

Top Ten Tropes

1. Anaphora - Repetition of the same word or group of words at the beginning of successive clauses, sentences, or lines.

This royal throne of kings, **this** sceptred isle,
This earth of majesty, **this** seat of Mars,

2. Antithesis - Juxtaposition of contrasting words or ideas (often, although not always, in parallel structure).

"It has been my experience that folks who have no **vices** have very few **virtues**." —Abraham Lincoln

"It can't be **wrong** if it feels so **right**" —Debbie Boone

3. Isocolon - A series of similarly structured elements having the same length. A kind of parallelism.

Veni, vidi, vici (I came, I saw, I conquered)

4. Antistrophe (epistrophe) - Ending a series of lines, phrases, clauses, or sentences with the same word or words.

"What lies behind **us** and what lies before **us** are tiny compared to what lies within **us**." —Emerson

5. Synchrisis - Comparison and contrast in parallel clauses.

We support the victory; they decry the cost.

6. Aphaeresis - The omission of a syllable or letter at the beginning of a word.

Omission of an initial letter:

What's the third R? **Rithmetic!** [for "Arithmetic"]

Omission of an initial syllable:

The King hath cause to **plain**. [for "complain"]

—Shakespeare, King Lear 3.1.39

7. Apocope - Omitting a letter or syllable at the end of a word.

Omission of a final letter:

When Maro says "**Achilli**" for "Achillis"

Omission of a final syllable:

True art is nature to advantage dressed

What **oft** was thought, but ne'er so well expressed. [for "often"]

—Alexander Pope

8. Hyperbole – Exaggerated or extravagant terms used for emphasis and not intended to be taken literally; self-conscious exaggeration.

For instance a Lion,
He roared so loud, and looked so wondrous grim,
His very shadow wouldn't follow him.
—Alexander Pope (Peri Bathous)

9. Pun (paronomasia) - A phrase that deliberately exploits confusion between similar-sounding words or between two senses of the same written or spoken word. The two different meanings are often used simultaneously.

A journalist described the 35th anniversary issue of Play as a "journey down **mammary** lane."

President Kennedy proclaimed, "I am a Berliner" not realizing that **berliner** was a word for a particular roll or doughnut.

Churchill quipped on the life of a politician, "He is asked to stand, he wants to sit, and he is expected to **lie**."

10. Chiasmus - the ABBA pattern of mirror inversion where the letters correspond to grammar, words, or meaning.

"Anyone who thinks he has a **solution** does not comprehend the **problem** and anyone who comprehends the **problem** does not have a **solution**."

"He **knowingly lied** and we **followed blindly**" (ABBA - grammar)

"**Swift** as an **arrow flying**, **fleeing** like a **hare afraid**..." (ABCCBA - adjective, simile, gerund, gerund, simile, adjective)

Master Tropes:

1. Metaphor - A type of conceptual substitution or comparison made by referring to one thing as another, directly comparing seemingly unrelated subjects.

No man is an island —John Donne

Life is a beach.

Who captains the ship of state?

2. Metonymy - Reference to something or someone by naming one of its attributes; a literary part of the object or relations rather than similarity among different things (as in metaphor).

The pen is mightier than the sword
(The pen is an attribute of thoughts that are written with a pen; the sword is an attribute of military action)

We await word from the **crown**.

I'm told he's gone so far as to give her a **diamond ring**.

The IRS is auditing me? Great. All I need is a couple of **suits** arriving at my door.

3. Synecdoche - A whole is represented by naming one of its parts (genus named for species), or vice versa (species named for genus). Similar to metonymy but the larger whole can also substitute for the smaller unit.

The rustler bragged he'd absconded with five hundred **head of longhorns**.
Both "head" and "longhorns" are parts of cattle that represent them as wholes

Listen, you've got to come take a look at my new set of **wheels**.
One refers to a vehicle in terms of some of its parts, "wheels"

"He shall think differently," the musketeer threatened, "when he feels the point of my **steel**."
A sword, the species, is represented by referring to its genus, "steel"

4. Irony - Speaking in such a way as to imply the contrary of what one says, often for the purpose of derision, mockery, or jest. In short, substituting an opposite.

When in Shakespeare's *Much Ado About Nothing* the constable Dogberry says "**redemption**" instead of "**damnation**" (itself a malapropism), the fact that he means precisely the opposite of what he so passionately exclaims makes this a comical use of irony:

O villain! thou wilt be condemned into everlasting redemption for this.