

## POETRY TERMS: FIGURATIVE DEVICES

1. Literal statement – words taken at face value
2. Imagery – use of words appealing to senses

### IRONIC DEVICES, which work to obscure

3. Verbal Irony – say the opposite of what you mean
4. Situational Irony – actions have effect opposite of intention, which makes the outcome contrary to the expectation
5. Dramatic Irony – implications known to audience, not characters;  
Speaker means different from author
6. Oxymoron – alignment of opposites (compact paradox)
7. Paradox – seemingly contradictory statement with underlying truth
8. Pun – a joke using diff meanings of same or similar words, word play  
double entendre -- a word or phrase open to two interpretations,  
often risqué or indecent.
9. Litotes<sup>1</sup> – a form of understatement (ironic or affirming in the negative)  
ie. “You won’t be sorry.” = You will be glad.
10. Hyperbole – overstatement, exaggeration for effect, sometimes ironic
11. Antithesis – balancing contrasting ideas (rel. to paradox)  
often ironic or affirmation by using negative
12. Meiosis<sup>2</sup> – understatement – minimizing for effect

### Metaphoric Devices, which work to clarify

13. Metaphor – comparing 2 seemingly unlike things for dramatic effect
14. Simile – comparison using like or as
15. Symbol – object suggests idea
16. Allusion – well-known references
17. Apostrophe – addresses a person not present
18. Personification – human qualities to nonhuman
19. Metonymy<sup>3</sup> – substitute symbol for whole
20. Synecdoche<sup>4</sup> – a part = the whole; the whole = a part  
ie. 10 sails = 10 ships

<sup>1</sup> litotes – lie-toe-teez

<sup>2</sup> meiosis – my o sis

<sup>3</sup> metonymy – meh ton a mee

<sup>4</sup> synecdoche – sin ek da key

## TOPIC: Hunger

1. I’m hungry.
2. The scent of sizzling bacon wafted invitingly into my bedroom.
3. Mmm, this fudge is absolute poison!
4. When I’m hungry, there’s never anything to eat. [But there really is.]
5. I don’t know why I’m so thin. [Skinny person drinking diet soda, skipping lunch.]
6. Those dreadfully delicious desserts
7. I must eat more frequently in order to lose weight.
8. Got a beef? Eat it.
9. Hey, Skinny! [Said to a fat person] OR I’m not completely without appetite.
10. I’m starving!
11. Man hungers; God fulfills.
12. Perhaps, I could eat a bite. [Says a super hungry person]
13. My stomach is an empty cave.
14. I need food like a meadow needs rain.
15. Eve bit the apple.
16. I have a better use for fruit than William Tell.
17. Jenny Craig, don’t fail me now.
18. That gurgling is simply my stomach begging for food.
19. Would you like some wine? Yes, I’ll take a glass.
20. My stomach was satisfied.

**Paradox:** A statement that seems contradictory or absurd but is actually valid or true. According to one proverbial paradox, we must sometimes be cruel in order to be kind. Another form of paradox is a statement that truly is contradictory and yet follows logically from other statements that do not seem open to objection. If someone says, “I am lying,” for example, and we assume that his statement is true, it must be false. The paradox is that the statement “I am lying” is false if it is true.

**Antithesis:** The placing of a sentence or one of its parts against another to which it is opposed in order to form a balanced contrast of ideas, as in “Give me liberty or give me death” (Patrick Henry). "To err is human; to forgive, divine" (Alexander Pope). "It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness" (Charles Dickens, *A Tale of Two Cities*). “Man plans and God laughs” (Yiddish proverb).

**Double entendre:** “Marriage is a fine institution, but I’m not ready for an institution” (Mae West). From *The Odyssey* by Homer: When Odysseus is held captive in the cave by the Cyclops, he tells the Cyclops that his name is nobody so that when Odysseus and his men attack the Cyclops, he will cry out for help, declaring that “nobody” has attacked him.

**Litotes:** Here are some examples – “Your comments on politics are not useless.” “They do not seem the happiest couple.”

**Meiosis:** When Mercutio is stabbed, he calls the wound a scratch.

### **Difference between Synecdoche and Metonymy:**

Synecdoche examples are often misidentified as metonymy (another literary device). Synecdoche refers to the whole thing by any one of its parts. For example, calling a car “wheels” is a synecdoche because a part of a car “wheels” stands for the whole car. However, in metonymy, the word we use to describe another thing is closely linked to that particular thing, but is not necessarily a part of it. For example, the word “crown” refers to power or authority is a metonymy used to replace the word “king” or “queen.”

### **Synecdoche: a part = the whole; the whole = a part**

- The word “bread” refers to food or money as in “Writing is my bread and butter” or “sole breadwinner.”
- The phrase “gray beard” refers to an old man.
- The word “sails” refers to a whole ship.
- The word “suits” refers to businessmen.
- The word “boots” usually refers to soldiers.
- The term “coke” is a common synecdoche for all carbonated drinks.
- “Pentagon” is a synecdoche when it refers to a few decision makers.
- The word “glasses” refers to spectacles.
- “Coppers” often refers to coins.

### **Metonymy: substitutes a symbol for the whole**

- England decides to keep check on immigration. (England refers to the government.)
- The pen is mightier than the sword. (Pen refers to written words and sword to military force.)
- The Oval Office was busy in work. (The Oval Office is a metonymy as it stands for people at work in the office.)
- Let me give you a hand. (Hand means help.)