

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.

She does not actually turn into a

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

Example:

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



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:

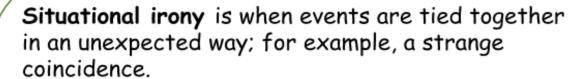
When someone says, "Thanks, that was a really useful definition," but they really mean it was not useful at all.



Onomatopoeia is when words sound like what they are describing.

Examples:

Splat! Sizzle! Woof! Cuckoo! Buzz



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 TW:
"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.

