

Metaphors, Similes, Hyperbole, and Personification

Metaphors, similes, hyperbole, and personification are different types of **figurative language** that writers use to make their writing more descriptive and interesting. Figurative language can be used to compare the qualities of similar subjects, paint a vivid image in the reader's mind, or exaggerate to prove a point.

Metaphor: A metaphor compares two subjects by directly stating that something **is** something else. The comparison helps the reader think about the two items in new ways. A metaphor is not meant to be taken literally, so the reader must interpret it.

If an author says “**Life is a roller coaster**,” the reader knows that life is not literally an amusement park ride. Which qualities of a roller coaster can be compared to life? We know that roller coasters can be both scary and fun, and they climb up high before dropping down. We can guess that the author is trying to say “**Life has many ups and downs**” or “**Life has both good times and bad times.**”

Metaphor Examples:

- Life is a roller coaster.
- Time is money.
- Love is a battlefield.
- She is my better half.
- You are my sunshine.
- Don't be a pig.
- Blanket of snow.
- Sea of tears.

- Heart of gold.
- A fork in the road.
- A couch potato.

Simile: A simile always uses the word *like* or *as* to make a comparison between two different subjects that share some similarities. It is up to the reader to make the connection between the two things.

If an author says “**Dan is as brave as a lion,**” the reader must figure out what the author is trying to say. We know that lions are fierce, strong, brave animals. By comparing Dan’s courage to that of a lion, we know the author means “**Dan is very brave.**”

The author could also write “**Dan is as brave as a mouse.**” We know that mice are timid creatures, so here the author is trying to say “**Dan is not very brave at all.**”

Simile Examples:

- As brave as a lion.
- As hot as the sun.
- As white as snow.
- As quiet as a mouse.
- As sweet as pie.
- As strong as an ox.
- I slept like a log.
- It fits like a glove.
- Live like a king.
- Soar like an eagle.
- Sing like an angel.

Hyperbole: Hyperbole is a figure of speech that uses extreme exaggeration for emphasis. These statements are untrue and are therefore not meant to be taken literally.

For example, if it is an extremely hot day, you might say “**It’s a million degrees outside!**” The actual temperature during a hot day on Earth would only be about 100 degrees Fahrenheit, so to say that the temperature is “a million degrees” is a major exaggeration. The use of hyperbole adds emphasis and importance to the claim.

Hyperbole Examples:

- It’s a million degrees outside!
- My backpack weighs a ton.
- These shoes are killing me.
- I’ve been waiting forever to play this game.
- I’m so hungry, I could eat a horse!
- She never blinks.
- He is constantly eating.
- I haven’t seen her in centuries.
- I’m freezing my toes off out here!
- You are the funniest person in the whole world.

Personification: Personification occurs when we give uniquely human qualities, feelings, and behaviors to nonhuman subjects such as animals, inanimate objects, and abstract ideas. This strategy brings the object to life by painting a vivid picture in the reader's mind.

A writer might simply say "**The flowers moved in the wind.**"

The writer could instead use personification to help the reader imagine exactly *how* these flowers moved: "**The flowers danced gracefully in the wind.**"

The flowers are not literally dancing. However, using a typically human behavior to describe their movement is more interesting and descriptive than the first sentence.

Personification Examples:

- The flowers danced gracefully in the wind.
- My favorite sweater hugged me tightly.
- The alarm shrieked a warning.
- The mountain peaks kissed the sky.
- The hungry ocean swallowed the sinking ship.
- The skies were angry that day.
- Video games tempt me to ignore my homework.
- The comfortable leather sofa invited me to sit down.
- Love helped my wounds to heal.
- Time is cruel.