

How to Identify, Name & Explain figurative language

When you analyze figurative language, remember this three-step process:

1 IDENTIFY

where the figurative language technique is in the sentence or extract, and how it is being used.

2 NAME

the figurative language technique being used (e.g. is it a metaphor? Simile? Euphemism? Etc.)

3 EXPLAIN

what it means, and the effect or image produced by using this figurative language technique.

Example:

QUESTION:

Identify and explain the figurative technique used in the following:
The teacher listened to his excuse with a wooden face.

ANSWER:

1
What is being compared is IDENTIFIED

The teacher's face is being compared to wood. This is a metaphor. His face is not literally made of wood, but the comparison illustrates that the teacher's expression is unmoving, and lacking in emotion. From this, it can be inferred that the teacher is not moved by, or does not believe, the student's excuse.

2
The technique is NAMED

3
The effect and purpose of the technique is EXPLAINED

Common Figurative Language Techniques

* These are just a few, there are many more...

Metaphor: A figure of speech that implies a comparison between two relatively unlikely things.

Simile: A comparison between two unlike things, usually with the words 'like' or 'as'.

Personification: The giving of human qualities to an animal, object or abstract idea.

Synecdoche: A figure of speech in which a part is used to represent the whole, or the whole for a part.

Oxymoron: When incongruous or contradictory terms appear side by side.

Assonance: The repetition of vowel sounds.

Alliteration: The repetition of the same letter or sound at the beginning of adjacent or closely connected words

Onomatopoeia: The use of words which actually sound like the objects or actions to which they refer.

Euphemism: A 'softer', more inoffensive word or phrase, used as a substitute for one considered too harsh or blunt when referring to something unpleasant or embarrassing.

Pun: A play on words; sometimes on different meanings of the same word and sometimes on the similar sense or sound of different words.

Hyperbole: An exaggerated statement used to emphasize a point.