

Ten Types of Figurative Language



For each term that's listed in this box, you'll find a short definition and an example from the literature used in this book. Help your students understand that in addition to poets, writers of literature and informational texts also use these devices.

Simile is a figure of speech that compares two unlike things that have something in common. A simile uses *like* or *as* to make the comparison.

Example: From "La Bamba" by Gary Soto: "The sheets were as cold as the moon that stood over the peach tree in their backyard."

Metaphor is a figure of speech that compares two unlike things that have something in common. Metaphor doesn't use *like* or *as* but equates the two unlike things, often using a form of "to be" as the verb.

Example: From "The Highwayman" by Alfred Noyes: "The moon was a ghostly galleon tossed upon cloudy seas."

Personification is giving human personality traits, emotions, and qualities to inanimate objects or abstract ideas.

Example: From "The Tyger" by William Blake: "When the stars threw down their spears, / And water'd heaven with their tears, "

Alliteration is the repetition of the same sounds at the beginning of words or in stressed syllables.

Example: From "Crystal Moment" by Robert Peter Tristram Coffin: "He leaned toward the land and life."

Onomatopoeia is using words that imitate the sounds associated with the objects or actions of the words.

Example: From "Dust Bowl Disaster" by Alex Porter and Kristin Lewis: "Suddenly, Ike felt a powerful jolt. Bzzt! Electricity shot through the car, shorting it out."

Oxymoron is a figure of speech that combines two contradictory terms.

Example: From "The Runaway" by Robert Frost: "We heard the miniature thunder where he fled."

Assonance is also referred to as "vowel rhyme." It's the repetition of similar vowel sounds in adjacent words.

Example: From "A narrow fellow in the grass" by Emily Dickinson: "... a transport / of cordiality."

Repetition is the repeating of a word within a sentence or a poetical line within a stanza or throughout a poem.

Example: From "The Day I Walked and Walked" by Ahmon'dra (Brenda) McClendon: "Well, we walked and we walked, and it seemed like we walked around that building for a long time."