

# How to Identify, Name & Explain figurative language

When you analyze figurative language, remember this three-step process:

## 1 IDENTIFY

where the figurative language technique is in the sentence or extract, and how it is being used.

## 2 NAME

the figurative language technique being used (e.g. is it a metaphor? Simile? Euphemism? Etc.)

## 3 EXPLAIN

what it means, and the effect or image produced by using this figurative language technique.

### Example:

#### QUESTION:

Identify and explain the figurative technique used in the following:  
*The teacher listened to his excuse with a wooden face.*

#### ANSWER:

1  
What is being compared is IDENTIFIED

The teacher's face is being compared to wood. This is a metaphor. His face is not literally made of wood, but the comparison illustrates that the teacher's expression is unmoving, and lacking in emotion. From this, it can be inferred that the teacher is not moved by, or does not believe, the student's excuse.

2  
The technique is NAMED

3  
The effect and purpose of the technique is EXPLAINED

## Common Figurative Language Techniques

\* These are just a few, there are many more...

**Metaphor:** A figure of speech that implies a comparison between two relatively unlikely things.

**Simile:** A comparison between two unlike things, usually with the words 'like' or 'as'.

**Personification:** The giving of human qualities to an animal, object or abstract idea.

**Synecdoche:** A figure of speech in which a part is used to represent the whole, or the whole for a part.

**Oxymoron:** When incongruous or contradictory terms appear side by side.

**Assonance:** The repetition of vowel sounds.

**Alliteration:** The repetition of the same letter or sound at the beginning of adjacent or closely connected words

**Onomatopoeia:** The use of words which actually sound like the objects or actions to which they refer.

**Euphemism:** A 'softer', more inoffensive word or phrase, used as a substitute for one considered too harsh or blunt when referring to something unpleasant or embarrassing.

**Pun:** A play on words; sometimes on different meanings of the same word and sometimes on the similar sense or sound of different words.

**Hyperbole:** An exaggerated statement used to emphasize a point.

# FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE

## Techniques Glossary

'Figurative language' can make language more descriptive, imaginative or fresh. There are many different figurative techniques used in poetry and prose, but below are some of the most common ones you will come across.

**METAPHOR:** A figure of speech that implies a comparison between two relatively unlikely things.

EXAMPLE: "My nephew is a monkey! He climbs on everything."

**SIMILE:** A comparison between two unlike things, usually with the words 'like' or 'as'.

EXAMPLE: "She dances like a chicken on hot coals."

**PERSONIFICATION:** The giving of human qualities to an animal, object or abstract idea.

EXAMPLE: "The chocolate cake was calling my name."

**HYPERBOLE:** An exaggerated statement used to emphasize an idea or make a point.

EXAMPLE: "I've told you a million times."

**ONOMATOPOEIA:** The use of words which actually sound like the objects or actions to which they refer.

EXAMPLE: "The guitar twanged as he thumped on it."

**ASSONANCE:** The repetition of vowel sounds.

EXAMPLE: "Try to light the fire by the ottoman over there."

**PARADOX:** A seemingly contradictory statement, which actually makes sense or contains some truth.

EXAMPLE: "Deep down you are actually quite shallow."

**ANAPHORA:** The repetition of a word or phrase at the beginning of successive clauses.

EXAMPLE: "Every man, every woman, every child, should be loved."

**SYNECDOCHE:** A figure of speech in which a part is used to represent the whole, or the whole for a part.

EXAMPLE: "I see many new faces here tonight."

**OXYMORON:** When incongruous or contradictory terms appear side by side.

EXAMPLE: "Parting is such sweet sorrow."

**ALLITERATION:** The repetition of the same letter or sound at the beginning of adjacent or closely connected words.

EXAMPLE: "The tall trees towered over the town."

**PUN:** A play on words; sometimes on different meanings of the same word and sometimes on the similar sense or sound of different words.

EXAMPLE: "A horse is a very stable animal."

**IDIOM:** An expression used by a particular group of people with a meaning that is only known through common use.

EXAMPLE: "It's raining cats and dogs."

**ALLUSION:** A brief, indirect reference to a person, place, thing or idea of historical, cultural, literary or political significance.

EXAMPLE: "Gosh he is romantic; quite the Romeo!"

**IRONY:** There are 3 types of irony: verbal (when what is said is the opposite of what is meant), situational (a contrast between the result of a situation and what is usually expected) and dramatic (when the audience or reader know more than the characters).

EXAMPLE: "That hairdresser really needs a haircut."  
(Situational)

**ANALOGY:** A comparison between two things in order to highlight a point of similarity. It is different to a metaphor or simile, in that it expresses a set of like relationships between two sets of terms.

EXAMPLE: "As a sword is the weapon of a warrior, a pen is the weapon of a writer."

**EUPHEMISM:** A 'softer', more inoffensive word or phrase, used as a substitute for one considered too harsh or blunt, when referring to something unpleasant or embarrassing.

EXAMPLE: "His mother passed away last year."