Figurative Language

Figurative language is a set of literary devices that authors use to bring the reader into the writing. The literary devices use language in such a way that what is being said is different from the actual literal meaning of the words. Figurative language helps the reader to get a clearer picture of what's happening, and they can also be used to convince the reader of something, or they can be used to simply entertain the reader. Some common types of figurative language are: simile, metaphor, and personification. Below are some definitions and examples of these types of figurative language.

Dialect: Dialect is the language used by people who live in a certain place. Sometimes writers will spell words incorrectly to show the way a character's words sound. You can guess where a person is from or where he or she lives. Sometimes you can even guess a character's age or what type of job he or she has.
Example: "GIT up! What you 'bout?" "Git" is not a real word. "Git" is a different spelling of the word "get." The writer uses dialect to change the sound of the word and to help the reader figure out how the character sounds when he talks.

Evocative Language - Evocative or sensory language evokes, or calls forth, our emotions, and it often appeals to our senses--hearing, sight, touch, smell, and taste. By using evocative language, the author helps the reader to picture and imagine scenes, events, and characters.
Example: One may guess the power of the north wind blowing over the edge, by the excessive slant of a few stunted firs at the end of the house, and a range of gaunt thorns all stretching their limbs one way, as if craving alms of the sun. By describing the "stunted firs," "gaunt thorns," and the limbs which are all stretched one way, "as if craving alms of the sun," the author evokes a harsh, windswept landscape in our imagination. You can almost feel the north wind whipping about the cliffs.

Imagery: Imagery deals with the senses. It is language which describes something in detail, but it appeals to the senses.
Example: The wind blew through the window and painted the walls with frost is another way of saying the room was cold. It plays on your sense of touch by describing a feeling in visual terms.

Irony: Irony is used to express the exact opposite of its literal meaning. Because of this, it depends on the perceived and real attitude of the speaker. Sarcasm is a form of verbal irony where a speaker or character strongly states the opposite of the truth. People sometimes use sarcasm to ridicule or mock someone or something.
Example: After Betty spilled all holiday gifts onto the floor before reaching the table, Ally shouted, "Great job!" Ally doesn't mean that Betty did a good job. Ironically, Betty did a lousy job. By being sarcastic, Ally is mocking her. Sarcasm is used mostly in speech.

Metaphor: Metaphor is a type of comparison between two objects that are not thought of to be the same. It's similar to a simile, but it doesn't use the words "like" or "as."
Example: Love is a sad and lonely flower.
**Personification**: Personification is a figure of speech in which things are endowed with human qualities or are represented as possessing human form.

**Example**: A reference to *angrily booming thunder* or *a smiling moon* personifies inanimate objects by giving them emotion.

**Rhyme**: Rhyme is when words are used because they sound similar, especially when they sound alike on the last syllable.

**Example**: *Let the rain pitter-patter, but it really doesn't matter if the skies are gray. As long as I can be with you, it's a lovely day.* "Pitter-patter" and "matter" rhyme, as well as "gray" and "day."

**Rhythmic Language** - Rhythmic language takes similar forms to the use of rhythms and the repetition of notes and phrases in music. Repetition of a word or phrase is one common form.

**Example**: *It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness.* . . Even though this is fiction, the rhythm and repetition of "It was… it was…" makes these lines feel almost like a poem. The author uses rhythmic language to bring the story to life and to make us want to read on.

**Simile**: A simile is a comparison between two unlike objects using the words "like" or "as."

**Example**: *Angus Scrimm was as tall as a tree.*

**Symbolism**: Symbolism is when certain objects or images are used in place or to represent other ideas. A symbol is usually something tangible or visible (something you can touch or feel), but the idea it symbolizes may be something abstract or universal (love, hate, worry).

**Example**: *The lonely bird chirped glumly from behind the solemn bars of its cage.* The caged bird here is used as a symbol to mean imprisonment.