

# Trope

## Definition of Trope

Trope is a [figure of speech](#) through which speakers or writers intend to express meanings of words differently than their literal meanings. In other words, it is a metaphorical or figurative use of words in which writers shift from the literal meanings of words to their non-literal meanings. The trope, in fact, could be a phrase, a word, or an image used to create artistic effect. We may find its use almost anywhere, such as in literature, political [rhetoric](#), and everyday speech.

## Types of Trope

Depending upon the meanings and understanding of trope, it has been classified into several types. Some of its types include, [irony](#), [hyperbole](#), [metaphor](#), [allegory](#), [litotes](#), pun, [personification](#), [simile](#), [metonymy](#), and [synecdoche](#). Here are some examples of the types of trope:

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### Example #1: *Romeo & Juliet* (By William Shakespeare)

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#### Irony

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Irony is used to imply an opposite meaning to the literal meaning of an idea, such as in the opening lines of *Romeo & Juliet*:

“Two households, both alike in dignity...”

Shakespeare leads the [audience](#) to believe that Montague and Capulet are both respectful families. However, as the [narrative](#) proceeds, we realize that both families were not noble. Many of their actions were not worthy of their

good positions in society. Hence, Shakespeare has used irony to develop this situation.

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### **Example #2: *A Red, Red Rose* (By Robert Burns)**

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#### **Hyperbole**

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This type of trope uses exaggerated statement for effect or emphasis. It is contrary to [understatement](#) and, like metaphor and simile, is overstated and ridiculous. We usually find its usage in oral communication and literature, such as:

“As fair art thou, my bonnie lass,  
So deep in luve am I;  
And I will love thee still, my dear,  
Till a’ the seas gang dry.

Till a’ the seas gang dry, my dear,  
And the rocks melt wi’ the sun:  
O I will love thee still, my dear,  
While the sands o’ life shall run.”

In this poem, the poet uses hyperbole by overstating his love for his beloved, that he would love her until the seas dry, and rocks melt with the sun. In fact, the poet has used [exaggeration](#) to emphasize the power of his love.

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### **Example #3: *To His Coy Mistress* (By Andrew Marvell)**

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#### **Litotes**

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This type of trope is opposite to hyperbole in that it is an understatement that negates its opposite.

“The grave’s a fine a private place,  
But none I think do there embrace.”

In these lines, the poet tries to understate the idea that he is unable to have sex with his beloved in this world, and suggests the opposite idea of having it in coffins where they could have privacy. However, there would be no hugging at all.

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#### **Example #4: *Hamlet* (By William Shakespeare)**

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#### **Metonymy**

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Metonymy is a type of trope in which an alternative name takes the place of the name of an original idea, while both are closely associated. As in William Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, we can find use of metonymy many times, such as the ghost of Hamlet's father referring to his assassin:

“The serpent that did sting thy father's life.”

In another case, we see when Polonius advises his son Laertes to

“Give every man thy ear, but few they [voice](#).”

This means to imply that he should pay attention to what others say, speaking little.

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#### **Example #5: *The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock* (By T. S. Eliot)**

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#### **Synecdoche**

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Synecdoche is a type of trope in which a part of a thing or idea represents the whole thing. T. S. Eliot uses this figure of speech several times in his poem *The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock*. The poet uses faces as a synecdoche in this line:

“To prepare a face to meet the faces that you meet ...”

Here, the “face” represents the entire person. Again, he uses eyes as a

“And I have known the eyes already, known them all —  
The eyes that fix you in a formulated phrase ...”

Where, the eyes are a small part that represent the whole person. Then, he makes use of arms as a synecdoche to represent a whole woman as:

“And I have known the arms already ...  
Arms that lie along a table, or wrap about a shawl.”

## **Function of Trope**

Since trope is a figurative expression, its major function is to give additional meaning to the texts, and allow readers to think profoundly, to understand the idea or a [character](#). Also, it creates images that produce artistic effects on the audience's senses. Through trope, writers intensify normal human feelings into extraordinary emotions, where they feel that those emotions are not ordinary. Additionally, most types of trope present comparisons that make the understanding of the text easier for readers.