

Keep this handout in the Reading section your binder all year

Figurative Language

Whenever you describe something by comparing it with something else, you are using figurative language. In other words language that goes beyond the literal meaning of words to furnish new effects or fresh insights into an idea or a subject. Here are the different kinds of figurative language we will study:

1. Idioms

Idioms are language specific expressions that can only be understood through common use; whereas the literal definition of the idiom, itself, does not communicate its meaning. *Example: "back breaking work," "bare handed," "fair minded."*

2. Simile

This is a figure of speech that involves a direct comparison between two unlike things using the words "like" or "as." *Example: The muscles on his brawny arms are strong as iron bands.*

3. Metaphor

This figure of speech is a lot like a simile because it involves an implied comparison between two unlike things **however "like" or "as" are NOT used.** *Example: The road was a ribbon of moonlight.*

4. Hyperbole

When an author exaggerates a statement to heighten effect, it is called hyperbole. It is not used to mislead the reader, but to emphasize a point. *Example: She's said so on several million occasions.*

5. Personification

A figure of speech gives the qualities of a person to an animal, object, or idea. It is a comparison that the author uses to show something in an entirely new light, to communicate a certain feeling or attitude towards it, and to control the way the reader perceives it. *Example describing a tree: A brave handsome brute that fell with a creaking rending cry.*

6. Onomatopoeia

This figure of speech uses words that mimic sounds and sometimes authors will even invent words to mimic a sound. They appeal to our sense of hearing and they help bring a description to life. *Example: Crackle! Snap! Pop! Slurp!*

7. Imagery

Whenever an author's description of people or objects is stated in terms of our sense of sight, smell, touch, taste or feeling, it is imagery. *Example: the bumpy texture of the wall.*

8. Alliteration

Often used in poetry, alliteration is the repetition of consonant sounds occurring at the beginning of words or within words to create melody, establish mood, call attention to important words, and point out similarities and contrasts. *Example: wide-eyed and wondering while we wait for others to waken.*