



## Figurative language

### Simile and metaphor in Shakespeare

Figurative language is language that uses words or expressions with a different meaning from the literal meaning. It is used a lot in English literature and in everyday conversation today. Figurative language is used to make something easier to understand, to highlight it, or to make it sound interesting.

People from all walks of life enjoyed watching Shakespeare's plays at the Globe Theatre. Using figurative language was a clever way for Shakespeare to make his complicated plots easier for everyone to understand. He often used farming, plants and food in his figurative language as these were part of everyday life in Elizabethan England.

Two important types of figurative language are *simile* and *metaphor*.

### SIMILE

A simile is a word or phrase that describes something by comparing it to something else. The comparison is made using the words *like* and *as*.

e.g.

*"Juliet was as sweet as sugar"*

*"Romeo was as cool as a cucumber"*

*"The Montagues and Capulets fought like cats and dogs"*

#### Examples from Shakespeare:

*"I found him under a tree, like a dropped acorn"* - AS YOU LIKE IT

- Shakespeare compares Orlando to a fruit that has fallen from a tree and is now open to attack.

*"Is love a tender thing? It is too rough...and it pricks like thorn"* - ROMEO AND JULIET

- Romeo says that love pricks like thorn to tell his friend that love can be painful.

### METAPHOR

A metaphor is a word or a phrase that is used to describe something *as if it were something else*.

e.g.

*"Juliet's nanny is an old dinosaur"* - She isn't really a dinosaur. We use old dinosaur to say that someone is old-fashioned and not very useful.

*"Shakespeare was a bright spark"* - He wasn't really an electrical spark. We use bright spark to say that someone is very clever.

#### Examples from Shakespeare:

*"All the world's a stage"* - AS YOU LIKE IT

- Here, Shakespeare compares life to acting out a play in a theatre.

*"Forever and a day"* - AS YOU LIKE IT

- Shakespeare uses this metaphor as a way of saying that something is going to last a very long time.