pathetic in the term is not used in the derogatory sense of being miserable; rather, it stands for “imparting emotions to something else.”

Examples:1. William Wordsworth, in his [poem](https://literarydevices.net/poem/) I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud, says:

“I wandered lonely as a cloud  
That floats on high o’er vales and hills,”

The poet describes clouds as lonely, in order to describe his own state.

2. Keats employs pathetic Fallacy in his Ode to Melancholy:

“But when the melancholy fit shall fall  
Sudden from heaven like a weeping cloud  
That fosters the droop-headed flowers all  
And hides the green hills in an April shroud”

The feeling of melancholy has been described by attributing the human emotion  of weeping to the clouds.

3. For example, the sentence “The somber clouds darkened our mood” is a pathetic fallacy, as human attributes are given to an inanimate object of nature reflecting a mood. But, the sentence “The sparrow talked to us” is a personification because the animate object of nature – the sparrow – is given the human quality of “talking.”

## Function of Pathetic Fallacy

By employing pathetic fallacy, writers try to bring inanimate objects to life, so that the nature of emotions they want to convey is understood in a better way. This is because it is easier for readers to relate to abstract emotions when they observe it in their natural surroundings. In addition, the use of pathetic fallacy encourages readers to develop a [perspective](https://literarydevices.net/perspective/) that is new as well as creative.