**Shakespeare’s Common Figurative Language (Literary Techniques)**

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| Imagery | Its applications range all the way from the "mental pictures" experienced by the reader of a poem to the totality of the components of a poem. |
| Personification | Figure of speech in which inanimate objects or abstract ideas are endowed with human qualities, e.g., allegorical morality plays where characters include Good Deeds, Beauty, and Death. |
| Metaphors | A metaphor is a figure of speech in which an object is described by comparing it to something else. For example, in A Midsummer Night’s Dream, a rose takes on special meaning as a metaphor f o r a woman’s marital status. A rose plucked and distilled into perfume describes a married woman, while a rose that withers on the stem describes a spinster. Shakespeare also used metaphors to describe more abstract topics such as life, time, and the meaning of the universe. In The Tempest and A Midsummer Night’s Dream, life is a dream in which we can never be sure of what’s real and what isn’t. Prospero believes that the world will one day disappear into thin air, just as dreams do (4.1.156). |
| Alliteration | A repetition of consonants, especially at the beginning of related words. It is a characteristic for the poems of Anglo-Saxons. |
| Irony | Shakespeare used two types of irony: *verbal and dramatic*. Verbal irony is saying one things but meaning another. In Julius Caesar, when Mark Antony refers in his funeral oration to Brutus as "an honorable man" repeatedly, he really means the opposite.  Dramatic irony occurs in a play when the audience knows facts that the characters in the play are ignorant of. For instance, Sophocles' Oedipus Rex, in which Oedipus try to avoid to kis his father and marry to his own mother but he does without knowing it, while the audience is fully aware of the fact. |
| Oxymoron | Two incongruous or classing words brought together to make a striking expression.  Parting is such sweet sorrow. ([Romeo and Juliet](http://shakespeare-w.com/english/shakespeare/terms.html). 2.1.229)  O brawling love, O loving hate. ([Romeo and Juliet](http://shakespeare-w.com/english/shakespeare/terms.html). 1.1.169) |
| Pun | Use of words, usually humorous, based on (a) the several meanings of one word, (b) a similarity of meaning between words that are pronounced the same, or (c) the difference in meanings between two words pronounced the same and spelled somewhat similar. |
| Hyperbole | Hyperbole is extravagant and obvious exaggeration.  Let Rome in Tiber melt and the wide arch  of the ranged empire fall!([*Antony and Cleopatra*](http://shakespeare-w.com/english/shakespeare/terms.html). 1.1.35-6) |
| Double negative | **Nor** I know **not** where I did lodge last night. ([***King Lear***](http://shakespeare-w.com/english/shakespeare/terms.html) 4.7.67-8) |
| Double comparable | Nor that I am **more** **better** than Prospero...  ([***The Tempest***](http://shakespeare-w.com/english/shakespeare/terms.html). 1.2.19-20) |
| Double superlative | This was **the most** unkind**est** cut of all.  ([***Julius Caesar***](http://shakespeare-w.com/english/shakespeare/terms.html). 3.2.184) |