Literary Devices

Metaphor

A metaphor is a figure of speech in which a subject is applied to something to which it is not literally applicable. For example, "She is a rose." Excluding the possibility that the subject of this sentence is literally a flower, this example suggests that the subject possesses figurative extensions of qualities or attributes of a rose, such as exquisite beauty or perhaps a prickly disposition.

Simile

A simile is a figure of speech in which two things are explicitly compared. That explicit comparison often takes the form of the word "like" or "as." For example, "She is like a rose."

Analogy

An analogy is a comparison in which an idea or thing is compared to another idea or thing. It aims to explain that idea or thing by comparing it to something that is familiar. Metaphors and similes are tools used to draw an analogy.

Hyperbole

A hyperbole is an obvious and intentional exaggeration. For example, "I read a million books this summer!" This literary device is used for dramatic or comedic effect.

Allusion

An allusion is an indirect reference to a person, place, event, or artistic work. Allusions assume a level of familiarity on the part of the reader with the work, person, or event referenced.

Euphemism

A euphemism substitutes an expression that could be considered harsh, blunt, or offensive for an expression more mild, indirect, or vague. For example, describing death as "passing away."

Paradox

A paradox is a statement or proposition that seems self-contradictory or absurd but may express a truth or tension. For example, "Less is more."

Oxymoron

An oxymoron uses contradiction but is more compressed than a paradox. An oxymoron is a figure of speech that produces an incongruous, seemingly self-contradictory effect, such as in the phrase "cruel kindness" or "to make haste slowly," or more famously in Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* when Romeo utters the lines "o loving hate" and "o heavy lightness" in the opening scene.

Satire

Satire is a technique employed by writers to expose and criticize foolishness and corruption of an individual or a society by using humor, irony, exaggeration, or ridicule. It intends to improve humanity by criticizing its

follies and foibles. A writer in a satire uses fictional characters, which stand for real people, to expose and condemn their corruption.

Onomatopoeia

An onomatopoeia is the formation of a word from a sound associated with what is named. For example, cuckoo, meow, honk, or boom.

Alliteration

Alliteration is a stylistic device in which several words, having the same first consonant sound, occur close together in a series. For example, "Sally sells seashells by the seashore."

Allegory

An allegory is a story in which the characters or developments symbolize real people or events. For example, George Orwell's *Animal Farm* and C. S. Lewis's *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe.*

Foreshadowing

Foreshadowing is when a writer hints at the ending or an upcoming event in a story.

Imagery

Imagery is when a writer uses figurative language to represent objects, actions, and ideas in such a way that it appeals to our physical senses (sight, sound, touch, smell, and taste).

Personification

Personification is the attribution of human characteristics to something nonhuman, or the representation of an abstract quality in human form. For example, "The fire swallowed the entire forest."

Theme/Motif

In a literary work, a motif can be seen as an image, sound, action, or other figures that have a symbolic significance and contributes toward the development of theme. Motif and theme are linked in a literary work but there is a difference between them. In a literary piece, a motif is a recurrent image, idea, or symbol that develops or explains a theme, while a theme is a central idea or message.

Symbolism

Symbolism is the use of symbols to signify ideas and qualities by giving them symbolic meanings that are different from their literal sense. For example, using a dove as a symbol of peace.

Need more information or assistance?

Schedule an appointment with the [Excel Multiliteracy Center](). We are here to provide one-on-one and group assistance to any and all UCCS students!