

Examples of Figurative Language

[Figurative language](#) can be found in literature and poetry where the writing appeals to the senses. It can do this by giving a word with a specific meaning, by comparing two things in such a way that you find the comparison interesting or by using words that have unusual constructions or sounds.

Figurative Language: Understanding the Concept

You are using figurative language when writing goes beyond the actual meanings of words so that the reader gains new insights into the objects or subjects in the work.

One of the best ways to really understand the concept of figurative language is to see it in action such as with these examples:

- Alright, the sky misses the sun at night.
- The poorest man is the richest, and the rich are poor.
- Hear the mellow wedding bells. - Edgar Allen Poe
- Out of reach, I pull out with a screech.
- I move fast like a cheetah on the Serengeti.
- Her head was spinning from all the new information.
- The toast jumped out of the toaster.
- I'm so hungry I could eat a horse.
- The Sea lashed out in anger at the ships, unwilling to tolerate another battle.
- The Redcoats are coming!
- I've told you a million times to clean your room!

Types of Figurative Language

There are many types of figurative language. Some include the use of a specific type of word or word meaning such as:

- [Simile](#)
- [Metaphor](#)
- Personification
- [Hyperbole](#)
- [Symbolism](#)

Figurative language can also include unusual constructions or combinations of words that give a new perspective on the word such as:

- [Alliteration](#)
- [Onomatopoeia](#)
- [Idiom](#)

Following is an explanation of each type of figurative language, each with an example of figurative language:

Simile

A simile compares two things using the words “like” and “as.” Examples include:

- busy as a bee
- clean as a whistle
- brave as a lion
- stand out like a sore thumb
- as easy as shooting fish in a barrel
- as dry as a bone
- as funny as a barrel of monkeys
- they fought like cats and dogs
- like watching grass grow

Metaphor

When you use a metaphor, you make a statement that doesn’t make sense literally, like “time is a thief.” It only makes sense when the similarities between the two things become apparent or someone understands the connection.

Examples include:

- the world is my oyster
- you are a couch potato
- time is money
- he has a heart of stone
- America is a melting pot
- you are my sunshine

Personification

Personification gives human characteristics to inanimate objects, animals, or ideas. This can really affect the way the reader imagines things. This is used in children’s books, poetry, and fictional literature. Examples include:

- opportunity knocked on the door
- the sun greeted me this morning
- the sky was full of dancing stars
- the vines wove their fingers together to form a braid
- the radio stopped singing and stared at me
- the sun played hide and seek with the clouds

Hyperbole

Hyperbole is an outrageous exaggeration that emphasizes a point, and can be ridiculous or funny. Hyperboles can be added to fiction to add color and depth to a character. Examples are:

- You snore louder than a freight train.
- It's a slow burg. I spent a couple of weeks there one day.
- She is so dumb, she thinks Taco Bell is a Mexican phone company.
- I had to walk 15 miles to school in the snow, uphill.
- You could have knocked me over with a feather.

Symbolism

Symbolism occurs when a word which has meaning in itself but is used to represent something entirely different. Examples are:

- Using an image of the American flag to represent patriotism and a love for one's country.
- Using an apple pie to represent an American lifestyle.
- Using an apple to represent education.

Alliteration

Alliteration is the easiest of the examples of figurative language to spot. It is a repetition of the first consonant sounds in several words. Some good examples are:

- wide-eyed and wondering while we wait for others to waken

and tongue twisters like:

- Betty bought butter but the butter was bitter, so Betty bought better butter to make the bitter butter better.

Onomatopoeia

Onomatopoeia is the use of words that sound like their meaning, or mimic sounds. They add a level of fun and reality to writing. Here are some examples:

- the burning wood hissed and crackled
- the words: beep, whirr, click, whoosh, swish, zap, zing, ping, clang, bong, hum, boom, munch, gobble, crunch, pow, smash, wham, quack, meow, oink, and tweet.

Idiom

An idiom is an expression that has a meaning that is only known to a particular group of people. For example:

- Kick the bucket
- Raining cats and dogs
- Whistling Dixie

Regardless of the type of word used, figurative language can make you look at the world differently; it can heighten your senses and help you feel like you are having the same experience as the author.