Figurative Language

**Analogy** -- An analogy is when we make a **comparison** between things which are not alike. If you have ever tried to tell someone something about which they have no knowledge and you use the words "It’s like..." Then you are making an analogy. For example, simple analogies may be “Hot is to fire as cold is to ice.” OR “Smooth is to baby’s behind as rough is to sandpaper.” OR “Hard is to rock as soft is to bed.” Now, let us use some short hand, Hot:Fire::Cold:Ice. If you noticed, we used colons in the analogy instead of writing it out. Try again, Football:America::Soccer:World. They can get harder, but for the most part, this is the type of analogies most people will see.

**Imagery** -- Imagery is language that is used to describe a **picture** in your mind. For example, "The young red-headed lass climbed the emerald green hillside above the ocean shore on the flawless Irish day." You should have seen a red headed girl climbing a hillside much like the illustration in your mind. That is imagery.

**Simile** -- A simile makes a **comparison** between two things which are **unalike**. Again, you have probably done this and not even realized it. The kicker on this one is you have to use the words **like, as, than,** or **resembles**. Here are a couple of examples: “The muscles on his arms were strong as iron.” “As easy as A.B.C.” “As easy as pie.” “As fit as a fiddle.”

**Metaphor** -- A metaphor **compares** unlike things but it **DOES NOT use like or as**. Here are some examples you may know: “Jumping for joy.” “Rolling in dough.” “Apple of my eye.” “It is raining cats and dogs.”

**Alliteration** -- Very simply, it is a **repeating consonant sound**. Vowels are A, E, I, O, U and sometimes Y. So any other letter which is repeated several times in a passage will make it an alliteration. Here are a couple of examples: “Sally sells sea shells by the sea shore.” Or, “Wally Walrus wondered where his socks were.” One more: “Tea for two and two for tea.”

**Personification** -- This is when we give **human qualities** to something which is not human. How many of you have a name for your car? Talk to the computer or TV? You are personifying the object by giving it a human quality. Some examples you will know include Santa Claus, Jack Frost, Mother Nature or the Angel of Death. They personify Christmas, Winter, Earth and Death respectively. We say "The wind cried..." or "My computer hates me."

**Onomatopoeia** -- The hardest word to spell is probably the easiest to remember. This is the one where the **words make a sound**. Booming bombs, buzzing bees, crackling fire, screeching tires.

**Hyperbole** -- A hyperbole is when you make a **BIG exaggeration**. For example, "I have told you a million times to stop that!" "If you don't stop that I am going to slap you into tomorrow!" "Better stop it or I am gonna kill you." Notice how these all sound like your parents.... These can also be what I like to call absolute statements, "You never clean your room." "I have always known it was you." "If I have to do this one more time, I will quit." "You never listen to me." These are all hyperbole because we say it, but it may not actually, in fact, be true.

**Cliche** -- A cliche is a **tired old expression** which everyone uses and no one likes to hear. Some examples are; "in the nick of time,” “for the life of me,” “without moving a muscle,” “without a doubt,” “to tell the truth,” “couldn't keep my eyes open,” “at the drop of a hat,” “cut to the chase..." The list goes on and on. Basically it is a word or phrase which has become very familiar to everyone. Examples of word cliches are "awesome,” “totally.” Words which most teenagers use today when they speak to each other... "snap!"

**Idioms** -- Idioms are those little **words and phrases which make a language unique**. Even in American English, we have idioms which make us different. For example, if you were to go to the southern United States and say you want a 'coke' to drink. Down south you will get a Coca Cola. However. when I was growing up in New Mexico, a 'coke' meant any soft drink. That is an idiom unique for a place.

Idioms are like Cliches, except an idiom is unique to a place where a cliche is known by all.

Here is another way of looking at it: people in the United States, England and Australia all speak English. However, there are sayings which are unique to each country. For example, if you were to hear the following idioms, would you know where they came from?

"I want to give it the Full Monty!"

"I'll meet you at the chemist's and we can buy a lolly."

"You guys better stop horsing around or I will write you up."

All of these are in English, but I'll bet you would not know where they came from except the last one if you are in America. “Horsing around” is an American Idiom meaning someone who is usually doing something they are not supposed to.

“Full Monty” is a term from England meaning to give it everything you have, to go all out for something.

“Chemist” and “lolly” are Australian. The chemist is a pharmacist and lolly is another word for candy.

**Pun** -- A pun is a **play on words** which deliberately uses words with similar meanings or spellings to make some kind of joke or point. Here is an example, "Two pencils decided to have a race. The outcome was a draw." The play on words has to do with pencils and drawing. How about "I noticed the article about peripheral vision out of the corner of my eye." The play on words here is peripheral vision which means seeing to the side of you while still looking ahead and corner of the eye, which is another way to say, you guessed it, peripheral vision.

**Satire** -- Let us start by saying that the easiest way to think of satire is to think of **pointing out the shortcomings of people or institutions in order to bring about change**. However, satire is not always funny. It can be very pointed and make us uncomfortable. If you watched Saturday Night Live during the election season, you noticed they were making fun of the candidates, this is satire. Sometimes it was funny and sometimes it is not. “The Simpsons” and “South Park” are prime examples of satire on television these days. A lot of times, sarcasm is used in satire.

**Allusion** -- An allusion is a **reference** to something which everyone is supposed to know about. For example, if I say that "It has been raining for 40 days and 40 nights." I have made an allusion to the story of Noah and the Ark. If I say, "She is no Madonna." Then I am making an allusion to the singer. Do not confuse allusion with illusion. Remember, an allusion is a reference to something you are supposed to already know and an illusion is when you see something which is not there.

**Irony** -- According to Henry Watson Fowler of The Kings English, he said "any definition of irony must include this, that the surface meaning and the underlying meaning of what is said are not the same." What this means is that what is said and what actually happens are not the same. Here is one, you stay up all night studying for a huge Science test. When you go to class, you discover the test is not until the next week. That is irony. There are three types: situational, verbal, and dramatic.

**Oxymoron** -- An oxymoron is a **contradiction** in two words. The thing with an oxymoron is that it is used on purpose to make a point. Here are some examples of oxymorons; Deafening silence, Now then, Living Dead, Icy hot, Controlled chaos, Open secret, Resident Alien, Dry lake, Jumbo shrimp and the list goes on.

**Paradox** -- A paradox is a **true statement** or group of true statements which when read or spoken, **do not seem to make sense**. They may sound like a contradiction. Here are some examples, "He who makes the most mistakes, wins." This refers to the fact that we learn from our failures. The more failures we have, the more we learn. "Bad things happen to good people." We expect bad things to happen to bad people and so when they do we really don't notice, but when good people have problems, we take notice.

**Rhetorical Question** -- This is a question which is asked, but for which **there is no reply**. Again, we have all seen and done this; here are some examples. “Are you out of your mind?!” In literature, Mark Antony asks the crowd after Caesar has been killed, “Here was a Caesar! When comes such another?” This is a rhetorical question because it is not expected to be answered.

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