

English Rhetoric

A stylized, blue-toned landscape illustration. On the left, a large tree with a thick trunk and sparse branches stands in the foreground. In the background, rolling hills are visible, with a silhouette of a building featuring a prominent steeple, possibly a church or university building, on the right. The overall aesthetic is clean and modern, using various shades of blue and white.

Chapter Ten Semantic Figures of Speech

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10.1 Simile

(1) Definition

- Two concepts or two similar things are imaginatively and descriptively compared because they have at least one quality or characteristic in common or in resemblance.
- The commonest connectives are “like” and “as”. It is one of the commonest figures of speech in English.

(2) Four basic demands:

- It has the comparative words such as “like”, “as” or “as if”, etc.
- Two things involved in comparison: tenor and vehicle.
- The two things must be substantially different
- The two things should be similar in at least one quality.

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- E.g. 1) Jim looks like his brother Billy.**
- 2) Jim and his brother are as like as two peas.**
- 3) My car runs as fast as the train.**
- 4) A real friend is like a mirror that can help you see any dirt on your face.**
- 5) Life was like a journey full of pitfalls(陷阱, 圈套).**
- 6) Records fell like ripe apples on a windy day.**

(3) Classification:

- Functionally, simile is classified into: **descriptive**(描述型明喻), **illuminative**(启示型明喻)and **illustrative**(阐明型明喻).

1) Descriptive simile:


2) attempt to draw images of people, things, etc., through figurative comparison.

3) E.g.

Her lips were red, her locks were yellow as *gold*.

Pop looked so unhappy, almost like *a child who's lost his piece of candy*.

The big black flies hit us like *bombs*.



2) Illuminative simile: try to give deeper insight into persons, things, ideas, even problems, through suggestive association, or to throw light on what would otherwise be inconceivable to ordinary people.

E.g. He was **like a cock** who thought the sun had risen to hear him crow.

What happened to a dream deferred (postponed)?

Like a raisin (葡萄干) in the sun?


Or fester (化脓) like a sore?

Does it stink like a rotten meat?



3) Illustrative 阐明型

- often used in scientific, technological writing.
- **E.g. What is tennis?**
- Tennis is like a ping pong game scaled up to a sizable court.
- **Its function** is to explain *abstract* or *complicated* ideas or things *unfamiliar* to you in *simple*, *concrete* ideas, or things *familiar* to you.

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- In terms of structure, simile is divided into: **closed simile** and **open simile**.
 - According to the comparative words, simile is divided into: “like”, “as”, “as...as”, “as..., so...”, “may (might) as well...as”, “as if/ though”, “what”, “more...than”, “remind of”, “compare...to...”, “resemble”, etc..

E.g. I am hungry **as a horse**.


You run **like a rabbit**.

She is happy **as a clam**.

He is sneaky **as a snake**.

The clouds were fluffy **like cotton wool**.

The baby was **like an octopus**, grabbing at all the cans on the grocery store shelves.

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- My handwriting looks **as if** a swarm of ants, escaping from an ink bottle, had walked over a sheet of paper without wiping their legs.
 - Reading is to the mind **what** exercise is to the body.
 - **What** salt is to food, that wit and humor are to literature.
 - A home without love is **no more than** a body without soul.
 - Kings **and** bears often worry their keepers.
 - 国王跟狗熊一样，总使照顾者坐立不安。伴君如伴虎。



The quality that similes must possess:

- ***Freshness***
- ***Originality***
- The repeatedly used similes should be avoided: **E.g.**
 - as cold as ice;
 - as good as gold;
 - as strong as an ox;
 - as cunning as a fox;



◆ Lots of clichés are similes. They are fun to use, *but don't overuse them in your writing!*


E.g. Even if you are *busy as a beaver*, it's not *as cute as a button* or *as American as apple pie* to overuse clichés. It should be *as plain as the nose on your face!*

美国人很喜欢吃 **apple pie**。Apple pie是一种用烤箱制作的甜点心，它的外面是一层面粉，里面是用苹果做的馅儿。中文有时把 **apple pie**翻成“苹果排”。美国人喜爱吃 **apple pie**是他们刚从欧洲移居到美洲来后来就开始了。每个家庭主妇都经常做苹果排。为了阐明**apple pie**是美国生活的一种特点，人们常说：“**As American as apple pie.**”这句话的意思是：就像苹果派一样具有美国特色。

10.2 Metaphor

(1) Definition:

- Metaphor uses words to indicate something different from their literal meaning ---- one thing is described in terms of another so as to suggest a likeness or analogy between them.
- Difference between metaphor and simile: in simile the comparison is explicit, while in metaphor the comparison is implied.
- E.g.
- The world is a *stage*.
- The theory is totally based on solid *foundation*.
- A romance was *budding*.
- The economy is *overheating*.
- She *exploded*.

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- **E.g.** I notice tears *welling* up in her eyes.
 - Embarrassed at our noisy children, we *sheepishly* tried to sneak into the dining room, hoping not to be noticed by others.
 - The temperature fell to a *murderous* -40°C.

(2) Classification:

➤ **Visible metaphor:** both the primary term (tenor) and the secondary term (vehicle) are present in the sentence, “X is Y”.

E.g. The pillow was **a cloud** when I put my head upon it after a long day.

No one invites Harold to parties because he’s **a wet blanket** (扫兴的人或物) .



Structure: The signified is the signifier.

- 本体 是 喻体。
- The theory is a *building*.
- The romance was a *plant*.
- The economy is *machinery*.
- She was a *container*.
- My tears is a *well*.
- We are *sheep*.
- The temperature is a *murderer*.




➤ **Invisible metaphor:**

- ❑ The primary term is present, but the secondary term is not.
- ❑ The secondary term is present but the primary term is not.

E.g. Some books are to be **tasted**, others to be **swallowed**, and some few to be **chewed** and **digested**.

The **machine** sitting at that desk was no longer a man; it was a busy New York broker.



Believe it or not, you use metaphors and similes every day of your life! Some words are metaphors all by themselves.

*E.g. She was a **bright** student.*

We all know that “bright” refers to light. But in this sentence we are comparing intelligence to light. It’s a metaphor!

2. Metaphor

(隐喻/暗喻)

- 1) 名词型

All the world is a stage, and all the men and women merely players.

——William Shakespeare

- 2) 动词型

The boy wolfed down the food.

- 3) 形容词型

She has a photographic memory for detail.

- 4) “of”型

The bridge of friendship/ the valley of despair/ a flower of a girl/ a fox of a man/ the snake of traffic




(3) Three purposes of metaphor:

- **Description**
- **Illumination**
- **Illustration**

(4) Multi-aspect metaphors:

- **Sustained metaphor:** the primary term is successively compared to two or more secondary terms.
- **Extended metaphor:** an initial comparison is made and then developed.



**E.g. Poetry is the scent of the rose, the lightening in
the sky, the gleam of the fly, the sound of the sea.**

E.g. 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.....(W. Shakespeare)**



(5) Mixed metaphor and Dead metaphor:

- **Mixed metaphor:** two or more incongruous comparison run together.
- **Dead metaphor:** refers to those which have been used for so long that they have lost their figurative strength and become lifeless.

Mixed Metaphor

- **E.g.** The *seeds* of rebellion were *kindled* in secret.
I skimmed over the book to *taste* the *tone* of it.
- Such metaphors should be avoided because they result in incongruity of images and inconsistency in logic.



Dead metaphors:

A metaphor should meet three requirements:

- Freshness and originality
- Aptness
- Consistency

Some metaphors have been used for so long that they have their figurative strength and become lifeless. They are called dead metaphors.

E.g. *“I'm dead tired”* *“She's the apple of my eye”*
“He wore me down” *“I'm heartbroken”* *“brow of the hill”*
“Strong as an ox” *“head teacher”* *“branches of government”*
“to lose face” *“lend a hand”* *“seeds of doubt”*

10.3 Metonymy

(1) Definition:

(2) Involving the substitution of the name of one thing for that of another. For example, the name of a referent is substituted by the name of an attribute or entity related in some semantic way or by spatial proximity or by other reasons.


E.g.

- **crown/ sceptre----- king or queen**
- **bottle ----- alcoholic drinks**
- **sword ----- war and destruction**
- **the camp ----- the troops**



(2) Sources of Metonymy

- a) Body part**
- b) Name of a person**
- c) Name of a clear sign of an object or a person**
- d) Name of a place**
- e) Instrument or container**
- f) Trade mark or brand**
- g) Location**



E.g.

- **The pen is mightier than the sword.**
- **Gray hairs** should be respected.
- He is too fond of **the bottles.**
- I have never read **James Joyce.**
- She is far from **the cradle.**
- What is learned in **the cradle** is carried into **the grave.**
- **His purse** would not allow him that luxury.



E.g. He reads *Shakespeare*.


Anton Rubinstein was renowned for his rendition of *Tchaikovsky*.

Yesterday I saw a pipe smoking *John Bull* astride a bicycle.

We pay *Uncle Sam* with our taxes.

That old goat thinks he is a real *Romeo*.

那个老色鬼自觉得是罗密欧。



John Bull “约翰牛”，是英国人或英国的绰号。其中也有一种典故：英国18世纪有位挖苦杂文作家叫约翰·阿布什诺特(**John Arbuthnot, 1667—1735**)，他于**1725**年出版了一本叫《约翰·布尔的历史》(**The History of John Bull**)的书。作者在书中发明了一种矮胖愚笨的绅士形象(即 **John Bull**)，用以挖苦当初辉格党(“自由党”的前身)在长久的西班牙王位继承战争(**War of the Spanish Succession**)中所扮演的角色。因为书中**John Bull**这一形象塑造得相当成功，简直就是当初当权者的影子，所以，它就成了英国或英国人的绰号。

Uncle Sam “山姆大叔”，是人们对“美国”“美国人”或“美国政府”的一种诙谐称呼。据说在**1823**年的英美战争时，美国的军事供给品的箱子上都印着 **U.S.**的字样(**United States** 第一种字母的缩写)，而当初在美国特罗城(**Troy**)有一位专门检验政府军用具订货的官员，名叫塞缪尔·威尔逊(**Samuel Wilson**)，他的朋友平日都叫他为“山姆大叔”(**Uncle Sam**)，因为**Uncle Sam**这两个词的第一种字母缩写也是 **U.S.**，所以特罗城的人便开玩笑说，这些军用具箱子都是山姆大叔的。后来这个笑话传开了，“山姆大叔”便成了“美国”、“美国人”或“美国政府”的绰号。



(3) Differences between metaphor and metonymy

- **Metaphor can be converted into simile, while metonymy can not;**
- **Metaphor appeals to the readers' imagination for similarity between the two different objects, while metonymy appeals to the reader's imagination for the association of ideas it provokes.**

E.g. All the world is a stage.

She is a peacock.

The kettle is boiling.

He likes to read Hemingway.

10.4 Synecdoche


(1) Definition:

- **A figure by which a more comprehensive term is used for a less comprehensive or vice versa; as whole for part or part for whole, genus for species or species for genus, etc.**
- **A figure of speech by which a part is put for the whole, the whole for a part, the species for the genus, the genus for the species, or the name of the material for the thing made.**

(2) Various types of Synecdoche:

- **The part for the whole:**

E.g.

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- **The whole for the part:**
 - **The abstract for the concrete, or the concrete for the abstract:**
 - **The species for the genus, or the genus for the species:**
 - **Name of the material for the thing made:**



(3) Distinction between Metonymy and Synecdoche

- With synecdoche, the relationship between the two things involved is part-and-whole: that is, one thing is a part of the other.
- Whereas, with metonymy, the two things involved are completely different.

E.g. Her *heart* ruled her *head*.

He paid the workers \$ 5 per *head*.



- Find out from the following sentences the examples of metonymy and synecdoche.

- The best *pens* of the day (); **M**
- To have an *ear* for music (); **M**
- Many *hands* make light work. () **S**
- Two *heads* are better than one. () **S**
- The *hall* applauded. () **M**
- Those *blue eyes* walked into the office (?). **M**
- The *pen* is mightier than the sword. () **M**

10.5 Antonomasia

(1) Definition:


(2) It is the replacement of a proper by a common noun.

E.g.

- The Iron Duke----- the Duke of Wellington
- The Iron Lady-----Margret Thacher
- The Almighty-----God
- an Odyssey-----a long and adventurous journey

She followed her way of Odyssey step by step and got to the top of heap in the section.

她沿着一条充斥艰难险阻的道路一步一步地奋斗，终于得到了这个部门的最高位置。



odyssey 奥德赛，古希腊两本仅存史诗中较新的一部，始于荷马记述但也合并了历代口耳相传的故事内容，描写希腊战士奥德赛在特洛伊城陷后怎样挣扎奋斗以返回家园并夺回伊萨基王位所经历的冒险与考验。

Odyssey years 所谓奥德赛时期，指的是后20几岁，30出头的年轻人为了生计奋斗的时期。他们大学之后，在工作与学校之间徘徊来徘徊去：时而工作，时而上学。对于他们来说，上学已不再是22岁之前的专利，而是犹如男女朋友一般，能够换来换去。他们当中的诸多人在经济上还不能完全独立，还要依赖父母的支持。



(2) Sources of Antonomasia:

➤ From the Bible or mythology

E.g. Eden----paradise Judas-----a traitor


Damon and Pythias-----lifelong friends

➤ From history


E.g. Nero-----a tyrant Caesar-----great man

➤ From literature

E.g. Uncle Tom----- a Negro who compromises and conforms with the whites



典出罗马和希腊民间传说。公元前4世纪在意大利的叙拉古(Syracuse)有一对生死之交的挚友名叫达蒙(Damon)和皮西厄斯(Pythias)。皮西厄斯因为触犯国王狄奥尼西奥斯(Dyonysius)被判死刑。他很想死之前见见父母亲和朋友，于是他祈求暴君放他回家一趟，并确保按时回来伏法。但是，暴君不相信他会信守诺言，以为他只是想借机会逃走。这时达蒙挺身而出，愿代皮西厄斯在狱中受刑。暴君钦佩达蒙的勇敢，就准了他们的祈求。转眼之间刑期到了，但皮西厄斯没有回来。达蒙作好了死的准备，他对朋友的信赖一如既往，坚定不移。他懂得这一定是他朋友身不由己或路途受阻。因为他是为所爱的人死的，所以显得十分坦然，丝毫不感到悲哀。就在他被押赴刑场的最终时刻，皮西厄斯及时赶到了。暴风雨和船只失事使他耽搁了。达蒙和皮西厄斯如此信赖，他们的友谊如此真挚深厚，连暴君都为之感动，于是，他放了他们俩。暴君还不无感叹地说：“我乐意用我的全部财产换取这么一位朋友。”



在英语中**Damon and Pythias**一语就被人们用来表达“莫逆之交”，“生死之交”，刎颈之交。其中**Pythias**这一名词在西塞罗著作中原为**Phintias**，而在古希腊传说中则为**Phinotias**。1564年英国剧作家爱德华兹(**Richard Edwards**)创作了**Damon and Pythias**一剧，使这一故事得以广为流传。**Pythias**这一形式虽属讹误，但却在英语中一直沿用了下来。

例：The **Damon and Pythias** of the establishment were **Damon and Pythias** no longer. They were ready to fly each at the other's throat.
这家企业的两位生死之交已经再也称不上莫逆了，他们成了不共戴天的仇人了。


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- Hercules 海格力斯 *a hero of strength and bravery*
 - Tower of Babel 巴别通天塔 *confusion of tongues*
 - Achilles' heel 阿喀琉斯的脚跟 *a person's principal weakness*
 - Holy Grail 圣杯 *an object of quest that is hard to obtain*
 - gospel 福音 *truth, creed*


10.6 Personification


(1) Definition:


(2) It is a figure of speech which attributes human characteristics to impersonal things, such as animals, inanimate objects, or abstractions.


(2) Personification is usually employed to add vividness to expression. It can be produced by the use of verbs, nouns, adjectives, adverbs and pronouns.

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- A. By the use of nouns
 - (1) Procrastination_{延迟;耽搁} is the thief of time.
 - (2) Time is the best physician.

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- B. By the use of verbs
 - (1) The kettle is singing joyfully.
 - (2) Always in my heart there's a shriek standing on tiptoe that I have to beat down and hold in under my shawl.

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- C. By the use of adjectives
 - (1) The empire had grown hoary and feeble with age.
 - (2) They rode her in across rolling foam
 - The cruel, crawling foam. (Kingsley)
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- D. By the use of adverbs
 - (1) Her words were bitingly sarcastic.

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- E. By the use of personal pronouns
 - (1) Let love, being light, be drowned if she sinks.

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- Personification is particularly associated with literary, especially poetic language. Writers, especially poets, like to use personification.
 - E.g.:
 - The grey sea and the long black land;
 - And the yellow half-moon large and low;
 - And the *startled* little waves that *leap*
 - *In fiery ringlets from their sleep,*
 - As I gain the cove with pushing prow,
 - And quench its speed i' the slushy sand.

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