

# **Figures of Speech**

## **Metaphor**

An implied comparison between two dissimilar things based on something important that is actually in common is called metaphor. E.g.

“All the world's a stage,  
And all the men and women merely players;  
They have their exits and their entrances;” (*As You Like It*)

## **Simile**

A comparison between two things that are essentially dissimilar, but have certain qualities in common using words “as” or “like”. E.g.

“She walks in beauty, like the night  
Of cloudless climes and starry skies;”

## **Alliteration**

The repetition of consonant sounds in a phrase or line is called alliteration. E.g. “she sells sea shells on the sea shore”.

## Irony

Using words that are opposite to the meaning that is meant to be conveyed. E.g. “I have been assured by a very knowing American of my acquaintance in London, that a young healthy child well nursed is at a year old a most delicious, nourishing, and wholesome food, whether stewed, roasted, baked, or boiled; and I make no doubt that it will equally serve in a fricassee or a ragout.” (*A Modest Proposal*)

Or,

Something that is unusual and unexpected as per given situation. E.g. “And the irony is that William Shakespeare’s birth and death dates are the same”.

Irony can be found in three forms in English-

- **Situational irony** – This is when the opposite of what is expected to happen occurs.
- **Verbal irony** – This is when what is being said is the exact opposite of what the speaker means.
- **Dramatic irony** – This occurs when the audience or reader knows what is ironic in the situation, but the character does not know its predicament.

## Personification

A figure of speech in which an inanimate object or abstract idea is endowed with human qualities or abilities. E.g. "Mumbai is a city that never sleeps" or "The winged seeds, where they lie cold and low, Each like a corpse within its grave, until Thine azure sister of the Spring shall blow" (Ode to the West Wind).

## Hyperbole

An exaggerated statement or the use of exaggerated, extravagant terms for the purpose of emphasis or heightened effect is called hyperbole. E.g.

"The brightness of her cheek would shame those stars.  
As daylight doth a lamp. Her eye in heaven  
Would through the airy region stream so bright  
That birds would sing and think it were not night."  
(*Romeo and Juliet*)

## Onomatopoeia

These are sound words; the use of words that imitate the sounds associated with the object they refer to. E.g. "buzzing of the bees", "gushing of the river water", "the cat was meowing the whole night", etc.

## Allusion

The act of referring to something in a literary text so that the meaning is understood quickly is called allusion. It is an indirect reference. E.g. "We have an Einstein in our class" and "They loiter around in the whole city like Romeos".

## Paradox

A phrase, statement or even a whole paragraph that seems to contradict itself is called paradox. E.g. "All animals are equal, but some animals are more equal than others" (*Animal Farm*) and "Less is more".

## Oxymoron

When two antithetical or contradictory words or ideas are placed next to each other, it is called oxymoron. At first look oxymoron might appear absurd, however the juxtaposition of the two contrasting words add a sense of irony to it and add to a dramatic effect to the meaning that is being conveyed. E.g. "This is seriously funny" or "O Loving Hate" (*Romeo and Juliet*).

## Pun

A play on words is called pun. It can work as either different senses of the same word or the similar sense or sound of different words. E.g. "My blood group is B-

positive” and “I have been to the dentist so many times now that I know the drill”.

## **Assonance**

Repetition of internal vowels in neighbouring words is called assonance. E.g. “Peter Piper picked a peck of pickled peppers”

## **Apostrophe**

Addressing some absent person, thing, abstract quality, object, or a non-existent character is called apostrophe.

Example:

"O, pardon me, thou bleeding piece of earth" (*Julius Caesar*)

## **Euphemism**

Substituting an inoffensive or crude term, something that is considered offensively explicit, with words or phrases that sound more acceptable or less harsh is called euphemism. E.g. “He passed away”.

## **Metonymy**

A figure of speech in which one word or phrase is substituted for another with which it's closely associated is called metonymy. E.g. “Pen is mightier

than sword” and “The Crown is still the constitutional head of the state in England”.

### **Synecdoche**

A figure of speech in which a part is used to represent the whole E.g. “I will take the wheels for a spin” and “it took 2000 hands to complete the construction work”.

### **Anaphora**

The repetition of the same word or phrase at the beginning of successive clauses or sentences is called anaphora. E.g.

“I came, I saw, I conquered” (*Julius Caesar*)

“It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness, it was the epoch of belief, it was the epoch of incredulity, it was the season of light, it was the season of darkness, it was the spring of hope, it was the winter of despair.” (*A Tale of Two Cities*)

### **Cataphora**

Where an earlier expression or word refers to a forward expression, person or thing is called cataphora. E.g. “After he played cricket for 3 straight hours, Ram slept like a baby” and “If you want some, here’s some milk”.

## **Litotes**

A figure of speech that consists of double negatives is called litotes. Affirmative is expressed by negating 2 negatives. E.g. “She’s not dumb” and “You are not wrong”.

## **Antaclasis**

It is a rhetorical device in which a word is repeated in a sentence but its meaning changes in the second instance. It can be categorized as a type of pun. E.g. “The judge doesn’t judge any criminals” and “If you aren’t fired with enthusiasm, you will be fired with enthusiasm”.

## **Climax**

A figure of speech in which words, phrases, or clauses are arranged in an ascending order of importance or emphasis. E.g. “I came, I saw, I conquered” (*Julius Caesar*)

## **Anticlimax**

A figure of speech in which words, phrases or statements gradually descend in order of importance. E.g. “He Instagram bio says- ‘Proud mother, wife and lawyer’”.

## Chiasmus

A figure of speech in which two or more parts of a sentence are reversed. E.g. “we **forget** what we want to **remember** but we **remember** what we want to **forget**”.

## Understatement

A figure of speech in which words that are spoken are of lesser importance or value than the actual situation. The object is being described as much less than it really is. E.g. “It is a little warm in Tropical countries” and “Ay, ay, a scratch, a scratch. Marry, 'tis enough. / Where is my page? -- Go, villain, fetch a surgeon.” (Mercutio, *Romeo and Juliet*).

## Dysphemism

It is the opposite of Euphemism. It is the use of a harsh, more offensive or harsher word instead of one considered less harsh. It is said with the intention to shock or offend. E.g. calling a “cigarette” a “cancer stick” and “He has gone cold”,

## Ellipsis

Using punctuation to refer to an omitted word or suggest that some words originally fill the given space. It can be used to either suggest a pause in speech or to



reduce the length of long paragraphs. It can also be used at the end of the sentence to suggest it is unfinished. It is generally denoted using three dots (...)  
E.g. "I know she deserved to win but..." and "It was the best of times...it was the winter of despair."

### **Merism**

It is a figure of speech in which a combination of two contrasting parts of the whole refer to the whole. It is a kind of synecdoche. E.g. "Flesh and bone" is used to refer to body and "left right and centre" suggesting the whole of something.

### **Tautology**

To say something twice over or the repetition of the same idea using different words or phrases is called tautology. E.g. "It is ditto same" and "Pardon, can you say that again?".