FIGURATIVE DEVICES & ERRORS
WHAT DO YOU NEED TO KNOW?

After learning about these devices you should be able to...

- Give the definition of each device
- Name the device by reading the definition
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THERE’S TWO WAYS OF LOOKING AT THAT…

PUNS AND AMBIGUITY
PUN
PUN
A play on similar sounding words that have different meanings.

Explain it:
1 – identify the word/s being ‘punned’
2 – explain BOTH interpretations
PUN
METAL FAN

I’M A HUGE METAL FAN.

ME TOO!
PUN
METAL FAN
Metal fan – a metallic object that blows air.
PUN

METAL FAN

Metal fan – a metallic object that blows air.

Metal fan – a person who is a fan of the heavy metal genre of music.
Explain this example.

Past, Present, and Future walked into a bar...

It was tense.
PUN

Tense – form of a verb to indicate the time the action is happening

Tense – a feeling of unease or anxiety
AMBIGUITY
AMBIGUITY
A statement that is vague and has two possible interpretations.

Explain it:
1 – identify the word/phrase that is ambiguous
2 – explain BOTH interpretations
AMBIGUITY

CHICKEN READY TO EAT
The chicken is ready to eat his meal.
The chicken is ready to eat his meal.

The meal, consisting of chicken, is ready to be eaten.
AMBIGUITY

Explain this example.
AMBIGUITY

Like my Dad – the boy’s father is the guitarist for Iggy and the Stooges and he wants to be like him

Like my Dad – the boy’s father wants to be the guitarist for Iggy and the Stooges and he also wants to do this
WE’RE NOT BEING LITERAL HERE...

HYPERBOLE, MEIOSIS AND LITOTES
HYPERBOLE

These shoes take 50 million years to put on.

50 million years later
HYPERBOLE

A deliberate exaggeration to heighten impact. It is not meant to be taken literally.

**Explain it:**

1 – identify the exaggeration
2 – explain what it is being used to emphasise
HYPERBOLE

50 MILLION YEARS
HYPERBOLE

50 MILLION YEARS

The shoes are difficult to put on. It is emphasizing the time it takes to put on the shoes.
HYPERBOLE

Explain this example.

I'm so hungry, I could eat you.
HYPERBOLE

COULD EAT [A HORSE]

This comes from the saying ‘I’m so hungry I could eat a horse.’ It put emphasis on how hungry someone would have to be to want to consume an entire horse (a very large animal).
MEIOSIS
MEIOSIS

Using understatement to subtly make an impact.

Explain it:
1 – identify the understatement
2 – explain what it is being used to emphasise
MEIOSIS

SENSING SOME TENSION
MEIOSIS

SENSING SOME TENSION

There is clearly more than ‘some tension’ between the two men as they are trying to strangle each other. The understatement is being used to highlight the tension between the men.
MEIOSIS

"Sure, I've done some things I'm not proud of."

Explain this example.
MEIOSIS

NOT PROUD OF

If the man is in jail it is safe to say that he has done things bad enough to land him there. His underplaying of the severity of his crimes creates the humour.

"Sure, I've done some things I'm not proud of."
LITOTES

A form of understatement making use of the opposite.

Why is it funny?

HE'S NOT EXACTLY A ROCKET SCIENTIST
LITOTES

NOT A ROCKET SCIENTIST

By saying that he is not a rocket scientist, it is suggesting that he is stupid.
## TEST YOUR SKILLS

### Match the example to the device

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OPPOSITES ATTRACT

OXYMORON, PARADOX AND ANTITHESIS
OXYMORON
OXYMORON
Two words, opposite in meaning, placed next to each other.

**Explain it:**
1 – identify the words that are opposite to each other
2 – comment on the effect in context
OXYMORON

INTEGRITY COMMITTEE

CAN YOU HELP ME WITH MY ENGLISH GRAMMAR HOMEWORK?

SURE.

"NAME AN EXAMPLE OF AN OXYMORON."

ANC INTEGRITY COMMITTEE.

MOM!!
OXYMORON

INTEGRITY COMMITTEE

The oxymoron is suggesting that committees (usually government) do not have integrity in their dealings.
OXYMORON

Let’s Do Nothing!

Explain the example.
OXYMORON

DO NOTHING

You cannot be doing something and doing nothing at the same time. This is poking fun at the way we use language.
PARADOX

I CAN RESIST ANYTHING EXCEPT TEMPTATION

Oscar Wilde
PARADOX
A statement which seems to be contradictory but contains truth.

Explain it:
1 – identify the words that are opposite to each other
2 – explain how the contradiction can be true
PARADOX

RESIST ANYTHING EXCEPT TEMPTATION

I CAN RESIST ANYTHING EXCEPT TEMPTATION

Oscar Wilde
PARADOX

RESIST ANYTHING EXCEPT TEMPTATION

If you say you can resist anything then there would be no exceptions yet Wilde says he cannot resist temptation. This creates humour and exposes a truth about human nature – we are easily tempted and find it difficult to resist.
PARADOX

Explain the example.
LOVE SPRUNG FROM HATE

It seems impossible that love could come from hate. In the context of the play, *Romeo and Juliet*, this is true because Juliet falls in love with her enemy.
ANTITHESIS

Opposites placed further apart so the sentence is balanced

LOVE IS AN IDEAL THING, MARRIAGE A REAL THING

Johann Wolfgang von Goethe

PICTUREQUOTES.com
ISN’T IT IRONIC?

SITUATIONAL, VERBAL AND DRAMATIC IRONY
IRONY IS ALL ABOUT OPPOSITES

Situational

Verbal

Dramatic

COINCIDENCE IS NOT IRONY...
SITUATIONAL
When the **opposite** of what you would expect happens.

**Explain it:**
1 – identify what the expectation would be
2 – explain how the situation contradicts the expectation
The boy is entering a school for gifted children so we expect him to be smart.
The boy is entering a school for gifted children so we expect him to be smart. However, he is trying to push a door clearly labelled ‘pull’, which bring his intelligence into question.
SITUATIONAL

Explain the example.
SITUATIONAL

Garfield says that cats have too much dignity to play fetch so you would expect him to behave in a poised manner.

However, he burps, coughs, sniffs and scratches his behind in public which are all undignified actions.
CONGRATULATIONS, YOU BROKE THE CODE, IF YOU PRESS THE ELEVATOR BUTTON 3 TIMES AFTER IT'S ALREADY BEEN PRESSED, IT GOES INTO "HURRY" MODE.

REALLY?
VERBAL
When you say something but mean the opposite.

Explain it:
1 – identify what the it would appear the person is saying
2 – explain what they actually mean in the context
The woman is commending the man on repeatedly pushing the elevator button as it made it go faster.
VERBAL

The woman is commending the man on repeatedly pushing the elevator button as it made it go faster.

However, what she really means is that repeatedly pushing the button will not help the elevator go faster. She is mocking him.
Explain the example.
The snail is saying that he wishes it would hail all year.

However, he obviously doesn’t mean it as he is curled up in his shell and is being pelted with hailstones as the inconsiderate bug hogs the umbrella.
SARCASM

A deliberately taunting, hurtful comment.

When what you say is ironic, the TONE is sarcastic.
FIRST HE WARMS OUR BOWL, NOW HE'S FEEDING US... AND YOU THOUGHT HE WASN'T FRIENDLY.
DRAMATIC
When the audience knows more than the characters do.

**Explain it:**
1 – identify what the characters think is happening
2 – explain what the audience knows to be true by referring to what is actually happening
The fish think that the cat is feeding them.
The fish think that the cat is feeding them.

However, we can see that the fish are on the stove and the cat is not feeding them but is adding flavour (salt) because he is planning to eat them.
Dramatic

Explain the example.

...and then I heard a loud bang and when I turned back he was gone.
The nails are confused about where their friend has gone.

However, the audience knows that the ‘loud bang’ was the sound of their friend being hit into the wood. He has been nailed down and will not be coming back (sob!).
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DO YOU GET THE HINT?

EUPHEMISM AND INNUENDO
EUPHEMISM
Expressing something harsh or distasteful in a polite manner.

Explain it:
1 – identify the word/phrase that is the euphemism
2 – explain what it actually means (the harsher truth)
EUPHEMISM

LET YOU GO
EUPHEMISM

LET YOU GO

Santa is trying to tell the elves that they are fired but is trying to soften the blow with a euphemism.
EUPHEMISM

Explain the example.
EUPHEMISM

DOING HIS BUSINESS

Ed is trying to avoid being vulgar. What he actually means is that the dog is defecating (making a poop!) on his lawn.
UGH – I HAVEN’T BEEN TO THE GYM IN AGES!

YES, I CAN BELIEVE THAT…
INNUENDO
A subtle (often nasty) hint at something.

Explain it:
1 – identify the word/phrase that is the innuendo
2 – explain what it actually means (the harsher truth)
INNUENDO

I CAN BELIEVE THAT

UGH – I HAVEN'T BEEN TO THE GYM IN AGES!

YES, I CAN BELIEVE THAT...
INNUENDO

I CAN BELIEVE THAT

The woman on the right is suggesting that it is physically evident that her colleague has not been to the gym. In other words, she is fat/ out of shape.
INNUENDO

Explain the example.
INNUENDO

DON’T THINK I’M NOT GRATEFUL

The smaller fish is suggesting that he does not want to hear more about the big fish. In other words, he is grateful that he doesn’t know everything because the big fish is dull/boring or he doesn’t care to take the time to listen.
WHOOPS... I MADE A MISTAKE

MALAPROPISM AND SPOONERISM
MALAPROPISM

“Remember, Jeffy. If the dodge ball hits you, you’ll be illuminated.”
MALAPROPISM
The use of the wrong ‘big word’.

Explain it:
1 – identify the word/phrase that is incorrect
2 – supply the correct word
MALAPROPISM

ILLUMINATED

“Remember, Jeffy. If the dodge ball hits you, you’ll be illuminated.”
 MALAPROPISM

ILLUMINATED

The girl meant to say eliminated, not illuminated.
MALAPROPISM

“Ha ha ha, Biff. Guess what? After we go to the drugstore and the post office, I'm going to the vet's to get tutored.”

Explain the example.
MALAPROPISM

TUTORED

The dog thinks that he is going to get tutored but is really going to get neutered (sterilized).

"Ha ha ha, Biff. Guess what? After we go to the drugstore and the post office, I'm going to the vet's to get tutored."
Runny Babbit lent to wunch
And heard the saitress way,
"We have some lovely
stabbit rew—
Our Special for today."
SPOONERISM
When you swap around the initial letters of words.

Explain it:
1 – identify the words that have swapped letters
2 – supply the correct words

Runny Babbit lent to wunch
And heard the saitress way,
"We have some lovely stabbit rew—
Our Special for today."
SPOONERISM

RUNNY BABBIT, LENT TO WUNCH, SAITRESS WAY, STABBITREW

Runny Babbit lent to wunch
And heard the saitress way,
"We have some lovely stabbit rew—
Our Special for today."
SPOONERISM

RUNNY BABBiT, LENT TO WUNCH, SAIiTRESS WAY, STABBiT REW

The correct words are ‘bunny rabbit’, ‘went to lunch’, ‘waitress say’ and ‘rabbit stew’.
SPOONERISM

Pouring with rain

Explain the example.
SPOONERISM

TIPS OF THE SLUNG, POURING WITH RAIN

The correct words are ‘slips of the tongue’ and ‘roaring with pain’.
<p>| 1  | EUPHEMISM       | A  | I would suggest using your brain power, but I’m not sure there’ll be enough wattage. |
| 2  | INNUENDO        | B  | I’ve lost my English file and tasted a whole worm’s work. |
| 3  | MALAPROPISM     | C  | Her uncle is spending some time in a correctional facility. |
| 4  | SPOONERISM      | D  | It seems he is suffering from a nervous shakedown. |</p>
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