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# ENGLISH

## Figure of Speech

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## Alliteration

The repetition of an initial consonant sound.

**Example:** Sally sells seashells.

"Peter Piper picked a peck of pickled peppers."

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## Allusion

The act of alluding is to make indirect reference. It is a literary device, a figure of speech that quickly stimulates different ideas and associations using only a couple of words.

**Example:** David was being such a scrooge!. (Scrooge" is the allusion, and it refers to Charles Dicken's novel, A Christmas Carol. Scrooge was very greedy and unkind, which David was being compared to.)

- ❑ “Don’t act like a Romeo in front of her.” – “Romeo” is a reference to Shakespeare’s Romeo, a passionate lover of Juliet, in “Romeo and Juliet”.
- ❑ The rise in poverty will unlock the Pandora’s box of crimes. – This is an allusion to one of Greek Mythology’s origin myth, “Pandora’s box”.

## Anticlimax

Refers to a figure of speech in which statements gradually descend in order of importance.

### Example:

- ☐ She is a great writer, a mother and a good humorist.
- ☐ He lost his family, his car and his cell phone.

## Antiphrasis

A figure of speech in which a word or phrase is used to mean the opposite of its normal meaning to create ironic humorous effect. From the Greek : anti "opposite" and phrasis, "diction".

### Example:

- ☐ She's so beautiful. She has an attractive long nose.
- ☐ She's so *beautiful*. She has an *attractive* long nose.
- ☐ "Get in, *little* man," he told his fat old friend.
- ☐ It is a *cool* 45 degrees Celsius in the shade.

## Antithesis

The juxtaposition of contrasting ideas in balanced phrases.

### Example:

- ❑ Many are called, but few are chosen.
- ❑ "Man proposes, God disposes." - *Source unknown*.
- ❑ "Love is an ideal thing, marriage a real thing." - *Goethe*.
- ❑ "That's one small step for man, one giant leap for mankind." - *Neil Armstrong*.

## Apostrophe

Breaking off discourse to address some absent person or thing, some abstract quality, an inanimate object, or a nonexistent character.

### Example:

- ☐ "O, pardon me, thou bleeding piece of earth,
- ☐ That I am meek and gentle with these butchers!
- ☐ Thou art the ruins of the noblest man
- ☐ That ever lived in the tide of times.
- ☐ Shakespeare, *Julius Caesar*, Act 3, Scene 1
- ☐ "Death, be not proud, though some have called thee Mighty and dreadful,  
for thou art not so."
- ☐ John Donne, *Holy Sonnet X*
- ☐ "Hello darkness, my old friend
- ☐ I've come to talk with you again."
- ☐ Paul Simon, *The Sounds of Silence*

## Assonance

Identity or similarity in sound between internal vowels in neighboring words.

### Example:

- ❑ "The crumbling thunder of seas" – Robert Louis Stevenson
- ❑ "The silken sad uncertain rustling of each purple curtain"
- ❑ "That solitude which suits abstruser musings"



## Cataphora

Refers to a figure of speech where an earlier expression refers to or describes a forward expression. Cataphora is the opposite of anaphora, a reference forward as opposed to backward in the discourse.

### Example:

- ❑ After he had received his orders, the soldier left the barracks. (he is also a cataphoric reference to the soldier which is mentioned later in the discourse.)
- ❑ If you want them, there are cookies in the kitchen. (*them* is an instance of cataphora because it refers to *cookies* which hasn't been mentioned in the discourse prior to that point.)

## Chiasmus

A verbal pattern in which the second half of an expression is balanced against the first but with the parts reversed.

### Example:

- ☐ He knowingly led and we followed blindly
- ☐ *Swift as an arrow flying, fleeing like a hare afraid*
- ☐ 'Bad men live that they may eat and drink, whereas good men eat and drink that they may live.' Socrates (fifth century B.C.)

## Climax

Refers to a figure of speech in which words, phrases, or clauses are arranged in order of increasing importance.

### Example:

- ❑ "There are three things that will endure: faith, hope, and love. But the greatest of these is love." 1 Corinthians 13:13
- ❑ This note was a promise that all men, yes, black men as well as white men, would be guaranteed the "unalienable Rights" of "Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness."
- ❑ *Martin Luther King, I Have a Dream*

## Dysphemism

Refers to the use of a harsh, more offensive word instead of one considered less harsh. Dysphemism is often contrasted with euphemism. Dysphemisms are generally used to shock or offend.

### Example:

- ☐ Snail mail for postal mail.
- ☐ *Egghead* for genius.
- ☐ *Worm food* for dead.
- ☐ *Pig* for policeman.
- ☐ *Bullshit* for lies.

## Ellipsis

Refers to the omission of a word or words. It refers to constructions in which words are left out of a sentence but the sentence can still be understood.

### Example:

- ☐ Lacy can do something about the problem, but I don't know what (she can do.)
- ☐ She can help with the housework; Nancy can (help with the housework), too.
- ☐ John can speak seven languages, but Ron can speak only two (languages.)

## Euphemism

The substitution of an inoffensive term for one considered offensively explicit.

### Example:

- ☐ Going to the other side for death Passed away for die
- ☐ *On the streets* for homeless.
- ☐ *Adult entertainment* for pornography.
- ☐ *Comfort woman* for prostitute
- ☐ *Between jobs* for unemployed.

## Hyperbole

An extravagant statement; the use of exaggerated terms for the purpose of emphasis or heightened effect.

### Example:

- ☐ The bag weighed a ton.
- ☐ She's older than the hills.
- ☐ I could sleep for a year; I was so tired.
- ☐ He's filthy rich. He's got tons of money.

## Irony

The use of words to convey the opposite of their literal meaning. A statement or situation where the meaning is contradicted by the appearance or presentation of the idea.

### Example:

- ☐ His argument was as clear as mud.
- ☐ The two identical twins were arguing.
- ☐ One of them told the other: "You're ugly"
- ☐ The thieves robbed the police station.



## Litotes

A figure of speech consisting of an understatement in which an affirmative is expressed by negating its opposite.

### Example:

- ☐ He's not a very generous man.
- ☐ She is not very beautiful.
- ☐ He is not the friendliest person I've met.
- ☐ Don't be too wicked.

## Merism

It is a figure of speech by which something is referred to by a conventional phrase that enumerates several of its constituents or traits.

### Example:

- ☐ Flesh and bone. (Referring to the body).
- ☐ *Search every nook and cranny.* (Search everywhere).
- ☐ *Sun, sea and sand.* (Referring to a holiday destination).
- ☐ *Young and old.* (Describing all the population.)

## Metaphor

An implied comparison between two unlike things that actually have something important in common.

### Example:

- ❑ All the world's a stage, And all the men and women merely players; They have their exits and their entrances; (William Shakespeare, As You Like It, 2/7)

## Metaplesis

It is a figure of speech in which reference is made to something by means of another thing that is remotely related to it, either through a causal relationship, or through another figure of speech.

### Example:

- ❑ A lead foot is driving behind me. (This refers to someone who drives fast. This metalepsis is achieved only through a cause and effect relationship. Lead is heavy and a heavy foot would press the accelerator, and this would cause the car to speed.)

**Was this the face that launched a thousand ships and burnt the topless towers of Ilium?** - Chistopher Marlowe, *Doctor Faustus*

A reference to the mythological figure Helen of Troy (or some would say, to Aphrodite). Her abduction by Paris was said to be the reason for a fleet of a thousand ships to be launched into battle, initiating the Trojan Wars.

**I've got to catch the worm tomorrow.**

"The early bird catches the worm" is a common maxim, advocating getting an early start on the day to achieve success. The subject, by referring to this maxim, is compared to the bird; tomorrow, the speaker will awaken early in order to achieve success.

## Metonymy

A figure of speech in which one word or phrase is substituted for another with which it's closely associated; also, the rhetorical strategy of describing something indirectly by referring to things around it.

### Example:

Crown. (For the power of a king.)

Dish. (To refer an entire plate of food.)

- ☐ The Pentagon. (For the Department of Defense and the offices of the U.S. Armed Forces.)
- ☐ Pen. (For the written word.)
- ☐ Sword - (For military force.)
- ☐ Hollywood. (For US Cinema.)

The White House. (Referring to the American administration.)

## Onomatopoeia

The use of words that imitate the sounds associated with the objects or actions they refer to.

### Example:

- ☐ Clap
- ☐ Murmur

## **Oxymoron**

A figure of speech in which incongruous or contradictory terms appear side by side.

### **Example:**

❑ Dark light Living dead

## Paradox

A statement that appears to contradict itself.

### Example:

- ❑ Drowning in the fountain of eternal life Deep down, you're really shallow.



## Personification

A figure of speech in which an inanimate object or abstraction is endowed with human qualities or abilities.

### Example:

"Ah, William, we're weary of weather," said the sunflowers, shining with dew. "Our travelling habits have tired us. Can you give us a room with a view?" They arranged themselves at the window and counted the steps of the sun, and they both took root in the carpet where the topaz tortoises run.

William Blake (1757-1827)

## Pun

A play on words, sometimes on different senses of the same word and sometimes on the similar sense or sound of different words.

### Example:

"Atheism is a non-prophet institution." (The word "prophet" is put in place of its homophone "profit", altering the common phrase "non-profit institution")

**Question:** Why do we still have troops in Germany?

**Answer:** To keep the Russians in Czech" - *Joke*.

This joke relies on the aural ambiguity of the homophones "check" and "Czech"

- ❑ "You can tune a guitar, but you can't tuna fish. Unless of course, you play bass." - *Douglas Adams*. The phrase uses the homophonic qualities of "*tune a*" and "*tuna*", as well as the homographic pun on "bass", in which ambiguity is reached through the identical spellings but different pronunciation of "*bass*": /'be?s/ (a string instrument), and /'bs/ (a kind of fish).

## Simile

A stated comparison (usually formed with "like" or "as") between two fundamentally dissimilar things that have certain qualities in common.

### Example:

- ☐ He fights like a lion.
- ☐ He slithers like a snake.
- ☐ "My dad was a mechanic by trade when he was in the Army, When he got the tools out, he was like a surgeon."

## Synecdoche

A figure of speech in which a part is used to represent the whole (for example, ABCs for alphabet) or the whole for a part ("England won the World Cup in 1966").

### Example:

- ❑ A hundred head of cattle (using the part head to refer to the whole animal)
- ❑ A general class of thing is used to refer to a smaller, more specific class -  
*The good book* (referring to the Bible or the Qur'an)
- ❑ A material is used to refer to an object composed of that material -  
*Glasses* or *steel* (referring to spectacles or sword)

## Tautology

A statement that says the same thing twice in different ways, or a statement that is unconditionally true by the way it is phrased.

### Example:

- ☐ Forward planning It's a free gift.
- ☐ The mobile phone is a new innovation.
- ☐ In my point of view, it is completely useless.
- ☐ These are necessary essentials.

## Understatement

A figure of speech in which a writer or speaker deliberately makes a situation seem less important or serious than it is.

### Example:

- ❑ "The grave's a fine and private place, But none, I think, do there embrace."  
(Andrew Marvell, "To His Coy Mistress")
- ❑ "It stings a bit" - a soldier describing the pain he feels after he has just lost his leg.
- ❑ "It has rained a little more than the average" - describing a flooded area.
- ❑ "It was an interesting experience." - describing a difficult unbearable experience.
- ❑ The grave's a fine and private place

**Hypophora** is a figure of speech in which the speaker raises a question and then answers it. Hypophora is different from rhetorical questions. In a rhetorical question the answer is not provided by the writer.

- ❑ "You ask, what is our policy? I will say: It is to wage war, by sea, land, and air, with all our might and with all the strength." — Winston Churchill, 4 June 1940.
- ❑ "Thirty-one cakes, dampened with whiskey, bask on window sills and shelves. Who are they for? Friends. Not necessarily neighbor friends: indeed, the larger share is intended for persons we've met maybe once, perhaps not at all. People who've struck our fancy. Like President Roosevelt." — Truman Capote, "A Christmas Memory." *Mademoiselle*, December 1956).

# **Exercise Questions**





Meow, where's my milk, cried the cat is an example of?

- (a) Litotes
- (b) Allusion
- (c) Onomatopoeia
- (d) Apostrophe

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Malacanang palace declared it's holiday today is an example of?

- (a) Metonymy
- (b) Anti-thesis
- (c) Irony
- (d) Allusion

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What kind of figure of speech is a direct comparison of two unlike things without using like and as?

- (a) Simile
- (b) Paradox
- (c) Metaphor
- (d) Oxymoron

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My father brought me new wheels is an example of?

- (a) Synecdoche
- (b) Hyperbole
- (c) Allusion
- (d) Apostrophe

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What kind of figure of speech is an opposite of what you mean?

- (a) Anti-thesis
- (b) Irony
- (c) Metonymy
- (d) Onomatopoeia

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A rich man is no richer than a poor man is an example of?

- (a) Hyperbole
- (b) Personification
- (c) Paradox
- (d) Litotes

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What kind of figure of speech is used to affirm by negating the opposite?

- (a) Synecdoche
- (b) Allusion
- (c) Litotes
- (d) Metonymy

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Virtually a sea but dry like a heart is an example of?

- (a) Irony
- (b) Personification
- (c) Anti-thesis
- (d) Apostrophe

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What kind of figure of speech is a represent the sound of what it is describe?

- (a) Simile
- (b) Metonymy
- (c) Metaphor
- (d) Onomatopoeia



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Roll on, thou dark and deep ocean. Roll!” is an example of?

- (a) Apostrophe
- (b) Oxymoron
- (c) Hyperbole
- (d) Metaphor

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'Out in the porch's sagging floor, Leaves got up in a coil and hissed, Blindly struck at my knee and missed.'

- (a) metaphor
- (b) irony
- (c) simile
- (d) hyperbole



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George Bush talked during his campaign about 'compassionate conservatism', which to many liberals sounds like a(n) \_\_\_\_\_.

- (a) oxymoron
- (b) euphemism
- (c) synecdoche
- (d) apostrophe

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'Necessity is the mother of invention.'

- (a) litotes
- (b) personification
- (c) oxymoron
- (d) paradox



14

'The poor people of Ireland should rid themselves of poverty by selling their children to the rich to eat.'

- (a) paradox
- (b) irony
- (c) logorrhoea
- (d) neologism

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The phrases 'the humming bee', 'the cackling hen', and 'the buzzing saw' are examples of \_\_\_\_\_.

- (a) onomatopoeia
- (b) metonymy
- (c) personification
- (d) spoonerisms

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'How many times have I told you to clean your room?'

- (a) rhetorical question
- (b) oxymoron
- (c) hyperbole
- (d) eponymy

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'To err is human, to forgive divine.'

- (a) antithesis
- (b) litotes
- (c) simile
- (d) irony

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'My uncle passed away in 1970.'

- (a) exclamation
- (b) tautology
- (c) apostrophe
- (d) euphemism



19

'When Detroit increased auto production recently, Wall Street applauded and the White House took credit.'

- (a) eponymy
- (b) simile
- (c) sesquipedalian
- (d) metonymy



'My rancher uncle bought 50 head of cattle last week.'

- (a) personification
- (b) oxymoron
- (c) euphemism
- (d) synecdoche

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‘My son's teacher made it clear that cheating on tests was no laughing matter’.

- (a) synecdoche
- (b) irony
- (c) onomatopoeia
- (d) litotes



'Hail divinest Melancholy, whose saintly visage is too bright to hit the sense of human sight.'

- (a) apostrophe
- (b) climax
- (c) anticlimax
- (d) euphemism



'I'm so hungry I could eat a horse!'

- (a) metaphor
- (b) hyperbole
- (c) metonymy
- (d) conceit



24

'Christianity shone like a beacon in the black night of paganism.' What figure of speech is "Christianity shone like a beacon"?

- (a) simile
- (b) litotes
- (c) conceit
- (d) climax





25

In Crown Hill Cemetery in Indianapolis are buried President Benjamin Harrison, 3 Vice-Presidents, 15 Senators and Governors, and John Dillinger.'

- (a) climax
- (b) metaphor
- (c) conceit
- (d) anticlimax

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Well, son, I'll tell you: Life for me ain't been no crystal stair. It's had tacks in it,  
And splinters, And boards torn up, And places with no carpet on the floor—  
Bare. (Langston Hughes, "Mother to Son")

- (a) synecdoche
- (b) metaphor
- (c) irony
- (d) pun



Turn off your television sets. Turn them off now! Turn them off right now! Turn them off and leave them off. Turn them off right in the middle of this sentence I'm speaking to you now. (Peter Finch as television anchorman Howard Beale in Network, 1976)

- (a) antithesis
- (b) litotes
- (c) anaphora
- (d) understatement



Substituting the word “euthanasia” for “mercy killing” or “killing the terminally ill”

- (a) hyperbole
- (b) euphemism
- (c) assonance
- (d) oxymoron



I had so much homework last night that I needed a pickup truck to carry all my books home!

- (a) synechdoche
- (b) onomatopoeia
- (c) pun
- (d) hyperbole



Let's just say that Bozo the Clown is not the brightest bulb on the Christmas tree.

- (a) paradox
- (b) litotes
- (c) apostrophe
- (d) chiasmus

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The chug-a, chug-a, chug-a of the train echoed down the hill, while a cloud of smoke rose up to the blue western sky.

- (a) simile
- (b) metonymy
- (c) anaphora
- (d) onomatopoeia

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But the prisoner would not answer, he only lay with wide, dark, bright, eyes, like a bound animal. (D. H. Lawrence, England, My England)

- (a) oxymoron
- (b) euphemism
- (c) anaphora
- (d) personification





You have a lot of work to do, so I'll lend you a hand.

- (a) assonance
- (b) apostrophe
- (c) irony
- (d) synecdoche

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Pitching pennies with the Pittsburgh Pirates in a pitter-patter of rain outside the Pitti Palace. (James Thurber, *Lanterns and Lances*, 1961)

- (a) chiasmus
- (b) alliteration
- (c) pun
- (d) oxymoron



35

O Western wind, when wilt thou blow that the small rain down can rain?  
Christ, that my love were in my arms, And I in my bed again! (Anonymous, "O  
Western Wind")

- (a) litotes
- (b) paradox
- (c) apostrophe
- (d) anaphora



36

The heart of a fool is in his mouth, but the mouth of a wise man is in his heart.  
(Benjamin Franklin)

- (a) hyperbole
- (b) chiasmus
- (c) litotes
- (d) anaphora

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We talked with each other about each other though neither of us spoke —  
(Emily Dickinson)

- (a) metonymy
- (b) paradox
- (c) synecdoche
- (d) personification

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The earth laughs beneath my heavy feet at the blasphemy in my old jangly walk (Billy Corgan, "Thirty-three")

- (a) euphemism
- (b) simile
- (c) antithesis
- (d) personification

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I dig my toes into the sand. The ocean looks like A thousand diamonds strewn  
Across a blue blanket. (Incubus, "Wish You Were Here")

- (a) chiasmus
- (b) simile
- (c) onomatopoeia
- (d) synecdoche

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In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread. (Genesis 3:19)

- (a) simile
- (b) irony
- (c) metonymy
- (d) assonance





Why do we wait until a pig is dead to cure it?

- (a) pun
- (b) personification
- (c) anaphora
- (d) synecdoche

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"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..."

- (a) antithesis
- (b) litotes
- (c) simile
- (d) understatement

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My wishes raced through the house high hay and nothing I cared, at my sky  
blue trades, (Dylan Thomas, "Fern Hill")

- (a) simile
- (b) irony
- (c) metonymy
- (d) assonance

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"Gentlemen, you can't fight in here! This is the War Room." (Peter Sellers as President Merkin Muffley in Dr. Strangelove, 1964)

- (a) chiasmus
- (b) litotes
- (c) antithesis
- (d) irony

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Prospective buyers are advised not to rely heavily on the front brakes, which are not connected. (advertisement for a replica 1925 Rolls-Royce WWI Armored Car)

- (a) antithesis
- (b) simile
- (c) anaphora
- (d) understatement

# Thank You

