**Figurative Language Terms**

1. **Simile** – A simile is a comparison of two things that are not necessarily alike, using connecting a word to link the comparison. The connecting word is most commonly “like” or “as.” Similes are usually used to make a description more vivid or memorable, or to establish a certain characteristic of the thing being described. Examples: He was courageous as a lion. Her beauty is like a rose.

2. **Metaphor** – A metaphor is a figure of speech used to compare two unlike things by claiming that one thing is another. Unlike a simile, a metaphor does not use a connecting word such as “like” or “as.” It asserts that the two things being compared are equal to one another. Like a simile, a metaphor’s purpose is to strengthen a description or comparison, and make it more memorable or vivid. Examples: The test was a breeze for him. You are everything to me.

3. **Alliteration** – Alliteration is the repetition of similar sounds within a sentence or a phrase. It is sometimes more specifically defined as the repetition of sounds at the beginning of words, or in stressed syllables. Its purpose is usually to call attention to that particular set of words, or to contribute to the overall rhythm and flow of the writing. Examples: She sells seashells by the seashore. Peter Piper picked a peck of pickled peppers.

4. **Hyperbole** – Hyperbole is the use of extreme exaggeration or extravagant statements, meant to create a strong impression, as well as to evoke or indicate strong feelings. Hyperbole is not meant or interpreted literally, but the exaggeration contributes to the true meaning of what is being said. Examples: I’ve been waiting for this forever. The kids were starving to death by the time they went to lunch.

5. **Understatement -** An **understatement** is a figure of speech employed by writers or speakers to intentionally make a situation seem less important than it really is. ... In response, you make an **understatement**, “It doesn't look too bad.” Therefore, an **understatement** is opposite to another figure of speech, hyperbole, which is an overstatement.

6. **Personification** – Personification is a method of assigning human characteristics to any non-human object or entity. Personification is often used to clarify or richen the description of something, or to emphasize a certain characteristic of a non-human creature or object. Examples: Opportunity will soon be knocking at your door. The mountains were swallowed by the heavy clouds.

7. **Onomatopoeia** – Onomatopoeia is defined as words whose spelling and pronunciation imitate natural sounds. Onomatopoeia is used to intensify a description of a sound, and make it more effective with a word that represents and resembles that sound. Examples: The party guests murmured softly throughout the room. The injured man moaned in pain.

8. **Oxymoron** – An oxymoron is a phrase or term that consists of juxtaposed words (usually only two) that appear to contradict one another. Oxymorons are sometimes used to produce a comedic effect, but are also often meant to emphasize the contradictory or confusing nature of an emotion or situation. Examples: The movie was a tragic comedy. They found original copies of the book in the basement.

9. **Allusion** – An allusion is a reference to a widely known person, place, or event. The subject of an allusion is referred to rather than explained in detail. The purpose of an allusion is often to clarify an idea or concept by referencing another idea that is universally recognized and understood. Examples: He thinks he’s such an Einstein anytime he answers a question correctly. I didn’t realize that by starting the conversation I had opened Pandora’s box.

10. **Idiom** – An idiom is a phrase or group of words that have a figurative meaning that differs from their literal meanings, and are understood by many due to common usage and repetition. Idioms exist in all languages, but usually cannot be understood based on the literal definitions of the words involved. Idioms are used in writing to convey a particular meaning or sentiment in a unique way. Examples: “Break a leg!” I said to him before the show. She really let the cat out of the bag when she revealed the secret plans.

11. **Pun** – A pun is a joke or phrase that takes advantage of words that have multiple definitions. Puns are almost always used for comic purposes. Examples: He was having trouble remembering how to fasten the seatbelt, but then it clicked. She couldn’t recall how to throw a boomerang, but it came back to her.

12. **Proverb -** A proverb is a simple and concrete saying, popularly told and repeated, that expresses a truth based on common sense or experience. They are often metaphorical. Examples: Early to bed and early to rise, makes a man healthy, wealthy and wise. Laugh and the world laughs with you, weep and you weep alone. Absence makes the heart grow fonder.