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Literary Forms and Figure of Speech

Personification

Personification is the projection of characteristics that normally belong only to humans onto inanimate objects, animals, deities or forces of nature. These characteristics can include verbs of actions that only humans do or adjectives that describe a human condition. The characteristics can also be emotions, feelings or motives given to objects incapable of thought. For example if someone said, "the trees whispered their discontent," this would personify the trees both as able to whisper and of feeling unhappy.

Eg - The stars winked
The city never sleeps
Love is blind.
The moon veiled her face
The sun smiled down on them
Let not ambition mock their useful
toil.

Apostrophe

An 'apostrophe' is a direct address to a person, thing or abstraction, the person or thing addressed need not be present, the apostrophe temporarily interrupts the surrounding discourse.

Eg - O Death! where is thy sting?
Ah love! let us be true to one another.

O holy night!.....

Roll on, thou deep and dark blue
Ocean - roll!

O, Pardon me, thou bleeding piece
of earth.

Paradox

A statement that is apparently self-contradictory in appearance but which contains a truth below the surface.

Wordsworth's "Child is the Father of Man" is an instance of paradox. How can a child be the father of a man? The opposite of it appears to be right.

But when we think over it again, it appears to be correct. A child, if he is good, will become a good man. If he is bad, he'll become a bad man.

Paradox can be used for humorous, wironical effects and can sometimes be used to express complex experiences.

Eg - • Less is more.

• He is the best teacher who teaches nothing.

• The king is dead, long live the king.

Antithesis

In an antithesis the balanced elements are contrasting. Thus antithesis is a figure of speech in which the exact opposite or contrasting ideas are conveyed. In this regard antithesis is like Oxymoron.

- Eg-
- I die met with a sweet death.
 - To err is human, to forgive divine.
 - A Jack of all trades but master of none.
 - Many are called but few are chosen.

Oxymoron

An oxymoron is a witty paradox often involving only two words, making sense despite its apparent self-contradiction.

Oxymoron is a figure by which two contradictory qualities are predicted at one of the same thing. An adjective is added to a word of quite a contrary meaning.

Eg -

- Life is bitter sweet.
- He is an honourable villain.
- They were engaged in a friendly strife.
- He is always idly busy.

Transferred Epithet

In this figure an epithet is transferred from a word to which it properly belongs to some other word closely connected with it.

Eg - . He passed a sleepless night!
. The ploughman plods his
weary way (gray)

. The prisoner was placed in the
condemned cell.

. She would with a greedy ear
devour Othello's discourse

Tautology

Tautology is a literary device used by writers to say something more than once, using the same words or synonymous words. The intent of this device is to emphasize a point or idea for an audience or reader.

Eg - He dwelt in lonely isolation
She may again regain her property
I rejoiced at the happy sight.

Onomatopoeia

It is defined as a word that imitates the natural sounds of a thing. It creates a sound effect that mimics the thing described, making the description more expressive and interesting.

Eg- The bull bellowed

- The rattle of the hall upon the roof awoke me.
- Brushing with hasty steps the dew away.

Epithet

An epithet is a descriptive word or phrase, usually picturesque or striking.

Eg - . Embalmed darkness

. Where the sea meets the moon-blanch-
ched land.

. In cense breathing mourn.

Fable - A fable is a short fictional tale in prose or verse that is designed to make a point quickly, clearly and sharply; animals often act out human roles. Aesop's fables are the best known fables. A fable sometimes also refers to the story of a narrative, the bare sequence of events. The object of fables is to enforce some moral truth.

Ballad - It is a simple narrative poem. It is usually in the form of short stanzas of four lines. It is of eight and six syllable alternately. It may also be a song accompanying a dance. It tells an old story. It is impersonal in treatment and the identity or personality of the writer remains unknown. Ballads are primarily of two kinds - Authentic Ballads of unknown authorship and Literary Ballads of known authorship.

Short story - The story is the simplest and oldest form of prose fiction.

It is also known by the name of tale.

It is an elaborate and uncomplicated narrative, usually plotted loosely and designed to entertain. Although stories are usually in prose, stories may be told in verse (Chaucer's Canterbury Tales)

The short-story is a flexible narrative form. Its origin can be traced to the classical romance. Usually less than 15,000 words in length, a short story differs from the tale by its tighter organisation and more artful construction. The comparative brevity of the story doesn't permit the large number of characters and events. It is made up of a series of incidents which lead to the central situation. The plot of a story may be comic, or tragic or romantic or satiric.

Fiction - A composition based on imaginary characters and situations is included in fiction. It is not based on historical or factual truths. It is composed to convey some message of social, political or cultural importance. In other words, fiction is something feigned or invented. Now the term, 'fiction' has come to be used for the prose narratives such as novel or a short story. Sometimes it is used synonymously for a novel.

eg- Hardy's 'Mayor of Casterbridge'
R.K. Narayan's 'Engine Trouble'.

Verse - A verse is a composition in metre. It has a fixed arrangements of accented and unaccented syllables. It has a regular rhythm or pattern. It is synonymous with poetry. Verse has more emotional and imaginative content than prose. Verse by its very structure and matter is more memorable and emphatic. Great teachings and sayings are therefore almost always put in verse.

Eg-

The sun is warm, the sky is clear.
The waves are dancing fast and bright

Drama - Drama is a form of literature intended to be performed on the stage before an audience. It has a plot, characters, dialogues, an atmosphere and an outlook on life. It has a message to give. The typical Elizabethan drama had five acts. Now three acts are considered sufficient. One Act plays are also popular. Dryden described 'drama' as a "just and lively image of human nature, representing its passions and humours, and the changes of fortune for the delight and instruction of mankind." A dramatist speaks through his characters.

Drama is divided into two kinds, tragedy and comedy. Tragedy deals with the darker side of life. Comedy deals with the lighter side of life. Tragedy arouses pity and fear while comedy evokes laughter.

Humour - Humour is the quality in a literary work that makes it funny and amusing. When we read it, it makes us laugh. To create humour in our works, a humorist uses comic side of things. He wants to evoke our laughter by using ridiculous exaggeration and statements. He also uses irony to create humour in his works.

Humour takes many different forms and can be used in novels, short stories, plays, films, and every other form of entertainment and communication.

Types of Humor

irony, sarcasm, Incongruity, understatement, Slapstick, hyperbole.