

Figures of Speech

Directions: Let's play with words. Below are several kinds of figurative language with definitions and examples. Instead of trying to memorize everything, you and a partner should write a dialogue filled with at least one example of each type of figure of speech. Label each sample. Then rehearse and perform for your class. (See example below)

Joe: I know I'm the bees knees (idiom). But please don't take my picture. I look terrible and I don't want people to see me looking this way in the tabloid magazines.

Paparazzi: Take it easy. I'm not bothering anybody. Besides, you look fantastic next to the green of the swaying palm and the shrimp-shell colors of grazing flamingos (imagery).

Joe: Listen. You're making me totally insane (hyperbole). If you don't stop, I'm calling my attorney!

Topics (choose one)

- A) A celebrity trying to convince a paparazzi not to take his/her picture, -or-
- B) Turning down a close friend asking to cheat off your math homework, -or-
- C) Trying to convince your crush to go with you to the prom (or some kind of public function where it's a date), -or-
- D) You decide the scenario

Challenge Activity: Once you've written a dialogue with your figures of speech, try rewriting the same dialogue with NO figures of speech.

Idiom (id-ee-um) "You don't mean for your words to be understood literally. You're just using an expression to get across an idea"

brownie points

break my heart

round-file

handwriting on the wall

deep-six

stick your neck out
go for broke
don't look a gift horse in the mouth
apple of my eye
leopard doesn't change its spots
cute as a bug's ear
I'm all ears
don't bite off more than you can chew

Hyperbole (hi-per-bully) “An exaggeration”

I almost died when she told my secret on her MySpace!
I tried a thousand times.
I screamed 'til I was blue in the face.
I studied for that test forever.
That guy is so busy, he wears about a dozen different hats.
The tension was so thick you could have cut it with a knife.

Metaphor (met-uh-for) “When you compare two items by saying one of them IS the other thing.”

She was a wet blanket on some of my best ideas.
The bar of soap was a slippery eel.
That class is a three-ring circus.
That child is a handful.

Simile (sim-uh-lee) “When you compare two items by saying one of them IS LIKE the other thing.”

ran like the wind
feet as big as boats
sharp as a tack
voice cut like glass
as stable as a glass of water without the glass
nervous as a cat with a long tail in a room full of rocking chairs

bright as a button
growing like a bad weed

Imagery (im-uh-jree) “When you use words to help people experience your words with their senses.”

flashes of lightning
brilliant sun, the bluest of blue skies
cried a river of tears
whitecaps on the river and flags whipping in the wind
stiff, stinky gym socks
soft lullabies
oozing slime
lazy as a summer afternoon on the river
they ran, hearts pounding with fear

Personification (pers-on-if-ih-ka-shun) “When you give human qualities to non-human things.”

The wind sang her mournful song through the falling leaves.
The microwave timer told me it was time to turn my TV dinner.
The video camera observed the whole scene.
The strawberries seemed to sing, "Eat me first!"

Reflection Questions

- 1) Our language is “chock full” of figurative language, so it’s hard not to use figurative words. Contrast your level of ease writing with figurative language against writing without figurative language.
- 2) Which type of figure of speech is the easiest to use? It would be the one you can think of many more examples of not listed on this sheet.
- 3) Which type of figure of speech is the hardest to use? It would be the one you cannot think of many more examples of not listed on this sheet.
- 4) Listen to conversations around you for one day. Write down any figurative language you hear from classmates, teachers, your parents, TV, and in print (online too). Share those with your class.