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Block

2

LITERARY DEVICES

Block Introduction

UNIT 5
Sound Patterns

UNIT 6
Figures of Speech-1

UNIT 7
Figures of Speech-2

UNIT 8
Figures of Speech-3

Course Introduction
Language through Literature (BEGLA 137)
(CHOICE BASED CREDIT SYSTEM)
Credit weightage: 6 credits

Language Through Literature which has been adapted from BEGE-101 is aimed at providing a lucid account of how even the most common elements of language are used dexterously and aesthetically in literature/oratory to please, entertain, persuade, gratify and create aesthetic appeal. As a matter of fact, literature is nothing but a creative and imaginative use of language. This course will enable you to not only understand the various and dynamic ways in which writers/orators use language but also comprehend and appreciate literary/rhetorical pieces better and derive greater pleasure from them. This course will primarily deal with literal versus metaphorical meaning, literary and rhetorical devices and an understanding of the development of discourse.

This course seeks to equip you with awareness of some of the important aspects of English usage through the study of representative samples of literary works produced in English. The course is divided into 4 blocks of about 4 units each. Block 1 deals with extension of meaning, multiple meanings and overlap of meaning in the context of language acquisition process through four units/chapters. Block 2 has four units that deal with confusion of semantic and structural criteria and escaping wrong analogies including studying literary texts. Block 3 introduces and takes you to an understanding of structure words and acquaints you with all its facets and dimensions including auxiliaries and structure words in discourse with a purpose to make you aware of the role of conjunctions and linking adverbials in combining ideas/events together.

Block 4 aims to clarify certain areas of confusion relating to rhetorical devices with an emphasis on structure and style including use of repetition and questions. The course does not include much linguistic theory and deals with the structure of English in a practical way. The aim is to help the undergraduate student acquire a better understanding of how language operates and attain a reasonable level of accuracy in the use of the language, both in speech and in writing.

Follow all the units and enjoy your Course.



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Block 2 Introduction

In this block 2 of the Course BEGLA 137 (Language through Literature), the first Unit will focus on illustrating how poets use language resourcefully to produce special sound effects. After completing this unit, you should be able to appreciate literary devices such as

- rhythm,
- rhyme,
- alliteration,
- assonance, and
- onomatopoeia

In unit 6, we will study some major figures of speech that characterize literary texts. Common, everyday language also presents instances of the use of these figures of speech, but literature (being a creative manipulation of language) is marked by such uses for producing greater effect and providing aesthetic pleasure. Some of these figures of speech that are used as literary devices are:

- simile,
- metaphor,
- synecdoche,
- metonymy, and
- personification.

In Unit 7, we will get to study some other literary devices as we have done in the previous unit. After completing the unit, you should be able to understand the following literary devices:

- Irony,
- Satire,
- Paradox, and
- Antithesis.

In Unit 8, we will discuss some other types of figurative use of language, that is, language used not in the literal sense but in an imaginative way and often having a deeper meaning. By the time you complete the study of this unit, you will have become familiar with:

- Allegory,
- Symbol, and
- Imagery.

UNIT 5 SOUND PATTERNS

Structure

- 5.0 Objectives
- 5.1 Introduction
- 5.2 Rhythm
- 5.3 Rhyme
- 5.4 Alliteration
- 5.5 Assonance
- 5.6 Onomatopoeia
- 5.7 Let Us Sum Up
- 5.8 Key Words
- 5.9 Suggested Reading
- Dictionaries Suggested for Reference
- Cassette Recording
- Answers

5.0 OBJECTIVES

In this unit, we shall illustrate how poets use language resourcefully to produce special sound effects. After completing this unit, you should be able to appreciate literary devices such as

- rhythm,
- rhyme,
- alliteration,
- assonance, and
- onomatopoeia

5.1 INTRODUCTION

Literature represents the best and finest expression of human thoughts, feelings, emotions, and aspirations. It also represents the most effective use of language. More often, writers make the most ordinary, day-to-day things and events appear striking, beautiful or mysterious. This is done by the artistic use of language. In prose or poetry (more so in poetry), creative writers use literary devices which, though they are based on patterns and usages that exist in the language, are more typical of literature than of common, everyday speech or writing. It is not as if such devices are not used in everyday speech or common writing. As a matter of fact, they are used in conversations, personal letters, journalistic writing etc., but their use is less frequent than in literary works. It is this greater frequency of their use and the sustained manner in which creative writers use these literary devices that constitute the difference between common, everyday language and 'literary language'. The choice of particular literary devices, as well as the frequency of their use also marks what we call the 'style' of a writer. It must be remembered that when a person speaks/writes in day-to-day context we refer to it as 'manner of speaking' or 'manner of writing', but when a writer does it in a sustained manner, we refer to it as his/her 'style'. We also must remember that no writer uses one literary device or the other all the time. Writers choose devices that would produce the maximum 'effect' and are best suited to the subject/theme/situation. These devices are intended to produce certain artistic effects in a literary work.

In this Unit, we shall discuss some of the devices that create special sound effects and add to the impact of the literary work. These include rhythm, rhyme, alliteration, assonance and onomatopoeia.

5.2 RHYTHM

The term 'rhythm' refers to a movement that recurs at regular intervals of time. English has what we call a stress-timed rhythm, which means that the stressed syllables come at approximately equal intervals of time, regardless of the number of the intervening unstressed syllables. Take a sentence like-

A 'change of 'air would 'do you 'good.

The stressed syllables are marked with the sign ' placed before them. Here we have 8 syllables, of which 4 are stressed, and they come at equal intervals of time. So, we have a rhythmic pattern consisting of unstressed syllables and stressed syllables coming alternately.

A change of air would do you good.

U I U I U I U I

(U represents an unstressed syllable; I represent a stressed syllable.)

This kind of rhythm is quite common in poetry and is called **iambic metre**. 'Metre' is the term used to indicate the number of stressed syllables that form the beats (or feet) and the arrangement of stressed and unstressed syllables in each line of a poem. So, we say the line given above, if it happens to be a line of poetry, has four beats or four feet. If we have a pattern in which one weak (or unstressed) syllable is followed by one strong (or stressed) syllable, we call it 'iambic metre'. Most English poetry is written in this metre, and one has to understand and appreciate the metrical patterns in order to appreciate and enjoy poetry. A good deal of the special sound effects aimed at by writers (especially poets) depends on such patterns of a rhythm.

Example 1

Notice the iambic metre in the following lines from Coleridge's famous poem *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*.

The 'Bridegroom's doors are 'opened 'wide,
And 'I am 'next of' kin;
The 'guests are 'met, the 'feast is 'set;
May'st 'hear the 'merry 'din.

Glossary

'next of kin: nearest relation. The phrase is archaic, that is, it has an association with earlier times. It is now used only in formal situations.

May'st: can (old singular form: *thou may'st*) (The subject 'thou' has been omitted in this line. The speaker, who has come to a wedding, is in a hurry to go in.)

din: a loud, continuous, confused, and unpleasant noise. (Generally used in a derogatory sense, but with the addition of the word 'merry', the cheerful aspect of the noise of the wedding feast is brought out.)

Check Your Progress 1

1 What is the metrical pattern in the stanza given above?

2 Describe the metrical pattern in the following lines from Thomas Hardy's poem *The Darkling Thrush*.

I leaned upon a coppice gate
When frost was spectre-gray, And
Winter's dregs made desolate The
weakening eye of day.

Glossary

'darkling: in the dark

thrush: a type of singing bird with a brownish back and spotted breast

'coppice: a wood of small trees or bushes

'spectre-'gray: grey like the ghost ('grey' is also spelt 'gray')

dregs: what are left at the bottom; worthless bits

'eye of 'day: the sun

There are other **metrical** patterns used by poets and it is **necessary** to appreciate them to enjoy the music produced by the rhythm.

Example 2

Here are some lines from Keats's *Ode on the Poets*:

'Bards of 'Passion 'and of 'Mirth,
'Ye have 'left your 'souls on 'earth!

'Have ye 'souls in 'heaven 'too, 'Double-
'lived in 'regions 'new ?

Glossary

Bards: poets (The word ‘bard’ is used only in literary writings.)

Passion: strong feeling

Mirth: merriment and gaiety

Ye: you {*Ye* is the old plural form used as the subject of a sentence.)

'souls on 'earth: the books which are the expressions of their spirits

Notice that each line has four beats, but we now have a stressed syllable followed by an unstressed syllable, except that the last syllable in the line is stressed and there is no syllable after it. This kind of rhythmic pattern is called 'trochaic' **metre**.

There are other rhythmic patterns as well, and very often a poet weaves the different patterns into a complex design to create variety and musicality.

Example 3

Here is a stanza from Shelley's poem *To Night*.

'Swiftly 'walk o'er the 'western 'wave,
'Spirit of 'Night!
'Out of the 'misty 'eastern 'cave,
Where 'all the 'long and 'lone day'light,
Thou 'wovest 'dreams of joy and 'fear,
Which 'make thee 'terrible and 'dear,
'Swift be thy 'flight!

Glossary

'misty 'eastern 'cave: a dark cave in the east, where the poet imagines Night lives.

Thou 'wovest': old form of 'you wove'

thee: object form of 'thou', the old form of 'you'

thy: possessive form of 'thou', the old form of 'you'.

Notice the variety of metrical patterns here.

Line 1 : 8 syllables; 4 beats;

 I U I U U I U I
strong weak strong weak weak strong weak strong
(trochaic + trochaic + iambic+ iambic)

Line 2 : 4 syllables; 2 beats;

 IUUI
(trochaic + iambic)

Line 3 : 8 syllables; 4 beats;

 I U U I U U I
(trochaic + iambic + iambic + iambic)

Line 4 : 8 syllables
 UIUIUII
 (iambic throughout)

'daylight' is usually stressed on the first syllable. Here, to keep the rhythm, we have stressed it on the second syllable.

Line 5 : 8 syllables; 4 beats
 UIUIUII
 (iambic throughout)

Line 6 : 8 syllables; 3 treats
 UIUIUUUI
 (prevailing metre iambic; one beat missing, as the last syllable of 'terrible' cannot be stressed).

Line 7 : 4 syllables; 2 beats
 IUUI
 (trochaic + iambic)

5.3 RHYME

'Rhyme' is the term used for the similarity of sounds in the final syllable (or syllables) of two or more lines of verse. For two lines to rhyme, the last stressed vowel sound, and all the sounds after it, must be the same.

Rhyme is frequently used at the ends of lines of poetry for particular effects.

- i) The recurrence of the same sequence of sounds has a pleasing-effect, because it fulfills the reader's expectancy.
- ii) It also marks the end of the line.
- iii) By adopting a particular rhyme scheme in a stanza, the poet can bind the lines together and thus achieve unity.

Nursery rhymes appeal to us and are so easy to remember because they all have 'rhyme'. Children memorize them easily and love to recite them. Most lyrics, songs and ballads use rhyme.

Example 4

He holds him with his glittering eye —
 The Wedding-Guest stood still,
 And listens like a three years' child:
 The Mariner hath his will.
 (Coleridge: *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*)

Glossary

hath: has ('hath' is an old form)

his will: what he wished

Notice that lines 2 and 4 rhyme, by which we mean that the sounds at the end of these lines are the same. *Still* and *will* have the same vowel /ɪ/ and the same consonant /l/ after it.

Literary Devices

(We shall use phonetic symbols to represent sounds and put them between oblique bars to distinguish them from the letters of the alphabet. The symbols used by us are those in *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English* and *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary of Current English* (revised edition).

Rhyme may be used by poets to form different patterns. Such a pattern is called rhyme-scheme. In the example given above, line 2 and line 4 rhyme, but lines 1 and 3 don't. However, in the example that follows lines 1 and 4 rhyme, as do lines 2 and 3. In order to describe the rhyme-scheme in the example that follows, we would say that it has the rhyme scheme abba. Similarly, the lines given in Example 2 on page 7 have the rhyme-scheme aabb.

Check Your Progress 2

Describe the rhyme scheme in the following stanza from Yeats's poem *When*

You are Old.

When you are old and gray and full of sleep,
And nodding by the fire, take down this book,
And slowly read, and dream of the soft look
Your eyes had once, and of their shadows deep;

5.4 ALLITERATION

The term alliteration refers to the appearance of the same consonant sound or sounds at the beginning of two or more words that are next to or close to each other.

Example 5

The fair breeze blew, the white foam flew,
The furrow followed free;
We were the first that ever burst
Into that silent sea.
(from Coleridge: *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*)

Notice that

- i) the sound /f/ occurs at the beginning of *fair, foam, flew, furrow, followed, free* and *first*,
- ii) the sound /b/ occurs at the beginning of *breeze, blew, and burst*,
- iii) the sound /w/ occurs at the beginning of *white, we, and were*,
- iv) the sound /s/ occurs at the beginning of *silent* and *sea*.

Read the stanza aloud to appreciate the effect of alliteration.

Check Your Progress 3

Point out the alliteration in the following passages of poetry:

- i) When the white feet of the baby beat across the grass, The little white feet nod like white flowers in a wind, They poise and run like puffs of wind that pass, Over water where the weeds are thinned.

(D.H. Lawrence: *Baby Running Barefoot*)

- ii) Nothing is so beautiful as Spring
When weeds, in wheels, shoot long and lovely and lush; Thrush's eggs look little low heavens, and thrush Through the echoing timber does so rinse and wring The ear, it strikes like lightnings to hear him sing; The glassy peartree leaves and blooms, they brush The descending blue, that blue is all in a rush With richness; the racing lambs too have fair their fling.

(Gerard Manley Hopkins: *Spring*)

Glossary

in 'wheels: in circles

look 'little 'heavens: probably because of their sky-blue colour

'echoing 'timber: the growing trees which send back the sound of the thrush's song. (There may also be a reference to the echoing quality of the thrush's song).

rinse/rins/: Wash in clean water so as to take away soap, dirt, etc. (the song fills the / ear completely)

wring/ri: twist and squeeze (something) tightly; force out (water) by doing this

'strikes like 'lightnings: hits suddenly (the song hits the ear)

brush (v.): touch lightly against (The leaves and flowers of the peartree touch the sky, which comes down to meet them.)

'all in a'rush: in a hurry

'fair their 'fling: their fair fling, that is, their fair share of dancing and jumping with joy

5.5 ASSONANCE

The term 'assonance' refers to similarity in the way words sound, especially the vowel sounds in them. For example,

born/bx:n/ and warm/wx:m/

Example:

And the May month flaps its glad green leaves like wings.
(Hardy: *Afterwards*)

Notice the sound /ae/ in *flaps* and *glad*, and the sound /i:/ in *green* and *leaves*.

5.6 ONOMATOPOEIA

Language has an imitative or suggestive aspect when we form words that are like natural sounds. This is called 'onomatopoeia'. For example, the word *cuckoo* is used to name the bird that makes that sound. Notice the use of onomatopoeia in the following passage.

It should be remembered, however, that there is no fixed, one-to-one correspondence between natural sounds and the words that a language uses for them. As a matter of fact, different languages (i.e. speakers of different languages) hear natural sounds differently and represent them through words differently. While for a speaker of English birds 'chirp', another language might represent the sound made by birds differently. (It might be useful to think of how your own language has words suggestive of sounds made by animals and birds, in contrast to those in English)

Example :

I never realized till a morning or two ago how much certain sounds mean to me.

It happened when I woke only to find it still dark outside. I was about to reach for the timepiece by my bed when I heard the birds twittering and chirping outside. It was then that I realized that winter was slowly coming on and the days were shortening, but it was waking time nevertheless. After all, those bird sounds are my daily cue for hopping out of bed.

The other sound that means so much to me in the mornings is the "swisshh" sound of the newspapers being shoved under the door. The day it happens late, or doesn't happen at all, finds me in a foul mood.

Then there are a host of other sounds that comprise the "mirch masala" of my life - the sound of the engine tooting on the railway line near my place followed by the nimble of a passing train; of the rustle of leaves during a high wind; of a marriage band; of temple bells ringing; of laughter, anywhere, any kind, anytime; of music, anywhere, any kind, any time.

Talking of music, there are some sounds that are definitely music in *my* household though may not count as such to others. My wife tells me that the sound that pleases her most is that of me clacking away at my typewriter, for that means that all is well with me and that I am ticking away merrily. Which is precisely what I feel about her when I hear the "tumtutting" of utensils and the "clip clop" of cups and saucers (including an occasional craaassh!) coming from the kitchen when she's there. And for both of us it is the sounds of our little boys playing, and fighting as all little boys do when thrown together, that make us the happiest.

There are, however, some sounds that I don't much care for and would rather do without. One is the ring of the direct internal line that connects me with my boss. Though he's a thoroughly nice chap, that ring somehow keys me up, for you never know what's coming your way. Another is the half gurgling sound my car gives when it refuses to start — a sound that immediately brings visions of a DTC journey to office that day. And, of course, the sound of mosquitoes buzzing close to your ear; of people quarrelling; and the noise of heavy traffic.

I live in a multi-storeyed complex with nearly 900 flats closely knitted together and by virtue of this fact I have come across two specific sounds that never fail to thrill me. One is when suddenly the electricity is restored after a longish power cut, especially at night; a big, combined whoop of joy originating from every flat in unison rends the air. The other one is the combined laughter from every flat whenever something funny takes place on a television programme. It is in moments such as these that one comprehends the power of television — and of laughter.

(Guddu Chopra: *Sound Effects*, *The Times of India*, 7 November 1987)

The passage has a number of words which sound like the actual sounds they represent, here are some.

twittering: making a number of short rapid sounds

chirping: making short sharp sounds

(These two words are associated with the sounds made by birds.)

"swisshh" (normal spelling: swish):

1 a sharp whistling noise made when something cuts through the air; for example, the cow's tail swishing,

2 a soft sound made in movement; for example, the sound of

clothes. tooting: making a short warning sound on a horn, whistle, etc.

rumble: a deep continuous rolling sound, like the sound of thunder.

rustle: slight sounds made when paper, dry leaves, silk, etc. are moved or rubbed together.

Check Your Progress 4

- 1 Find other examples from the passage of words that sound like the sounds they represent. Try to describe the sounds these words stand for.

- 2 Read the following stanza from John Masefield's poem *Laugh and Be Merry* and answer the questions given below.

Laugh and be merry: remember, better the world with a song,
Better the world with a blow in the teeth of a wrong. Laugh, for
the time is brief, a thread the length of a span. Laugh, and be
proud to belong to the old proud pageant of man.

- i) Give number of syllables in each line. Is there a pattern?

- ii) Give the number of beats (stressed syllables) in each line, and mark the stressed syllables.

iii) What is the pattern of rhyme in the stanza?

iv) Give examples of the use of alliteration in the stanza.

v) Give examples of the use of assonance in the stanza.

Read the stanza aloud to appreciate the sound effects.

5.7 LET US SUM UP

In this unit we have discussed the various sound patterns used by poets and other writers for particular effects. The devices we have discussed are rhythm (or metre), rhyme, alliteration, assonance, and onomatopoeia.

5.8 KEY WORDS

al'ite'ration: the appearance of the same sound (or sounds) at the beginning of two or more words that are next to or close to each other, e.g., the *furrow followed free*

'assonance: the sounding alike of words, especially the vowels of words; e.g. in *born* and *form*.

'couplet: two lines of poetry, one following the other, that are usually of equal length and end in the same sound.

i'ambic: having the metre in which one unstressed syllable is followed by one stressed syllable, e.g., in the word *a'way*.

'metre: the arrangement of words in poetry on the basis of stressed and unstressed syllables.

'onomato'poeia: the formation of words that are like natural sounds e.g., *cuckoo*: the bird that makes that sound.

'**rhyme**': the use of words that end with the same sounds, including the last vowel and the consonants after it. e.g., *bold* and *cold*.

'**rhythm**': the quality of happening at regular periods of time; for example, stressed syllables in English come at approximately equal intervals of time.

'**stanza**': a group of lines, usually in a repeating pattern, forming a division of a poem.

'**syllable**': a word or part of a word which contains a vowel sound (or a consonant acting as a vowel); e.g. *better* has two syllables.

trochaic: having the metre in which one stressed syllable is followed by one unstressed syllable e.g. in the word '*metre*'.

5.9 SUGGESTED READING

S.T. Coleridge: *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*.

Dictionaries Suggested for Reference

- 1 Procter, P. (2004) *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English*, Third Edition, Longman.
- 2 Hornby, A.S. (2003) *Oxford Advanced Learners Dictionary of Current English*, Sixth Edition, E.L.B.S. and Oxford University Press.

Cassette Recording

An audio-cassette recording based on this unit is available at the study centres of the university.

ANSWERS

Check Your Progress 1

- 1 Lines 1 & 3: 8 syllables; 4 stresses; one unstressed syllable followed by one stressed syllable; iambic metre.
Lines 2 & 4: 6 syllables; 3 stresses; iambic metre.
- 2 I 'leaned u'pon a 'coppice 'gate
When 'Frost was 'spectre-'gray
And 'Winter's 'dregs made 'desolate,
The 'weakening 'eye of 'day.

Line 1: 8 syllables; 4 beats; iambic metre
Line 2: 6 syllables; 3 beats; iambic metre
Line 3: 8 syllables; 3 beats; the fourth beat suppressed, as the last syllable of 'desolate' cannot be stressed. The prevailing metre is iambic.

Line 4: 7 syllables; 3 beats; the prevailing metre is iambic; the middle syllable in 'weakening' can be elided to keep the rhythm; otherwise we have an extra syllable there.

Check Your Progress 2

Lines 1 & 4 rhyme: /sli:p/and / di:p/ di:p/
Lines 2 & 3 also rhyme: /buk/ and /luk

The rhyme scheme can be described as *abba*. It binds the four lines together and gives unity to the stanza.

Check Your Progress 3

- i) /w/ in *when, white, wind, water, where, and weeds*
/f/ in *feet and flowers*
/b/ in *baby and beat*
/l/ in *little and like*
/p/ in *poise, puffs, and pass*
- ii) /w/ in *when, weeds and wheels*
/l/ in *long, lovely, lush, look, little, and low*
/r/ in *thrush and through*
/ɪ/ in *rinse and wring*
/l/ in *like and lightnings*
/ɪ/ in *rush, richness, and racing*
/f/ in *fair and fling*

Check Your Progress 4

- 1 'clanking: making one or more sudden quick sounds
'ticking: making a regularly repeated short sudden sound, like that of a clock or watch
'turn-tumming': making sounds like /'th m'thm/
'clip clop': sounds like /'klip'klop/
'craaassh': (normal spelling 'crash') a sudden loud noise, as made by breaking crockery
'gurgling: making a sound like water flowing unevenly in the throat
'buzzing: making a low hum, as bees do
whoop: a loud shout of joy
- 2 i) Line 1 : 15 syllables
Line 2 : 13 syllables
Line 3 : 13 syllables
Line 4 : 15 syllables
Lines 1 & 4 have 15 syllables each;
Lines 2 & 3 have 13 syllables each.
- ii) 'Laugh and be 'merry: re'member, 'better the 'world with a 'song,
'Better the 'world with a 'blow in the 'teeth of a 'wrong.
'Laugh, for the 'time is 'brief, a thread the 'length of a 'span.
'Laugh, and be 'proud to be'long to the 'old proud 'pageant of 'man.

Line 1 : 6 beats
Line 2 : 5 beats
Line 3 : 6 beats
Line 4 : 6 beats
- iii) a a b b
Lines 1 & 2 rhyme
Lines 3 & 4 also rhyme.
So we have rhyming couplets.
- iv) /m/ in *merry and remember* (stressed syllables)
/b/ in *better, blow, and brief*
/l/ in *laugh, length, and belong* (stressed syllable)
/p/ in *proud and pageant*
- v) /e/ in *merry, remember and better* (stressed syllables)
/e/ in *thread and length*
/m/ in *pageant and man*'.

UNIT 6 FIGURES OF SPEECH-I

Structure

- 6.0 Objectives
- 6.1 Introduction
- 6.2 Simile
- 6.3 Metaphor
 - 6.3.1 Extended Metaphor
 - 6.3.2 Mixed Metaphor
- 6.4 Synecdoche
- 6.5 Metonymy
- 6.6 Personification
- 6.7 Passage for Study: from Mulk Raj Anand: *The Lost Child*
- 6.8 Let Us Sum Up
- 6.9 Key Words
- Answers

6.0 OBJECTIVES

In this unit, we shall discuss some major figures of speech that characterize literary texts. Common, everyday language also presents instances of the use of these figures of speech, but literature (being a creative manipulation of language) is marked by such uses for producing greater effect and providing aesthetic pleasure. Some of these figures of speech that are used as literary devices are:

- simile,
- metaphor,
- synecdoche,
- metonymy, and
- personification.

6.1 INTRODUCTION

A figure of speech is an expression that is generally not a part of common, ordinary language, but a marked feature of literary prices. Figures of speech represent the use of words in ways different from their ordinary, literal use, and are employed by creative writers to produce figurative meaning, thus lending verve, vivacity and force to their writings. In this unit we shall discuss some of the more frequently used figures of speech.

6.2 SIMILE

A simile is an expression in which we make a comparison between two things to present an effective word-picture, and use such words as *like* and *as*.

Example

When the white feet of the baby beat across the grass,
The little white feet nod like white flowers in a wind,

They poise and run like puffs of wind that pass
Over water where the weeds are thinned.
(From D.H. Lawrence: *Baby Running Barefoot*)

Glossary

beat (verb): hit (the grass)

nod: bend forward and down

poise: keep steady

puff: a short quick movement of air

weeds: wild plants growing where they are not wanted

In the above example, the baby's feet are compared to flowers bending forward and to puffs of wind blowing over water.

Check Your Progress 1

Read the whole of the poem *Baby Running Barefoot* by D.H. Lawrence given below and try to answer the questions given at the end.

When the white feet of the baby beat across the grass
The little white feet nod like white flowers in a wind,
They poise and run like puffs of wind that pass
Over water where the weeds are thinned.

And the sight of their white playing in the grass
Is winsome as a robin's song, so fluttering;
Or like two butterflies that settle on a glass
Cup for a moment, soft little wing-beats uttering.

And I wish that the baby would tack across here to me
Like a wind-shadow running on a pond, so she could
stand With two little bare white feet upon my knee
And I could feel her feet in either hand.

Cool as syringa buds in morning hours,
Or firm and silken as young peony flowers.

Glossary

'*winsome*': attractive in appearance

'*fluttering*': moving in a quick, Irregular way

tack: change its course

syringa: lilac, a shrub with fragrant pale pinkish-violet, or white flowers

'*peony*': a plant with red, pink or white flowers

1 What is the picture that comes to your mind when you read the poem?

2 Make a list of the similes used by the poet.

3 How do the similes make the description more vivid to us?

A simile usually contains an image, that is, a word picture that we can perceive. In the line “my words swirled around his head like summer flies” by E.B. White, 'words' are being described with the help of the image of 'summer flies'. 'Swirling around his head' is a visual image, but we can hear the flies as well as see them.

Although similes are generally brief, they may be expanded.

Example

...his mind was like a vast sea cave, filled with the murmur of dark waters at flow and the stirring of nature's great forces, lit here and there by streaks of glorious sunshine bursting in through crevices hewn at random in its rugged sides.

(From Ashley Montague: *The Oxford Guide to Writing. A Rhetoric Handbook for College Students*)

In the above passage, 'his mind' is compared to 'a vast sea cave'. The sea cave is further described as 'filled with the murmur of dark waters at flow' and 'lit here and there by streaks of sunshine bursting in through crevices'.

Check Your Progress 2

1 Read the passage again. Look up the meanings of the following words in the dictionary:

murmur:

stirring:

streaks:

crevices:

rugged:

2 What is the picture that comes to your mind when you read about the cave?

Handwriting practice lines for question 2.

3 In what way was 'his mind' is like the cave?

Handwriting practice lines for question 3.

6.3 METAPHOR

We have already discussed metaphor in Block 1, Units 1-2. It is a figure of speech in which we use a name or a descriptive term or phrase for an object or action to which it is not literally applicable. Whereas in a simile there is a direct comparison, a metaphor suggests a comparison between two things not usually thought of as similar. We can say about a person that her absence was like a long winter. This would be a simile, but if we say that his greeting was 'lacking in warmth', or that 'it was a wintry greeting' this would be a metaphor.

Other **examples** of metaphor:

- i) The river snakes its way through the mountains.
- ii) The ripe pumpkins were golden idols among the corn stalks.
- iii) On their shining tracks the waiting diesel engines purred softly.

In the above examples, one thing is described as if it were something else. The river winds through the mountains as if it were a snake, the pumpkins were golden idols, and the diesel engines purred as if they were kittens.

6.3.1 Extended Metaphor

Once you can recognize metaphors, you will be able to appreciate their effectiveness in language. Sometimes a writer continues a metaphor over an entire poem or any other piece of writing. This is called an extended metaphor. Extended metaphors are often easier to recognize because they continue over a longer stretch of writing.

Example

I remember once, as a kid, lying on my back watching clouds. Row upon row of factory-perfect models drifted along the assembly line. There went a schooner, flag flying — and look, a snapping toy poodle with the most absurd cut! Next came chilly Greenland, with Labrador much too close for comfort. But the banana split was the best one of all.

(Reprinted from *The Language Arts Handbook*, Alberta Correspondence School.)

Glossary

'schooner: a fast sailing ship with at least two masts

'poodle: a kind of pet dog, with thick curly hair which is often clipped into a pattern

'labrador: a dog with a broad head and chest

ba'nana 'split: a sweet dish of split banana, ice cream, etc.

In the example quoted above, the writer uses a series of metaphors to form word pictures of various shapes of clouds floating overhead. The words may differ in range and meaning, but they all describe clouds. We find that with the help of word pictures the writer makes the scene vivid for us.

Check Your Progress 3

- 1 List the objects with which the clouds are compared in the passage given above.

- 2 i) Read the following sentence and say whether it is an example of extended metaphor.

"His face was webbed: in fact, the wrinkles were so dense that it seemed all expression was caught in a net."

(From Sharon R. Curtin: *The Oxford Guide to Writing. A Rhetoric Handbook for College-Students*)

- ii) 'Webbed' here is used in the sense of being like a spider's web of woven threads and not in the sense of the webbed feet of a duck. What does 'webbed face' mean?

6.3.2 Mixed Metaphor

Occasionally a writer combines two metaphors which do not normally go together. This is called a mixed metaphor.

Example

Most of those at the gathering were friends and co-workers who had toiled in the constituency vineyards trying to harvest votes in campaigns of yesteryears. To them, Dalton Camp was a comrade in the trenches, sharing in victory, commiserating in defeat, and ready when called on.

Glossary

constituency: a town or area which elects someone to represent it in parliament

trenches: long narrow channels dug in the ground for defensive purposes

In the example quoted above, the political friends trying to gather votes are first described as harvesters collecting grapes and then as soldiers fighting in the trenches, though harvesters and soldiers have nothing in common. Compare this example with the one under „extended metaphor“ in Exercise 2(1) under Check Your Progress 3, where an old man's face was described as a spider's web, and wrinkles as part of that net. There the words *web* and *net* had related meanings.

You can find another example of mixed metaphor in the following:

When I graduate, I hope to become a well-oiled cog in the beehive of industry.

Here a “well-oiled cog”, which is associated with machinery, does not go with 'beehive'.

A very good example of mixed metaphor is to be found in Shakespeare's *Hamlet* where the hero wonders:

"To be, or not to be — that is the question;
 whether 'tis nobler in the mind to suffer
 The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune,

Or to take arms against a sea of troubles,
And by opposing end them”

Here the speaker begins by referring to the “slings and arrows' of fortune (using the metaphor of bows and arrows) and ends by talking of “a sea of troubles” (the metaphor of waves of the sea) — both within the same interrogative sentence, signifying his dilemma.

Check Your Progress 4

Point out the similes and metaphors in the following passages:

- i) Never seek to tell thy love
Love that never told can be;
For the gentle wind does move silently, invisibly,
(Blake: *Never Seek to Tell Thy Love*)
-
-

- ii) As a huge stone is sometimes seen to lie
Couched on the bald top of an eminence;
Wonder to all who do the same espy,
By what means it could thither come, and whence;
So that it seems a thing endued with sense
Like a sea-beast Growled forth, that on a shelf
Of rock or sand reposeth, there to sun itself; (W.
Wordsworth: *Resolution and Independence*)

Glossary

couched: reclining as if on a couch (used only in literary writing)

e'spy: happen to see,

'thither: to that place (old use)

en'dued: provided (with)

re'poseth: rests (used in formal writing)

- iii) The peasants came like swarms of flies and buzzed the name of God
a hundred times.
(Nissim Ezekiel: *Night of the Scorpion*)
-
-

- iv) The battle was like the grinding of an immense and terrible machine to him.
(Stephen Crane: *The Red Badge of Courage*)
-
-

- v) He feels like a “pestered animal”, a well-meaning cow worried
by dogs. (Stephen Crane: *The Red Badge of Courage*)
-
-

Synecdoche is a figure of speech in which a part of an object refers to the whole, or the whole to a part.

Examples

Has Mike got wheels? (meaning a car, a motorcycle or a bicycle)

Look at that skirt! (meaning a woman)

Can you spare your wallet? (meaning some money from your wallet)

He is skilled at twisting another person's arm. (coercing him by moral pressure)

Check Your Progress 5

1. Read the following poem and answer the questions given below:

Tiger! Tiger! burning bright

In the forests of the night,
What immortal hand or eye
Could frame thy fearful symmetry?

In what distant deeps or skies
Burnt the fire of thine eyes?
On what wings dare he aspire?
What the hand dare seize the fire?

And what shoulder, and what art,
Could twist the sinews of thy heart?
And when thy heart began to beat,
What dread hand? And what dread feet?

What the hammer? What the chain?
In what furnace was thy brain?
What the anvil? What dread grasp
Dare its deadly terrors clasp?

When the stars threw down their spears,
And water'd heaven with their tears,
Did he smile his work to see?
Did he who made the Lamb make thee?

Tiger! Tiger! burning bright
In the forests of the night,
What immortal hand or eye
Dare frame thy fearful symmetry?
(William Blake: 'Tiger')

4

8

12

16

20

24

- i) What does the phrase 'immortal hand or eye' refer to?

- ii) In what lines is God shown as almost wrestling with the Tiger while shaping it?

2 Read the following passage and answer the question given below:

Oh, when this my dust surrenders
Hand, foot, lip, to dust again,
May these loved and loving faces
Please other men!

(Walter de la Mare: *Farewell*)

What do 'hand', 'foot' and 'lip' stand for?

6.5 METONYMY

Metonymy is a figure of speech in which the name of an attribute or adjunct is substituted for that of the thing meant.

Examples

- I enjoy reading *Shakespeare*. (his plays)
- A minister of the *Crown*. (the King)
- Please clean the *brass*. (things made of brass)
- My friend plays *Beethoven* beautifully. (his music)
- The *Oval Room* was the source of the Watergate. (Office of the President of U.S.A., which is oval in shape).

Check Your Progress 6

1 Read the following passage and answer the question given below:

For tho' from out our bourne of Time and
Place The flood may bear me far,
I hope to see my Pilot face to face
When I have crost the bar.
(Tennyson: *Crossing the Bar*)

What does 'My Pilot' refer to?

2 Read the following lines from Robert Graves' poem 'The Naked And The Nude' and identify metonymy.

Lovers without reproach will gaze on bodies naked and ablaze;
The Hippocratic eye will see in nakedness, anatomy.

Glossary

'hippo'cratic 'eye: the eye of a doctor

a'natomy: the structure of animal and human bodies.

Personification is giving the human characteristics, powers or feelings to inanimate (non-living) objects or abstract qualities. In personification, as in metaphor, a comparison is implied. The purpose of personification, like that of metaphor, is to make the description vivid.

Example

Busy old fool, unruly sun,
Why dost thou thus,
Through windows, and through curtains call on us?
Must to thy motion lovers' seasons run?
Saucy pedantic wretch, go chide
Late schoolboys and sour prentices,
Go tell court-huntsmen that the king will ride,
Call country ants to harvest offices,
Love, all alike, no season knows, nor clime,
Nor hours, days, months, which are the rags of time.

(John Donne: *The Sun Rising*)

Glossary

motion: movement

saucy: rude, disrespectful

pe'dantic: showing too much insistence on formal rules

wretch: a rogue (in playful expressions)

chide: scold

'prentices: apprentices, persons under an agreement to serve somebody for low wages in order to learn that person's skill.

In *The Sun Rising*, the sun is talked of as an old fool who gets up early to sneak through windows to wake up lovers, who obviously do not like to be disturbed. He is asked to chide other people like the schoolboys who will get late for school. The picture we get is that of an elderly person in the family asking everybody to rush to work. The sun might as well wake up the ants (here means peasants) in the fields so that they may resume their work of gathering harvest, and the huntsmen to get ready to go for a hunt with the king. The poet says that love, which is constant, is not affected by change of season or climate, or by months, days or hours, which are merely small bits of time.

Check Your Progress 7

What expressions does the poem use to rebuke the sun?

6.7 PASSAGE FOR STUDY

Read this passage from the story *The Lost Child* by Mulk Raj Anand and answer the questions given at the end.

The Lost Child

It was the festival of Spring. From the wintry shades of narrow lanes and alleys emerged a gaily clad humanity, thick as a crowd of bright-coloured rabbits issuing from a warren, and entering the flooded sea of sparkling silver sunshine outside the city gates, sped towards the fair. Some walked, some rode on horses, others sat, being carried in bamboo and bullock-carts. One little boy ran between his parent's legs, brimming over with life and laughter, as the joyous, smiling morning, with its open greetings and unashamed invitations to come away into the fields, full of flowers and songs.

"Come, child, come," called his parents, as he lagged behind, arrested by the toys in the shops that lined the way.

He hurried towards his parents, his feet obedient to their call, his eyes still lingering on the receding toys. As he came to where they had stopped to wait for him, he could not suppress the desire of his heart, even though he well knew the old, cold stare of refusal in their eyes.

"I want that toy," he pleaded.

His father looked at him red-eyed in his familiar tyrant's way. His mother, melted by the free spirit of the day, was tender, and giving him her finger to catch, said;

"Look, child, what is before you."

The faint disgust of the child's unfulfilled desire had hardly been quelled in the heavy, pouting sob of a breath, "M—o—th—e—r", when the pleasure of what was before him filled him eager eyes. They had left the dusty road on which they had walked so far to wend its weary way circuitously to the north, and had entered a footpath in a field.

It was a flowering mustard-field, pale, pale, like melting gold, as it swept across miles and miles of even land, a river of yellow light, ebbing and falling with each fresh eddy of wild wind, and straying at places into broad, rich tributary streams, yet running in a constant sunny sweep towards the distant mirage of an ocean of silver light. Where it ended, on a side stood a dense group of low, mudwalled houses put into relief both by the lower forms of a denser crowd of yellow-robed men and women and by high-pitched sequence of whistling, creaking, squeaking, roaring, humming noises that rose from it, across the groves, to the blue-throated sky like the weird, strange sound of Siva's mad laughter.

Check Your Progress 8

- 1 What words and phrases in the opening paragraph suggest the festive mood of the crowd?

2 In the first paragraph, what is the crowd of people compared to? What figure of speech is it?

3 Give the meanings of the following expressions:

i) a gaily clad humanity

ii) lagged behind

iii) receding toys

iv) red-eyed

v) circuitously

vi) put into relief

4 The mustard field is compared to a river of yellow light. Write the comparison in your own words.

5 The „whistling, creaking, squeaking, roaring, humming noises' are likened to 'Siva's mad laughter'. What does this comparison suggest?

- 6 What literary device has the writer adopted in the use of words such as 'whistling', 'creaking', 'squeaking', 'roaring' and 'humming'?
-
-

6.8 LET US SUM UP

In this unit, we have discussed how figures of speech help to make one's writing more effective than literal or direct statements. They can add colour to language and make it more vivid. We have seen how comparisons embodied in similes, metaphors or personifications provide us with images or word pictures that help us to understand the meaning better.

6.9 KEY WORDS

'figure of 'speech: an expression, e.g., a simile or metaphor, that gives variety or force, that uses words differently from the way they are used literally.

'metaphor: the use of words to indicate something different from the literal meaning, as in 'I'll make him *eat* his words.'

me'tonymy: the substitution of the name of an attribute or adjunct for that of the thing meant. (e.g., *crown* for *king*)

per'sonifi'cation: representing something as a person

'simile: comparison of one thing to another e.g. 'He is as brave as a lion'.

sy'nechdoche: a figure of speech in which part is named, but the whole is understood, (e.g., *200 extra hands* for *200 extra workmen*), or the whole is named but a part is understood (e.g. *India beats England at cricket*.)

ANSWERS

Check Your Progress 1

- 1 A baby running on the grass and the movements of its feet.
- 2
 - i) 'The little white feet nod like white flowers in a wind.'
 - ii) 'They poise and run like puffs of wind that pass over water where the weeds are thinned.'
 - iii) 'The sight of their white playing in the grass is winsome as a robin's song, so fluttering.'
 - iv) '... like two butterflies that settle on a glass cup for a moment, soft little wing-beats uttering.'
 - v) 'I wish that the baby would tack across here to me like a wind-shadow running on a pond.'

vi) '.... her feet. cool as syringa buds in morning hours.'

vii) '.... firm and silken as young peony flowers.'

- 3
- a) The movements of the baby's feet are like
- i) flowers waving in the wind, and
 - ii) puffs of wind passing over water.
- We can almost see the movement of flowers and the waves on the surface of water.
- b) They are attractive like
- i) the fluttering of a singing robin, and
 - ii) the beating of the butterflies' soft little wings.
- We can almost hear the sounds made by the robin and the butterflies.
- c) The touch of the baby's feet on the poet's hands is
- i) cool like syringa flowers in the morning, and
 - ii) firm and soft like young peony flowers.
- We can almost feel the touch of flowers.

Check Your Progress 2

- 1
- murmur: a soft low sound, continuous and indistinct
 flow: the rise of the tide
 stirring: movement
 streaks: thin lines
 crevices: narrow openings or cracks in rocks, etc.
 rugged: rough
- 2
- It is a vast cave. When the water rises, it fills the cave and makes a soft low sound as it comes in. It appears as if the mighty forces of nature were moving in the dark cave to bring about a change. At some places bright sunlight enters the cave through the narrow openings in its sides.
- 3
- The cave is filled with the sound of water coming in and the forces of nature appear to be working in it. At places, sunlight enters the cave through the crevices. In the same way, 'his mind' was full of ideas and appeared to be working on them. Sometimes he was able to see the light in the midst of the prevailing confusion.

Check Your Progress 3

- 1 A schooner, a toy poodle, Greenland, a Labrador, and a banana split.
- 2
- i) Yes
 - ii) The wrinkled face of an old man.

Check Your Progress 4

- i) metaphor; love is described as a gentle wind.
- ii) simile; the huge rock is compared to a sea-beast.
- iii) simile; the peasants repeating the name of God are compared to swarms of flies.
- iv) simile; the fighting in the battle is compared to the grinding done by an 'immense' machine.
- v) metaphor; the man is described as a 'pestered animal.'

Check Your Progress 5

- 1
- i) God, who designed the tiger's body.
 - ii) In lines 15 and 16.

Literary Devices

What the anvil? What dread grasp
Dare its deadly terrors clasp†
God is shown as a blacksmith using his tools — the hammer and the anvil, and
shaping the tiger's brain.

2 The body.

Check Your Progress 6

- 1 God
- 2 'the Hippocratic eye', referring to the medical people.

Check Your Progress 7

Old fool, unruly, saucy, pedantic wretch.

Check Your Progress 8

- 1 festival of Spring; a gaily clad humanity; bright-coloured rabbits; flooded sea of sparkling silver sunshine; brimming over with life and laughter; joyous, smiling; flowers and songs.
- 2 The crowd of 'gaily-clad' people coming out of 'narrow lanes and alleys' is compared to 'bright-coloured rabbits' coming out of a warren. A simile.
- 3
 - i) people wearing bright-coloured clothes
 - ii) fell behind
 - iii) the toys left behind and getting farther off
 - iv) in anger
 - v) going round
 - vi) made vivid by their distinct outline in the background and the contrast with the crowd of people.
- 4 The mustard field of yellow flowers is like a shining yellow river. The movement of the plants is like the rise and fall of water under the influence of a strong wind. At places the plants have formed separate clusters as if the river had turned into side streams. The long stretch of continuous plants gives the impression of a river flowing into a distant sea of silver light, which is in fact an illusion.
- 5 People talking and shouting merrily in an unrestrained, almost wild, manner.
- 6 Onomatopoeia.

UNIT 7 FIGURES OF SPEECH-2

Structure

- 7.0 Objectives
- 7.1 Introduction
- 7.2 Irony
 - 7.2.1 The Irony of Situation
 - 7.2.2 Ironic Contrast
 - 7.2.3 Irony in Satire
- 7.3 Paradox
- 7.4 Antithesis
- 7.5 Let Us Sum Up
- 7.6 Key Words
- 7.7 Suggested Reading
- Answers

7.0 OBJECTIVES

In this unit, we are going to study some other literary devices as we have done in the previous unit. After completing the unit, you should be able to understand the following literary devices:

- Irony,
- Satire,
- Paradox, and
- Antithesis.

7.1 INTRODUCTION

In the last unit, we discussed some figures of speech like simile, metaphor, etc., used as literary devices. We shall now take up some other devices like

- i) **irony**, in which the intended meaning is the opposite of, or at least in sharp contrast to, the literal meaning,
- ii) **satire**, which ridicules vice or folly, or attacks an individual with some kind of non-literal use of language,
- iii) **paradox**, which makes use of contradictory or incompatible elements, and
- iv) **antithesis**, which uses a contrast of ideas.

7.2 IRONY

Irony consists in using words which are opposite to one's meaning. For example, if you say 'What a good friend you are!' when you mean just the opposite, you are using the device of irony. This is the most commonly used kind of irony.

Example 1

"Mr. Bennet, how can you abuse your own children in such a way? You take delight in vexing me. You have no compassion on my poor nerves."

"You mistake me, my dear. I have a high respect for your nerves. They are my old friends. I have heard you mention them with consideration these twenty years at least."

" Ah! You do not know what I suffer. "

(From Jane Austen: *Pride and Prejudice*,

chapter I)

In *Pride and Prejudice*, Mr. and Mrs. Bennet form an odd couple owing to their different temperaments. Mr. Bennet is serious and objective and has a mature understanding. Mrs. Bennet is uninformed, 'of mean understanding', and 'nervous when discontented.' Her main concern in life is to get her daughters married. She asks her husband to invite Mr. Bingley, a rich young bachelor who has settled down in their neighborhood. Mr. Bennet remarks that he does not consider any of their daughters, except Lizzy, worthy of being recommended to that gentleman. At this remark Mrs. Bennet flares up saying that he 'abuses' his own children and takes pleasure in annoying her, and that he does not care for her nerves and how they will be affected by his remarks. Mr. Bennet replies that he has been trying to be patient with her for the last twenty years. Mrs. Bennet, however, knows that Mr. Bennet's attitude is in fact just the opposite of what he has said. This is an example of verbal irony.

The following passage is another example of irony where the reader knows what was meant, but the character does not.

Example 2

"Permit me to say, Madam, that as I never yet have had the pleasure of seeing Miss Languish, my principal inducement in this affair at present is the honor of being allied to Mrs. Malaprop, of whose intellectual accomplishments, elegant manners, and unaffected learning no tongue is silent."

(From Sheridan: *The Rivals*, Act III, Scene III)

Note that Captain Absolute has been meeting Lydia Languish, of which the reader of the book is aware, and that he is playing to the vanity of Mrs. Malaprop, who wants to be admired for her fine vocabulary. In reality he is fooling her. The irony is that the reader understands the situation but Mrs. Malaprop does not.

7.2.1 The Irony of Situation

Another type of irony is that of situation, in which the true meaning of a set of circumstances is not revealed until the outcome of the circumstances is seen; then a contradiction in the outcome is the result. The situation may seem to be developing to its logical conclusion, yet almost at the end it takes an opposite turn. This unexpected, or unintended, development is an example of irony of situation.

In the short story given below, *The Gift*, by O. Henry, Della sells her beautiful long hair in order to buy her husband, Jim a chain for his watch. Meanwhile Jim pawns his cherished watch in order to buy Della a present of hair combs. This ironic twist of fate produces a conclusion which is unexpected by both the characters and readers.

Check Your Progress 1

Read the following story and answer the questions given at the end.

The Gift of the Magi

Figures of Speech-2

O. Henry

One dollar and eighty-seven cents. That was all she had saved. Three times Della counted it. Only one dollar and eighty-seven cents. And the next day would be Christmas.

There was clearly nothing left to do but flop down on the shabby little couch and weep. So, Della did. You see, life is made up of sobs, sniffles, and smiles — but mainly of sniffles.

When Della had finished crying, she patted her cheeks with the powder rag. She stood by the window and looked out dully at a grey cat walking along a grey fence in a grey backyard. Tomorrow would be Christmas Day, and she had only \$1.87 with which to buy Jim, her husband, a present. She had been saving every cent she could for months; but twenty dollars a week — which was the total of their income - doesn't leave much for saving. Expenses had been greater than she had calculated. They always are. And now she had only \$ 1.87 to buy a present for Jim. Many happy hours she had spent planning something nice for him. Something fine and rare — something worthy of the honor of being owned by Jim.

There was a mirror between the windows of the room. Suddenly she whirled from the window and stood before the glass. Her eyes were shining brilliantly, but her face had lost its colour within twenty seconds. Rapidly she pulled down her hair and let it fall to its full length.

Now, there were two possessions of Della and Jim in which they both took a very great pride. One was Jim's gold watch, which had been his father's and his grandfather's. The other was Della's hair. It fell about her, rippling and shining like a cascade of brown water. It reached below her knee and made itself almost a garment for her.

She did it up again nervously and quickly. She hesitated for a minute and stood still while a tear or two splashed on the worn red carpet.

On went her old brown jacket; on went her old brown hat. With a whirl of skirts and with the brilliant sparkle still in her eyes, she ran out of the door and down the stairs to the street.

Where she stopped the sign read: 'Madame Sofronie. We Buy Hair Goods of All Kinds.' One flight up Della ran, and paused for a moment, panting. She opened the door.

'Will you buy my hair?' asked Della.

'Yes, I buy hair' said Madame. 'Take your hat off and let's have a look at it.'

Down rippled the brown cascade.

'Twenty dollars', said Madame, lifting the mass of hair with a practiced hand.

'Give it to me quickly,' said Della.

The next two hours went by as if they had wings. She was searching the shops for Jim's present.

She found it at last. It surely had been made for Jim and no one else. There was no other like it in any of the shops, and she had turned all of them inside out. It was a gold watch chain, simple in design, properly proclaiming its value by substance alone and not by ornamentation- as all good things should do. As soon as she saw it, she knew that it must be Jim's. It was just right for him. Twenty-one dollars they took from her for it, and she hurried home with the remaining eighty-seven cents. Grand as Jim's watch was, he sometimes looked at it with shame on account of the old leather strap that he used instead of a chain.

When Della reached home her excitement gave way a little to prudence and reason. She looked at what was left of her poor hair — and started to work at it with nimble fingers.

Within forty minutes her head was covered with tiny, close-lying curls that made her look wonderful, like a naughty schoolboy. She looked at her reflection in the mirror for long- carefully, and critically.

At seven o'clock the coffee was made and the frying-pan on the back of the stove was hot and ready to cook the supper.

Jim was never late. Della held the newly bought chain in her hand and sat in the corner of the table near the door that he always entered. Then she heard his steps on the stairway and she turned pale for just a moment. She had a habit of saying little silent prayers about the simplest everyday things, and she whispered: 'Please God, make him think I am still pretty.'

The door opened and Jim stepped in and closed the door. He looked thin and very serious. Poor fellow, he was only twenty-two and had a family to care of! He needed a new overcoat and his shoes were old and worn.

Jim stepped inside the door. Then he stood still. His eyes were fixed upon Della, and there was an expression in them that she could not read, and it terrified her. It was not anger, nor surprise, nor disapproval, nor horror, nor any of the sentiments that she had been prepared for. He simply stared at her fixedly with that peculiar expression on his face.

Della wriggled off the table and went to him.

'Jim!' she cried, 'don't look at me that way. I had my hair cut off and sold it because I couldn't have lived through Christmas without giving you a present. It'll grow again — you won't mind, do you? I just had to do it. My hair grows very fast, you know. Say "Merry Christmas!" Jim, and let's be happy. You don't know what a nice — what a beautiful, nice gift I've got for you!'

'You've cut off your hair?' asked Jim, slowly, as if he had not yet arrived at that obvious fact even after the hardest mental labour.

'I've cut it off and sold it', said Della. 'Don't you like me just as well, anyhow? My hair is gone, but I'm just the same.'

Jim looked about the room curiously.

'You say your hair is gone?' he said with an air almost of idiocy.

'You needn't look for it', said Della. 'It's sold, I tell you — sold and gone, too. It's Christmas Eve, Jim. Be good to me, for it went for you.'

Jim seemed quickly to wake out of his trance. He drew a package from his overcoat pocket and threw it upon the table.

'Don't make any mistake about me, Della', he said, 'I don't think there's anything about a haircut that could make me like my dear wife any less. But if you'll unwrap that package you will see why I was upset for a while at first.'

White and nimble fingers tore at the string and paper. And then an excited scream of joy; and then, alas! a quick feminine change to hysterical tears and wails.

For there lay the combs — the set of combs that Della had worshipped for many months ever since she saw them in a shop window. Beautiful combs, pure tortoise shell, with jeweled rims — just the colour to wear in her beautiful vanished hair. They were expensive combs, she knew, and her heart had longed for them without the least hope of possession. And now they were hers, but with her hair gone there could be no use for them.

But she hugged them to her chest, and at last she was able to look up with tearful eyes and a smile and say: „My hair grows so fast, Jim!

Then Della remembered something else and cried, 'Oh, oh!'

Jim had not yet seen his beautiful gift. She held it out to him eagerly in her open hand. The precious metal seemed to flash with a reflection of her bright and ardent spirit.

'Isn't it lovely, Jim? I hunted all over the town to find it. You'll have to look at the time a hundred times a day now. Give me your watch. I want to see how it looks on it.'

Instead of obeying, Jim tumbled down on the couch, put his hands under the back of his head, and smiled.

'Della,' said he, 'let's put our Christmas gifts away and keep them a while. They're too nice to use just at present. I sold the watch to get the money to buy your combs.

'And now, let us have our supper. '

1 What do the following words and phrases mean?

- i) flop down _____
- ii) whirled _____
- iii) cascade _____
- iv) garment _____
- v) panting _____
- vi) proclaiming _____
- vii) ornamentation _____
- viii) prudence _____
- ix) mental labour _____
- x) trance _____
- xi) hysterical _____
- xii) wail _____

2 Can you find words in the story that have the following meanings?

- i) a waterfall

- ii) a coat worn outside another or over indoor clothes for warmth in cold weather

- iii) the state of being poor

3 Why did Della change to hysterical tears and wails?

4 What image has been used to describe Della's hair?

7.2.2 Ironic Contrast

Ironic contrast is achieved by showing the imaginary and the actual situation at the same time. In the following passage William Saroyan describes suicide in a way that is so different from what one would expect in real life.

Example 3

Poor Tom. He is sinking to his knees, and somehow, even though it is happening swiftly, it seems that this little action, being the last one of a great man, will go on forever, this sinking to the knees. The room is dim, the music eloquent. There is no blood, no disorder. Tom is sinking to his knees, dying nobly. I myself hear two ladies weeping. They know it's a movie, they know it must be fake, still, they are weeping. Tom is man. He is life. It makes them weep to see life sinking to its knees. The movie will be over in a minute and they will get up and go home, and get down to the regular business of their lives, but now, in the pious darkness of the theatre, they are weeping.

All I know is this: that a suicide is not an orderly occurrence with symphonic music. There was a man once who lived in the house next door to my house when I was a boy of nine or ten. One afternoon he committed suicide, but it took him over an hour to do it. He shot himself through the chest, missed his heart, then shot himself through the stomach. I heard both shots. There was an interval of about forty seconds between the shots. I thought afterwards that during the interval he was probably trying to decide if he ought to go on wanting to be dead or if he ought to try to get well.

Then he started to holler. The whole thing was a mess, materially and spiritually, this man hollering, people running, shouting, wanting to do something and not knowing what to do. He hollered so loud half the town heard him.

This is all I know about regular suicides...the way this man hollered wouldn't please anyone in a movie. It wouldn't make anyone weep with joy.

I think it comes to this: we've got to stop committing suicide in the movies.

(From William Saroyan: 'Love, Death, Sacrifice, and So Forth' in *The Daring Young Man on the Flying Trapeze*, Copyright 1989, by William Saroyan foundation).

Glossary

'holler: shout or yell

Check Your Progress 2

1 Restatement is a common device used to emphasize a particular point. Do you find the writer using this technique in the above passage? Where?

2 Bring out the irony in the passage.

7.2.3 Irony in Satire

Satire is a literary weapon directed against persons or institutions that the author believes should be corrected. The writer often describes a completely different situation, but makes indirect parallels and reference to the things we know, so that we realize what it is that the writer is criticizing.

Satire may be humorous and witty. Humour is the sugar coating which makes the criticism easier to take. A writer of satire uses laughter against a situation, a particular person, or a type of person with the aim of correcting an undesirable situation or human folly, or saving people from committing follies.

Example 4

“Yes, Caroline of Brunswick was innocent; and Madam Laffarge never poisoned her husband; and Mary of Scotland never blew up hers; and poor Sophia Dorothea was never unfaithful; and Eve never took the apple — it was a cowardly fabrication of the serpent's.”

(Thackeray: *King George II of England*)

Literary Devices

In the example quoted above Thackeray is evoking moral indignation at some of the famous names in history. By saying the opposite of what he means, he is emphasizing the true facts about Caroline, Madam Laffarge, Mary of Scotland, Sophia Dorothea, and Eve, and their unfaithfulness to their husbands.

Here is an excerpt from a powerful satire, perhaps the most powerful of all, aimed at improving the status of the Irish people. Ireland was subjected to many commercial and economic Restrictions under the British regime at the time Swift was writing. It had become a question of survival for the Irish people.

Example 5

I shall now therefore humbly propose my own thoughts, which I hope will not be liable to the least objection.

I have been assured by a very knowing American of my acquaintance in London, that a young healthy child well nursed is at a year old a most delicious, nourishing, and wholesome food, whether stewed, roasted, baked or boiled, and I make no doubt that it will serve in a fricassee.

(Jonathan Swift: *Modest Proposal*)

Glossary

'fricassee a dish made of pieces of bird or other meat cooked and served in thick sauce.

Check Your Progress 3

1 Do you find the use of extended metaphor in the above passage?

2 Is the aim of the author to hurt, to improve, or to prevent a situation?

3 What is the irony in the passage?

7.3 PARADOX

As a figure of speech, a paradox is an apparently self-contradictory statement which is nevertheless found to be true. A paradoxical situation contains contradictory elements

that put together make sense. For example, the celebration of a fifth birthday anniversary by a twenty-year-old man is paradoxical, but makes sense if the man was born on February 29.

Example 6

Tell me not, Sweet, I am unkind,
That from the nunnery
Of thy chaste breast and quiet mind
to war and arms I fly.

True a new mistress now I chase,
The first foe in the field;
And with a stronger faith embrace
A sword, a horse, a shield.

Yet this inconstancy is such
As you too shall adore;
I could not love thee, Dear, so much
Loved I not honour more.

(Richard Lovelace: *To Lucasta, Going to the Wars*)

The poem is about a soldier who must leave his beloved to fight in a war. He calls the foe in the battle-field his new mistress. The paradox is that he asks his beloved to adore his inconstancy. The fickleness in his affection for his beloved is due to his sense of duty as a soldier. The statement is paradoxical, but can be understood in the total context of the poem.

7.4 ANTITHESIS

Antithesis refers to the putting together of contrasting ideas or words so as to produce an effect of balance.

Examples

- 1 My words fly up, my thoughts remain below.
- 2 The prodigal robs his heir; the miser robs himself.
- 3 Excess of ceremony shows want of breeding.

Check Your Progress 4

- 1 The following poem is divided into two stanzas. In what way does this formal division correspond to the organization of ideas?

At twenty, stooping round about,
I thought the world a miserable
place, Truth a trick, faith in doubt,
Little beauty, less grace.

Now at sixty what I see,
Although the world is worse by far,
Stops my heart in ecstasy,
God, the wonders that there are.

(Archibald Macleish: 'With Age wisdom', from *The Human Season*.
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Houghton Mifflin Company)

2 Read the following passage and answer the questions given below:

May she be granted beauty and yet not
Beauty to make a stranger's eye distraught,
Or hers before a looking-glass, for such,
Being made beautiful overmuch, Consider
beauty a sufficient end,
Lose natural kindness and maybe
The heart-revealing intimacy
That chooses right, and never find a friend. (William
Butler Yeats: 'A Prayer for My Daughter')

Glossary

distraught: very anxious or troubled; agitated

i) What kind of beauty does the poet want his daughter to have?

ii) What are the hazards of „being made beautiful overmuch'? How does the poet illustrate his point?

7.5 LET US SUM UP

In this unit, we have studied incongruities or discrepancies involved in the use of language, as in Irony, and the use of contradictory or incompatible elements as in a Paradox and Antithesis, which help convey the meaning more effectively.

7.6 KEY WORDS

Antithesis: the putting together of two **opposite** ideas (e.g., 'We want deeds, not words.')

Irony: use of words which are clearly opposite to one's meaning, usually with an amusing purpose (e.g., saying *What a nice weather!* when the weather is bad).

Paradox: a statement which **seems** to be contradictory, but which has some truth in it. (e.g., „More haste, less speed.“)

Satire: a literary word or speech intended to show the foolishness or evil of some establishment or practice in an amusing way.

7.7 SUGGESTED READING

Jane Austen: *Pride and Prejudice*.

Answers

Check Your Progress 1

- I
- i) fall suddenly
 - ii) turned round quickly
 - iii) waterfall
 - iv) article of dress
 - v) gasping for breath
 - vi) making known
 - vii) adornment
 - viii) carefulness to avoid undesired consequences
 - ix) an effort of the mind
 - x) sleeplike state; half-conscious state
 - xi) uncontrolled; arising from nervous excitement
 - xii) long, loud, high pitched cries

- 2
- i) cascade
 - ii) overcoat
 - iii) poverty

3 Jim bought Della a Christmas gift of combs made of tortoise shell studded with jewels on the edges, which Della had longed to buy all these months but had found too expensive to afford. Della bought a gift for Jim by selling her long beautiful hair, her most prized possession. The realization that she did not now need the combs as she had sold her hair made her cry in an uncontrolled hysterical manner.

4 Della's hair is compared to a brown-coloured waterfall. The hair was wavy and shining and looked like a waterfall. It reached below her knee, and almost covered her body like a garment.

Check Your Progress 2

- I Paragraph I : repetition of
- i) *sinking to his knees*
 - ii) *weeping*
- Paragraph 2 : repetition of *shot*
Paragraph 3 : repetition of *holler*

2 Death and suicide are serious matters, which the author has treated in a non-serious way while giving an account of the two incidents. We, therefore, find an ironic contrast between the author's account and the world of reality.

Check Your Progress 3

- 1 Yes. A young healthy child well nursed is at a year old a most *delicious, nourishing, and wholesome food*, whether *stewed, roasted, baked or boiled*, and I make no doubt that it will serve in a *fricassee*.
- 2 To prevent a situation.
- 3 *The irony consists in treating children as animals cooked for food.*

Check Your Progress 4

- 1 In the first stanza of the poem, the poet makes a statement that the world is a miserable place. In the second stanza he says that the world is a wonderful place. The two stanzas together balance his views.
- 2
 - i) He wants his daughter to be moderately beautiful.
 - ii) A very beautiful woman distracts the attention of other people. It also makes her vain; she loses her natural kindness and can never have good friends.



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UNIT 8 FIGURES OF SPEECH-3

Structure

- 8.0 Objectives
- 8.1 Introduction
- 8.2 Allegory
 - 8.2.1 Bunyan: *The Pilgrim's Progress*
 - 8.2.2 Melvin B. Tolson: *The Sea Turtle and the Shark*
- 8.3 Symbol
 - 8.3.1 John Boyle O' Reilly: *A White Rose*
 - 8.3.2 William Blake: *My Pretty Rose Tree*
 - 8.3.3 Robert Frost: *The Road Not Taken*
- 8.4 Imagery
 - 8.4.1 T.S. Eliot: *The Hollow Men*
 - 8.4.2 Keats: *Ode to Autumn*
 - 8.4.3 Passage from N. Scott Momaday: *House Made of Dawn*
- 8.5 Let Us Sum Up
- 8.6 Key Words
- 8.7 Suggested Reading
Answers

8.0 OBJECTIVES

In this unit, we shall discuss some other types of figurative use of language, that is, language used not in the literal sense but in an imaginative way and often having a deeper meaning. By the time you complete the study of this unit, you will have become familiar with

- Allegory,
- Symbol, and
- Imagery.

8.1 INTRODUCTION

In previous Units , we discussed the use of figurative language to convey **meanings** which could not be expressed through a literal use of language. In this unit, we shall discuss how certain devices like allegory and symbol convey deeper and richer meaning than ordinary words do. We shall also discuss how imagery effectively calls up vivid sensory experiences and helps convey ideas and emotions which cannot be expressed by literal statements.

8.2 ALLEGORY

An Allegory is a form of writing — usually a story or a description — in which the persons, the places, the objects and the events have meanings and implications beyond the literal meanings. If it is a story, it often implies a penetrating commentary on life and society. The characters in the story often represent ideas or qualities such as patience, purity, truth, falsehood, anger, jealousy, lust, greediness, etc. Allegory has been sometimes defined as an extended or sustained metaphor because the theme is developed by a series of metaphors, which continue throughout the story. Some

famous examples of allegory are: Spenser's *Faerie Queen*, Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* and Swift's *Gulliver's Travels*.

8.2.1 Bunyan: *The Pilgrim's Progress*

Given below is the story of Bunyan's book *The Pilgrim's Progress*, originally published in 1678. You should read the story given here in order to understand the discussion that follows.

One day, Bunyan had laid down in a den to sleep, and in his sleep, he dreamt that a man was standing in a field and crying in pain and sorrow because he, his whole family as well as the town in which they lived were to be destroyed. Christian, the protagonist, knew of this catastrophe because he had read about it in the book he held in his hands, the Bible. Evangelist, the preacher of Christianity, soon came up to Christian and presented him with a roll of paper on which it was written that he should flee from the wrath of God and make his way from the City of destruction to the City of Zion. Running home with this hope of salvation, Christian tried to get his neighbours and family to go away with him, but they would not listen and thought he was either sick or mad. Finally, shutting his ears to his family's entreaties to stay with them, he ran off toward the light in the distance. Under the light he knew he would find the wicket gate which opened into Heaven.

On his way he met Pliable and Obstinate, who distracted Christian that he fell in a bog called the „Slough of Despond“. He could not get out because of the bundle of sins on his back. Finally help came and aided Christian out of the sticky mire. Going on his way, he soon fell in with Mr. Worldly Wiseman, who tried to convince Christian he would lead a happier life if he gave up his trip towards the light and settled down to the comforts of a burdenless town life. Fearing that Christian was about to be led astray, Evangelist came up to the two men and quickly showed the errors in Mr. Worldly Wiseman's arguments.

Soon Christian arrived at a closed gate where he met Good-Will, who told him that if he knocked the gate would be opened to him. Christian did so. Invited into the gatekeeper's house by the Interpreter, he learned from him the meaning of many of the Christian mysteries. He was shown pictures of Christ, Passion and Patience; Despair in a cage of iron bars; and finally, a vision of the Day of Judgment, when evil men will be sent to the bottomless pit and good men will be carried up to Heaven. Having seen these things, Christian was filled with both hope and fear. Continuing on his journey, he came to for through from out our bourne of Time and Place The flood may bear me far, I hope to see my Pilot face to face When I have crost the bar. (Tennyson: *Crossing the Bar*) There his burden of sins fell off, and he was able to take to the road with renewed vigor.

Soon he met Sloth, Simple, Presumption, Formalism, and Hypocrisy, but he kept to his way and they kept to theirs. Later Christian lay down to sleep for a while. When he went on again, he forgot to pick up the roll of paper Evangelist had given him. Remembering it later, he ran back to find it. Running to make up the time lost, he suddenly found himself confronted by two lions. He was afraid to pass by them until the porter of the house by the side of the road told him that the lions were chained, and that he had nothing to fear. The porter then asked Christian to come into the house. There he was well-treated and shown some of the relics of Biblical antiquity by four virgins; Discretion, Prudence, Piety, and Charity. They gave him good advice and sent him on his journey armed with the sword and shield of Christian faith.

In the Valley of Humiliation, Christian was forced to fight the giant devil, Apollyon, whose body was covered with the shiny scales of pride. In this battle Christian was wounded, but after he had chased away the devil, he healed his wounds with leaves from the Tree of Life which grew nearby. After the Valley of Humiliation came the Valley of the Shadow of Death in which Christian had to pass one of the gates to Hell. In order to save himself from the devils who issued out of that terrible hole, he recited some of the verses from the Psalms.

Having passed through this danger, he had to go by the caves of the old giants, Pope and Pagan, and when he had done so he caught up with a fellow traveller, Faithful. As the two companions went along, they met Evangelist, who warned them of the dangers in the town of Vanity Fair.

Vanity Fair was a town of ancient foundation which since the beginning of time had tried to lure men away from the path to Heaven. Here all the vanities of the world were sold, and the people who dwelt there were cruel and stupid and had no love for travellers such as Christian and Faithful. Having learned these things, the two companions promised to be careful and went on down into the town. There they were arrested and tried because they would buy none of the town's goods. Faithful was sentenced to be burned alive and Christian was put in prison. When Faithful died in the fire, a chariot came down from Heaven and took him up to God. Christian escaped from the prison. Accompanied by a young man named Hopeful, who had been impressed by Faithful's reward, he set off once more.

They passed through the Valley of Ease, where they were tempted to dig in a silver mine free to all. As they left the valley, they saw the pillar of salt which had once been Lot's wife. Becoming lost, they were captured by a giant, Despair, who lived in Doubting Castle, and were locked in the vaults beneath the castle walls. There they lay until Christian remembered he had a key called Promise in his pocket, and with this they escaped from the prison.

They met the four shepherds; Knowledge, Experience, Watchful, and Sincere, who showed them the Celestial Gate and warned them of the paths to Hell. Then the two pilgrims passed by the Valley of Conceit, where they were met by ignorance and other men who had not kept to the straight and narrow path. They passed on to the country of Beulah. Far off they saw the gates of the city of Heaven glistening with pearls and precious stones. Thinking that all their troubles were behind them, they laid down to rest.

When they went on towards the city, they came to the River of Death. They entered the river and began to wade through the water. Soon Christian became afraid, and the more afraid he became the deeper the waters rolled.

Hopeful shouted to him to have hope and faith. Cheered by these words, Christian became less afraid, the water became less deep, and finally they both got across safely. They ran up the hill towards Heaven. Shining angels led them through the gates.

(From *Masterplots*, Vol. 8, Salem Press Inc., Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey)

Discussion

The Pilgrim's Progress is an account of the journey of a boy, named Christian, who moves from the city of Destruction to the city of Zion. As such, it can be read as a narrative, a picaresque romance, that is, a story dealing with the adventures of a traveller, or a realistic novel which shows life as it is. In fact, it is an allegory giving an account of man's progress through life to heaven or hell. Christian represents man, the journey he makes is human life, and the city he reaches is heaven. The story thus relates man's spiritual adventures, the temptations and dangers he has to face in life before he attains salvation. It is a Christian document that preaches that man should free himself from evils like sloth, presumption, hypocrisy, and vanity, and try to find salvation through piety, hope, and faith in Christ. Seen in this light, the characters and situations become significant as metaphors that build the theme of the allegory.

Pliable, Obstinate, Worldly Wiseman, Sloth, Presumption, Formalism, and Hypocrisy are not just characters our hero meets during his journey; they represent the evils that are obstacles in one's attainment of salvation. Similarly, characters like Evangelist,

Good-Will, Discretion, Prudence, Piety, Charity, Faithful and Hopeful, in fact, represent the qualities that help man in his pursuit of salvation. Some of these befriend Christian and accompany him on his journey.

8.2.2 Melvin B. Tolson: *The Sea Turtle and the Shark*

Read this poem by Melvin B. Tolson.

Strange but true is the story of the sea-turtle and the shark —
The instinctive drive of the weak to survive in the oceanic dark.
Driven
Riven
By hunger
Front abyss to shoal,
Sometimes the shark swallows the sea-turtle whole.
The sly reptilian marine withdraws,
Into the shell
Of his undersea craft,
His leathery head and the rapacious claws that can rip
A rhinoceros hide
Or strip
A crocodile to fare-thee-well,
Now
Inside the shark,
The sea-turtle begins the churning seesaws
Of his descent into pelagic hell;
Then... then,
With ravenous jaws
That can cut sheet steel scrap,
The sea-turtle gnaws... and
Gnaws... and gnaws...
His way in a way that appa'ls —
His way to freedom,
Beyond the vomiting dark,
Beyond the stomach walls
Of the shark.

Glossary

'turtle: a sea-animal with a soft body protected by a hard shell like that of a tortoise

shark: a sea-fish; some kinds are large and dangerous

*ab'ys*s: a hole so deep that it appears bottomless

shoal: a shallow place in the sea

sly: doing things secretly

ma'rine: found in the sea or relating to the sea

ra'pacious: greedy

'churning: stirring or moving about with a lot of force, as when milk is churned to produce butter

'seesaws: up-and-down or to-and-fro movements

pe'logic: relating to the open sea

gnaws: bites steadily to tear away something

'palls: fills with fear; dismays

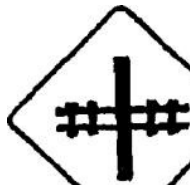
Since the poem is taken from the book *Harlem Gallery*, where it is given as the work of a black poet, it is suggested that the sea-turtle and the shark represent the American negro and the White American respectively. At the literal level the story is that of the sea-turtle who is able to find its way out of the shark's stomach. At another level the story of the sea-turtle and the shark can be interpreted as an allegory, describing the effort of the weak or the poor to survive in their struggle against the mighty or the rich. A more specific meaning, howsoever, relates to the American negroes' struggle against oppression by the white people. It depicts the history of the negro's survival in the cruel atmosphere in America symbolized by the sea and the shark. Just as the turtle cuts its way out of the shark's stomach, the negro attempts to be free of the oppression of the white.

Check Your Progress 1

In what ways is a turtle gifted? Your answer should be based on the poem by Melvin B. Tolson you have just read.

8.3 SYMBOL

A symbol can be a sign, a mark, a word or an object looked upon as representing something. For example, we have mathematical symbols like +, —, x, and phonetic symbols for the various sounds. 'Red' is usually a symbol danger and is therefore used as a traffic signal to indicate "stop". A leaf, a branch, or a wreath of the olive tree, is a symbol of peace. A flag is used as the distinctive symbol of a country. Here are some more examples:



8.3.1 John Boyle O' Reilly: *A White Rose*

Sometimes a poet identifies the symbols he uses, as in the following poem: *A White Rose* by John Boyle O' Reilly.

The red rose whispers of passion,
And the white rose breathes of love;
Oh, the red rose is a falcon,
And the white rose is a dove.

But I send you a cream-white rosebud,
With a flush on its petal tips;
For the love that is purest and sweetest
Has a kiss of desire on the lips.

Glossary

'passion: strong feeling of love

'falcon: a small bird of prey trained to hunt and kill other birds and small animals

dove: a kind of pigeon

flush: red colour

In the above poem, the poet makes the white rose a symbol of love and the red rose a symbol of passion. The cream-white rosebud symbolizes the newly sprung innocent love and the flush on the petal tips suggests innocent desire.

8.3.2 William Blake: *My Pretty Rose Tree*

A flower was offered to me,
Such a flower as May never bore;
But I said 'I've a pretty Rose-tree'
And I passed the sweet flower o'er.

Then I went to my pretty Rose-tree,
To tend her by day and by night,
But my rose turned away with jealousy
And her thorns were my only delight.

The poem is metaphorical as also rich in symbols. The reader can see the contrasts between the rose that is offered to the man and the rose that the man is cultivating in his own garden. The beauty of the rose that is offered to him is appreciated by him; it stands for the love offered to him by a woman. The man, who does appreciate the loneliness of the rose, does not accept the offer, though. He has his own rose-tree in his garden which he is cultivating day and night. This rose symbolizes his wife.

The garden rose turns away from him in jealousy, having seen the offer of another rose made to him. The man is faithful to his wife, though he is struck by the beauty of the other woman. His wife is jealous and turns away from him. Now her thorns (jealous attitude) are his only delight!

8.3.3 Robert Frost: *The Road Not Taken*

More often the symbol is so general in its meaning that it can suggest a great variety of more specific meanings, as in the following poem by Robert Frost.

The Road Not Taken

Two roads diverged in a yellow wood,
And sorry I could not travel both

And be one traveler, long I stood
And looked down one as far as I could
To where it bent in the undergrowth;

Then took the other, as just as fair,
And having perhaps the better claim,
Because it was grassy and wanted wear;
Though as for that the passing there
Had worn them really about the same,

And both that morning equally lay
In leaves no step had trodden black.
Oh, I kept the first for another day!
Yet knowing how way leads on to way,
I doubted if I should ever come back.

I shall be telling this with a sigh
Somewhere ages and ages hence;
Two roads diverged in a wood, and I —
I took the one less traveled by,
And that has made all the difference.

Glossary

di'verged: branched away from a point

wood: land covered with growing trees (not so extensive as a forest).

'grassy: covered with grass

wear(o.): damage from use

In *The Road Not Taken*, Frost talks about the dilemma of a person who is at the cross-roads and has to choose one of the two roads diverging into the wood. He would like to explore both the roads but is aware of his inability to do so. The choice of the road symbolically refers to the difficult choices one has to make in life. It may be the choice of a profession, a place of residence, a wife, or anything else. The possibilities of experiencing life get limited by the choice one makes.

Check Your Progress 2

1 In the poem *The Road Not Taken*, the poet says “I shall be telling this with a sigh”. Is it because he thinks he has made a wrong choice? If not, why does he regret his choice?

2 Do you find an overstatement in the poem? Where?

8.4 IMAGERY

Imagery may be defined as the representation of sense experience through language. The word 'image' often suggests a mental picture, and visual imagery is the most frequent kind of imagery in literary writings. But an image may also represent a sound, a smell, a taste, a tactile experience such as hardness, cold, etc., or an internal sensation such as hunger or thirst. The writer creates images by using vivid sensory details as in the following examples:

sight: a sparkling diamond
 hearing: a shrieking siren
 taste: salty, buttered popcorn
 smell: rotten eggs
 touch: a slimy creature

It is easy to see that imagery uses colourful words with specific meanings to create a picture in the reader's mind. The sentence, 'The dog made a noise', does not give the reader a very clear picture, but the sentence, 'The panting, struggling German Shepherd whimpered in his agony', is a more effective image. You not only see and hear the dog, but also get the impression of his suffering. Here are two statements which say almost the same thing.

Try to do great things.
 Hitch your wagon to a star.

Although both statements say almost the same thing, one of them is somehow more interesting than the other. The first one makes a straightforward statement without appealing to our imagination. It uses literal language. The second example, on the other hand, makes the reader use his imagination to perceive a special image.

8.4.1 T.S. Eliot: *The Hollow Men*

T.S. Eliot, through the use of clear and precise images suggested the spiritual aridity and inertia of modern industrial society in 'The Hollow Men'.

We are the hollow men
 We are the stuffed men
 Leaning together
 Head piece filled with straw. Alas!
 Our dried voices, when
 We whisper together
 Are quiet and meaningless
 As wind in dry grass
 Or rats' feet over broken glass
 In our dry cellar.

In this poem, Eliot articulates in a collective voice a sort of choric chant of hollow men lamenting their own hollowness or emptiness. They are spiritually empty, and devoid of all faith. When they try to pray, only dry, meaningless whispers come out of their lips. 'Dried voices', 'wind in dry grass', 'rats' feet over broken glass', 'dry cellar', are images symbolic of spiritual sterility and decay. They are people with blurred shapes and gestures which mean nothing. They are as if paralyzed both physically and spiritually. They are inactive and as such read a sterile, meaningless existence. Their heads are filled with straw, rather than anything meaningful or worthwhile.

8.4.2 Keats: *Ode to Autumn*

Read this poem by Keats.

Ode to Autumn

Season of mists and mellow fruitfulness,
 Close bosom-friend of the maturing sun;
 Conspiring with him how to load and bless
 With fruit the vines that round the thatch-eaves run;
 To bend with apples the moss'd cottage-trees,
 And fill all fruit with ripeness to the core;
 To swell the gourd, and plump the hazel shells
 With a sweet kernel; to set budding more,
 And still more, later flowers for the bees,
 Until they think warm days, will never cease,
 For summer has o'er-brimm'd their clammy cells

Who hath not seen thee oft amid thy store?
 Sometimes whoever seeks abroad may find
 Thee sitting careless on a granary floor,
 Thy hair soft-lifted by the winnowing wind;
 Or on a half-reap'd furrow sound asleep,
 Drowsed with the fume of poppies, while thy hook
 Spares the next swathe and all its twined flowers:
 And sometimes like a gleaner thou dost keep
 Steady thy laden head across a brook;
 Or by a cider-press, with patient look,
 Thou watchest the last oozings hours by hours.

Where are the songs of Spring? Ay, where are they?
 Think not of them, thou hast thy music too, —
 While barred clouds bloom the soft-dying day,
 And touch the stubble-plains with rosy hue:
 Then in a wailful choir the small gnats mourn
 Among the river shallows, borne aloft
 Or sinking as the light wind lives or dies;
 And full-grow'n lambs loud bleat from hilly bourn;
 Hedge-crickets sing; and now with treble soft
 The red-breast whistles from a garden-croft;
 And gathering swallows twitter in the skies,

Glossary

'mellow: soft and sweet in taste

'thatch: roof covering of dried straw, reeds, etc.

eaves: overhanging edges of a roof

moss'd: covered with moss (kind of small green plant growing in thick masses on wet surfaces)

plump (verb): make rounded



Literary Devices

'kernel: softer, inner (usually edible) part of a nut or fruit-Stone

'clammy: sticky

'winnowing 'wind: a stream of air used to separate the dry outer covering from grain

'furrow: a long narrow trench made in the ground by a plough

hook: a curved tool for cutting grain, etc.

swathe (noun): a ridge of grass, corn, etc.

'gleaner: a person who collects grain left in a harvest field by the workers

'oozing: apple juice falling slowly from the cider-press

barred: marked with stripes

'stubble: ends of grain plants left in the ground after harvest

'wailful: crying or complaining in a loud and shrill voice

gnat: a small two-winged fly that stings

bleat (verb): the word refers to the cry of sheep, goats, etc.

bourne: boundary

'treble: high-pitched

sallow: willow tree, of low-growing kind

'crickets: small, brown jumping insects

croft: a small enclosed field

'swallows: kinds of small, swift-flying insect-eating birds, with forked tails

In the first stanza, the poet describes the fruits of autumn. It is the time of the ripening of grapes, apples, gourds, hazelnuts, etc. During this time the bees suck the juice from flowers to make honey.

In the second stanza, autumn is seen in the person of a winnower, a reaper, a glen. and a person extracting cider-juice. These are operations associated with the harvest. At first, autumn is shown as a harvester sitting carelessly in the field during winnowing time, then as a gleaner walking homewards with a load on the head; thereafter as one watching the flow of apple juice from the cider-press.

The third stanza describes the various sounds heard during autumn. If spring has its songs, autumn too has distinct sounds and songs. A choral sound can be heard in the sounds produced by the gnats. There are other sounds: the bleating of lambs, the chirping of hedge-crickets, the robin's high notes, and the swallows twittering in the sky.

Check Your Progress 3

- 1 Keats describes the Autumn (the season personified) in three steps: the work, the sights, and the sounds. In stanza 1, he speaks of the effect of Autumn on

fruits and nuts and the collection of honey by bees. In stanza 2, he gives us a picture of Autumn as a woman in four different occupations. First, as a woman resting on the granary floor. Second, as a woman sleeping on a furrow with her cutting tool beside her. What are the other two pictures of Autumn?

- 2 In stanzas 1 and 2, the imagery is predominantly visual, but in the last stanza the emphasis is on auditory imagery. List the five sounds of the season which the poet describes here.

- 3 The poem is primarily descriptive but there is an element of sadness in some of these descriptions. What words give us that impression?

8.4.3 Passage from N. Scott Momaday: *House Made of Dawn*

Read this passage from N. Scott Momaday's 'House Made of Dawn'.

The hardest weather in the world is there. Winter brings blizzards, hot tornadic winds arise in the spring, and in summer the prairie is an anvil's edge. The grass turns brittle and brown, and it cracks beneath your feet. There are green belts along the rivers and creeks, linear groves of hickory and pecan, willow and witch hazel. At a distance in July or August the steaming foliage seems almost to writhe in fire. Great green and yellow grasshoppers are everywhere in the tall grass, popping up like com to sting the flesh, and tortoises crawl about on the red earth, going nowhere in plenty of time.

Glossary

'blizzard: strong cold wind accompanied by widespread heavy snowfall

tor'nadic: like a violent storm with winds whirling around a low-pressure area

'anvil: a heavy block of iron on which heated metals are hammered into shape

'brittle: hard but easily broken.

'hickory: a tree which grows in North America and has edible nuts

pe'can: a kind of hickory tree growing in Southern U.S.A.

'willow: a kind of tree with long thin branches

'witch hazel: a kind of tree

writhe: twist in pain

Check Your Progress 1

The turtle has a head covered with hard leather and claws strong enough to tear the thick skin of a rhinoceros or a crocodile. It has jaws that can cut a steel sheet into pieces.

Check Your Progress 2

- 1 The poet is not sorry for the choice he has made, but regrets the fact that each choice limits the possibilities of other experiences in life.
- 2 Yes. 'I shall be telling this with a sigh somewhere ages and ages hence.'

Check Your Progress 3

- 1 as a gleaner, and as a watcher of the cider-press.
- 2 the gnats mourn in a wailful choir, the lambs bleat, the hedge-crickets sing, the red-breast whistles, and the swallows twitter.
- 3 in a wailful choir the small gnats mourn.

Check Your Progress 4

See:

- i) in summer the grass turns brittle and brown;
- ii) green belts along the rivers and creeks, linear groves of hickory and pecan, willow and witch hazel;
- iii) great green and yellow grasshoppers;
- iv) tall grass;
- v) popping tip like corn;
- vi) tortoises crawl about on the red earth.

See and feel:

- i) winter brings blizzards;
- ii) hot tornadic winds in the spring;
- iii) in summer the prairie is an anvil's edge;
- iv) in July and August steaming foliage seems almost to writhe in fire.

feel: 'to sting the flesh'

hear: 'it cracks beneath your feet'