

Figurative Language in *The Miracle Worker*

of this lesson, you should be able to confidently say,

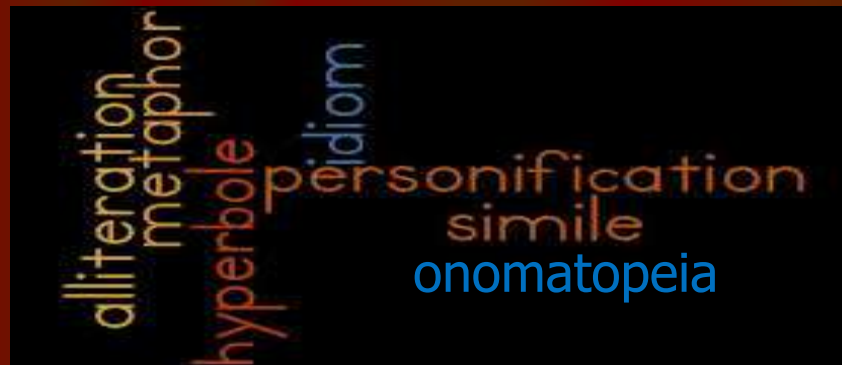
“I can identify, understand and locate figures of speech in written context.”

“I can verify the meaning of a phrase by checking specialized reference materials, both in print and digital.”

Warm Up

Turn to your shoulder partner and share a sample of figurative language from the previous lesson.

Be sure to state the type as well as the example.



Using Context Clues

Hints or clues the author gives to help understand a difficult term

Usually found in the same sentence, preceding or succeeding sentence



Historical Context

Some words and phrases also have historical contexts

Professor Claude Bélanger at Marianopolis College describes historical context with these questions:

What was happening at the time of the event or the decision that sheds some light on it? In what type of society did the event occur? An urban one? A rich one? An educated one?



What does this mean? Let's review some *Miracle Worker* gems

She has the constitution of a goat
She isn't battle-scarred yet
I call it acute congestion of the stomach and brain
Now that you're marshal, you'll have this Yankee money.
Spanish monks under a--vow of silence. Which I wish you'd take!
I might as well try to work in a hen yard.
This house is at sixes and sevens.
Teach an iota of discipline
She paws his papers to the floor.
It was always an Irish battle.
The battle is dead and done with; why not let it stay buried?

She has the constitution of a goat.

constitution

the physical makeup of the individual especially with respect to the health, strength, and appearance of the body.

Inference

She is very healthy.



Goats are sturdy animals that can eat garbage and still remain healthy.

She isn't battle-scarred yet.

battle-scarred

damaged or affected by fighting

Background Information
Mrs. Keller was Captain Keller's second wife.
Helen was her first child.

Inference

Mrs. Keller isn't used to dealing with the trials of being a mother.



Acute congestion of stomach and brain

acute: bad or difficult,
experienced to a severe or
intense degree

congestion: accumulation
of body fluids

Background

In the 1880's, doctors were
unaware of many illnesses.
Helen probably had Scarlet
Fever.

Inference

Helen had a sudden
onset of illness that was
severe. Today it would
be medically treated



Now that you're marshal, you'll have this Yankee money.

Yankee

During the Civil War, people from the north were called Yankees.



Inference

Captain Keller (originally a Confederate captain) will have money to spend to get Helen the help she needs.



Spanish monks under a--vow of silence. Which I wish you'd take!

Background

Finger spelling was invented by Spanish monks to communicate without breaking their vow of silence.



Inference

Annie is explaining who invented finger spelling. She is also annoyed with James, so she wishes that he too would vow to be silent. Annie isn't afraid to speak her mind.

But weren't we studying figurative language?



Historical context of
figurative language has
not been studied.

mentioned in
the texts we have

I might as well try to work in a hen yard.

Hen yard

Hens are noisy, messy creatures.



Inference

The working environment must be very noisy and unorganized.

Hyperbole:
gross exaggeration,
metaphor

The man who sold me the ticket should be tied to the tracks.

Background

The railroad was a major form of transportation in the 1800's. However, some train rides took a long time because of frequent stops along the way.

Inference

The train ride was a terrible experience.



Alliteration, hyperbole

The battle is dead and done with; why not let it stay buried?

Symbolism

The battle is symbolic for an internal conflict.

Let it stay symbolic for something go.



Inference

The struggle that you experienced is over with. Don't keep reliving it.



Metaphor,
Personification

In the South, we view women as the flowers of civilization.

Background

Chivalry is the act of treating women with courtesy and respect. Chivalry originated with medieval knights. It was an expected trait of southern gentleman

Symbolism

Flowers are symbolic of women, beautiful and fragile.



Inference:

In the South, we treat women with respect.



Simile

She's as bright as a little monkey.

Background

Monkeys are intelligent primates. However, they are skilled at imitating humans. It is difficult to know if they understand the meaning behind their imitations.



Inference

Helen can imitate others even if she cannot see them. It is unclear if she actually understands the meaning behind her actions.

Simile



This house is at sixes and sevens.

Background

an old English expression meaning a state of confusion, disarray.

Inference

The Keller house must be very unorganized.

It may have originated from a dice game called "Hazard".

Idiom, Alliteration



Her hand aches to – speak out

Background

Annie witnesses
Helen fingerspelling
in her sleep

Inference
She CAN learn
language



Personification