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What is figurative language? Heres a quick and simple definition: Figurative language is language that contains or uses figures of speech. When people use the term "figurative language," however, they often do so in a slightly narrower way. In this narrower definition, figurative language refers to language that uses words in ways that deviate from their literal interpretation to achieve a more complex or powerful effect. This view of figurative language focuses on the use of figures of speech that play with the meaning of words, such as metaphor, simile, personification, and hyperbole. Some additional key details about figurative language: Figurative language is common in all sorts of writing, as well as in spoken language. Figurative language refers to language that contains figures of speech, while figures of speech are the particular techniques. If figurative speech is like a dance routine, figures of speech are like the various moves that make up the routine. It's a common misconception that imagery, or vivid descriptive language, is a kind of figurative language. In fact, writers can use figurative language as one tool to help create imagery, but imagery does not have to use figurative language. Figurative Language Pronunciation Here's how to pronounce figurative language: fig-yer-uh-tiv lang-gwij Figures of Speech and Figurative Language To fully understand figurative language, it's helpful to have a basic understanding of figures of speech. More specifically, it's helpful to understandthe two main types of figures of speech: tropes and schemes. Tropes are figures of speech that play with and shift the expected and literal meaning of words. Schemes are figures of speech that involve a change from the typical mechanics of a sentence, such as the order, pattern, or arrangement of words. Put even more simply: tropes play with the meaning of words, while schemes play with the structure of words, phrases, and sentences. The Different Things People Mean When They Say Figurative Language When people say figurative language, they don't always mean the precise same thing. Here are the three different ways people usually talk about figurative language: Dictionary definition of figurative language: According to the dictionary, figurative language is simply any language that contains or uses figures of speech. This definition would mean that figurative language includes the use of both tropes and schemes. Much more common real world use of figurative language: However, when people (including teachers) refer to figurative language, they usually mean language that plays with the literal meaning of words. This definition sees figurative language as language that primarily involves the use of tropes. Another common real world use of figurative language: Some people define figurative language as including figures of speech that play with meaning as well as a few other common schemes that affect the rhythm and sound of text, such as alliteration and assonance. What does all that boil down to for you? If you hear someone talking about figurative language, you can usually safely assume they are referring to language that uses figures of speech to play with the meaning of words and, perhaps, with the way that language sounds or feels. Common Types of Figurative Language There are many, many types of figures of speech that can be involved in figurative language. Some of the most common are: Metaphor: A figure of speech that makes a comparison between two unrelated things by stating that one thing is another thing, even though this isn't literally true. For example, the phrase "her lips are a blooming rose" obviously doesn't literally mean what it saysit's a metaphor that makes a comparison between the red beauty and promise of a blooming rose with that of the lips of the woman being described. Simile: A simile, like a metaphor, makes a comparison between two unrelated things. However, instead of stating that one thing is another thing (as in metaphor), a simile states that one thing is like another thing. An example of a simile would be to say "they fought like cats and dogs." Oxymoron: An oxymoron pairs contradictory words in order to express new or complex meanings. In the phrase "parting is such sweet sorrow" from Romeo and Juliet, "sweet sorrow" is an oxymoron that captures the complex and simultaneous feelings of pain and pleasure associated with passionate love. Hyperbole: Hyperbole is an intentional exaggeration of the truth, used to emphasize the importance of something or to create a comic effect. An example of a hyperbole is to say that a backpack "weighs a ton." No backpack literally weighs a ton, but to say "my backpack weighs ten pounds" doesn't effectively communicate how burdensome a heavy backpack feels. Personification: In personification, non-human things are described as having human attributes, as in the sentence, "The rain poured down on the wedding guests, indifferent to their plans." Describing the rain as "indifferent" is an example of personification, because rain can't be "indifferent," nor can it feel any other human emotion. Idiom: An idiom is a phrase that, through general usage within a particular group or society, has gained a meaning that is different from the literal meaning of the words. The phrase "it's raining cats and dogs" is known to most Americans to mean that it's raining hard, but an English-speaking foreigner in the United States might find the phrase totally confusing. Onomatopoeia: Onomatopoeia is a figure of speech in which words evoke the actual sound of the thing they refer to or describe. The boom of a firework exploding, the tick tock of a clock, and the ding dong of a doorbell are all examples of onomatopoeia. Synecdoche: In synecdoche, a part of something is used to refer to its whole. For example, "The captain commands one hundred sails" is a synecdoche that uses "sails" to refer to shipsships being the thing of which a sail is a part. Metonymy: Metonymy is a figure of speech in which an object or concept is referred to not by its own name, but instead by the name of something closely associated with it. For example, in "Wall Street prefers lower taxes," the New York City street that was the original home of the New York Stock Exchange stands in for (or is a "metonym" for) the entire American financial industry. Alliteration: In alliteration, the same sound repeats in a group of words, such as the b sound in: Bob brought the box of bricks to the basement. Alliteration uses repetition to create a musical effect that helps phrases to stand out from the language around them. Assonance: The repetition of vowel sounds repeat in nearby words, such as the "ee" sound: "the squeaky wheel gets the grease." Like alliteration, assonance uses repeated sounds to create a musical effect in which words echo one another. Figurative Language vs. Imagery Many people (and websites) argue that imagery is a type of figurative language. That is actually incorrect. Imagery refers to a writers use of vivid and descriptive language to appeal to the reader's senses and more deeply evoke places, things, emotions, and more. The following sentence uses imagery to give the reader a sense of how what is being described looks, feels, smells, and sounds: The night was dark and humid, the scent of rotting vegetation hung in the air, and only the sound of mosquitoes broke the quiet of the swamp. This sentence uses no figurative language. Every word means exactly what it says, and the sentence is still an example of the use of imagery. That said, imagery can use figurative language, often to powerful effect: The night was dark and humid, heavy with a scent of rotting vegetation like a great-aunt's heavy and inescapable perfume, and only the whining buzz of mosquitoes broke the silence of the swamp. In this sentence, the description has been made more powerful through the use of a simile ("like a great-aunt's..."), onomatopoeia ("whining buzz," which not only describes but actually sounds like the noise made by mosquitoes), and even a bit of alliteration in the "silence of the swamp." To sum up: imagery is not a form of figurative language. But a writer can enhance his or her effort to write imagery through the use of figurative language. Figurative Language Examples Figurative language is more interesting, lively, beautiful, and memorable than language that's purely literal. Figurative language is found in all sorts of writing, from poetry to prose to speeches to song lyrics, and is also a common part of spoken speech. The examples below show a variety of different types of figures of speech. You can see many more examples of each type at their own specific LitChart entries. Figurative Language Example: Metaphor Metaphor in Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet In Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet, Romeo uses the following metaphor in Act 2 Scene 2 of Romeo and Juliet, after sneaking into Juliet's garden and catching a glimpse of her on her balcony: But, soft! what light through yonder window breaks? It is the east, and Juliet is the sun. Romeo compares Juliet to the sun not only to describe how radiantly beautiful she is, but also to convey the full extent of her power over him. He's so taken with Juliet that her appearances and disappearances affect him like those of the sun. His life "revolves" around Juliet like the earth orbits the sun. Figurative Language Example: Simile In this example of a simile from Slaughterhouse-Five, Billy Pilgrim emerges from an underground slaughterhouse where he has been held prisoner by the Germans during the deadly World War II firebombing of Dresden: It wasn't safe to come out of the shelter until noon the next day. When the Americans and their guards did come out, the sky was black with smoke. The sun was an angry little pinhead. Dresden was like the moon now, nothing but minerals. The stones were hot. Everybody else in the neighborhood was dead. Vonnegut uses simile to compare the bombed city of Dresden to the moon in order to capture the totality of the devastationthe city is so lifeless that it is like the barren moon. Figurative Language Example: Oxymoron These lines from Chapter 7 of Ernest Hemingway's For Whom the Bell Tolls describe an encounter between Robert Jordan, a young American soldier fighting in the Spanish Civil War, and his lover Mara. She held herself tight to him and her lips looked for his and then found them and were against them and he felt her, fresh, new and smooth and young and lovely with the warm, scalding coolness and unbelievable to be there in the robe that was as familiar as his clothes, or his shoes, or his duty and then she said, frightenedly, And now let us do quickly what it is we do so that the other is all gone. The couple's relationship becomes a bright spot for both of them in the midst of war, but ultimately also a source of pain and confusion for Jordan, as he struggles to balance his obligation to fight with his desire to live happily by Maria's side. The contradiction contained within the oxymoron "scalding coolness" emphasizes the couple's conflicting emotions and impossible situation. Figurative Language Example: Hyperbole Elizabeth Bennet, the most free-spirited character in Pride and Prejudice, refuses Mr. Darcy's first marriage proposal with a string of hyperbole: From the very beginning, from the first moment I may almost say, of my acquaintance with you, your manners impressing me with the fullest belief of your arrogance, your conceit, and your selfish disdain of the feelings of others, were such as to form that ground-work of disapprobation, on which succeeding events have built so immoveable a dislike; and I had not known you a month before I felt that you were the last man in the world whom I could ever be prevailed on to marry. Elizabeth's closing statement, that Darcy is the "last man in the world" whom she would ever marry, is an obvious hyperbole. It's hard to believe that Elizabeth would rather marry, say, an axe murderer or a diseased pirate than Mr. Darcy. Even beyond the obvious exaggeration, Austen's use of hyperbole in this exchange hints at the fact that Elizabeth's feelings for Darcy are more complicated than she admits, even to herself. Austen drops various hints throughout the beginning of the novel that Elizabeth feels something beyond mere dislike for Darcy. Taken together with these hints, Elizabeth's hyperbolic statements seem designed to convince not only Darcy, but also herself, that their relationship has no future. Figurative Language Example: Personification In Chapter 1 of The Scarlet Letter, Nathaniel Hawthorne describes a wild rose bush that grows in front of Salem's gloomy wooden jail: But, on one side of the portal, and rooted almost at the threshold, was a wild rose-bush, covered, in this month of June, with its delicate gems, which might be imagined to offer their fragrance and fragile beauty to the prisoner as he went in, and to the condemned criminal as he came forth to his doom, in token that the deep heart of Nature could pity and be kind to him. In the context of the novel's setting in 17th century Boston, this rose bush, which grows wild in front of an establishment dedicated to enforcing harsh puritan values, symbolizes those elements of human nature that cannot be repressed, no matter how strict a community's moral code may be: desire, fertility, and a love of beauty. By personifying the rosebush as "offering" its blossoms to reflect Nature's pity (Nature is also personified here as having a "heart"), Hawthorne turns the passive coincidence of the rosebush's location into an image of human nature actively resisting its constraints. Figurative Language Example: Idiom Figurative Language Example: Onomatopoeia In Act 3, Scene 3 of Shakespeare's The Tempest, Caliban uses onomatopoeia to convey the noises of the island. Be not afeard. The isle is full of noises, Sounds, and sweet airs that give delight and hurt not. Sometimes a thousand twangling instruments Will hum about mine ears, and sometime voices... The use of onomatopoeia makes the audience feel the sounds on the island, rather than just have to take Caliban's word about there being noises. Figurative Language Example: Synecdoche In Act 4, Scene 3 of Shakespeare's Macbeth, an angry Macbeth kicks out a servant by saying: Take thy face hence. Here, "thy face" stands in for "you." Macbeth is simply telling the servant to leave, but his use of synecdoche makes the tone of his command more harsh and insulting because he uses synecdoche to treat the servant not as a person but as an object, a body part. Figurative Language Example: Metonymy In his song "Juicy," Notorious B.I.G. raps: Now I'm in the limelight 'cause I rhyme tight Here he's using "limelight" as a metonymy for fame (a "limelight" was a kind of spotlight used in old theaters, and so it came to be associated with the fame of being in the spotlight). Biggie's use of metonymy here also sets him up for a sweet rhyme. Figurative Language Example: Alliteration In his song "Rap God," Eminem shows his incredible lyrical dexterity by loading up the alliteration: So I wanna make sure, somewhere in this chicken scratch I Scribble and doodle enough rhymes To maybe try to help get some people through tough times But I gotta keep a few punchlines Just in case, cause even you unsigned Rappers are hungry looking at me like it's lunchtime Why Do Writers Use Figurative Language? The term figurative language refers to a whole host of different figures of speech, so it's difficult to provide a single definitive answer to why writers use figurative language. That said, writers use figurative language for a wide variety of reasons: Interest and beauty: Figurative language allows writes to express descriptions, ideas, and more in ways that are unique and beautiful. Complexity and power: Because figurative language can create meanings that go beyond the literal, it can capture complex ideas, feelings, descriptions, or truths that cause readers to see things in a new way, or more closely mirror the complex reality of the world. Visceral affect: Because figurative language can both impact the rhythm and sound of language, and also connect the abstract (say, love) with the concrete (say, a rose), it can help language make an almost physical impact on a reader. Humor: By allowing a writer to layer additional meanings over literal meanings, or even to imply intended meanings that are the opposite of the literal meaning, figurative language gives writers all sorts of options for creating humor in their writing. Realism: People speak and even think in terms of the sorts of comparisons that underlie so much figurative language. Rather than being flowery, figurative language allows writers to describe things in ways that match how people really think about them, and to create characters who themselves feel real. In general, figurative language often makes writing feel at once more accessible and powerful, more colorful, surprising, and deep. Other Helpful Figurative Language Resources Figurative language is a powerful tool for writers and speakers. In this ultimate guide, well explore what figurative language is, break down its essential elements, and examine 20 specific types with examples and practical tips. By the end, youll have a solid understanding of how to spot and use figurative language effectively. Plus, youll get free anchor charts to reinforce what youve learned. (This post may have affiliate links. Please see my full disclosure)I made this image with AI Figurative Language Figurative language involves using words or expressions that go beyond their literal meanings to create more vivid, imaginative, or impactful effects. Its used in poetry, storytelling, and everyday speech. Mostly, to evoke emotions, make descriptions richer, and communicate abstract ideas more effectively. Here are the foundational components that make figurative language work: Imagination: Figurative expressions spark visual, auditory, or emotional connections in the readers mind. Creativity: They use innovative comparisons or ideas to convey meaning. Symbolism: Many forms rely on symbols to represent broader concepts. Comparison: Techniques like similes and metaphors explicitly or implicitly compare one thing to another. Exaggeration: Hyperbole and other forms amplify reality for dramatic effect. Emotion: Evoking feelings is a central goal of figurative language. Now that weve covered the basics, lets dive into the types of figurative language, complete with examples and how to use them effectively. Here is good video from Khan Academy about figurative language: YouTube Video by Khan Academy Below, youll find 20 distinct types of figurative language, explained with examples and practical uses. A simile connects two unrelated ideas using like or as, giving your text a quick visual jolt. Its a simple way to conjure vivid imagesShes as busy as a bee turns a dull statement into a bright mental pic. Similes can lighten the load on your readers imaginations and make complicated concepts easier to absorb. They also keep your writing snappy, but watch out for clichs. If youre tossing as sly as a fox or as clear as day into every paragraph, your readers might roll their eyes. Strive for freshness and relevance instead of tired phrases. Hes as cool as a cucumber. They moved like ghosts through the hallway. How to Use: Add similes for colorful comparisons that dont require lengthy explanations. Just dont cram five into one sentence or you might lose readers in a simile maze. A metaphor boldly proclaims that something is something else, despite those two things having no literal connection. Its a quick way to give your text a poetic punch. Instead of saying Shes really good at everything, you might declare, Shes a one-woman army. This type of figurative language can supercharge your descriptions and convey strong emotions without needing extra words. Be warnedmixing too many metaphors at once can cause confusion. Pick one strong metaphor per idea so your text remains clear but memorable. Time is a thief. Her mind is a steel trap. How to Use: Use metaphors to create powerful mental images. Avoid stacking them or youll turn your writing into a mixed metaphor soup that nobody wants to taste. Personification hands out human traits to inanimate objects or abstract concepts. Suddenly, your morning coffee can greet you, or a storm can dance across the sky. It brings life to dull scenes and helps readers relate more easily. By humanizing non-human elements, you amplify emotion and energy in your text. Its like giving your setting a personality that readers can engage with. Just remember, theres a fine line between whimsical and ridiculousnobody wants to see a lamp hold a press conference. The wind whispered secrets through the trees. Fear pounded on my door all night. How to Use: Personify selectively to inject mood or drama. If you make everything talk and giggle, your scene might feel more like a cartoon than a compelling narrative. Hyperbole is your go-to move when you need to dial up the drama. Its a deliberate exaggeration that shouldnt be taken at face value. When someone says, Im so hungry I could eat a horse, nobodys calling the nearest stable. It can add humor, emphasis, or just a dash of flair. However, too much hyperbole can numb your audiences sense of reality. If every sentence has your character screaming that a chore is the worst thing on Earth, readers might check out early. Ive told you a million times. Her heart nearly jumped out of her chest. How to Use: Use hyperbole in moderation to amp up excitement or lighten the mood. Overdoing it can lead to eye-rolls, so keep it in check. Onomatopoeia is like strapping a microphone onto your text. Words such as buzz, pop, and whisper mimic real sounds, making your writing feel immersive. Readers can practically hear whats happening. This trick is especially handy in action scenes or playful moments. The biggest risk is going overboard. Unless youre writing a comic book, you probably dont need an entire paragraph filled with kaboom, pow, and clang. The book hit the table with a thud. Bees buzzed around the garden. How to Use: Sprinkle onomatopoeia where it counts to create a vivid, sensory experience. Too many sound effects in one spot can distract and break the flow. Alliteration repeats the starting consonant sounds in a series of words. This can create a catchy, almost musical vibe. Think of it as the hook in a songsimple yet memorable. Whether its whimsical whispers or big, bouncy balls, alliteration sticks in the readers brain. It can bring flair to titles, headlines, or any phrase you want people to remember. Just try not to pile them up in every sentence or youll end up sounding like a tongue twister champion. Peter Piper picked a peck of pickled peppers. Brisk breezes blew by. How to Use: Use alliteration for emphasis on important points or to make phrases pop. Avoid turning your text into a never-ending parade of plosives or sibilants. Assonance repeats vowel sounds in nearby words, giving your writing a smooth, melodic flow. Its like humming a tune without belting out the lyrics. It can also make descriptions more pleasant to read. Dont confuse assonance with rhyme; youre focusing only on repeated vowel sounds, not ending syllables. Its a subtle technique that can add sophistication to poetry or prose. Overdoing it might make your text sound like a lullaby, so keep it balanced. The rain in Spain fell mainly on the plain. Hear the mellow wedding bells. How to Use: Layer assonance to soften the tone or add harmony. Keep it spaced out so readers can appreciate it instead of feeling like theyre trapped in a nursery rhyme. Irony says one thing but means another, often with a wink or sly grin. Its the ultimate tool for sarcasm and can highlight contrasts. What a nice day, while rain pelts your umbrella, signals that you mean the exact opposite. Irony can liven up dialogue or add humor to serious moments. But its easy to miss if your audience isnt on the same wavelength. Watch your context to ensure your ironic zingers dont come off as rude or just plain confusing. I love being stuck in traffic. Great job breaking the vase! How to Use: Reserve irony for moments where it truly packs a punch. Too much can muddy your message if readers keep wondering whether youre joking. An idiom is a phrase that can baffle outsiders because the literal meaning is often wild. Spill the beans has nothing to do with legumes, yet everyone knows it means to reveal a secret. Theyre a quick way to convey cultural flavor and familiarity. They can also be stumbling blocks for non-native speakers. Throw in idioms with care, and if your audience includes folks from different linguistic backgrounds, maybe think twice before you say someone kicked the bucket. Break a leg. Hit the sack. How to Use: Use idioms to sound natural and relatable. Dont overload your writing with them, or youll look like youre auditioning for the Idiom Olympics. A euphemism replaces a harsh term with a gentler one. Its like wrapping a difficult idea in fluffy packaging. He passed away softens the bluntness of He died. They help navigate sensitive or awkward topics without sounding callous, but going too far can also obscure your meaning. Overusing euphemisms might leave readers guessing: Wait, what does restructured the team actually mean? He passed away instead of He died. She was let go instead of She was fired. How to Use: Use euphemisms to handle delicate subjects gently. Dont wrap your message in so much padding that readers miss the point. Symbolism slips deeper meanings into everyday objects, characters, or settings. A locked door might represent secrecy. A dove might imply peace. Its subtle, but it adds an extra layer that sharp-eyed readers love to peel back. It also allows you to communicate big themes without being overt. But be sure your symbols line up with the rest of your narrative. If you scatter random objects everywhere with no clear significance, your symbolism might just feel random. A red rose symbolizing passion. A shadowy forest hinting at mystery. How to Use: Plant symbols thoughtfully so they blend with your plot. Avoid throwing in symbols just for show or youll confuse the audience. An oxymoron shoves two contradictory terms together. Its a neat clash that makes people think twice. Deafening silence or cruel kindness might seem impossible at first, but they capture a unique tension. You can create striking images that linger in the readers head. Still, dont overuse this technique or your paragraphs might look like a riddle list. One or two well-placed oxymorons can add spice to your writing. Living dead. Pretty ugly. How to Use: Slip in an oxymoron to highlight a paradoxical moment. Refrain from stacking them up or youll drown your readers in contradictions. A paradox initially looks impossible but actually reveals some deeper sense. Less is more might sound silly, yet it rings true in many contexts. Its the literary equivalent of a brain teaserslightly perplexing but satisfying once you catch on. Paradoxes challenge your audience to think beyond the surface. They can add philosophical vibes to your work, but dont cram in too many or your writing may start feeling more like a puzzle game than a smooth read. You have to be cruel to be kind. This statement is false. How to Use: Use paradoxes to spark reflection. Keep them spaced out, or you risk turning your piece into a nonstop head-scratcher. A pun is basically a linguistic spin that plays on multiple meanings or similar-sounding words. Its the cornerstone of dad jokes and a quick way to get either a chuckle or a groan. Time flies like an arrow, fruit flies like a banana stands as a timeless classic. They can liven up your writing when used in moderation. Too many puns, and youll have readers rolling their eyes or fleeing the page. Like salt, a sprinkle works wonders, but a spoonful is horrifying. I tried to catch some fog. I mist. Im reading a book about gravityits impossible to put down. How to Use: Include puns to add humor or levity. Dont stuff them into every sentence unless your aim is to master cringe comedy. Synecdoche takes a piece of something to represent the entire thing, or vice versa. When you say all hands on deck, you want the whole crew, not just their hands. Its a shorthand that makes your writing neat and impactful. But clarity is key. If your synecdoche is too obscure, readers might wonder what body part or object youre talking about. Hes got a cool set of wheels meaning an awesome car. We need boots on the ground for more soldiers or personnel. How to Use: Use synecdoche to be concise or dramatic. Avoid ambiguous references or youll leave your readers scratching their heads. Metonymy trades out the name of something for something closely related. The White House declared replaces The President declared, and Hollywood is obsessed with reboots means the film industrys churning out sequels. It keeps your writing from feeling repetitive. Just make sure your audience can easily connect the stand-in word with its actual subject. If you pick a metonym thats too obscure, it might sail over peoples heads. Hollywood loves drama. The suits upstairs made the decision. How to Use: Use metonymy to avoid repetition or add style. Check that your swap is common enough that everyone knows what you mean. Apostrophe addresses someone or something not physically there, like giving a speech to an absent lover, a deceased figure, or even an inanimate object. Its dramatic, heartfelt, and can make readers feel like theyre eavesdropping on a private moment. This device is a staple in poetry and emotional monologues. However, it might feel overblown in casual or technical writing. If you catch yourself shouting at the weather in an analytical essay, maybe dial it back a notch. O Romeo, Romeo, wherefore art thou Romeo? Twinkle, twinkle, little star. How to Use: Reserve apostrophe for intense or poetic sections. Keep it out of everyday text unless youre aiming for a theatrical flourish. Anaphora repeats a word or phrase at the beginning of consecutive clauses or lines. Its like hammering a point home with a steady beat. Readers get the emphasis loud and clear. This tool can bring a speech or poetic passage to life. But if you do it too often, your writing may sound robotic. Find a rhythm that underscores your key message without becoming a broken record. I have a dream I have a dream Every day, every hour, every minute How to Use: Use anaphora to reinforce crucial themes or calls to action. Dont repeat it so often that your audience feels stuck in a loop. Litotes uses understatement, often by expressing the negative of its opposite. Saying not bad when you mean good is a classic example. It can lend subtlety or politeness to your statements. This gentle style can be handy if you dont want to sound too brash or arrogant. Yet, if you lean on litotes too hard, your compliments may come across as lukewarm or passive-aggressive. Hes not the worst teacher Ive had. Winning that award was no small accomplishment. How to Use: Add litotes for mild emphasis or polite restraint. Too many can confuse readers who might start wondering if you actually like anything. An allegory is a fully fleshed-out story that carries a second meaning beneath the surface. Characters and events stand in for broader ideas or moral lessons. Think of it as a narrative puzzle that reveals deeper truths when you piece it together. Whether youre crafting political commentary or teaching children life lessons, allegories let you package big messages in an approachable form. Just ensure the symbolic connections are consistent, or readers might miss your carefully planted hints. Animal Farm representing political power struggles. The Tortoise and the Hare for perseverance versus arrogance. How to Use: Build an allegory if you want to layer your story with hidden themes. Keep the symbolism coherent so your readers dont need a decoder ring to follow along. Practice identifying figurative language with this passage: Practice Passage: The sun peeked over the horizon, yawning as it stretched its golden arms across the sky. The silence of dawn was broken by the chirping symphony of sparrows. Time, an unrelenting thief, marched forward as the day began. Answer Key: Personification: The sun peeked and yawning as it stretched its golden arms. Metaphor: Time, an unrelenting thief. Onomatopoeia: Chirping symphony. Figurative language can transform ordinary writing into something extraordinary by adding layers of meaning, emotion, and creativity. To use figurative language effectively, follow these steps for precision and impact: Understand the Purpose: Start by identifying the goal of your writing. Are you trying to evoke a specific emotion, clarify a complex idea, or simply make your writing more engaging? For example, a simile can make abstract ideas relatable, while a metaphor can pack a powerful emotional punch. Choose the Right Type: Once you know your purpose, select the most suitable type of figurative language. If you want to emphasize similarity, a simile might be your best bet. For storytelling, metaphors, and personification can breathe life into the narrative. Hyperboles are great for humor, and irony can subtly express contrasting ideas. Practice Moderation: Figurative language is most effective when used strategically. Overusing it can clutter your writing and dilute its impact. Think of it as seasoning: a little goes a long way in enhancing the overall flavor without overwhelming the dish. Experiment: Dont be afraid to play with different types of figurative language. Try crafting a few sentences using various techniques. Compare how each approach alters the tone or meaning of the sentence. For instance, describe a storm using personification (The storm angrily roared) versus hyperbole (The storm was the loudest thing in the universe). Revise and Refine: Once youve written your figurative expression, take a step back and evaluate its effectiveness. Does it serve your purpose? Is it clear and impactful? Sometimes, simplifying or tweaking your figurative language can make it even more compelling. For example, replacing a clichd metaphor with a fresh one can breathe new life into your writing. Heres a step-by-step guide: Understand the Purpose: Determine why youre using figurative languageto evoke emotion, clarify a point, or add creativity. Choose the Right Type: Pick a form that best fits your message (e.g., simile for clarity, hyperbole for humor). Practice Moderation: Avoid overloading your writing; use figurative language strategically. Experiment: Play with different types to find the most impactful expression. Revise and Refine: Edit to ensure your figurative language enhances rather than distracts. Below are free anchor charts summarizing different types of figurative language and their uses. Types of Figurative Language Anchor Chart Using Similes Anchor Chart Figurative language is one of my favorite topics and techniques. I use it every day in my various writing roles. Thats why I have so many awesome guides about it on this site. Check out a few of my other blog posts below. blue circles with figurative language definition and example sentences Created by Karina Goto for YourDictionary Owned by YourDictionary, Copyright YourDictionary If you tell someone You look like a million bucks, youre not saying that they look like a stack of cash. Youre using figurative language to say that they look really good. So why not just say that? What does figurative language add to our conversations and writing and how many types of figurative language do you encounter every day? Figurative language is non-literal wording that adds creativity or rhetorical meaning to your writing. It invites the reader to use their senses or prior knowledge to understand your meaning.For example: This coffee shop is an icebox! She's drowning in a sea of grief. She's as happy as a clam. I move fast like a cheetah on the Serengeti. The sea lashed out in anger at the ships, unwilling to tolerate another battle. The sky misses the sun at night. I've told you a million times to clean your room! Her head was spinning from all the new information. She was living her life in chains. When she saw the dove soar high above her home, she knew the worst was over.None of these phrases are literal, but you still understand what they mean. They use your senses or experiences to make a point rather than directly explaining what they mean. Depending on which figurative language you use, you can create different images or arguments for your reader. Its all about choosing the correct wording for what you want to say. You look like a million bucks. (You look wonderful.) You look like an angel. (You look beautiful.) You look like something the cat dragged in. (You look terrible.) You look like youve seen a ghost. (You look terrified.) You look like death warmed up. (You look sick.) You look like a spring morning. (You look refreshed and healthy.) You look like an old mop. (Youre not attractive.) Any time youre using language that shouldnt be taken literally, youre using figurative language. You can group most examples of figurative language into nine different types. Allusions reference something famous that readers likely know about. They can refer to written works, songs, famous people, historical events, mythological figures, or even television shows. He was the Romeo to her Juliet. (Refers to Romeo and Juliet) I made a Herculean effort this year. (Refers to the myth of Hercules) You always want the forbidden fruit. (Refers to the story of Adam and Eve) This job is my white whale. (Refers to Moby Dick) Red velvet cake is my kryptonite. (Refers to the Superman comics) Cupids arrows always seem to miss me. (Refers to the Roman god Cupid) Dont be such a Scrooge this Christmas. (Refers to A Christmas Carol) Make sure not to tell he-who-shall-not-be-named. (Refers to Harry Potter) When a writer exaggerates something to make a point, it's called a hyperbole (hy-PER-bow-lee). Hyperbole in literature adds color and depth to a character and to an argument. You snore louder than a freight train! It's a slow burn. I spent a couple of weeks there one day. He was dying of boredom. I had to walk 15 miles to school in the snow, uphill, in bare feet. You could've knocked me over with a feather. Ive been sitting in traffic half my life! Her head was killing her. Weve been waiting for you all day. Idioms are figures of speech that dont make any sense on their own, but they make perfect sense to native English speakers. When an idiom is overused or very common, its also known as a clich. Stop beating a dead horse. Weve bitten off more than we can chew. That train has left the station. I heard the news straight from the horses mouth. Lets throw caution to the wind. Hes as dead as a doornail. Its raining cats and dogs outside. Im ready to hit the sack. Its no skin off my nose. Why are you giving me the cold shoulder? Metaphors make comparisons between two things that share one attribute. They state that one thing is another thing. But like all figurative language, metaphors arent literal. You need to think about each thing to figure out how they are alike.Youre likely to find metaphors in poems and poetic language, but they also appear in everyday speech. Ellens job is a dead-end street. My house is a three-ring circus. He has a heart of stone. Youre a breath of fresh air. The scenic view from my window is a gorgeous painting. Marion wears her heart on her sleeve. You are a ray of sunshine. America is a melting pot. In metonymy (met-ON-oh-me) a word becomes linked with a larger concept to the point where it can stand for that concept. You can't fight the power of the crown. Bring a dish to pass. Can you give me a hand? Please lend me your ear. That happens all the time on Wall Street. The actors goal has always been Hollywood. The pencan bea mighty tool. The young couple took a trip to the altar. Giving human-like attributes to a non-human thing is personification. (Note that personification is different from anthropomorphism, which allows non-human things to literally act as humans, and is not figurative language.) Opportunity knocked at his door. The sun greeted me this morning. Dancing stars filled the sky. Vines wove their delicate fingers together. The radio suddenly stopped singing. An orchestra of crickets played their melody. My car engine grumbled before rumbling to life. The wind howled outside the window. A simile compares two things using the words like or as. Unlike metaphors, they explicitly state the quality theyre comparing between two things. Shes as busy as a bee. My room is as clean as a whistle. The child is brave as a lion. We stood out like a sore thumb. It was as easy as shooting fish in a barrel. My mouth was as dry as a bone. Hes like a bull in a china shop. She's as prickly as a porcupine. In writing, symbolism occurs when a word has its own meaning but represents something entirely different. Youll find literary examples of symbolism in nearly everything you read. As he stormed out of the house, the last leaf fell from the dead oak tree. The black night crept upon us, and I felt the coldness of death. Joanie watched the bird in the cage fight for its freedom against the bars. Go away! she yelled as a clap of thunder roared above us. The rain washed over our town, filling our soil and lifting our spirits. A rainbow stretched across the sky as we embraced after our fight. The worried mother robin fussed over her nest as I watched my daughter step into her kindergarten classroom. A dark cloud settled over the house after Dad moved away. A synecdoche (sin-ECK-doh-key) uses part of a noun to represent the whole thing. It can also use the whole noun to represent part of a noun. I'm paying with plastic. We need to get a head count. Rachel wore new threads to the party. Grab me a Kleenex. I need a Band-aid. My mom is the brains of our family. Did you get new wheels? The world is against me. Using figurative language is like finding buried treasure. (See what we did there?) Once you know how to use the different types of figurative language, your writing will engage readers even better.But figurative language isnt just a writing tool it can be an effective way to make your point in different types of writing. You can even use figurative language as a rhetorical device to convince your audience to agree with you for better or for worse.Figurative language is the spice of English, adding color, depth, and layers of meaning to our communication. It moves beyond the literal, inviting readers and listeners to engage their imaginations and connect with ideas in fresh, insightful ways.Mastering figurative language is crucial for improving comprehension, enhancing writing skills, and appreciating the nuances of literature and everyday conversation. This article offers a thorough exploration of various figurative language techniques, providing definitions, examples, and practical exercises to help you become proficient in their use.Whether youre a student, writer, or simply someone who wants to express themselves more effectively, this guide will equip you with the knowledge and tools needed to confidently identify and utilize figurative language. Get ready to unlock a richer understanding of the English language and elevate your communication skills to new heights.Definition of Figurative LanguageFigurative language is a departure from the literal meaning of words in order to achieve a special effect or meaning. It involves using words or phrases in a way that deviates from their ordinary definitions, often to create a vivid image, emphasize a point, or evoke a particular emotion.Unlike literal language, which aims for directness and accuracy, figurative language employs comparisons, associations, and exaggerations to convey meaning in a more imaginative and impactful way.Figurative language is essential for adding depth, color, and complexity to writing and speech. It allows us to express abstract ideas in concrete terms, making them more relatable and memorable.By using figurative language, writers and speakers can engage their audiences senses, emotions, and imaginations, creating a more powerful and lasting impression. Understanding and using figurative language effectively is a key skill for anyone who wants to improve their communication skills.Figurative language can be classified based on the specific techniques used. Some common classifications include figures of speech based on comparison (simile, metaphor), exaggeration (hyperbole, understatement), sound (alliteration, onomatopoeia), and association (synecdoche, metonymy).Each type serves a unique purpose and contributes to the overall richness and effectiveness of the language.Structural Breakdown of Figurative LanguageThe structure of figurative language varies depending on the specific figure of speech being used. However, there are some common elements that are often present.Many figures of speech involve a comparison between two unlike things, such as a simile or metaphor. These comparisons often highlight a shared quality or characteristic, creating a new understanding of both things being compared.Other figures of speech rely on exaggeration or understatement to emphasize a point. Hyperbole uses extreme exaggeration for emphasis, while understatement minimizes the importance of something.These techniques can be used to create humor, irony, or a sense of drama. Still others employ sound devices like alliteration and onomatopoeia to create a musical or rhythmic effect.Alliteration involves the repetition of consonant sounds at the beginning of words, while onomatopoeia uses words that imitate the sounds they describe.Understanding the structural elements of figurative language can help you to identify and interpret these figures of speech more effectively. It can also help you to use them more deliberately and creatively in your own writing and speaking.By paying attention to the way words are used and the relationships between them, you can unlock the full potential of figurative language.Types of Figurative LanguageThere are many different types of figurative language, each with its own unique characteristics and effects. Here is a detailed overview of some of the most common types:SimileA simile is a figure of speech that compares two unlike things using the words like or as. The purpose of a simile is to highlight a shared quality or characteristic between the two things being compared, creating a vivid image or a deeper understanding. Similes are a common and effective way to add color and interest to writing and speech.For example, the sentence The clouds were like fluffy cotton candy uses a simile to compare the appearance of clouds to the appearance of cotton candy. The comparison highlights the shared quality of being soft and fluffy, creating a visual image in the readers mind.A metaphor is a figure of speech that directly compares two unlike things without using like or as. Unlike a simile, which states a comparison, a metaphor implies that one thing *is* another thing. This creates a stronger and more direct connection between the two things being compared, often revealing a hidden similarity or a deeper understanding.For example, the sentence The world is a stage is a metaphor that compares the world to a stage. The metaphor suggests that life is like a play, with people acting out different roles.This comparison can lead to a deeper understanding of the human experience and the nature of reality.PersonificationPersonification is a figure of speech that gives human qualities or characteristics to inanimate objects, animals, or abstract ideas. This technique can make writing more engaging and relatable, allowing readers to connect with non-human entities on a personal level.For example, the sentence The wind whispered through the trees uses personification to give the wind the human quality of whispering. This creates a sense of atmosphere and mystery, making the wind seem more alive and present.HyperboleHyperbole is a figure of speech that uses extreme exaggeration to emphasize a point or create a humorous effect. The exaggeration is not meant to be taken literally, but rather as a way to draw attention to a particular aspect of something.For example, the sentence Im so hungry I could eat a horse is a hyperbole. The speaker is not literally going to eat a horse, but the exaggeration emphasizes the intensity of their hunger.UnderstatementUnderstatement is the opposite of hyperbole. It is a figure of speech that deliberately minimizes the importance or significance of something.Understatement can be used for humorous or ironic effect, or to create a sense of modesty or restraint.For example, if someone wins the lottery and says, Im doing okay, that would be an understatement. The statement downplays the significance of winning the lottery, creating a humorous or ironic effect.IdiomAn idiom is a phrase or expression whose meaning cannot be understood from the literal meanings of the individual words. Idioms are often culturally specific and add color and personality to language.For example, the idiom kick the bucket means to die. The individual words have nothing to do with death, but the phrase as a whole has a specific and well-understood meaning.OxymoronAn oxymoron is a figure of speech that combines two contradictory terms. The combination of opposites creates a surprising and thought-provoking effect.For example, bittersweet is an oxymoron that combines the opposite qualities of bitterness and sweetness. The combination suggests a complex emotion that is both pleasant and unpleasant.PunA pun is a figure of speech that uses a word or phrase in a way that exploits its

PSAT.SimileA comparison between two different things using "like" or "as."Helps create vivid imagery and enhance understanding.Commonly used in poetry and everyday language to express emotions or characteristics.MetaphorA direct comparison between two unlike things without using "like" or "as."Suggests that one thing is another, providing deeper meaning.Often used to convey complex ideas and emotions succinctly.PersonificationAssigns human traits or characteristics to non-human entities or abstract concepts.Enhances relatability and emotional connection in literature.Commonly found in poetry, stories, and descriptive writing.HyperboleAn exaggerated statement not meant to be taken literally.Used for emphasis or to create a strong impression.Common in everyday speech and literary works to convey strong feelings.AlliterationThe repetition of initial consonant sounds in a series of words.Creates rhythm and musicality in writing, enhancing the reading experience.Often used in poetry, tongue twisters, and brand names for memorability.OnomatopoeiaWords that imitate the natural sounds associated with objects or actions.Enhances sensory experience and brings writing to life.Common in comic books, poetry, and descriptive narratives.IdiomA phrase or expression whose meaning is not predictable from the individual words.Reflects cultural nuances and adds color to language.Important for understanding conversational English and literature.OxymoronA figure of speech that combines contradictory terms.Used to create a paradoxical effect, provoking thought or highlighting complexity.Common in poetry and everyday language to express nuanced ideas.IronyA contrast between expectation and reality, often highlighting a discrepancy.Can be verbal (saying one thing but meaning another), situational (unexpected outcomes), or dramatic (audience knows something characters do not).Adds depth and complexity to narratives, often provoking critical thinking.SymbolismThe use of symbols to represent ideas or qualities beyond their literal meaning.Enhances themes and messages in literature, allowing for deeper interpretation.Common in poetry, novels, and visual arts to convey complex concepts succinctly.Figurative language uses figures of speech to be more effective, persuasive, and impactful.Figures of speech such as metaphors, similes, and allusions go beyond the literal meanings of the words to give readers new insights. On the other hand, alliterations, imageries, or onomatopoeias are figurative devices that appeal to the senses of the readers.Figurative language can appear in multiple forms with the use of different literary and rhetorical devices. According to Merriam Websters Encyclopedia, the definition of figurative language has five different forms:Understatement or EmphasisRelationship or ResemblanceFigures of SoundErrors andVerbal GamesTypes of Figurative LanguageThe term figurative language covers a wide range of literary devices and techniques, a few of which include:Short Examples of Figurative LanguageHis friend is as black as coal.He has learned gymnastics, and is as agile as a monkey.When attacked in his home, he will fight like a caged tiger.Can you dance like a monkey?Even when he was told everything, he was acting like a donkey.My Friend is a Shakespeare when in English class.He was a roaring lion in anger, though now he is silent.They seem like jackals when running in fear.Kisses are roses in the spring.This world is a sea of anonymous faces.The house stood half-demolished and abandoned.He left with his haunted and spell-bound face.He did not like the odorless and colorless shape of water.His friend was looking at spooky glissando twangs.Zigzag fissures in the land made him look for snakes.The light on the site did not let him see the sight.He heard the sound of the fire, like wire striking the air.This artificial stream is going to flow to the downtown of the town.Please set the kite right.Might of the fright seems greater than the actual fear.He lets the pink ball fall with a tall man.They have not learned how to catch the cat.Get a seat with a treat in our local hall.Calling the cow an ox is like putting the cart before the horse.He saw the pink kite floating past the tall trees.He is dying with his untrustworthy belief.Sharply blunt razor cannot do anything to you.Kindly cruel treatment made him flabbergasted.Please, watch with closed eyes and you will see the heaven.Creatively dull person cannot do anything in his life.The Pentagon is located in Washington in the United States.The Hollywood is a home of English movies.10 Downing Street is located in London.Buckingham Palace is worlds oldest symbol of democracy.The White House.He does not know how to behave with the special people.He is looking at his own grey hair and his agility.They saw a fleet of fifty.At this time, he owns nine head of cattle.The new generation is addicted to the use of plastic money.Poised between going on and back, pulledBoth ways taut like a tight-rope walker,Now bouncing tiptoe like a dropped ball,Or a kid skipping rope, come on, come on! Taunts them, hovers like an ecstatic bird,Hes only flirting, crowd him, crowd him,The similes and word choice of this poem makes it a masterpiece. The poet use similes between the lines to depict his scattered thoughts before taking action, and makes comparison as, like a tight-rope, like a dropped ball, and hovers like an ecstatic bird.Example #2: I Know Why the Cage Bird Sings (By Maya Angelou)MetaphorBut a BIRD that stalks down his narrow cageCan seldom see through his bars of rageHis wings are clipped and his feet are tiedThe caged bird sings with a fearful trill And his tune is heard on the distant hill forThe caged bird sings of freedom.The entire poem is rich with metaphor as a bird in a cage represents a group of people who are oppressed and cannot get freedom. The cage represents physical barriers, fear, addiction, or society; while the song of the bird represents true self yearning for something greater in life.Example #3: She Sweeps with Many-Colored Brooms (By Emily Dickinson)PersonificationShe sweeps with many-colored BroomsAnd leaves the Shreds behindOh Housewife in the Evening WestCome back, and dust the Pond!Dickinson uses personification of a housewife to describe the sunset in the very first line of this poem. She is using a sweeping housewife who does her daily work, likewise the rays of the setting sun sweep away beneath the horizon.Example #4: The Raven (By Edgar Allen Poe)AlliterationOnce upon a midnight dreary while I pondered weak and weary;rare and radiant maiden;And the silken sad uncertain rustling of each purple curtain Deep into that darkness peering, long I stood there wondering, fearing,Doubting, dreaming dreams no mortal ever dared to dream before.Poe uses alliteration by repeating the /w/ sound to emphasize the weariness of the narrator, and then /r/ and /s/ sounds in the second and third lines respectively. In the last two lines, the /d/ sound highlights the narrators hopelessness.Example #5: The Rime of the Ancient Mariner (By Samuel Taylor Coleridge)SymbolismAh ! well a-day ! what evil looksHad I from old and young !Instead of the cross, the AlbatrossAbout my neck was hung.In these lines, the albatross symbolizes a big mistake, or a burden of sin, just like the cross on which Christ was crucified. Therefore, all people on the ship agreed to slay that bird.Example #6: The Bluest Eyes (By Toni Morrison)Personification, Consonance, and SimileShe ran down the street, the green knee socks making her legs look like wild dandelion of stems that had somehow lost their heads. The weight of her remark stunned us.This excerpt uses different devices that make language figurative. There is a good use of simile, legs look like wild dandelion; and personification, lost their heads; and use of consonance in stunned us, where the /s/ is a consonant sound.Example #7: The Week of Diana (By Maya Angelou)Metaphor, Consonance, PersonificationThe dark lantern of world sadness has cast its shadow upon the land.We stumble into our misery on leaden feet.in just these two lines, Maya Angelou has used a metaphor of the dark lantern, consonance of the /s/ sounds, and personification of misery.Example #8: The Negro Speaks of River (By Langston Hughes)Consonance, SimileIve known rivers:Ive known rivers ancient as the world and older than the flow of human blood in human veins.My soul has grown deep like the rivers.This prince of the Harlem Renaissance has beautifully used a different type of consonance with the /l/ sound and a simile of my soul.Example #9: Muse des Beaux Arts (By W. H. Auden)Personification, ConsonanceThat even the dreadful martyrdom must run its courseAnyhow in a corner, some untidy spotWhere the dogs go on with their doggy W. H. Auden life and the torturers horseScratches its innocent behind on a tree.W. H. Auden has used a personification of the dreadful martyrdom, and consonances of some untidy spot, with the /s/ sound, and dogs go on with their doggy life, with the /d/ and /g/ sounds.Function of Figurative LanguageThe primary function of figurative language is to force readers to imagine what a writer wants to express. Figurative language is not meant to convey literal meanings, and often it compares one concept with another in order to make the first concept easier to understand. However, it links the two ideas or concepts with the goal of influencing the audience to understand the link, even if it does not exist.Poets and prose writers use this technique to bring out emotions and help their readers form images in their minds. Thus, figurative language is a useful way of conveying an idea that readers cannot understand otherwise, due to its complex and abstract nature. In addition, it helps in analyzing a literary text. Figurative language is an essential aspect of expressive writing and communication. This reference aims to teach figurative language, its types, and its impact. By using devices like similes, metaphors, personification, and onomatopoeia, writers can enhance meaning and emotional depth in their work.Throughout the reference, youll find various examples of figurative language and how its used in literature and pop culture. Understanding these techniques will help you connect with your audience on a deeper, more emotional level.Figurative LanguageQuick Note:Figurative language uses comparisons and symbolism to express ideas creatively and beyond literal meanings.It enhances writing by adding depth, emotion, and vivid imagery, making concepts more relatable and memorable.Common forms include metaphors, similes, personification, and hyperbole, each enriching communication in unique ways.PinFigurative Language Created by 7ESLFigurative Language DefinitionFigurative language is a way of speaking or writing which is in a non-literal sense and is designed to have more of an impact on the subject it is referring to. It is used to add a more vivid or imaginative description of something, someone, or a situation.When using figurative language, the speaker wishes to convey something in a way that is not usual in everyday language. It will have a more rhetorical meaning and may not seem to make sense until the listener understands the concept of figurative language.When used in a literary sense, figurative language adds new layers to the meaning of the text and can create a more emotional, deep response for the reader.Similes and metaphors are among the most common forms of figurative language. Similes are comparisons between two seemingly different things using the words like or as, while metaphors make similar comparisons without the use of these connectors. Personification occurs when human characteristics are attributed to non-human entities, whereas hyperbole refers to intentional exaggeration for emphasis or dramatic effect. Idioms, on the other hand, are commonly used expressions whose meanings differ from their literal definitions, often providing a unique cultural insight.Types of Figurative LanguageThere are different types of figurative language. These forms of figurative language serve to engage readers, enrich the language, and breathe life into otherwise mundane expressions. By employing these diverse techniques, writers can evoke a wide range of emotions and reactions from their readers, ultimately enhancing the overall quality and depth of their work.Lets take a look at them.MetaphorA metaphor is a phrase describing something as something that is not in reality. It is used to compare two things symbolically. A metaphor literally describes something as something it is not. A good example of a metaphor would be Love is a battlefield.Another example, Her eyes were shining stars is a metaphor that compares a persons eyes to stars, implying the brightness of the eyes.SimileA simile is a type of figurative language that is used to compare one thing against another. Similes compare the likeness of two things and often feature the words like or as. An example of this would be her smile was as bright as the sun in the sky.Another example of a simile would be, His face was as red as a tomato, which compares the redness of someones face to the color of a tomato.HyperboleA hyperbole is a figure of speech that exaggerates the meaning of a sentence. For example, you could say My granddad is as old as time.Another example of hyperbole would be, Im so hungry, I could eat a horse. Obviously, no one could actually eat a horse, but this statement conveys a sense of extreme hunger.IdiomAn idiom is a phrase that bears no literal meaning to the situation it is describing but it implies the facts or story behind it. For example, there is a silver lining in every cloud. This does not mean that there are silver linings inside clouds but it is referring to the fact that in a bad situation, good can always be found.Idioms are often specific to a language, culture, or region and might not make sense when translated. Some more examples of idioms are break a leg (meaning good luck) and barking up the wrong tree (meaning pursuing a mistaken or misguided course of action).PersonificationPersonification is a type of figurative language. It is used to give an inanimate object or item a sense of being alive. The speaker would talk to the object as if it could understand and was intelligent. This helps create a more vivid and relatable image for the reader.For example, The wind whispered through the trees paints a picture of a gentle breeze by giving it the human action of whispering.OnomatopoeiaOnomatopoeia is a form of figurative language in which words that are used to describe a sound actually resemble the sound they are referring to. These words can create sensory images and enhance the readers experience. Examples of onomatopoeia include buzz (to imitate the sound of a bee) and bang (to imitate the sound of a loud noise or explosion).OxymoronAn oxymoron is a term that features two words that appear to contradict each other but make sense of the situation overall. This rhetorical device is often used for humor or to make a point. Examples include jumbo shrimp, civil war, and deafening silence.SymbolismSymbolism is another form of figurative language that is used to express an abstract idea using an item or words. For example, a red rose can symbolize love, while a black cat can symbolize bad luck or evil. Symbolism is often used to add depth and meaning to a story, poem, or other literary work.AlliterationAlliteration is a type of figurative speech in which the repetition of letters or sounds is used within one sentence. Examples include Peter Piper picked a peck of pickled peppers and She sells seashells by the seashore.PunsPuns are a form of figurative language that creates a play on words. They add an extra meaning to a subject and are often seen as a form of joke or to be humorous. Examples include Time flies like an arrow; fruit flies like a banana and A horse is a very stable animal.IronyA form of figurative speech is irony. This is when a statement made is directly contradictory to reality. It is also used to convey a style of sarcasm. There are several types of irony, including verbal irony, situational irony, and dramatic irony.Verbal irony occurs when a speaker says something but means the opposite. For example, if its raining outside and someone says, What a lovely day! that would be verbal irony.Situational irony occurs when there is a discrepancy between what is expected to happen and what actually happens. For example, if a fire station burns down, that would be situational irony.Dramatic irony occurs when the audience knows something that the characters do not. For example, if a character in a play is about to make a bad decision, and the audience knows its a bad decision but the character doesnt, that would be dramatic irony.SynecdocheA synecdoche is a figure of speech where a part of something represents the whole or the whole represents a part. It is used to emphasize specific aspects of an object or idea. For example, wheels may be used to represent a car, or all hands on deck implies that the whole crew is needed.MetonymyMetonymy is a figure of speech where an attribute or component of something is used to represent the whole thing. This is often used for symbolic or poetic purposes. Examples include referring to the government as the White House or the film industry as Hollywood.AllusionAllusion refers to a figure of speech where the author makes a reference to another work, event, person, or idea, without directly mentioning it. This can help create deeper meaning and connections for the reader. Examples include referencing Shakespeares Hamlet with To be or not to be or referring to a historical event like the Titanic when describing a disaster.AssonanceAssonance is a figure of speech that involves the repetition of vowel sounds in nearby words. This can help create a musical effect within the text. Examples include The rain in Spain stays mainly on the plain and The early bird catches the worm.LitotesLitotes is a figure of speech that uses understatement or negative expressions to emphasize a point or create a positive effect. This rhetorical device often employs double negatives or contrasting statements. Examples include Its not the worst idea in the world or Im not unhappy with the results.ParadoxA paradox is a figure of speech that presents a seemingly contradictory statement that, when considered more closely, may reveal a deeper truth. Examples include Less is more and The only constant is change.AnaphoraAnaphora is a figure of speech that uses the repetition of a word or phrase at the beginning of consecutive sentences, clauses, or lines. This repetition can help create emphasis and establish a rhythm in the text. Examples include Martin Luther King Jr.s I Have a Dream speech and Charles Dickens opening lines in A Tale of Two Cities, It was the best of times, it was the worst of times.When the above things are used in spoken English they can add an extra flair to a conversation that may otherwise have a less dramatic meaning. The speaker is able to more easily convey the depth, urgency, or importance of a matter by using one of these rhetorical devices. It is extremely common for native speakers to use these figures of speech without thinking about it and so they are often heard in conversation.When used in written text such as fiction, poetry, song, or script literary devices such as onomatopoeia or alliteration can add a new layer and make a text more interesting to read. It can also be used to further describe the emotions of characters or situations within a literary piece which enables the reader to create a clearer picture in their mind of what the author is referring to.Figurative Language: Function and ImpactEmphasis and UnderstatementFigurative language functions as a powerful tool that allows writers to emphasize certain ideas and create understatement by using literary devices like idioms, metaphors, or hyperboles. By employing these devices, authors can direct the readers attention to significant aspects of the text, thereby reinforcing the overall theme or message. For example, an understatement like Its just a scratch, when referring to a significant wound, can create a sense of irony or sarcasm, while emphasis through exaggeration can convey the intensity of a situation.Imagery and SymbolismAnother essential function of figurative language is the creation of vivid imagery and symbolism. By using descriptive words and phrases, writers can paint a more detailed picture in the readers mind, making the scene or character more memorable. Imagery engages the readers senses, drawing them into the story and helping them forge a stronger connection with the text. Symbolism adds depth by attaching additional meanings to particular objects, characters, or situations, which may not be apparent through a literal interpretation.Descriptive Words and Sensory ConnectionThrough the use of descriptive words, figurative language allows readers to establish a sensory connection with the text. By appealing to the readers sight, sound, touch, taste, or smell, authors can stimulate the readers imagination and evoke emotions. This sensory connection makes the text more relatable and engaging, fostering a stronger bond between the reader and the content.For example, consider the following simile:Her voice was like a soft breeze rustling through the trees.This figurative comparison elicits the image of a gentle wind, creating a calming atmosphere and establishing an auditory connection with the reader.Literal Meaning and Literal LanguageWhile figurative language is essential in creating emphasis, imagery, and sensory experiences, it exists alongside literal language in a balance that significantly impacts reader comprehension. Literal meaning provides a straightforward interpretation of words or phrases, whereas figurative language involves deliberate deviation from literal meaning to convey a deeper or more nuanced message. By skillfully navigating between the two, authors ensure that their intended meaning comes across clearly, while still maintaining the richness and subtlety afforded by figurative devices.Figurative Language ExamplesWe are now going to take a look at some examples of the different types offigurative languagewhich we have discussed. We will separate the examples into the different categories listed above to make it easier to see which one fits where.Examples of SimilesHere are some examples of similes.As strong as an ox.As brave as a lion.As tall as a skyscraper.As hot as hell.As hard as nails.As light as a feather.As tough as old boots.As bright as a button.As shiny as a penny.As common as muck.As white as a sheet.As tall as a chimney.As bold as brass.As cool as a cucumber.As wet as water.As sweet as sugar.As pleased as punch.As slow as a sloth.Examples of MetaphorsHere are some examples of metaphors.She was a shining star.A blanket of snow.She cried a river of tears.My mother-in-law is a dragon.The classroom was a zoo.She is a night owl.Steve is a couch potato.My husband is a pigShe is an airhead.They were two peas in a pod.Life is a rollercoaster.Mary is ice cold.The lake was a mirrorMy brother is a monster.I have seven rug rats.Examples of OxymoronsHere are some examples of oxymoronsBittersweetPretty uglyAlone togetherAct naturallyDefinitely maybeClearly confusedFarewell receptionDeafening silenceJumbo shrimpGrowing smallerOnly choiceOpen secretOriginal copyRandom orderSweet sorrowWalking deadHonest thiefQuite incredibleOld fashionedDeeply superficialExamples of HyperbolesHere are some examples of hyperboles.She ran faster than the wind.This bag weighs a tonne.You have enough food to feed the five thousand.That boy is as tall as a giraffe.My mom is going to kill me.She has a mile wide smile.This job is impossible.I am drowning in my sorrows.My holiday is never going to arrive.He is my guardian angel.The trees are dancing in the wind.You have a brain the size of a pea.I have told you a million times not to do that.I could eat a horse.I have a thousand and one things to do.Examples of IdiomsHere are some examples of idioms.A picture paints a thousand words-which means that a picture can explain something better than many words could.Beauty is in the eye of the beholder-which means that beauty is seen differently according to who is looking.Add fuel to the fire = which means to make a situation worse by your action.As easy as pie-which means that something is very easy.Break the bank-which means to spend more money than you have.Get a kick out of it-which means that someone gets a thrill from something.We are in the same boat-which means that two people are in the same situation.A blessing in disguise-which refers to something that seems bad but actually turns out to be beneficial.A dime a dozen-which means that something is cheap.Beat around the bush which means avoid getting straight to the point.A chip on the shoulder which means that someone has a bad attitude.Cutting corners-which means missing out on parts of a job.Let someone off the hook which means to let someone get away with a mistake or wrongdoing.Go back to the drawing board which means to go back to making the initial plans.Rub someone up the wrong way-which means to annoy someone.Cross that bridge when we come to it-which means to face an issue when it arises.Wrap your head around something-which means to understand a complex issue.Break a leg-which means good luck.Sing your heart out-which means to sing well and a lot.Hit the hay-which means to go to bed.It takes two to tango-which means it takes two people to create a situation.Kill two birds with one stone-which means to complete two tasks by only doing one thing.Examples of PersonificationHere are some examples of how personification is used in sentences.Please work the phone, I need to make a call.Come on you stupid computer, why wont you turn on?Help me find what Im looking for dictionary, please.Where are you whisk? I need to start baking.Where are you hiding the pencil? I could have sworn I left you on the table.Why are you so heavy, suitcase?Come on car, why do you keep breaking down?Why dont you last a long bar of chocolate?Kill two birds with one stone-which means to complete two tasks by only doing one thing.Examples of SymbolismHere are some examples to show how symbolism can work in a sentence.The black death killed many people all those years ago.We had to put out a red alert.We desperately want to get on the property ladder.My son has been in hospital but he has been a lion.After our argument, I offered her an olive branch.The time after the war was dove-like.We had disputed long enough so I raised a white flag.He gave her a red rose to show how much he loved her.He is so wise that he rivals the owl.Examples of AlliterationHere are some examples of alliteration being used in a sentence.She sells seashells on the seashore.The horses hooves hobbled along the hillside.Rudolph the red-nosed reindeer ran around the road.Eagles end up eating entrails.Any aunts are appreciated.Fog filled the flora in the forest.Examples of OnomatopoeiaHere are some examples of onomatopoeia being used in sentences.The horse neighed when I rode him.The sausages sizzled in the frying pan.My cough made a loud hacking sound.The ghost said boo.The wind whistled through the trees.The cat purred as he stroked it.The birds wings made a fluttering sound.The car zoomed past us on the road.The ball boinged up against the wall.The leaves rustled under my feet.The waterfall splashed into the canyon.The broken tap dripped all the time.In the jungle, you can hear the monkeys chatter.There was a bang which woke me from my sleep.The clock ticked quietly in the corner.The sound of the buzzing bees was prominent in the meadow.There was a huge metallic clang when I dropped the pan.I gasped in horror when I saw the car crash.I can hear the moo of the cows through the open window.The train chugged along the tracks.At night, you can hear the owls hooting outside.The frogs croaked loudly on the pond.It made a slapping sound as I hit the ground.My husband grunted when I told him that we were going to my parents for dinner.Examples of PunsHere are some examples of what a pun would sound like.An egg in the morning is hard to beat.A horse is a very stable animal.The opinion of an elephant carries a lot of weight.A good pun is its own reward.I bet someone a cut of beef the other day, he wouldnt match me as he said the steaks were too high.Did you hear about the optician who made a spectacle of himself?The helpers of Santa are subordinate clauses.How do you communicate with a fish? You drop them a line.A cat ate some cheese and then he awaited the arrival of a mouse with bated breath.They have created a flea from scratch.What did the duck say to the barkeep? Put it on my bill.Black Beauty was a dark horse.I fixed my trousers at the library, that was a turn-up for the books.Examples of SynecdocheAnother form of figurative language is synecdoche. This is when a whole is represented by a part or vice versa. Here are some examples of how synecdoche works in a sentence.At school, we learn our ABCsMy little sister is currently learning her 123s.My sister always pays for her plastic when she goes shopping.I am getting my first set of wheels once I pass my driving test.He is going to ask for her hand.We need to put some wind in the sails.The employers needed a lot of hired hands to complete all the work that needed to be done.At the party, we cracked open the bubbly.the employed the boots out into the field.I enjoy tickling the ivories.He goes out to earn the bread.Examples of IronyHere are some examples of how irony is used in a sentence.When he stepped out into the thunderstorm, he exclaimed What lovely we are having.The irony of the situation was that the robbers targeted the police station.The marriage counselor ended up getting a divorce from her husband.I posted on Facebook about how bad Facebook is.He claims to be an animal rights activist but he wears a fur coat.The ambulance arrived at the heart attack patient but ended up running him over.She was a cobbler yet her children had no shoes.I won the lottery on my retirement day. Figurative language is often used in literature to evoke strong emotions or create vivid imagery. Lets examine some of the common types of figurative language, with examples from literature and pop culture.SimilesSimiles use the words like or as to compare two different things. In literature, they can be used to make descriptions more vivid and memorable. For example, in Margaret Mitchells Gone with the Wind, a simile is used to describe a characters curiosity: The very mystery of him excited her curiosity like a door that had neither lock nor key.MetaphorsMetaphors are a direct comparison between two different things without using the words like or as. These can be found in literature as well as in everyday language. For example, the famous line in Shakespeares Romeo and Juliet: Whats in a name? That which we call a rose by any other name would smell as sweet.AllusionsAllusions occur when a work references another text, person, place, or event. These references can be used to create connections between different works or to add depth to a story. An example of allusion can be found in the poem The Waste Land by T.S. Eliot, which has several references to classical literature, such as the myth of the Sibyl and the story of Tiresias.SymbolismSymbolism uses symbols to represent an idea or quality. This can be found in literature and various forms of pop culture. For example, in Nathaniel Hawthornes The Scarlet Letter, the letter A is a symbol representing Hester Prynnes sin and her status as an adulterer. In pop culture, symbols can be found in movies, music, and artwork.Figurative Language in Pop CultureFigurative language is not limited to literature; it can also be found in music, television, movies, and other forms of popular culture. For example, in the song Juicy by Notorious B.I.G., the word limelight is used metaphorically to represent fame, as the line goes: Now Im in the limelight cause I rhyme tight.Another example would be in the movie The Lion King, where Mufasas spirit appearing in the clouds and telling Simba to remember who you are serves as a metaphor for remembering ones roots and staying true to oneself. Figurative language can enhance various aspects of an individuals career. Professionals in fields such as marketing, advertising, and public relations use figurative language to create more compelling and persuasive content. For example, descriptive words, metaphors, and analogies can help explain complex ideas and engage the target audience. Additionally, understanding figurative language is essential in fields like finance and management; for instance, in the Management Discussion and Analysis (MD&A), management may use metaphors to explain complex concepts.Communication ToolFigurative language serves as a powerful communication tool, allowing speakers and writers to convey complex ideas, emotions, and experiences more effectively. Examples of figurative language include:Oxymorons, which express contradictory meanings to highlight a concept or ideaHyperbole, which involves exaggeration to emphasize a point or create a comedic effectClich, which refers to overused expressions that can help quickly communicate ideasBy using these devices, individuals can enrich their spoken and written communication, making it more engaging and relatable to the audience.Writing SkillsDeveloping a strong grasp of figurative language can significantly improve ones writing skills. It enables authors to create vivid imagery, strengthen arguments, and evoke emotions in readers. For example, using descriptive words, similes, and metaphors can make even mundane descriptions come to life, painting a more vibrant picture for the reader. In turn, this can lead to more engaging content, whether in the form of fiction, non-fiction, or professional writing.Engaging and Conveying a MessageFigurative language plays a crucial role in helping writers and speakers engage their audience and convey their intended message. By tapping into emotions, figurative language can make complex or abstract concepts more accessible, enabling the audience to better understand and connect with the content. For instance, using analogies and metaphors helps frame challenging ideas in relatable terms, while personification allows readers or listeners to identify with non-human objects.In summary, figurative language is an essential aspect of communication and writing that can aid in career development, serve as an effective communication tool, improve writing skills, and help engage audiences and convey messages. By mastering various figurative language devices, individuals can elevate their spoken and written communication, making it more dynamic and impactful.Conclusion:To sum it up, figurative language is used to add impact and extra description in a non-literal sense to what you are saying. There are many ways in which you can do this and there are different types of figurative language for different types of situations.Figurative Language | 7ESL Video Figurative language is an excellent tool you can use in writing that helps your audience better visualize and understand your message.There are several different types including: What Is Figurative Language?Figurative language are words or phrases that help readers engage with, visualize, and understand your writing. They do this by transcending the literal definition of words.Every writer should familiarize themselves with figurative language. Why? Not only because it makes your writing sound nice, but also because it can play a major role in the effectiveness of the message youre trying to get across.There are different types of figurative languagesome more useful than others depending on what youre writing about. Below, well go over 10 common types of figurative language. There are different types of figurative language.Types of Figurative Language1. SimilesSimiles use the words as or like to explicitly highlight the similarities between two seemingly different things.Youre sweet like candy. Compared to similes, metaphors are implicit comparisons because they dont use as or like.Daniel is the light of my life.There are many different types of metaphors, including standard, implied, mixed, extended, and conceptual metaphors. 3. IdiomsAn idiom is a phrase in which the meaning of the whole cannot be derived from the meaning of the parts.There are plenty of fish in the sea.A non-native English speaker might not deduce that this phrase means there are numerous eligible people to date.4. HyperbolesA hyperbole is an exaggerated statement that is used to emphasize something or add a desired effect. Youve likely used a hyperbole if youve ever said something like:Im so tired that Im going to sleep for the rest of time.The example above is hyperbolic because theres no way someone can literally sleep for the rest of time. However, it does help the audience understand how tired the writer (or speaker) is.5. OxymoronsAn oxymoron is a figure of speech in which two contradictory words are put side by side.In my unbiased opinion, the movie was terrible.Unbiased opinion is an oxymoron because opinions are inherently biased. There are many reasons a writer might decide to include an oxymoron in their text, whether it be for comedic or dramatic effects.6. PunsSimply put, a pun is a humorous play on words that exploits the different meanings of a word.Make like a tree and leave.This pun makes use of leave as a verb, and the fact that a tree has leaves (plural noun). Puns are often added to a text to entertain readers.7. PersonificationPersonification is when human qualities and abilities are figuratively applied to inanimate objects or abstractions.Personification makes it easier to write about things that are usually challenging. It also makes your writing more engaging and tangible.The last piece of the pie was calling my name.Obviously, pie cannot call out someones name. But personifying it is a creative way to let the audience know that the last piece of pie was tempting to you.8. AllusionAn allusion is when a famous person, place, literary work, or event is implicitly referenced. For example:Surrounded by the majesty of the Rocky Mountains, I could be forgiven for thinking I was in Eden.The example above alluded to the biblical Garden of Eden.9. LitotesLitotes is a type of ironic understatement that uses negative terms to express a positive statement.Its not uncommon for something like this to happen.The use of not and uncommon together ends up meaning common. Litotes are used to emphasize the positive through the use of negatives. They also sometimes make your reader pause and reflect.10. SynecdocheSynecdoche is a type of figurative language in which a part of something is used to represent a whole (or vice-versa).Did you see Jasons new set of wheels?Here, wheels represents a car. A synecdoche can be useful when you want to keep your writing fluent or concise.Experienced writers know when to employ figurative language in their writing. They also know which ones work best depending on the setting and context of the text.Familiarizing yourself with these different types of figures of speech is an effective way of sharpening your writing skills.If you want to take it a step further, you can also elevate your writing by using LanguageToola multilingual writing assistant that can check for spelling, grammar, and punctuation mistakes. If that werent enough, it can also suggest stylistic improvements and help rephrase your sentences. Try it today.

What are the 10 figurative language. What are the 9 types of figurative language. Figurative languages. Examples of figurative language. What are the 8 figurative language.