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| <i>Figure of Speech</i> | <i>What is it really?</i> | <i>Example</i> | <i>Explanation of example:</i> |
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| ALLITERATION | The repetition of the same consonant sounds at the beginning of words that are in close proximity to each other. | Shakespeare's <i>Sonnet 30</i> : "Then can I grieve at grievances foregone." | The "g" sound is alliterative in "grieve", "grievances", and "foregone", since the stressed syllable in "foregone" starts with "g". |
| ASSONANCE | The repetition of a vowel sound or diphthong in non-rhyming that are in close proximity to each other words | <i>Sonnet 55</i> by Shakespeare: "Of princes, shall outlive this powerful rhyme; But you shall shine more bright in these contents..." | Contains two different assonance examples; the first is the short "i" sound in "princes" and "outlive" and the second is the long "i" sound in "shine" and "bright." |
| ONOMATOPOEIA | A word that phonetically mimics or resembles the sound of the thing it describes. | <i>Ulysses</i> by James Joyce: "I was just beginning to yawn with nerves thinking he was trying to make a fool of me when I knew his tattarrattat at the door." | Joyce creates a nonce word "tattarrattat" for the sound of knocking at a door (a "nonce" word is a word that is created only for a special case). He combines other onomatopoeic words for knocking at a door, like "rap" and "tap" into one long word. |
| ALLEGORY | In which the characters, images, and/or events act as symbols | <i>The Cave</i> by Plato "It is the task of the enlightened not only to ascend to learning and to see the good but to be willing to descend again to those prisoners and to share their troubles and their honours, whether they are worth having or not. And this they must do, even with the prospect of death." | Plato's allegory is meant to symbolize the difficulty of the philosopher's task when trying to expand the worldview of the common man. |

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| HYPERBOLE | The use of obvious and deliberate exaggeration. | <i>Sonnet 99</i> by William Shakespeare: "The forward violet thus did I chide: Sweet thief, whence didst thou steal thy sweet that smells, If not from my love's breath?" | Shakespeare imagines that the sweet smell of a violet has come from his lover's breath. This is a clear overstatement, as it is impossible for nature to have taken its smell from the lover. In fact, his lover's breath is almost surely not as sweet-smelling as a violet, yet Shakespeare's love overcomes reason. This hyperbole example gives us greater insight into Shakespeare's all-encompassing love for the subject of the poem. |
| IRONY | Is a contrast or incongruity between expectations for a situation and what reality is. Types of Irony: Verbal Irony, Dramatic Irony and Situational Irony | <i>Julius Caesar</i> by Shakespeare: MARK ANTONY: But Brutus says he was ambitious; / And Brutus is an honourable man. | Mark Antony is seemingly praising Brutus after the assassination of Julius Caesar. However, this example of irony is one of verbal irony, since Mark Antony is in fact implying that Brutus is neither ambitious nor honourable. |
| OXYMORON | In which two seemingly opposing and contradictory elements are juxtaposed (Difference between Oxymoron and Paradox: http://www.differencebetween.net/language/difference-between-oxymoron-and-paradox/) | <i>The Picture of Dorian Grey</i> by Oscar Wilde: "As for believing things, I can believe anything provided that it is quite incredible." | The oxymoron is created by the juxtaposition of "believe" and "incredible." The word "incredible" stems etymologically from the negative form of "credible," which means "believable." Therefore, Wilde, in effect, has written that his character will believe anything that cannot be believed. This adds to a sense of the character having something of a wild imagination and being uninterested in anything that is too straightforward. |

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| PARADOX | The juxtaposition of a set of seemingly contradictory concepts that reveal a hidden and/or unexpected truth. The juxtaposition of a set of seemingly contradictory concepts that reveal a hidden and/or unexpected truth. | <i>The Importance of Being Earnest</i> by Oscar Wilde: CECILY: To be natural is such a very difficult pose to keep up. | In this example from his play <i>The Importance of Being Earnest</i> , the character Cecily complains about the difficulty of keeping up the “pose” of naturalness. Of course, posing is antithetical to being natural. However, the inner truth of this statement is that being natural is sometimes a state that we have to pretend at in that it doesn’t always come easily. |
| PERSONIFICATION | The projection of characteristics that normally belong only to humans onto inanimate objects, animals, deities, or forces of nature. | <i>Pride and Prejudice</i> by Jane Austen: "Her heart was divided between concern for her sister, and resentment against all the others." | Jane Austen writes about a heart that feels concern and resentment. The heart in question is of the character Elizabeth. It’s clear that Elizabeth is the one divided between concern for her sister Jane and resentment for the others, yet Austen personifies Elizabeth’s heart to have these feelings to add some poetic sensibility to the sentence. |
| SIMILE | An explicit comparison between two unlike things through the use of connecting words, usually “like” or “as.” | <i>The Handmaid’s Tale</i> by Margaret Atwood: "I wait, washed, brushed, fed, like a prize pig." | The protagonist of the novel is Offred, a woman whose sole purpose is to reproduce with the higher social classes. Women in this new society have had their rights entirely taken away, even to the point of their humanity. Therefore, Offred’s comparison between herself and a prize pig shows that she is treated no differently than—and no better than—an animal. |

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| <p>METAPHOR</p> | <p>A rhetorical figure of speech that compares two subjects without the use of “like” or “as.”</p> | <p><i>Angela’s Ashes</i> by Frank McCourt: "He says, you have to study and learn so that you can make up your own mind about history and everything else but you can’t make up an empty mind. Stock your mind, stock you’re mind You might be poor, your shoes might be broken, but your mind is a palace.</p> | <p>This lovely excerpt, however, demonstrates how he was able to conceptualize his life as having a large amount of potential. Even though McCourt was poor, he could think of his mind as a palace and therefore have riches beyond belief available to him.</p> |
| <p>EXTENDED METAPHOR</p> | <p>A metaphor that an author develops over the course of many lines or even an entire work of literature.</p> | <p><i>As You Like It</i> by William Shakespeare: JAQUES: All the world’s a stage, And all the men and women merely players. They have their exits and their entrances, And one man in his time plays many parts, His acts being seven ages.</p> | <p>In this example of extended metaphor, Shakespeare compares the world to a stage and people to actors. He goes on to develop this metaphor by exploring the seven different stages of life.</p> |