

## **Figurative Language: What is It?**

“Figurative language tells it like it isn’t to show the way it really is.”

– Richard Lederer, *The Miracle of Language*

A figure of speech is an expressive use of language to create an image that enriches the message. These words are used both creatively and non-literally. There are several categories of figurative language; a few of the more commonly seen figurative language forms are described below.

*Hyperbole* – In the simplest of terms, hyperbole is an exaggeration (e.g. I could eat a horse!)

*Idioms* – These are expressions that develop over time and should be learned as a “whole.” (e.g. Don’t let the cat out of the bag.)

*Simile* – Writers compare things that are alike in one way, but different in most other ways. A simile uses the words “like” or “as.” (e.g. She ran like the wind.)

*Metaphor* – Unlike a simile, metaphors compare things that are alike in one way, but different in most other ways **without** using the words “like” or “as.” (e.g. He was king of the world.)

*Onomatopoeia* is an ancient Greek term that means “name-making,” because the meanings of onomatopoeic words are indeed made by *sounds*. (e.g. bang, snap, chirp, thump)

*Personification* – application of human qualities to inanimate things or ideas (e.g. the house rumbled...)