

Figures of Speech

Feature Menu

Figures of Speech

Simile

Metaphor

Personification

Review

Practice



Previous

Next

Collection
Menu

Exit

Figures of Speech

Figure of speech—word or phrase that makes a comparison between seemingly unlike things. ▼

He collapsed onto the grass like a half-empty flour sack.

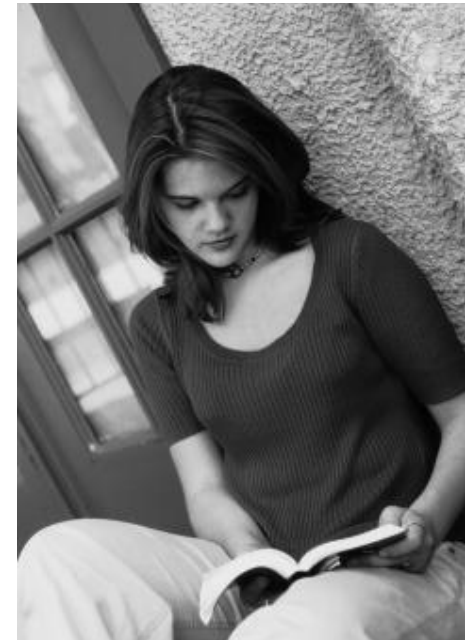
from “The Scarlet Ibis” by James Hurst ▼

You’ll come across figures of speech—or figurative language—in poetry, in prose, and in everyday speaking and writing.

Figures of Speech

Figures of speech

- are not literally true ▼
- make imaginative connections ▼
- express meaning in fresh and original ways ▼
- often act as a kind of shorthand



Figures of Speech

Some figures of speech have become part of our everyday language. We don't even think about the fact that they aren't literally true. ▼

He didn't notice how quickly the time flew by.

My heart leapt at the thought.

She must have gotten tied up in traffic.

His room is a pigsty.



[End of Section]

Simile

Simile—comparison between two unlike things, using a word such as *like*, *as*, *than*, or *resembles*. ▼

A lone oak tree stood in the front yard like an aged but dedicated sentry. ▼

The dew on the leaves glistened as brilliantly as loose diamonds on silk. ▼

That child's eyes are warmer than the summer's sandy beach.



Simile

Quick Check

My mother has the prettiest tricks
Of words and words and words.
Her talk comes out as smooth and sleek
As breasts of singing birds.

.....

We had not dreamed these things were so
Of sorrow and of mirth.

Her speech is as a thousand eyes
Through which we see the earth.

—from “Songs for my Mother” by Anna Hempstead
Branch

Identify the two
similes in this
excerpt.

Answer

What meaning
is expressed by
each simile?

Answer



[End of Section]

Metaphor

Metaphor

- comparison between two unlike things in which one thing becomes the other ▼
- does not use a word such as *like* or *as* ▼

The flood waters rose, and the river became a ravenous monster. Raging on for hours, it consumed everything in its sight.



Metaphor

Poets use metaphors to make the reader think about new ways of seeing things. ▼

- What is the poet trying to say with this metaphor? ▼

My heart it was a floating bird
That through the world did wander free,
But he hath locked it in a cage,
And lost the silver key.

—from "The Prince" by Josephine Dodge Daskam



Metaphor

A **direct metaphor** directly compares two things using a verb such as *is*. ▼

His ideas were a flock of birds in flight. ▼



An **indirect metaphor** implies or suggests the comparison. ▼

His ideas spread their wings and soared freely.

Metaphor

Quick Check

This computer is a dinosaur.

She stared at me with venomous eyes and hissed out her reply.

The old motorcycle barked and yipped before it started up with a howl.

Today my mind is the wind blowing across rolling hills.

Identify each metaphor as either direct or indirect.

Answer

[End of Section]

Personification

Personification—special kind of metaphor in which human qualities are given to something that is not human—an animal, an object, or an idea. ▼

The sun was shining on the sea,
Shining with all his might:

He did his very best to make
The billows smooth and bright.

—from “The Walrus and the Carpenter” by Lewis Carroll

[End of Section]

Review

Quick Check

Spring caresses the earth and sky with her warm, delicate hands.

Our friendship is as comfortable as a pair of flannel pajamas.

The old factory had become a heaving, grunting beast.

Identify each figure of speech.

- Simile
- Metaphor
- Personification

Answer

[End of Section]

Practice

PRACTICE **Figures of speech** are widely used. Look through a newspaper or magazine, including the advertisements, and gather at least six figures of speech. Look for examples of **similes**, **metaphors**, and **personification**.

[End of Section]

The End

