

I'm not robot!

Have you ever felt so hungry you could "eat a horse"? Complained that "it's raining cats and dogs" out there? Or wisely observed that "all that glitters is not gold"? Then you've already used figurative language without knowing or noticing it. Figures of speech pop up everywhere in literature, poetry books, pop culture, marketing materials and even in our everyday speech. ("Pop up"—that's figurative language!) But what is figurative language exactly? How do you recognize it? And what are the most common types you can use? In short, the definition of figurative language is using a word or phrase beyond its literal definition to achieve a more complex meaning or to strengthen its descriptive effect. Let's take a closer look at this creative, non-literal use of language that colors everything that we say, read and write. What is figurative language? Figurative language uses figures of speech (such as similes, metaphors and clichés) to suggest new pictures or images, or to create stronger effects. It is particularly useful in getting a specific message or feeling across. For instance, let's say I'm stuck in the desert with a friend because our car broke down. Rather than saying: "It's hot outside, isn't it?", I'd probably say: "It's a million degrees outside, what are we going to do?!" Of course, it's not literally a million degrees outside, but by using figurative language I have better expressed the dread and urgency of the situation we are in. Figurative language has a fundamental impact on readers. By creating new connections between concepts, images or objects that have little to no original link, readers discover new insights and see a more vivid or imaginative picture in their heads. Figurative language is also useful in explaining an abstract concept by comparing it to something else that readers can better relate to. It can transform the seemingly ordinary into something significant. This is why authors of all genres employ figures of speech so abundantly. In literature and poetry, writers often use them to pinpoint an exact feeling or mood they would otherwise fail to express with more conventional wording. Politicians and debaters use figurative language to argue and persuade. Novelists use it to draw readers into the world they've created. It's all good. 10 common types of figurative language Similes A simile is a figure of speech that compares two things of different kinds, and that is often introduced by using a connecting word such as like or as. Here are some examples of similes: She was as busy as a bee. The three-piece suit fit him like a glove. The zombie's hands were cold as ice. Metaphors A metaphor is the same as a simile, but without the connecting word like or as. In a metaphor, one element directly replaces the other one. Some examples of metaphors include: She was a busy bee. His eyes were a deep ocean. The zombie's hands were ice. Cliché A cliché is a phrase, expression, or idea that has become so overused that it has lost its original meaning or effect. Clichés can sometimes be seen as irritating and annoying because of their predictability. Here are some classic examples of clichés: All's fair in love and war. Every cloud has a silver lining. The zombie fell head over heels in love. Hyperbole Remember a few paragraphs ago when I was stuck in the desert and it was "a million degrees outside?" That's hyperbolic. Hyperboles are intentional and obvious exaggerations in order to emphasize or evoke strong feelings. They aren't meant to be taken literally, like these hyperbole examples: Her smile was a mile wide. The student's backpack weighed a ton. Tommy the zombie was nervous: His dad was going to kill him when he got home. Idiom An idiom is a group of words that, when used in a certain order, have brand new, unique meaning that has nothing to do with the definition of the words taken individually. Idioms are generally used to reveal a universal truth. While something doesn't literally cost you "an arm and a leg", the meaning behind the idiom immediately makes sense—because what 'costs' more than your own limbs? Here are some examples of useful idioms: The project was a piece of cake. He shrugged. "Better late than never." The expensive meal cost the zombie an arm and a leg. Onomatopoeia Onomatopoeia is my favorite type of figurative language, and not only because it's so fun to say. Onomatopoeia has a simple definition: It's the formation of a word by imitating the sound the thing it refers to makes or evokes. You can find them in most nursery rhymes. The cow goes Moo. Ding dong. Someone was at the door. Rwwrrrr said the zombie. Personification Personification is when human characteristics or qualities are attributed to inanimate objects, animals, or abstract concepts. Some examples of personification: The wind howled in the night. The camera loves her. The chair groaned when the zombie sat down. Oxymoron An oxymoron associates two seemingly self-contradicting terms to illustrate a point or reveal a paradox. Taken independently, bitter and sweet mean opposite things; however, their association (bittersweet) create a distinct, highly evocative meaning. Here are some other examples of oxymorons: The silence was deafening. I was busy doing nothing. That zombie was part of the walking dead. Euphemism A euphemism is when a polite or mild word or expression is used in place of something more unpleasant, distributing, or taboo. In this regard, it functions as the opposite of hyperbole. The most common example of a euphemism is saying someone "passed away" rather than "died". Here are some others: The English major was between jobs. He asked if she wanted to "Netflix and chill". The zombie's girlfriend was about to bite the big one. Allusion An allusion is a device that makes the reader think of another person, place, event, or thing. Allusions can be both explicit or implied in the narrative. Some of the most common sources of allusions come from the Bible and Greek mythology. She picked up the trash like a Good Samaritan. He was a regular Einstein. The zombie couldn't stop eating human brains; they were his Achilles' heel. Famous examples of figurative language from literature Example 1: "Parting is such sweet sorrow"—William Shakespeare, Romeo and Juliet If you want to find examples of figurative language, look no further than Shakespeare. Can you guess what literary device he's using in this famous quote from Romeo and Juliet? If you guessed oxymoron, you're correct! The words sweet and sorrow evoke opposite ideas of happiness and pain. However, when Shakespeare combines them, it shows how the lovers are sad at having to leave one another, but also excited and joyful at the prospect of anticipating their next reunion. Example 2: "Hope is a thing with feathers"—Emily Dickinson, "Hope is a thing with feathers" In this famous poem, Emily Dickinson uses an extended metaphor to articulate a profound human emotion. She describes the abstract concept of hope to the reader by comparing it to something very tangible and visceral: a bird with feathers that perches on branches. As readers, we can better understand the complex once it's compared to something known. Example 3: "Beep, beep!"—The Road Runner, Looney Tunes cartoons Though maybe not quite literary, let's end on a fun example. Poor Wile E. Coyote knows and fears the "beep beep" or "meep meep" onomatopoeia of his archenemy the Road Runner in the Looney Tunes cartoon series. The "beep beep" is reminiscent of a car horn and signals to the coyote that danger is around the corner. Cartoons and comics traditionally use onomatopoeia to illustrate sounds to readers, whether it's a loud Ka-Pow! after Superman lands a good punch, or the Klang! of an anvil over Tom Cat's head. Either way ... we feel it. Using figurative language in your writing Figurative language makes speech fun. It allows us to go beyond the literal and offers us a range of tools to express, describe, and emot. It's used in everything from nursery rhymes—with a moo moo here—to Shakespearean soliloquies, to excuses for not going into work (after all, your head is killing you!). Understanding the different types of figurative language and when to use them is important, but in the end it's all about what you want to say. Go ahead. The world is your oyster ... Pardon the cliché. Looking to create a blog? Wix has got your covered with thousands of design features, built-in SEO and marketing tools, that will allow you to scale your content, your brand and your business. Marika Hirsch, Knowledge Base Writer at Wix American expat living in Ireland. Loves creative writing and carbs. Will ask to pet your dog. Figurative language refers to words or phrases that are meaningful, but not literally true. If you say "that news hit me like a ton of bricks," you are using figurative language; listeners understand the news you got was deeply moving, and also know that you were not actually hit by 2000 pounds of bricks (because if you had been you would be dead). Similarly, if you say "he begged me to reconsider, but I had a heart of stone, and I refused," you are also using figurative language; listeners understand that you are describing yourself as inflexible or unforgiving, and know that your heart is not actually made of stone (because if it were you would be dead). This fellow is literally swimming in money There are many ways to use figurative language. Here are some of the more common types, and examples of their use. Idioms An idiom is an expression that cannot be understood from the meanings of its separate words but that has a separate meaning of its own. Many (although not all) idioms are examples of figurative language. "Hold your horses," the teacher told the students as they were leaving school. (The teacher told the student to slow down, and did not mean that they should pick up their four-legged animals) He was up in the air about whether to go to the concert. (He was undecided, and was not suspended above the ground) The dog ate the muffins in a flash. (The dog ate the muffins quickly, and there was no sudden burst of light) The senator was renowned for throwing his colleagues under the bus in election season. (He was known for blaming others in order to gain an advantage, and was not actually pushing anyone under a moving vehicle) Metaphors Metaphors and similes are another category of figurative language use. A metaphor substitutes a word or phrase with one that makes an analogy or explanation with an image. My desk had a mountain of paperwork on it. (There was no actual mountain, just a large amount of paper) My aunt is a walking encyclopedia, and everyone wanted her on their team on game night. (The aunt is a person with considerable knowledge, but is not actually a multi-volume set of books with legs) He sat quietly, letting her words soak in. (This person is taking in information, but they are not actually soaking wet while doing so) Similes A simile is a phrase that uses the words like or as to describe someone or something by comparing it with someone or something else that is similar. Fast as lightning, I picked up the paper and read it. (The paper was picked up very quickly; if the person picking it up had been as fast as lightning the paper would have been damaged) Traffic is moving as slow as molasses. (Traffic is moving very slowly, as molasses often does when one tries to pour it out) I am so tired I will sleep like a baby. (Saying you will sleep like a baby means you will sleep deeply, but we don't know if that is how a baby will sleep; some babies sleep well, and others sleep poorly) Hyperbole Figurative use of language also takes the form of extreme exaggeration, or hyperbole. This very often expresses an impossibility or near impossibility: She literally was swimming in money. (The person described did not actually swim through a pool of currency, but merely had a lot of money) Tickets sold out at light speed. (The tickets sold very quickly; they did not move at 299,792,458 meters per second) The show went on forever. (The show lasted for a very long time) Personification Finally, if we give our words qualities or abilities that people have but that the things we are describing can't logically possess, the result is a different kind of figurative language called personification. We saw lights dance in the distance. (The lights are twinkling, but are not actually performing a waltz) The wind was howling all night. (The wind was making a noise, but was not using its vocal cords to cry out in grief) The words jumped off the page. (The words made a strong and immediate impression on the reader, but they remained in place on the page on which they had been printed) In some cases it can be very simple to distinguish one type of figurative language from another: if you say "my love is like a flower" you are using a simile, and if you say "my love is a flower" you are using a metaphor. In other cases, however, you may not be able to easily say whether an example of figurative language is an idiom, hyperbole, or a metaphor (and it may be a combination of some or all of these things). Using figurative language allows a writer to be both playful and to communicate information effectively to readers. It provides tools for a writer to paint a picture with words (the words are bringing images to the reader's mind; we do not have groups of letters banding together and wielding paintbrushes and paint). MORE RHETORICAL DEVICE EXAMPLES One-Word Oxymorons Pop Song Rhetoric New Meanings for Onomatopoeia





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