



Use this as a quick reference for figurative language, literary elements, and literary techniques.

Figurative Language

Alliteration - The repetition of the same initial letter, sound, or group of sounds in a series of words. Alliteration includes tongue twisters.

Example: She sells seashells by the seashore.

Cliché - A cliché is an expression that has been used so often that it has become common and sometimes boring.

Examples: Opposites attract. You are what you eat.

Hyperbole - An exaggeration that is so dramatic that no one would believe the statement is true. Tall tales are hyperboles.

Example: I'm so hungry I could eat a horse.

Idiom - An idiom is an expression that has a meaning apart from the meanings of its individual words. It's not meant to be taken literally.

Example: It's raining cats and dogs.

Irony – Irony is a literary device involving a discrepancy between what is said and what is meant, or between what's expected to happen and what actually occurs. There are three main types:

- **Dramatic irony** - A situation in which the audience knows something about present or future circumstances that the character does not know.
Example: In Romeo & Juliet, Romeo thinks Juliet is dead, so he goes to her tomb to kill himself. This is ironic because he doesn't know, as the audience does, that she has been given a potion to make her look dead.
- **Verbal irony** - A contradiction of expectation between what is said and what is meant.
Example: In Romeo & Juliet, Juliet is upset after being told that her father has promised her hand in marriage to Paris. She states to her mother "...I will not marry yet; and, when I do, I swear it shall be Romeo, whom you know I hate, rather than Paris ..." This is ironic because she is already married to Romeo.
- **Situational irony** - A contradiction between what might be expected and what actually occurs. It's often connected to a really negative view of life.
Example: Dying of thirst while adrift on a boat in the ocean. There's water everywhere, but none of it is drinkable.



Metaphor - The metaphor makes a direct comparison between two unlike things. A simile would say you are like something; a metaphor is more positive - it says you are something.

Example: Her eyes are stars shining in the sky.

Extended Metaphor – In an extended metaphor, the metaphor is carried over many sentences or lines.

Onomatopoeia – The use of a word to describe or imitate a natural sound or the sound made by an object or an action.

Example: snap, crackle, pop.

Oxymoron – When something is described using contradictory terms.

Example: jumbo shrimp; definite maybe; deafening silence.

Personification - A figure of speech in which human characteristics are given to an animal or an object.

Example: My teddy bear gave me a hug.

Pun – A play on words. A pun involves using a word or words that have more than one meaning.

Example: My dog not only has a fur coat, but also pants.

Simile - A simile uses the words “like” or “as” to compare one object or idea with another to suggest they are alike.

Example: She is busy as a bee.