



Understanding Literary Devices

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

Examples:

The **bread** was 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 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 they really mean it was not useful at all.



Onomatopoeia is when words sound like what they are describing.

Examples:

Splat! Sizzle! Woof! Cuckoo! Buzz!



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.

