

SYNOPSIS

Rhetoric

Sublimity

Criticism

Rhetoric

Rhetoric (figure of speech) is the intentional, non-literal use of language—grouped mainly by resemblance (simile, metaphor, allegory), contrast (antithesis, epigram, pun, condensed sentence), and association/contiguity (metonymy, synecdoche, transferred epithet)—plus a set of miscellaneous devices (irony, sarcasm, interrogation, exclamation, personification, apostrophe, vision, climax, hyperbole, repetition, litotes, euphemism, circumlocution, alliteration, onomatopoeia, allusion) to make expression clearer, stronger, or more vivid.

Figure of speech

Rhetoric (figure of speech) is the use of a word or phrase in a non-literal sense. [Nesfield 1908]

The word or phrase so used conveys a different meaning than its literal meanings. The three main classes of figures have their origin in the three chief faculties of the human intellect, viz.

(1) Comparison or the perception of resemblance: when like objects come under our notice, we are struck with the resemblance. The figures based on similarity or resemblance are: (i) Simile, (ii) Metaphor, and (iii) Allegory, parable and fable.

(2) Discrimination or the perception of difference: when unlike objects come under our notice, we are struck with the

~~~~~

difference. The figures based on contrast or difference are: (i) Antithesis, (ii) Epigram and pun, and (iii) Condensed Sentence.

**(3) Association or the impression of contiguity:** When two impressions occurring together become permanently associated in the mind, the thought of the one calls up the thought of the other, as a storm suggests shipwreck, wealth suggests gold, etc; this is called the law of contiguity, and is the foundation of memory or the retentive faculty. The figures of speech based upon contiguity are: (i) Metonymy, (ii) Synecdoche, and (iii) Transferred Epithet.

**Miscellaneous figures:** Besides the above, there is a fourth class consisting of miscellaneous figures, which though not based on any one faculty like the three classes just named, involve some deviation from the ordinary use of words, and are therefore rightly included among figures of speech. Such are: Innuendo, Irony, Sarcasm, Interrogation, Exclamation, Personification, A-pos-tro-phe, Vision, Climax and Anti-climax , Hy-per-bo-le, Repetition, Lit-o-tes, Euphemism, Circumlocution, Alliteration, and Onomatopoeia

**Simile: lit. "a thing like" (neuter of Latin similis, like)**

A simile is the explicit statement of some point of resemblance conceived to exist between two things that differ in other respects. Observe, in the simile and in all other figures based upon resemblance, the comparison is, not between things of the same kind, but between things of different kinds. Thus there is no figure, if we compare a camel with a dromedary, but only when, for example, we compare it with a ship and call it "the ship of the desert." A simile is especially effective, when some abstract thought or series of thoughts is illustrated by means of some concrete parallel.

~~~~~

~~~~~

There is no simile if we compare Burke with Cicero, Napoleon with Alexander, or the Russian Empire with the Roman Empire. These are all good parallels. But, as the comparisons are literal – that is, between objects of the same kind – there is nothing figurative about them. Eg – Errors, like straws, upon the surface flow.

**Metaphor: lit. A transfer (Gr. Meta, across ; phore, carrying)**

A metaphor is a potential or implied simile. In a simile both sides of the comparison are distinctly stated; whereas in a metaphor one side is stated, but not the other. Thus when we say, "He curbs his passion," we mean that he restrains his passion, as a man would curb a restless horse. If both sides of the comparison were to be given, this is how the simile would be expressed. A metaphor is personal, when it speaks of inanimate objects as if they were living. Eg – A treacherous calm ; a sullen sky ; a frowning rock ; pitiless cold ; cruel heat ; a learned age ; the thirsty ground ; a virgin soil.

**Metaphors based on history, fable, parable, etc.:** Metaphors may be drawn not only from resemblances of objects, but from resemblances of situation, and these may be taken from history, or fable, or parable, or proverb. Every one is familiar with such phrases as " hiding one's light under a bushel," " the lion lying down with the lamb " (parables from the Bible) ; " to wash one's hands of a thing" (Pilate's action in the praetorium) ; " cutting one's coat according to the cloth," " letting sleeping dogs lie," " swapping horses in crossing a stream," " putting the cart before the horse " (proverbs).

**Allegory, fable, parable**

~~~~~

These are the same at bottom, and, like metaphors, are based upon resemblance.

Allegory is a tale consisting of a series of incidents analogous to another series of incidents, which it is intended to illustrate. The object of such a tale is to exemplify and enforce some moral truth; as in Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress.

Parable is a short allegory, as the Sower, the Ten Virgins, the Prodigal Son, the Grain of Mustard Seed, the Lost Sheep, etc. In the Old Testament the parable of the Ewe Lamb was intended to bring King David to a sense of his guilt by putting a parallel case before him ; and it succeeded.

Fables of classical literature, in which birds and beasts are made to think, speak, and act like men, all teach some moral, as allegory and parable do.

Antithesis

It is a first principle of the human mind, that we are affected only by change of impression. Among the many consequences of this law is the efficacy of contrast in verbal composition ". We cannot use the commonest word, say "weak" for example, without inwardly contrasting it with "strong". Barring proper names, which are mere marks or tokens, and interjections, which are mere sounds, there is not a word in our language, or in fact in any language, which does not imply some other word or words with which it is contrasted in meaning. This law is so universal, that in ordinary speech it is sufficient to mention one word, such as "weak", without adding its negative form "not strong". Sometimes, however, it is expedient, for the sake of increasing or specialising the effect, to mention both of the contrasted terms;

~~~~~  
and as this is a departure from the ordinary use of words, we call it a figure of speech.

Antithesis is a Greek word signifying “setting against”; that is, setting one word against another. Eg. – He can bribe, but he cannot seduce; he can buy, but he cannot gain; he can lie, but he cannot deceive. A friend exaggerates a man's virtues, an enemy his crimes. Between fame and true honour there is much difference; the former is a blind and noisy applause; the latter is an internal and more silent homage.

### **Epigram: lit. An inscription (a Greek word, epigramma)**

The name given by the Greeks to a short piece of verse inscribed on a public monument. Brevity is still one of the distinguishing marks of epigram. But the word has been made to denote any kind of pointed saying, and especially one in which the words appear to be contrasted, or at least to contain some kind of incongruity. It is therefore based upon the perception of difference, and is closely allied to Antithesis. "The epigram is an apparent contradiction in language, which, by causing a temporary shock, rouses our attention to some important meaning underneath". Eg – The *child* is *father* of the man. – Wordsworth. By *merit* raised to that *bad* eminence. – Milton. Beware the *fury* of a *patient* man. – Dryden

The following phrases, all of common occurrence, can be classed under the heading of epigrammatic: White lie, solemn trifling, a silent rebuke, masterly inactivity, an open secret, a tedious amusement, Sb pious fraud, nohle revenge, expressive silence, shabby genteel.

### **Pun**

In this figure the incongruity consists in using the same word in different senses. The figure is used chiefly for purposes of humour. Eg:

The leopard changes his spots, as often as he goes from one spot to another.

Is life worth living? That depends on the liver.

The figure is sometimes, however, used seriously. In such instances there is a play upon words not amounting to a pun. Eg:

Home-keeping youth have ever homely wits. – Shakspeare.

The repeated word 'home', is used in a different sense in the same sentence.

The right divine of kings to govern wrong. – Pope.

There is almost a pun on the word right. It is really a noun signifying "lawful power or prerogative," but it is made to look like an adjective used as the opposite to "wrong," a real adjective.

### **The condensed sentence**

This figure consists in bringing together under one verb or in one enumeration ideas so different, that we should ordinarily give a distinct clause or an entirely distinct sentence to each of them. Eg:

The Russian grandees came to Elizabeth's court dropping pearls and vermin. — Macaulay.

She dropped a tear and her pocket-handkerchief. — Dickens.

Smelling of musk and of insolence. — Tennyson.

**Metonymy: lit. "a change of name" (Gr. Meta, change; onoma, name)**

~~~~~

This figure consists in describing a thing by some accompaniment or significant adjunct, instead of naming the thing itself. When the sign is such as to strike the imagination more vividly than what it stands for, the language gains in impressiveness. Eg:

He succeeded to the *crown* (= royal office).

The *pen* has more influence than the *sword*.

He drank the *cup* (= the contents of the cup).

O for a beaker full of the warm south!—Keats. (Here wine is described by the warm south, that is, the warm sun of the south, which ripens the grape from which the wine is produced. This is a metonymy three deep).

I have never read Homer (= the poems of Homer).

She is coming, my life, my fate. - Tennyson.

Syn-ec-do-che : lit. " the understanding of one thing simultaneously with another"

A Greek word transliterated into English. This figure is distinguished from Metonymy by the fact that the sign, which is made to represent the thing signified, may be any kind of symbol except an accompaniment, this last being the exclusive property of Metonymy. Perhaps, however, the best way to distinguish these two figures is as follows: In synecdoche one name is substituted for another, whose meaning is more or less cognate with its own. In metonymy one name is substituted for another, whose meaning is wholly foreign to itself. Eg:

They *sank* as *lead* in the mighty waters.—Exodus xv. 10. A

Daniel (very wise judge) come to judgment. - Shakspeare.

~~~~~

There is a mixture of the *tiger* and the *ape* in the character of a Frenchman. — Voltaire.

### Transferred epithet

This is a third kind of figure based on contiguity. When two impressions are associated together in the mind, an epithet that properly belongs to one only is transferred to the other. One of the commonest, though not the only, application of this figure is when some personal quality is transferred to something inanimate. Eg:

He lay all night on a sleepless pillow.

### Innuendo: lit. "by making a nod" (Latin word, but often wrongly spelt in English as inuendo)

This figure consists in hinting a thing without plainly saying it. Eg:

There are two times in a man's life when he should not speculate: when he cannot afford it, and when he can. (That is, never speculate at all.) — Mark Twain.

### Irony: lit. "dissimulation" (a Greek word, eironeia)

A mode of speech, in which the writer or speaker says the opposite to what he means, but does not intend or expect his words to be taken in their literal sense. Eg – The Holy Alliance (Russia/ Prussia, Austria) was minded to stretch the arm of its Christian charity across the Atlantic and put republicanism down in the western hemisphere as well as in its own.

### Sarcasm

In sarcasm a man does not, as in irony, say the opposite to what he means. He says what he means, but says it in a way that implies ridicule, disapproval, or contempt. Eg – If ideas were

innate, it would save much trouble to many worthy persons. —  
Locke.

## Interrogation

Usually, when we ask a question, we do so for the sake of getting an answer. Whenever we do this, we are using language "in the plain and ordinary way," and there is no figure of speech involved in the process. There are, however, at least two kinds of instances in which interrogation is used as a rhetorical device :

(1) when the speaker or writer, having asked a question, leaves the hearer or reader to answer it for himself - an indirect mode of affirming or denying, which is sometimes more forcible than direct assertion. Eg:

Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? -  
Old Testament.

(2) when a question is asked for purposes of exposition - here the teacher or writer directs attention to a point by putting it in the form of a question to be solved; having done this, he propounds his own answer. Eg:

Will all great Neptune's ocean wash this blood clean from my  
hand ? No. This my hand will rather the multitudinous seas  
incarnadine. Making the green one red. — Macbeth.

## Exclamation

What, an interjection is in grammar, exclamation is in rhetoric. It is a mode of expressing some strong emotion without describing it in set terms. By this means the speaker or writer hopes to communicate the same feeling to the mind of the hearer or reader. Eg:

They (the earliest Christians) were there in their secluded world,  
clothed internally with light in the kingdom of God, their Father;  
but without them what a hell! — Renan.

## Personification

This figure consists in ascribing life and any property of life to things inanimate. Eg:

Fair Science frowned not on his humble birth. But melancholy  
marked him for her own. — Gray

An extreme form of this figure is called the **Pathetic Fallacy**, by which external objects are made to sympathise in all the emotions of the agent, feeling exactly as he does, and hearing and understanding what he says to them. Eg:

When Cromwell was dying, a furious storm was raging outside,  
"as if in sympathy," says Hallam, "with the mighty soul that was  
passing away from the earth."

## A-pos-tro-phe: lit. “turning away” (a Greek word, transliterated into Roman character)

By this figure the speaker or writer suddenly breaks off from the tenor of his speech or narrative, and addresses in the second person some person or thing, whether absent or present. If something inanimate is addressed, it is personified. If some dead person is addressed, he is addressed as if he were alive. Eg:

Unhappy man! And must you be swept into the grave, unnoticed  
and unnumbered, and no friendly tear be shed for your  
sufferings, or mingled with your dust? — Robert Hall.

Frailty, thy name is woman! — Shakspeare.

## Vision

~~~~~

By this figure the writer or speaker, in relating something past, or describing some anticipated future, employs the present tense instead of the past or future, and thus makes it appear as if the event were actually passing before his eyes. The same figure can be used for describing something neither past nor future, but purely imaginary. Eg:

The sack and carnage of Delhi lasted from three o'clock in the morning until three in the afternoon. The streets echo with the shouts of brutal soldiery and with the cries and shrieks of the inhabitants. The atmosphere reeks with blood. Houses are set on fire, and hundreds perish in the flames. Husbands kill their wives, and then destroy themselves. Women throw themselves into the wells. Children are slaughtered without mercy, and infants are cut to pieces at their mothers' breasts. — Wheeler's India

Climax and Anti-climax

It adds much to the impressiveness of a sentence or group of sentences, if the mind .of the reader is made to ascend from a lower thought to a higher by successive steps; for it is as difficult for the mind to grasp a final issue by a single step, as for the body to ascend a ladder by a single rung. In a climax (Greek word for “ladder”) the first part of a sentence prepares the mind for the middle, and the middle for the end. Eg:

It is an outrage to bind a Roman citizen; to scourge him is an atrocious crime; to put him to death is almost a parricide; but to crucify him, what shall I call it?—Cicero.

His reason had been outraged at Lourdes; his illusions were dissipated in Rome; his shaken faith comes to utter shipwreck in Paris. — Times Weekly, 4th March 1898.

The opposite process, by which the thought descends from a higher level to a lower, is called Anti-climax or Bathos (Greek

~~~~~

for "depth"). This may be done intentionally, for point, humour, or any other purpose. Eg:

The autocrat of Russia possesses more power than any other man on earth, but he cannot stop a sneeze. — Mark Twain.

Or it may be done through an inadvertence, in which case the effect will be feeble or even ludicrous. Eg:

It would seem almost superfluous to point out the propriety, and necessity, and desirability of appointing female officers. (The strong word "necessity" is followed by the weaker word "desirability").

### **Hy-per-bo-le (a Greek word of four syllables, signifying exaggeration)**

This is usually a fault. But when it is resorted to for the sake of heightening the effect, and provided that the departure from truth does not offend one's sense of the truthful, it is a recognised figure of speech. Eg:

They were swifter than eagles, they were stronger than lions. — David's Lament for Saul and Jonathan.

### **Repetition**

Another mode of giving expression to intense feeling or conviction is by repeating the principal word, or adding equivalent words. Eg:

He sung Darius great and good, fallen, fallen, fallen, fallen.  
Fallen from his high estate. And weltering in his blood. — Dryden.

Repetition, when it is used with no rhetorical effect, that is, when it is a fault in composition, is called **Tautology** or **Pleonasm**.

### **Lit-o-tes (a Greek word signifying plainness, simplicity)**

The name is now given to that figure of speech by which we place a negative before some word, to indicate a strong affirmative in the opposite direction. Eg:

He is no dullard (= decidedly clever).

By this figure such words as "infamous," "unprofessional," "unchristian," etc., all of which have merely negative prefixes, have acquired a strongly affirmative sense in the opposite direction.

### **Euphemism (Gr. Eu, well ; and phemi, I speak)**

By this figure we speak in gentle and favourable terms of some person, object, or event which, is ordinarily seen in a less pleasing light. Eg:

China is a country where you often get different accounts of the same thing (= where many lies are told).

### **Circumlocution: "saying a thing in a roundabout way" instead of saying it at once.**

This figure may be used either for poetic ornament,

The sightless couriers of the air (= the winds) - Shakespeare

or for giving greater prominence to a thought,

The very source and fount of day (= the sun).

Is flecked with wandering isles of night. - Tennyson

or for euphemism,

She declared that neither she nor her husband was suffering from the domination of stimulant (= was tipsy).

### **Alliteration**

~~~~~

The repetition of the same letter or syllable at the beginning of two or more words. Eg:

Ruin seize thee, ruthless king!

Onomatopoeia (sense suggested by sound)

An impression can sometimes be strengthened, if "the sound," as Pope says, "is made an echo to the sense." This device is more commonly used in poetry than in prose; yet it is common in prose also. In fact, we have a considerable number of words whose origin is clearly imitative.

"A drum," says Smollett, "is not inaptly so called, from the noise and emptiness of the entertainment."

We still for the most part recognise the imitative intent of such words as the clucking of hens, cackling of geese, gobbling of turkeys, quacking of ducks, croaking of frogs, cawing of rooks, cooing of doves, hooting of owls, booming of bitterns, chirping of sparrows, twittering of swallows, chattering of pies or monkeys, neighing or whinnying of horses, purring or mewing of cats, yelping, howling, growling, snarling of dogs, grunting or squealing of hogs, bellowing of bulls, lowing of oxen, bleating of sheep, baaing of lambs."

Alliteration

Alliteration is derived from Latin's "Latira". It means "letters of alphabet". It is a stylistic device in which a number of words, having the same first consonant sound, occur close together in a series. Eg:

But a better butter makes a batter better.

A big bully beats a baby boy.

~~~~~

~~~~~  
Both sentences are alliterative because the same first letter of words 'B' occurs close together and produces alliteration in the sentence. An important point to remember here is that alliteration does not depend on letters but on sounds. So, the phrase 'not knotty' is alliterative, but 'cigarette chase' is not.

Allusion

Allusion is a brief and indirect reference to a person, place, thing or idea of historical, cultural, literary or political significance. It does not describe in detail the person or thing to which it refers. It is just a passing comment and the writer expects the reader to possess enough knowledge to spot the allusion and grasp its importance in a text. For instance, you make a literary allusion the moment you say, "I do not approve of this quixotic idea," Quixotic means stupid and impractical derived from Cervantes's "Don Quixote", a story of a foolish knight and his misadventures.

Sublimity

Sublimity is the grandeur of thought arising from a writer's elevated mind and moral insight, which through profound ideas, passionate emotion, rhetorical figures, noble diction, and dignified composition, evokes ecstasy rather than persuasion in the reader.

Texts that generate ecstasy

Sublimity of the texts generates ecstasy in the reader.

Longinus in his work "On the Sublime" says that a sublime passage or work is grandeur of thought which can only be created by a writer with an elevated cast of mind. Implied is the notion that such grandeur of thought can only emanate from a person of superior moral character, but also a deep insight into human

~~~~~

nature. As he says, unlike rhetoric, the goal of the sublime is not to persuade, but to induce a state of ecstasy in the reader or audience member. A mere knowledge of rhetorical figures, tropes, or other technical tricks, he suggests, will not suffice. Longinus gives five sources of sublime. First and most important is the power of forming great conceptions. Secondly, there is vehement and inspired passion. The due formation of figures deals with two sorts of figures, first those of thought and secondly those of expression. Next there is noble diction. The fifth cause of elevation — one which is the fitting conclusion of all that have preceded it — is dignified and elevated composition.

This may be simplified as follows:

|                                |              |
|--------------------------------|--------------|
| Thought (thorough knowledge)   | Subject      |
| Emotion (flow)                 |              |
| Figure of speech (Rhetoric)    | Presentation |
| Choice of words (vocabulary)   |              |
| Grammar (Arrangement of words) |              |

## Criticism

**Criticism is the art of interpreting and evaluating literature, evolving from classical rule-based judgement (legislative) to aesthetic appreciation of art and finally to descriptive study of individual works and their effects.**

~~~~~  
Art of interpretation and evaluation

Criticism is the art of interpreting art. [Prasad 1999]

Criticism in English has a specific meaning which is quite different from the use we are used to. As per Walter Pater, criticism is the art of interpreting art. It serves as an intermediary between the author and the reader by explaining the one to the other. By his special aptitude and training, the critic feels the virtue of a masterpiece, disengages it, and sets it forth.

As per Carlyle criticism stand like an interpreter between the inspired and the uninspired; between the prophet and those who hear the melody of his words, and those who hear the melody of his words, and catch some glimpse of their material meaning, but understand not their deeper import.

In its wider application, as per Mathew Arnold, criticism is a disinterested endeavour to learn and propagate the best that is known and thought in the world. It is an endeavour in all branches of knowledge – theology, philosophy, history, art, science – to see the object as in itself it really is. Tendency of such endeavour is to make the best idea prevail.

Etymologically, however, the word signifies “judgement”. Traditionally the critic’s primary concern is to pronounce upon the faults or merits of work in accordance with a whole code of laws framed to guide him in his task. A new orientation added to criticism is appreciation. So, the aspect of judgement is looked after by the classical or dogmatic critic, whereas the aspect of appreciation is looked after by the romantic or impressionistic critic.

From twentieth century onward the orientation of criticism has grown to accommodate the bolder and philosophical purposes

~~~~~

and is being extended and developed by the healthy spirit of enquiry.

The three major type of criticism are: legislative, aesthetic and descriptive.

**Legislative criticism:** Coming from the classical school, legislative criticism lays down rules for the art of writing, based on the best works of Greek and Latin literature. The Elizabethan criticism in England and a large part of eighteenth century criticism belong to legislative criticism.

**Aesthetic criticism:** Coming from the romantic school, aesthetic criticism treats literature as an art, independent activity of the mind. Examples are the criticism of Philip Sidney in the Elizabethan Age in England, John Dryden in the seventeenth century and Joseph Addison in the eighteenth century. It was followed by S.T. Coleridge, Walter Pater, Oscar Wilde and I.A. Richards in our age.

**Descriptive criticism:** Descriptive criticism is a study of individual works of writers, of their aims, methods and effects. Descriptive criticism is the latest of the three criticisms and the most popular. Among the earliest examples are Ben Johnson's 'Conversations with Drummond' and John Dryden's 'Prefaces'.