FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE

A figure of speech is a way of expressing an idea, thought, or image with words which carry meanings beyond their literal ones. *Figurative language gives extra dimension to the language by stimulating the imagination and evoking visual and sensual imagery, while painting a mental picture in words.* The following are examples of figurative language:

SIMILE
A direct comparison of two things, usually employing the words like or as.

"He watches from his mountain walls,  
And like a thunderbolt he falls."  
*Tennyson*

"Hell is a city much like London/  
A populous and smokey city."  
*Shelley*

"My heart is like an apple tree whose boughs  
are bent with thickest fruit."  
*Christina Raced*

METAPHOR
An implied comparison in which one thing is spoken of in terms of something else; the figurative term is substituted for or identified with the literal term. Metaphors are extremely valuable in making an abstract idea clearer by associating the idea with something concrete that relates to one or more of the senses.

"And merry larks are ploughman's clocks."  
*Shakespeare*

"Entangled in the cobweb of the schools."  
*Cowper*

"Time let me hail and climb  
Golden in the heydays of his eyes."  
*Thomas*

HYPERBOLE
The use of exaggeration or overstatement to make a point. It may be used for emphasis, for humor, or for poetic intensity.

"Here once the embattled farmers stood,  
And fired the shot heard around the world."  
*Emerson*

It is used freely in sports broadcasting and news articles...
"...slaughtered their opponents on the basketball court."

PERSONIFICATION
Another type of comparison that treats objects or things as if they were capable of the actions and feelings of people. As in a metaphor, there is an implied comparison which gives the attributes of a human being to an animal, object, or idea.

"...Sea that bears her bosom to the moon"  
*Wordsworth*

"The dirty nurse, Experience."

*Tennyson*

"Mad Ireland hurt you into poetry."

*Auden*

**IRONY**
An expression in which the author's meaning is quite different (often the opposite) from what is literally said. Irony, as a matter of tone, occurs most frequently in prose as a technique for humor, satire, or contrast.

"The English are mentioned in the Bible: Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth."

*Twain*

"It is a truth universally acknowledged that a single man in possession of a good fortune must be in want of a wife."

*Austin*

**ALLUSION**
A reference to some historical or literary event or person that has striking resemblance to the subject under discussion. Allusion is used often in prose.

"We live under the nuclear sword of Damocles."

"When he met her, he met his Waterloo."

The administration of John F. Kennedy was known as "Camelot."