

## **Elements of Literature and Creative Communication**

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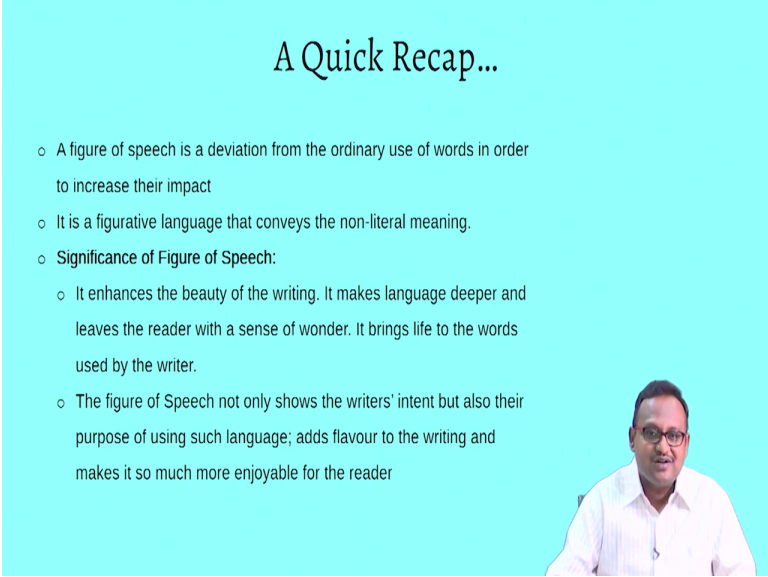
**Indian Institute of Technology, Kharagpur**

### **Lecture - 17**

### **Elements of Poetry - 2**


Hello, welcome to the second class of week 4. We began this week with an introduction to various elements of literature, especially Elements of Poetry. This will be a continuation of the discussion that we have had.

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**A Quick Recap...**

- A figure of speech is a deviation from the ordinary use of words in order to increase their impact
- It is a figurative language that conveys the non-literal meaning.
- **Significance of Figure of Speech:**
  - It enhances the beauty of the writing. It makes language deeper and leaves the reader with a sense of wonder. It brings life to the words used by the writer.
  - The figure of Speech not only shows the writers' intent but also their purpose of using such language; adds flavour to the writing and makes it so much more enjoyable for the reader



So, before we proceed, let us have a quick recap of what we did in the previous class. We discussed the importance of a figure of speech and brought out parallels between a rhetoric device and a figure of speech. What we call a rhetoric device becomes a figure of speech in poetry.

Furthermore, how whether it is a rhetorical device or a figure of speech, there is a kind of a deviation from the ordinary use of words, and because of this deviation, it adds novelty to be it speech or poetry as well as increases the impact on the reader or the listener.

Therefore, you can broadly call it a kind of figurative language, not a non-literal language or a figurative language. We also discussed how, when used in writing or when used in speaking, these devices enhance the beauty of writing and speaking activity and how it takes language to a level deeper than the surficial meaning.

So, it takes language to a degree deeper and makes it work wonders. In fact, as a result of this, it is going to leave the reader with a sense of awe. In other words, it is a device that is used to create a sense of wonder in the readers and the listener.

So, here, these figures of speeches reveal the writer's interests and the intent, but they are also used to create a deliberate impact in such a way that readers and listeners are left with a sense of mesmerizing. These devices mesmerize the readers and the listeners.

As a part of our understanding of figures of speech we discussed various sound devices such as alliteration, assonance, consonance, and onomatopoeia. We discussed figures of speech such as simile, metaphor, personification, and all that. So, in this class, we are going to further our understanding of these figures of speech, and as I said there are more than 250 figures of speech, and obviously, for want of time and space, we will not be covering all of them.

These are some of the predominant figures of speech that you come across in various literary pieces.

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# Metonymy

- An object/idea replaces another object/idea with which it has close links
- Metonymy > 'change of name'
- Helps writers express in an empowered way; adds variety to their expressions
- Creates an indelible impact on readers
- Also used liberally in idioms
  - (Head count, from the cradle to the grave, lend a hand)

Example:

"The pen is mightier than the sword"

The bench gave the verdict



So, in today's class, we are going to begin with a discussion of metonymy. Please pay attention to this particular figure of speech. It is again a very important figure of speech. Metonymy again has a Greek origin, which means a kind of a changing of name a change.

So, what happens here? We replace an idea or a subject by another idea or a subject or a thing that has a close relationship with what we are discussing. So, let us say, for instance, I want to discuss "a". So, rather than directly jumping into discussing "a", I make use of y, which has some kind of parallels between "a" which shares some kind of relationship with x and then make use of it.

So, again why do we do it? Because literature, rather than approaching a subject directly, create some kind of a gap in our understanding. It is a deliberate gap that is created so that the gap can create a fresh perspective; that is why, as I said, all these figures of speech enhance the impact. No doubt, when you use them, you are going to create an extraordinary impact on your listeners or readers.

And usually, metonymy is used abundantly in many idioms and phrases. So, when you say headcount, a very interesting idiom. What do you mean by head count? It is not just the head you count. The head here stands for an entire person.

Or, when you say "from the cradle to the grave," that human journey is between from the cradle to the grave. You can describe human life as a kind of a journey from the cradle to the grave.

What do we mean by that? Here cradle symbolizes birth, and grave symbolizes death. So, birth and death are replaced by cradle and grave respectively.

So, this is an apt example for metonymy. We have some well-known sayings in English, and you must have heard of this statement “The pen is mightier than the sword”. So, here the keywords are pen, mightier, and sword; obviously, when you use it, you do not mean literally. That is why I said most of these figures of speech deal with figurative language. That is why it is called a figure of speech or figurative dimension of a language.

So, pen stands for intellectual activity, and writing language; sword may stand for the physical part. So, the intellectual parts are always better than physical parts. It has multiple meanings. But in order to convey something similar, we use pen and sword. Again this is a part of a symbolic use of language and when you say the bench delivered the verdict or when you hear of a judge pronouncing judgment, we say the bench gave the verdict or delivered the verdict. Here the bench stands for the judge. So, this is how the bench comes to replace the judge, meaning is enhanced in the process. Metonymy, therefore means one object or one thing replaces another.

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## Synecdoche

- Synecdoche is a figure of speech in which a part of something is used to signify the whole, or the whole to signify a part; Greek: 'simultaneous meaning'
- Synecdoche, like metonymy, (Symbolism) helps writers to add variations and impact to their expressions.

Examples:

Gray beard" meaning an old man  
"The Crown" for Kings/Queens

"Friends, Romans, countrymen, lend me your ears;  
I come to bury Caesar, not praise him." (Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*)



We have another similar figure of speech called Synecdoche. So, it is slightly related to metonymy, but there is a minor variation. So, we should not get confused here. Even in

synecdoche there is a replacement, but here rather than any object replacing any other object; here, a part of the object replaces the whole object.

Let us say, for instance, in the previous example we gave headcount right. So, head is a part of human being. When we use headcount, what we mean is count the number of people involved. Therefore, headcount is a better example of synecdoche. So, where the head, a part of human being, stands for the entire human being.

And why do we use it? Again it is a part of symbolism, it is part of a symbolic expression of language. They help writers bring in variations; ultimately poetry is to break free from the mundane, it is to break free from the routine.

To break ourselves free from the tyranny of mundane poetry can also be defined as that. It is letting loose of tyranny and embracing something new. So, all these expressions help poetry achieve that effect. When you use “gray beard” for instance, here again, gray beard stands for an old person. A part of him therefore replaces the old person. Therefore, instead of saying an old man or an old person, you can say gray beard.

And similarly for crown. The crown stands for the king or the queen- monarchy. It represents monarchy. So, here is an extraordinary example from Shakespeare’s Julius and Caesar, and I am sure you must have at least heard this dialogue, if you have not read the entire play: " Friends, Romans, countrymen, lend me your ears. I come to bury Caesar, not to praise him”.

So, if you are interested in developing oratorical skills or public speaking, many of us who do this job, we make use of this particular dialogue from the play.

Lend me your ears-- it is not that he is asking the audience to give the give him their ears; here ears stand for entire attention. So, ears represent the entire human being. So, these are some well known examples. I am sure these examples help you understand the concept a little better.

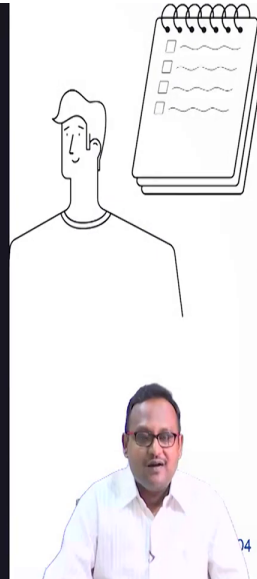
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## Metonymy vs. Synecdoche

Often confused. Related but two distinct devices.

In **metonymy**, the relationship between the two things is not part-to-whole or whole-to-part, but is simply one of being closely *conceptually* related, as in a phrase like "The pen is mightier than the sword," in which "pen" stands in for writing and "sword" stands in for physical power.

**Synecdoche**, as a figure of speech, must indicate a relationship in which a part signifies the whole of an entity



As I said there is a scope for mistaking metonymy for synecdoche or the other way around. But though there is one thing in common that here one thing replaces the other, in metonymy, it is not a part replacing the whole, it is one object replacing another object where there is a link. But in synecdoche, a part replaces the whole. Like the head stands for human being, gray beard stands for the old person. So, a part replaces the whole, which is a crucial distinction that you must keep in mind when using metonymy and synecdoche.

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## Euphemism

- The substitution of an inoffensive term for one considered offensively explicit.
- It is often used to soften and censor the content of the message.  
(Understatement); plus a new spin and alters perspective
- The use of euphemism may also be purely literary in that it helps to heighten effect and add variety. Other than that, they help writers to avoid taboo and add humour.

Examples:

- ✓ She is behind the bars
- ✓ Your pet breathed its last

If I pass during some nocturnal blackness, mothy and warm,  
When the hedgehog travels furtively over the lawn...



From these two things, let us move on to Euphemism. Euphemism is another rhetorical device and of course, also used in poetry and becomes a figure of speech. Here euphemism again has Greek origin. In Greek, eu as a root word stands for good, therefore, you have eulogy speaking something good; eulogizing or you can even consider eugenics; eu, therefore, stands for good.

So, euphemism is stating an unpleasant thing in a very pleasant way. Most of the time it becomes important because words have the capacity to hurt us like words have the capacity to heal us. Therefore, the challenge for the speaker, the challenge for the writer is how to express a sentiment without using a harsher word, that is where we make use of a euphemism.

Thereby, it reduces harshness in tone, but maintains some sort of truthfulness nevertheless. So, while being truthful, you are not being blunt. In euphemism, you are truthful, you say whatever you wish to say, but you are not blunt, instead you express an unpleasant thing in a very pleasant way.

So, generally, euphemism is employed in order to discuss taboo topics; topics that are generally not discussed or even to infuse an element of humor you make use of euphemism. Now, look at this. In order to say that somebody is in jail, you can say he or she is behind the bars; behind bars to a certain extent, is capable of masking a harsher reality called jail.

So, when you do not want your readers or listeners to completely get immersed into the harsher tonality of the word, that is when you and I make use of euphemism and say behind bars. Slightly a pleasant way when your intention is to put it that.

Or, when you say your pet breathed its last. So, it is again a euphemism is used to mean your pet died. So, another example in poetry, if I can read this; if I pass during some nocturnal blackness, mothy and warm when the hedgehog travels furtively over the lawn. Look at the expression when I pass during some nocturnal blackness. Death here is represented as nocturnal blackness, and the idea of somebody dying become when I pass during some nocturnal blackness.

How the idea of death and euphemism like metaphor, metonymy , and synecdoche helps you to bring in some kind of a distance, an intended distance so that when you understand its meaning, it comes after a pause and has the capacity to give you a kind of a revelation. So, these are some kind of poetic devices writers use to bring in various effects. So, depending on what effect, what impact you want to create, you make use of these devices.

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## Hyperbole

An extravagant statement; the use of boldly exaggerated terms for the purpose of emphasis or heightened effect.

**Example:** It's raining cats and dogs | One Hundred Years of Solitude |


- I'm so hungry I could eat a horse! • Her smile was a mile wide.

**In Advertisements:**

Redbull - "It gives you wings!"; Disneyland - "The happiest place on Earth."

Coca-Cola - "Open happiness."

"An hundred years should go to praise  
Thine eyes and on thy forehead gaze...  
Andrew Marvell, To His Coy Mistress



Then comes Hyperbole. Hyperbole is a very interesting figure of speech. To simply put, hyperbole is an exaggeration to the core an overstatement. There is a word called exaggeration, but it is exaggeration taken to the taken to the power of n.

So, you exaggerate a fact so much, and this figure of speech is so common that you and I keep using it when we have not met a friend in many years. We say, we have not met in ages or it is been ages since we last met. What we mean is, it has been quite a long time.

So, without knowing when we use it, we will have used a hyperbole, a very beautiful interesting figure of speech that writers use. And are also used in advertisements to create a kind of a solid impact. Now, when Coca-Cola says, when you open the bottle of a coke it would be opening happiness.

Now, look at this when, you open a bottle of coke it is like opening happiness, something like that- an exaggeration or too much of an exaggeration, a hyperbole. Or if you have watched a Red Bull advertisement, it says when you drink it, it gives you wings to connote the sense of liberation a consumer feels after drinking it. All these are overstatements, and exaggerations.

And you have been to Disneyland or if you have heard of Disneyland, you know the tagline says- the happiest place on earth; obviously, these are exaggerations or hyperbole. So, I have a very interesting poetic use--



A hundred years should go to praise thine eyes and on thy forehead gaze... . The poet says when referring to his beloved he says probably I might need a hundred years in order to praise you. Probably the highest compliment you could give to your beloved or even when you say a hundred years of solitude. I am sure you must have come across that extraordinary piece of fiction by Marquez One Hundred Years of Solitude, which again is a hyperbole.

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**Antimetabole**

A verbal pattern in which the second half of an expression is balanced against the first but with the parts reversed. It is reversing of the order of words in the second of two parallel phrases or sentences.

**Example:**

- ✓ "We shape our building and afterwards our buildings shape us"
- ✓ Power does not add glory to people; it's people who add glory to power
- ✓ I know what I like but I like what I know.



From hyperbole, let us go to Antimetabole. Here, there is a set of clauses or phrases and they have some kind of parallel constructions here. Here you have two sets of phrases or two sets of clauses. But in the second set there is a kind of a reversal of the pattern ; thereby you are going to add an extra layer of meaning here.

So, in a sense you know you are going to create a kind of a balance by saying something different in the second part. When you reverse the order, you create a sort of a balance.

Now, look at these examples. I am sure when you look at these examples it becomes clear what Antimetabole is- We shape our buildings, and afterwards our buildings shape us. Now, look at the kind of a climatic kind of a change. It is an extraordinary reversal, when you reverse the phrasings "we shape our buildings".

Initially, we shape our buildings, and later our buildings shape us. Almost a clever play on the word; of course, again, when we say play on the word, of course, the first thing that comes to our

mind is a pun. A pun is also a clever play on a particular word. An antimetabole is a play onset of words or phrases.

" Power does not add glory to people, it is people who add glory to power." Most of us think that the moment they occupy a chair, the chair dictates what they need to do, but in the hands of better people, the chair gets the character of these people. It is not the chair changing the human being, it is a human being changing the character of the chair. Again when we say chair, it is a figure of speech we have used.

The chair here stands for a position of power, metonymy again. So, this is how a clever reversal of phrases creates a dramatic impact.

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Antithesis or an antithesis happens when two contradictory ideas or two contradictory phrases are put next to each other. In other words, it is a juxtaposition of one idea with another idea that is almost opposite to it symmetrically opposite.

Now, I am sure you must have again read it or heard it somewhere Neil Armstrong's description of the space voyage. One small step for man, one giant leap for mankind. This step that you are keeping on the moon or going out of is like a giant leap for mankind.

One small step for man, a giant leap for mankind; small step and giant leap put together to create a kind of an extraordinary dramatic impact. And now look at another one; it is a very well-known

statement by Martin Luther King, "We must learn to live together as brothers or perish together as fools". Though brothers and fools are not opposites here, but in a sense they can create that because brothers stands for kind of living harmoniously with each other. Fools, foolish in a sense not very harmoniously, but the main contradiction comes here between live together and perish together, live and perish.

Look at the dramatic change of the meaning. And another well-known quote, "Better to reign in hell than serve in heaven." It is a Miltonic statement. Of course, that is a debatable thing. I am not endorsing that opinion. I am just using it only to make you understand the concept of antithesis.

So, these are some examples that will help you understand intuitively what these figures of speech are.

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## Paradox and Oxymoron

Paradox	Oxymoron
A statement that appears to contradict itself.	A figure of speech in which incongruous or contradictory terms appear side by side.
Example:	
✓ "All animals are equal, but some animals are more equal than other animals" (Orwell)	✓ 'Magical realism', 'Virtual reality'
✓ "Whatever you do in life will be insignificant, but it is very important that you do it" (Gandhi)	✓ He's an adult kid
	✓ "Parting is such sweet sorrow"
	✓ Alone together
	✓ Growing smaller
	✓ Sweet sorrow
	✓ Awfully good

From all these things, we move on to some more important figures of speech. These are Paradox and Oxymoron. We need to pay careful attention to how oxymoron is pronounced, oxymoron it is not moron, oxymoron. The stress is on m mo part.

A paradox is again a statement in which the first part appears to contradict itself; first part appears to contradict itself. I can give you a very famous story for this. Imagine a huge stone

tablet hanging in mid air defying gravity that itself is a great wonder. If there is an object that defies gravity and hangs somewhere in mid air.

So, on the one side when you come face to face with it, it says whatever that is written on the other side is true, and when you go to the other side and see where it says you know whatever that is written on the other side is false. Now, you begin scratching your head. This side says what is written on the other side is true and the other side says what is written on this side is false.

What is it doing? It is trying to contradict the other side. So, the crux of it can be called a paradox. I mean the combination is powered by paradox. Of course, what do you mean by that? That is a, this particular story or an image that I give you plays a very important role in Greek culture. So, if time permits we can take it up at some other stage and ask you what exactly you understand by that. So, but that is an example for you know a paradox.

A well known example for paradox is a statement or a line from George Orwell's iconoclastic novel called Animal Farm. So, if time permits, please read that short novel, it is a novella. We might discuss it during our discussion of fiction, during our class on fiction, please read it if time permits.

So, "all animals are equal, but some animals are more equal than the others." Well, it should confuse us right because on the one hand you say everybody is equal and on the other hand you say some are more equal than others. So, how does it flies in the face of the first statement and it confounds us.

But sometimes these kind of contradictions are a part of life because see contradiction well in logic may not be appropriate, but in life, contradiction is a part of understanding life coming to terms with a diversity and multitude of life; that is why when somebody tells Walt Whitman he is a renowned transcendentalist, American poet who has had a significant influence on poets and writers the world over.

Somebody tells him that you know you contradict yourself then he seems to have said- well I am large; I contain multitudes. So, probably the path to multitude has to go through contradiction we do not know you know, but again contradiction may not be an ideal way in communication, but in life, that is essential to understand the diversity of life, the paradoxes of life and things like that right.

And another important thing that Gandhi says, whatever you do in life will be insignificant; nevertheless, it is important that you do it, insignificant and important. If everything I do is insignificant, why should I do it? Why should it be important that I do it?

Well, probably, when you realize that we need to build our own purposes in life, life as such existentially may not give us any purpose because when we are created when we are born here, it is not that well. If we are not fatalistic, then we can say there is no purpose defined. Every human being has to chalk out his or her own path. So, in order to explain, that probably Gandhi uses this paradoxical statement. So, these are some very important figures of speech.

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## Irony

Irony

- The use of words to convey the opposite of their literal meaning.
- Verbal irony and situational irony

**Example:**

“Oh, I love spending big bucks,” said my dad, a notorious penny pincher!

Stating during a thunderstorm, “beautiful weather we’re having”

We might have one or two more, let us take a look at it. Irony - again irony is an important thing, and without you and I knowing that we are using irony we keep using it. Irony can be attained in very many ways; irony is there when you it is a verbal irony, situational irony there are different examples to that.

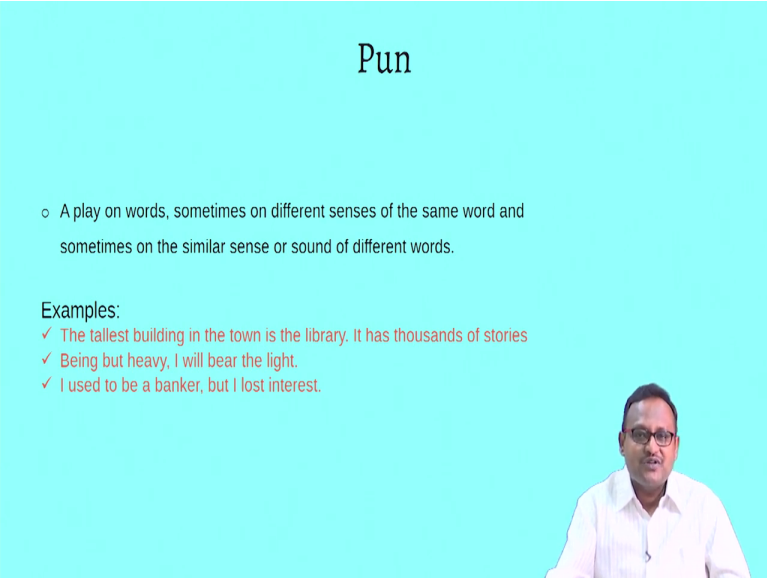
So, when you say in an example. Now, look at this I love spending big bucks said my dad, a notorious penny pincher. Somebody who is miserly says that they love spending big bucks, what could be more ironic than that? So, this you can call it a verbal irony.

Irony achieved using words to convey the meaning; irony, of course, is to convey you use a word in order to convey meaning which is opposite to the word you use which is opposite to the word

that you use you know something like that. If a word means x, well you have used that word in order to convey y which is an opposite of x right.

So, something like this. And now, if it is a thunderstorm, if you are caught in the middle of a thunderstorm, if you say what a beautiful and pleasant weather we have here today; that means, it is a situational irony. Well, you are trying to say an unpleasant thing, but you are trying to express it in a pleasant way, it is not euphemism, but it is irony because you are not exactly enjoying the weather, you are sarcastic, you are ironically using it, it is called a situational irony.

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Pun

- A play on words, sometimes on different senses of the same word and sometimes on the similar sense or sound of different words.

Examples:

- ✓ The tallest building in the town is the library. It has thousands of stories
- ✓ Being but heavy, I will bear the light.
- ✓ I used to be a banker, but I lost interest.



From irony, we come to Pun. a pun is a very important. It is a play on the word. Here a pun makes use of multiple meanings associated with a particular word, a multiple meanings associated with a particular word. So, therefore, you say pun intended; when you want to convey that what you say has multiple meanings attached to it, you say pun is intended, you know.

So, it is this pun is again it can be you know based on similar spelling or it can be based on you know especially in writing it is based on a similar spelling. When you say it is based on the way you sound these things. Now, look at this example. The tallest building in the town is the library. It has thousands of stories.

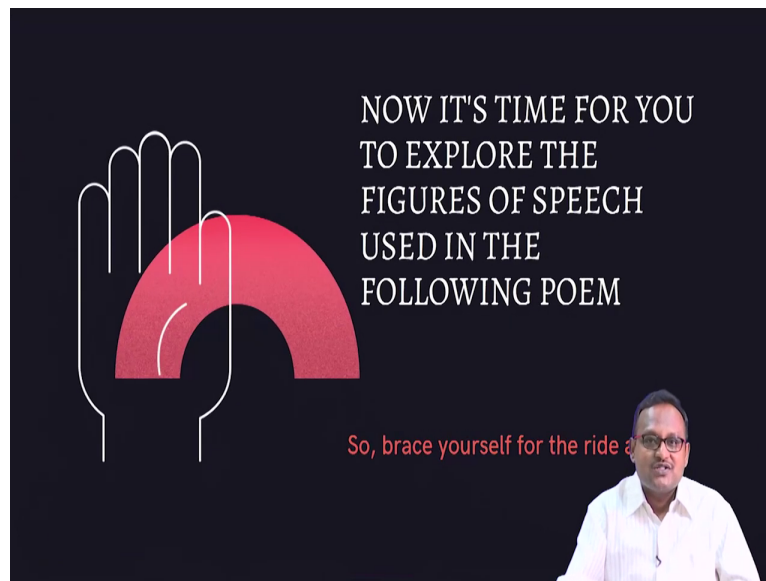
So, thousands of stories, stories spelling is different, but if you can replace stories with storeyed. So, multiple floors; building has multiple floors for that story we use of it, but since it is a library

it also has stories, multiple stories, thousands of stories, a pun on that. That means, it is true that this library has plenty of stories and it also has plenty of storey's architecturally speaking.

And again, the other one is "I used to be a banker, but I lost interest." Now, look at the use of the word interest. Interest, here can mean two things. One, the interest that you earn on money, and the other is losing interest in something. So, we do not know which he means, probably both. So, this is a classic case of pun.

So, I am sure all these things have given you an idea about you know how figures of speech are used. So, I am going to give you an extraordinary poem—

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So, let us see if you have, based on your understanding of the figures of speech discussed in these two classes, if you can identify at least a few of them.

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What does he plant who plants a tree? He plants a friend of sun and sky; He plants the flag of breezes free; The shaft of beauty, towering high; He plants a home to heaven anigh; For song and mother-croon of bird In hushed and happy twilight heard— The treble of heaven's harmony— These things he plants who plants a tree.	<p style="text-align: center;">"The Heart of the Tree"</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Henry Cuyler Bunner (1855-1896)</p>	What does he plant who plants a tree? He plants, in sap and leaf and wood, In love of home and loyalty And far-cast thought of civic good— His blessings on the neighborhood, Who in the hollow of His hand Holds all the growth of all our land— A nation's growth from sea to sea Stirs in his heart who plants a tree.
What does he plant who plants a tree? He plants cool shade and tender rain, And seed and bud of days to be, And years that fade and flush again; He plants the glory of the plain; He plants the forest's heritage; The harvest of a coming age; The joy that unborn eyes shall see— These things he plants who plants a tree		

This is an extraordinary poem by Bunner called "The Heart of the Tree", for want of time I will not be able to read this entire poem, but what you can do, you can take a screenshot of it. I am sure, you should be able to identify at least 8 to 10 figures of speech that we have discussed in the class; metaphor yes, alliteration yes, consonance yes, assonance yes, personification yes, metonymy yes, synecdoche probably, just think of it.

So, there are different figures of speech employed. At least you should be able to spot 8 to 10 of them. A beautiful remarkable poem. If you want to inspire somebody towards nature, if you want to inspire somebody to lean towards nature or if you want to encourage them you can give them this poem "The Heart of the Tree".

"What does he plant who he plants a tree?

He plants a friend of sun and sky."

Now, look at this. When you plant a tree, you plant a friend of sun and sky. So, a tree is called a friend to the sun and sky and again the heart of the tree, what is the figure of speech used in the title itself? An extraordinary, remarkable poem. Please read it and identify it ok.

Thank you.