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**LMD ONE: 2020- 2021 G:2**

**Lecture Seven: Figures of Speech or Poetic Devices**

**4.1. Definition of Figures of Speech**

The language used in a literary text is sometimes direct, straightforward, and simple. However, other times it is indirect, symbolic, and complex containing images and figures. Figures of speech give beauty and grant the words, meanings which deviate from their literal one and that are called the figurative meanings or the implied meanings (hidden). This type of style intensifies the meaning and pushed the reader to reflect upon the point that the writer wishes to reach. It is also named “the ornaments of language”. Figurative language is used in all types of literature and mainly in poetry.

**4.2 Types of Figures of Speech**

The English language comprises a set of figures of speech like simile, metaphor, personification, irony, hyperbole, paradox, apostrophe, and many others. The following section adapted from (Adams, 1997, pp. 133-147) presents some of them.

**4.2.1 Simile**

A simile is a comparison between two dissimilar things through the use of linking word/ comparison tools example; like, as, or than e.g. she is as rigorous as a bee, he is brave as a lion.

* **William Wordsworth**, *On the Beach at Calais*

The holy time is quiet **as** a nun

* **Alfred, Lord Tennyson**, *The Eagle*

And ***like*** a thunderbolt he falls

**4.2.2 Metaphor**

It is a comparison between two distinct things without the use of liking words e.g. she is a flower, he is a wolf.

* **William Shakespeare**, *As You Like It*

All the world’s a stage

* **Langston Hughes**, *War*

Death is the broom

I take in my hands

To sweep the world clean.

**4.2.3. Personification**

Is the fact of giving a human quality or a characteristic to a nonhuman (animal, object, or something abstract) e.g. the moonlight dance, the fear murmured to me.

* **Emily Dickinson**, *A Certain Slant of Light*

When it comes, the landscape listens,

Shadows hold their breath.

* **Alfred, Lord Tennyson**, The Charge of the Light Brigade

Into the jaws of Death.

Into the mouth of Hell.

**4.2.4. Hyperbole**

It is the fact of exaggerating to show a strong and serious emotional state. E.g.: my soul is a million miles far from here. When he dies, his mother cries a flood of tears.

* **Andrew Marvell**, *To his Coy Mistress*

Love you ten years before the Flood,

And you should, if you please, refuse

Till the conversion of the Jews.

* **John Donne**, *The Ecstasy*

Our hands were firmly cemented.

**4.2.5 Apostrophe**

Is when the author is speaking to a dead or an absent person as if he is present in front of him e.g.

* **John Keats**, *Ode On Grecian Urn*

Thou still unravish’d bride of quietness,

Thou faster-child of silence and slow time

* **William Blake**, The Lamb

Little Lamb, who made thee?

* **John Milton**, *Samson Agonistes*

O loss of sight, of thee I most complain!

**4.2.6 Irony**

The irony is a [figure of speech](https://literarydevices.net/figure-of-speech/) in which words are used to convey an opposite meaning which is different from what is expected or intended and pictures a different sense from the actual meaning of the words. Simply it is the difference between what appears and what is real e.g.: we love colonialism (we hate it). There are three common types of irony: verbal irony, dramatic irony, and situational irony.

The woman is as delicate as a rocky mountain (she is harsh and difficult).

He is given an excellent mark for being stupid (he is punished).

1. *Verbal*—when the author means one thing and says another e.g.

* E.E. Cummings

Next to of course god America I love you

1. *Dramatic*—here we have two levels of meaning—what the author says and what he/ she means, and what the speaker says and the author means e.g.

* Stephen Crane, *I Stood Upon a High Place*

I stood upon a high place,

And saw, below, many devils

Running, leaping,

And carousing in sin.

One looked up grinning,

And said, “Comrade! Brother!

1. *Situational*—when the actual situation is unlike the anticipated or intended result; when something unpredicted occurs. E.g.

* William Butler Yeats, *The Second Coming*

What rough beast, its hour come round at last

Slouches toward Bethlehem to be born?

(The second coming of Christ is expected, yet, a violent beast will come in his place.)

**4.2.7 Paradox**

It is a statement which appears self-contradictory and paradoxical, yet, it underlines the basis of truth e.g.

* **Gerard Manley Hopkins**, *The Habit of Perfection*

Elected silence, sing to me.

Were her first years the Golden Age; that’s true,

But now she’s gold oft-tried and

**4.2.8 Apostrophe**

It is a figure in which the author addresses a person or personified object not present.

* **William Blake**, *The Lamb*

Little Lamb, who made thee?

* **John Milton**, *Samson Agonistes*

O loss of sight, of thee I most complain!