

WHAT IS IMAGERY

Each poem also uses imagery which is produced by figures of speech. These take many forms, but all are rhetorical methods which affect the literal meaning of words. Let's start by looking at single words which appear synonymous:

dumb, stupid, slow, uneducated, ignorant, obtuse, dense

smart, clever, shrewd, brilliant, intelligent, with-it, cagey

skinny, slender, thin, emaciated, scrawny, lithe, lean, underweight

fat, chubby, plump, corpulent, pudgy, junoesque, zaftig. overweight

home, house, shack, bungalow, mansion, crib, pad, hearth, quarters

Even though the denotation (literal meaning) of the words appears synonymous, the connotation n(figurative meaning) is different. Figures of speech work the same way.

Imagery is the use of figures of speech which are concrete — it always refers to a sensory experience. The sun perceived by the senses is concrete; the enlightenment associated with it is abstract (perceived by the intellect, not the senses). Thus, we have the image of a peacock which serves as the vehicle of the comparison. Its theme or meaning may be something abstract like vanity or beauty, but the image must be concrete. Generally speaking, there are three kinds of figures of speech: comparisons, substitutions, and ambiguities.

Comparisons

Analogy is a comparison of two things, alike in certain aspects – a simile is an expressed analogy; a metaphor is an implied one.

Metaphor means two unlike things compared directly, implying several similar qualities, such as “The river is a snake which coils on itself.”

Simile means two unlike things compared using “like” or “as,” implying only one similar quality, such as “The man paced like a hungry lion.”

Personification means giving human qualities to inanimate objects or non-human creatures, such as “the trees danced in the breeze.”

Apostrophe means addressing some abstract object as if it were animate, such as “O world! Tell me thy pain!” Thus, it is a kind of personification.

Allusion means the referring metaphorically to persons, places or things from history or previous literature, with which the reader is expected to have enough familiarity to make extended associations, such as “The new kid is as mean as Grendel and twice as ugly” or “He must think he’s some kind of Superman.”

Allegory is a form of extended metaphor in which objects, persons, and actions in a narrative are equated with meanings that lie outside the narrative itself, such as Everyman. Special kinds of allegories include the fable and the parable.

Symbolism means the use of one object to represent or suggest another object or an idea. Thus, arose might be used to symbolize the loved one or love in general, depending on the context.

Ambiguities

Hyperbole means saying more than is true, an over-exaggeration, such as “He wore his fingers to the bone.”

Meiosis means saying less than is true, an under-exaggeration, such as “The reports of my death have been exaggerated.”

Irony means saying the opposite to what is true, such as “War is kind.”

Antithesis is the use of contrasts for an accumulative effect, such as “Man proposes; God disposes.”

Oxymoron means an antithesis which brings together two sharply contradictory terms, such as “wise fool,” “little big man,” “eloquent silence,” and “loving hate.”

Paradox is a statement which while seemingly contradictory or absurd may actually be well founded or true; a “logic twist,” such as “Everything I say is a lie.”

Pun is a play on words based on the similarity of sound between two words with different meanings, such as “She offered her honor; he honored her offer; and all night long he was on her and off her”.