

Understanding Literary Devices

A **simile** is a way of describing something by comparing it to something else.

Examples:

The **bread** was as hard as a **rock**.

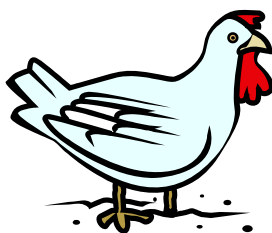
The woman **sang** like a **bird**.



Similes always contain the words *like* or *as*.
These are words used to compare things.

A **metaphor** is a way of describing something or someone by saying it (or he or she) *is* something else.

Example:



She is a chicken when it comes to going to the dentist.

She does not actually turn into a barnyard animal. This means that she gets scared!

Metaphors do not use the words *like* or *as*.

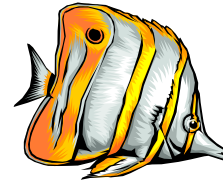
Hyperbole is an obvious exaggeration.

Example: **When my parents find out what I did to the car, I'll be grounded for the rest of my life!**



A **pun** is when the meaning of a word is twisted to be funny, or words with similar sounds but different meanings are switched to be funny.

Example: **The fish could not carry a tuna.**



Sarcasm is a comment that teases or criticizes someone or something. It is often expressed by the person's tone of voice.

Example: When someone says "**Thanks, that was a really useful definition,**" but he or she really means that it was not useful at all.



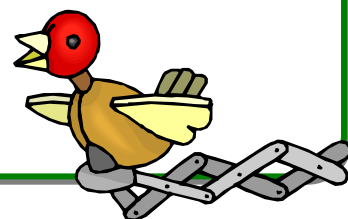
Alliteration is when a number of words in one sentence begin with or contain the same sound.

Example: **The snake slithered silently towards Sarah, but she saw nothing.**



Onomatopoeia is when words sound like what they are describing.

Examples: **Splat! Sizzle! Woof! Cuckoo!**



Situational Irony is when events are tied together in an unexpected way; for example, a strange coincidence.

Example: **It was ironic that the forest caught fire during Fire Prevention Week.**



Verbal Irony is when a person says (or writes) the opposite of what they really mean to emphasize a point.

Example: **A parent talking to a teenager watching TV – “When you’re finished with your serious studies, maybe you could take some time out to relax and do a little yard work.”**

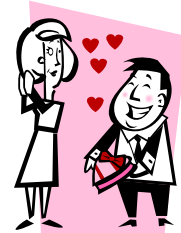
Imagery is when objects, actions or ideas are described in detail so readers can picture them in their minds.

Example: **The robin swooped and swirled around the tree, her wings beating a warning to the intruder. She screeched and flapped her wings frantically.**

Allusion is an (often indirect) reference to something well-known, such as a famous text.

Example: **Allusion to Shakespeare:**

The guy was a real Romeo—always sending flowers and gifts.



Symbols are images or events that represent a larger idea, feeling or belief.

Example: **Sometimes writers use signs of winter—leaves falling off trees, geese flying south, flowers dying—to symbolize the death of a character.**

