

Figure of Speech

WHAT ARE THE FIGURES OF SPEECH? A figure of speech is a deviation from the ordinary use of words in order to increase their effectiveness. Basically, it is a figurative language that may consist of a single word or phrase. It may be a simile, a metaphor or personification to convey the meaning other than the literal meaning.

TYPES OF FIGURES OF SPEECH

The figures of speech list is over a hundred but some commonly used types are given along with examples.

1. SIMILE

In simile two unlike things are explicitly compared. For example, "She is like a fairy". A simile is introduced by words such as like, so, as etc.

2. METAPHOR

It is an informal or implied simile in which words like, as, so are omitted. For example, "He is like a lion (Simile)" and "He is a lion (metaphor)". In the following examples, metaphors are underlined.

- She is a star of our family.
- The childhood of the world; the anger of the tempest; the deceitfulness of the riches: wine is a mocker.
- She is now in the sunset of her days.

3. PERSONIFICATION

Personification is an attribution of personal nature, intelligence or character to inanimate objects or abstract notions. For example, in some phrases we use, the furious storm, the thirsty ground, and the pitiless cold. Some other examples are:

- Little sorrows sit and weep. (Boccaccio)
- The dish ran away with the spoon. (Blake)

4. METONYMY

Metonymy is meant for a change of name. It is a substitute of the thing names for the thing meant. Following examples will clarify the concept.

- The pen is mightier than the sword.
- From the cradle to the grave. = from childhood to death.
- I have never read Milton. = the works of Milton.

5. APOSTROPHE

It is a direct address to some inanimate thing or some abstract idea as if it were living person or some absent person as if it were present. Example, "Boy's mother loved him very much."

6. HYPERBOLE

Hyperbole is a statement made emphatic by overstatement. For example, "Virtues as the sands of the shore."

7. SYNECDOCHE

Synecdoche is the understanding of one thing by means of another. Here, a part is used to designate the whole or the whole to designate a part. For example, "I have the Viceroy, love the man.", and "All hands (crew) at work."

8. TRANSFERRED EPITHETS

In transferred epithets, the qualifying objective is transferred from a person to a thing as in phrases. For example, "sleepless night", "sunburn mirth", and "melodious plain".

9. EUPHEMISM

By using the euphemism, we speak in agreeable and favorable terms of some person, object or event which is ordinarily considered unpleasant and disagreeable. For example,

- He is telling us a fairy tale. (a lie)
- He has fallen asleep. (he is dead)

10. IRONY OR SARCASM

In this mode of speech, the real meanings of the words used are different from the intended meanings. For example, the child of cobbler has no shoe.

11. PUN

This consists of a play on the various meanings of a word. Its effect is often ludicrous. For example,

- Is life worth living? It depends upon the liver.
- Obviously, the constitution is against prostitution and congress is against progress. (con means against and pro means for)

12. EPIGRAM

It is a brief pointed saying. It couples words which apparently contradict each other. The language of the epigram is remarkable for its brevity. Examples are as under:

- The child is the father of the man. (Wordsworth)
- Fools rush in where angels fear to tread.
- The art lies in concealing art.
- Silence is sometimes more eloquent than words.
- Conspicuous by its absence.

13. ANTITHESIS

In antithesis, a striking opposition or contrast of words is made in the same sentence in order to secure emphasis. For example,

- To err is human, to forgive divine.
- Give every man thy ear, but few thy voice.

14. OXYMORON

It is a figure of speech which combines two seemingly contradictory or incongruous words for sharp emphasis or effect. For example,

- "darkness visible" (Milton);
- "make haste slowly" (Suetonius)
- "loving hate" (Romeo and Juliet)

15. LITOTES

It is the opposite of hyperbole. Here an affirmative is conveyed by negation of the opposite. For example,

- He is no dullard.
- I am not a little
- He is not a bad sort.

16. INTERROGATION

This is a rhetorical mode of affirming or denying something more strongly than could be done in ordinary language. Examples,

- Who is here so base that would be a bondman?
- Who is here so rude that would not be a Roman?

- Who is here so vile that will not love his country? (Shakespeare)

17. EXCLAMATION

It is used for strong expression of feelings. For examples, O lift me as a wave, a leaf, a cloud I fall upon the thorns of life; I bleed!

18. CLIMAX

It is an arrangement of a series of ideas in the order of increasing importance. For example, "What a piece of work man! How noble in reason, how infinite in faculties! In action, how like an angel!"

19. ANTICLIMAX OR BATHOS

This is the opposite to climax and signifies a ludicrous descent from the higher to the lower.

- A man so various, that he seemed to be. Not one, but all mankind's epitome; who in the course of one revolving moon; was lawyer, statesman, fiddler, and buffoon.

20. ALLITERATION

The repetition of the same letter or syllable at the beginning of two or more words is called alliteration. For example,

- By apt Alliteration's artful a
- Glittering through the gloomy g
- The furrow follows f

21. ONOMATOPOEIA

The formation of a word whose sound is made to suggest or echo the sense as in cuckoo, bang, growl, hiss.

- The moan of doves in immemorial elms and murmur of innumerable bees.
- Rend with the tremendous sound your ears asunder with guns, drum, trumpet, blunderbuss, and thunder.

22. CIRCUMLOCUTION

This consists of expressing some fact or idea in a roundabout way, instead of stating it at once. For example,

- The viewless couriers of the air. =(the wind)
- That statement of his was purely an effort of imagination. = (a fiction)

23. TAUTOLOGY OR PLEONASM

Tautology is meant for repeating the same fact or idea in different words. For example, "It is the privilege and birth-right of every man to express his ideas without any fear."

Exercise

Direction for the questions: Identify the figure of speech used in the following sentences.

1. The leader made a fiery speech.
2. At last, they agreed to disagree.
3. Even the sky shed tears when Gandhi died.
4. He is the vulture of the state.
5. A cry that would raise the dead from the grave.
6. Idleness is the nursery of evil thoughts.
7. Words are easy like the wind.
8. Infancy is the beginning of life as dawn is the beginning of the day.
9. The curfew tolls the knell of parting day.
10. His rash policy let lose the dogs of war.

11. A lie has no legs.
12. Thus Nature spake – the work was done – How soon my Lucy's race was run!
13. O, Captain! My captain! Our fearful trip is done.
14. And beauty born of murmuring sound. Shall pass into her face.
15. Her mother, too, upon this occasion felt pleasing distress.
16. Whose armor is his honest thought?
17. Whose conscience is his strong retreat?
18. The wind lies in the arms of the dawn.
19. Our echoes roll from soul to soul.
20. Death in his palace holds his court-His messengers move to and fro.
21. Peace hath her victories-No less renowned the war.
22. Cowardly brave-Yes that describes him, Because he fights only when he cannot run away.
23. Wild West wind, thou breath of autumn's being.
24. Milton, thou shouldst be living at this hour.
25. They build the nation's pillars deep – And lift them to the sky.
26. Our sweetest songs are those that tell of saddest thoughts.
27. As shines the moon in clouded skies. She in her poor attire was seen.
28. The city's voice itself is soft like solitude's.
29. Hope is the poor man's bread.
30. We are the voices of the wandering wind.
31. Death lays his icy hands on kings.
32. The daisy smiled at the morning sun.
33. O, Julius Caesar! Thou art mighty yet.
34. O world! Oh, Life! O Time! On Whose last steps I climb.
35. Why, man, if the river were dry I am able to fill it with tears.
36. James, I was the wisest fool.
37. But patient, to prevent That murmur, soon replies
38. I hear lake water lapping with low sounds by the shore.
39. So like a shattered column lay the king?
40. I wandered lonely as a cloud.
41. The murmurous haunt of flies on summer eves.
42. It droppeth as the gentle rain from heaven.
43. We are all like swimmers on the sea of life.
44. I see a lily on thy brow.
45. He is the pillar of the state.
46. Let not ambition mock their useful toil.
47. It is the tree's lament, an eerie speech, That haply to the unknown land may reach.
48. O mighty Caesar! Dost thou lie so low?
49. All the perfumes of Arabia will not sweeten this little hand.
50. And out of joy, His heart jumped miles high.
51. The camel is the ship of the desert.
52. Authority forgets a dying king.
53. Experience is the best teacher.
54. He is regularly irregular.
55. I heard the water lapping on the crag.
56. She is as firm as a rock.
57. Errors, like straws, upon the surface flow.
58. Life is but a walking shadow.
59. He is the pillar of the administration.
60. Love is blind.
61. Truth sits upon the lips of dying men.
62. O sweet content! Where is thy mild abode?

63. My cheeks grow cold and hear the sea.
64. O Grave! Where is thy victory?
65. Life! I know not what thou art,
66. They were swifter than eagles and stronger than lions.
67. He is an innocent criminal.
68. She wept oceans of tears.
69. Fair is foul and foul is fair.
70. A murmuring whisper through the nunnery ran.
71. Lightly, O lightly we glide and we sing. We bear her along like a pearl on a string.
72. She is as lovely as a rose.
73. Life is a dream.
74. He is now in the sunset of his days.
75. Opportunity knocks at the door but once.
76. Laughter holding both her sides.
77. Frailty, thy name is a woman!
78. Rend with the tremendous sound your ears asunder With gun, drum, trumpet, blunderbuss and thunder.
79. She shall be sportive as the fawn.
80. Like the sly snake they come, That sting unseen: like the striped murderer.
81. As many farewells as there be stars in heaven.
82. And having nothing he hath all.
83. This is an open secret.
84. The curfew tolls the knell of a parting day.
85. O my love is like a red, red rose.
86. How a little candle throws its beams! So shines a good deed is a naughty world.
87. Life is a tale told by an idiot.
88. Integrity is the backbone of character.
89. Peace hath her victories no less renowned than war.
90. The sea that bears her bosom to the moon.
91. There is a dagger in thy words.
92. Beaded bubbles winking at the brim.
93. Sunflowers nod in the hot fields and apple buds laughs into blossom.
94. O! Judgment! Thou art fled to brutish beasts.
95. O Solitude! Where are the charms, That sages have seen in the face?
96. Belinda smiled and all the world was gay.
97. Great lord of all things, yet a prey to all.
98. The more haste, the less speed.
99. The moan of doves in immemorial elms. And murmur of innumerable bees.
100. Or from star-like eyes doth seek Fuel to maintain his fires.
101. I could lie down like a tired child. And weep away the life of care.

Solutions

1. Metaphor
2. Oxymoron
3. Hyperbole
4. Metaphor
5. Hyperbole
6. Metaphor
7. Simile

8. Simile
9. Onomatopoeia
10. Metaphor
11. Personification
12. Personification
13. Apostrophe
14. Onomatopoeia
15. Oxymoron
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