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Grammarian's Glossary

The following are rhetorical devices (use of language that creates a literary effect):

Alliteration

The repetition of the same sounds or of the same kinds of sounds at the beginning of words or in stressed syllables, as in “on scrolls of silver snowy sentences” (Hart Crane).

Other examples:

“Veni, vidi, vici.” Julius Caesar (translations, “I came, I saw, I conquered.”)

“Peter Piper picked a peck of pickled peppers.” (tongue twister)

Malapropism

Ludicrous (laughable) misuse of a word, especially by confusion with one of similar sound.

Examples:

“Comparisons are *odorous*.” (Shakespeare) (*odious* is correct)

“He was a man of great *statue*.” (Thomas Menino, Boston mayor) (*stature* is correct)

“It is beyond my *apprehension*.” (Danny Ozark, baseball manager) (*comprehension* is correct)

Metaphor

1. A figure of speech in which a word or phrase that ordinarily designates one thing is used to designate another, thus making an implicit comparison, as in “a sea of troubles” or “All the world's a stage.” (Shakespeare).

2. One thing conceived as representing another; a symbol: “Hollywood has always been an irresistible, prefabricated metaphor for the crass, the materialistic, the shallow, and the craven.” (Neal Gabler).

Simile

A figure of speech in which two essentially unlike things are compared, often in a phrase introduced by *like* or *as*, as in “How like the winter hath my absence been” or “So are you to my thoughts as food to life.” (Shakespeare).

A rhetorical device to avoid:

Cliché

A sentence or phrase, usually expressing a popular or common thought or idea, which has lost originality, ingenuity, and impact by long overuse, such as “beating a dead horse” or “strong as an ox.”