

Shout-Out to Shakespeare

William Shakespeare used a lot of figurative language in his plays and poems. Read the examples of figurative language from Shakespeare's works below. Identify which literary device (or devices) is being used and how you know, and describe what the lines mean in your own words.

I. From As You Like It

All the world's a stage,
And all the men and women merely players;
They have their exits and their entrances,
And one man in his time plays many parts,
His acts being seven ages.

Which literary device is being used? Select all that apply.

- a. metaphor
- b. simile
- c. personification

How do you know?

Shakespeare compares the world and a stage, and men and women and "players" (actors), without using "like" or "as."

What do you think these lines mean?

Answers will vary. Students may say that the lines mean that people act a certain way, or perform certain roles, for the rest of society. These roles change depending on the phase of life they're in.

2. Romeo describing Juliet in Romeo and

Oh, she doth teach the torches to burn bright!
It seems she hangs upon the cheek of night
Like a rich jewel in an Ethiop's ear

Which literary device is being used? Select all that apply.

- a. metaphor
- b. simile
- c. personification

How do you know?

"The cheek of night" gives a human quality, a cheek, to something non-human, the night. This is an example of personification. Shakespeare also compares Juliet hanging on the cheek of night to a "rich jewel" using the word "like." This is an example of a simile.

What do you think these lines mean?

Answers will vary. Students may say that the lines mean that Juliet is incredibly radiant, beautiful and important.

3. From "Sonnet 18":

Sometime too hot the eye of heaven shines,
And often is his gold complexion dimmed

Which literary device is being used? Select all that apply.

- a. metaphor
- b. simile
- c. personification

How do you know?

These lines give two human qualities to something nonhuman, the sun, calling it the "eye of heaven" and saying it has a "complexion." These are examples of personification. Also, by saying "too hot the eye of heaven shines," Shakespeare is using a metaphor to describe the sun as "the eye of heaven."

What do you think these lines mean?

Answers will vary. Students may say that the lines mean that sometimes the sun shines too much, and sometimes it doesn't shine enough.