

JOHN - PAUL FLINTOFF

Figures of speech / Week 2

Broadly speaking, there are two kinds of figures: the ones that things sound good, and the ones that change how people think. (Massive overstatement, and you can't have either without the other - but time is wasted debating this.)

I'm hardly bothering here with the "sound" figures. These (examples below) are very much focused on how you can make words new

I strongly recommend that you put all these figures into your own book, maybe add a definition in each case (I'm not providing that, because it's good for you to find it yourself!).

Then go ahead and collect the finest examples you come across. Make this a lifetime project. If you want to add to them fast, you could do worse than browse the dictionary of quotations, as I did. And I permit myself to add further examples from anywhere: TV, Idler newsletters, my next-door neighbour...

You can also find amusing [examples of many figures, taken from episodes of The Simpsons, on the website of my friend Jay Heinrichs](#), an American author.

Simile

"He sang like a choirboy castrated too late" - John Updike

"He treated opponents as if they were corrupt readings in an old manuscript" - Lytton Strachey

Metaphor

"Modern teaching is organised amnesia" - Georges Steiner

"She beheaded me, and flung my head into abstract space" - DH Lawrence on a neighbour's lecturing

Litotes

"What I always feel about rejection slips is that their glamour soon wears off" - PG Wodehouse

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Hyperbole

“Two-thirds of the planet is covered by water; the rest is covered by N’Golo Kante” - Gary Linker, on a Chelsea Football Club player

Personification

“War is an ancient imposter, he leads the way through the cornfields to the cemetery” - Edmund Blunden

Antonomasia

“Doris Stokes was the Gracie Fields of the psychic world” - Hugh Massingberd

“It may be that he will dance rings round the Labour leader, Gordon Browning him” - Hugo Rifkind

Analogy

“Corneille is to Shakespeare as a clipped hedge is to a forest” - Dr Samuel Johnson

Metanoia

“I have my own ideas about who will be forgotten and who won’t... I could, of course, be wrong. We’ll see - or rather, we won’t see” - Ian Hamilton

A fortiori

“If elephants can be trained to dance, lions to play and leopards to hunt, surely priests can be taught to preach” - Erasmus

Portmanteau

“I can’t download it because I have a desktop Macnosaurus” - John-Paul Flintoff

Rule of three

This, that and the other

Ready, steady, go

Life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness