

Grade 8 Playlist: Interpreting Figures of Speech in Context

Aligns with *CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.8.5.A*

- Interpret figures of speech (e.g. verbal irony, puns) in context.

Welcome

A new burger joint opens in town, and Marcus and Paul decide to give it a try. They each order a burger and fries, and they sit down and wait for their server to bring them their food. Nearly an hour later, it finally arrives. Marcus's burger is so overcooked that it is nearly burnt, while Paul ends up sending his back because it is still pink on the inside. Both of the boys agree that their fries are cold. Instead of ordering a dessert, they leave as soon as they are finished eating. "Whoa, that was a great place!" said Marcus as they walked out the door. "No kidding," replied Paul. "We need to go there more often!" Marcus and Paul are obviously not serious when they say that the restaurant was great and that they wish to return. They are expressing the opposite of how they really feel—with a humorous effect.

Watch!

This video explains how figures of speech are used to enhance spoken and written language:

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CNyKisERYZO>

Objectives

In this playlist, the student will learn and practice how to:

- interpret figures of speech (such as verbal irony, puns, hyperbole, and synecdoche) in context.

Review

Key Terms

- A **figure of speech** is a phrase that uses language in a way that is not literal (like a dictionary definition), to give the reader a better picture of something that is being described. Types of figures of speech include:
 - **Verbal irony**, or the use of words or phrases to convey the opposite of their literal meaning.
 - **Puns**, or "plays on words." Puns often use words that are alike or nearly alike but sound different in order to emphasize their different meanings, usually to a humorous effect.
 - **Hyperbole**, or the obvious use of exaggeration that is not meant to be taken literally.
 - **Synecdoche**, or a figure of speech in which one part is used to refer to the whole (or the whole is used to refer to one part).
- **Context** refers to how a specific word or phrase is used in a particular statement.



Exploring the Standard

This playlist will discuss how authors use figures of speech, such as verbal irony, puns, hyperbole, and synecdoche, and how they are used to enhance language and create effects such as humor. Looking at the context is also helpful in understanding the effects of figures of speech, no matter how odd they may sound in a sentence at first.

Watch!

This video explains how verbal irony is used:

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=liR-bnCHIYo>

A Closer Look: Understanding the Purpose of Figures of Speech

There are many reasons for using figures of speech. One of the main reasons is humor. Writers use figures of speech to create humorous situations. For example, read the following two sentences: “This peanut butter sandwich is delicious.” “This peanut butter sandwich is the best thing ever!” Both sentences give the reader the same general idea: this is a great peanut butter sandwich.

But the person who ate the second sandwich seems to like his or her a lot better. However, when someone describes a peanut butter sandwich as “the best thing ever,” is the speaker describing his or her true feelings about it? Would anybody consider a peanut butter sandwich to be better than a week’s vacation at the beach or a perfect report card? While the speaker may like his or her sandwich very much, to say that it is “the best thing ever” is an example of hyperbole. The speaker is exaggerating how good the sandwich is in order to give an impression to the listener. It’s funny to think that a peanut butter sandwich is better than a vacation!

On the other hand, what if the speaker who describes the sandwich this way does not really like it at all? The speaker may be saying that he or she not only likes it, but thinks it is “the best thing ever” to show how little he or she actually likes it. If this were the case, it would show an example of verbal irony. The speaker would be saying one thing and meaning the opposite.

