



## **Figures of Speech: 60 Ways To Turn A Phrase**

*Arthur Quinn, Barney R. Quinn*

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Writing is not like chemical engineering. The figures of speech should not be learned the same way as the periodic table of elements. This is because figures of speech are not about hypothetical structures in things, but about real potentialities within language and within ourselves. The "figurings" of speech reveal the apparently limitless plasticity of language itself. We are inescapably confronted with the intoxicating possibility that we can make language do for us almost anything we want. Or at least a Shakespeare can. The figures of speech help to see how he does it, and how we might.

Therefore, in the chapters presented in this volume, the quotations from Shakespeare, the Bible, and other sources are not presented to exemplify the definitions. Rather, the definitions are presented to lead to the quotations. And the quotations are there to show us how to do with language what we have not done before. They are there for imitation.

## **Figures of Speech: 60 Ways To Turn A Phrase Details**

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## **From Reader Review Figures of Speech: 60 Ways To Turn A Phrase for online ebook**

### **Erin says**

For people interested in writing or perhaps in literary analysis. This is a small volume but it's very dense. I can see myself reading this book many more times in my life.

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### **max says**

This book is an excellent summary of the major figures of speech, providing for each figure multiple examples from a wide range of the best literature, especially the Bible and Shakespeare. Superb reference work or one simply to browse for the pure enjoyment of wallowing in that other dimension that is figurative language.

"The business of America is business." There's a specific name for this figure. Check out this book and discover what it is.

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### **Alessandra says**

everyone should know this book.

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### **Quiver says**

A clever little book, a bit old-fashioned, but witty and full of character. The humour has weathered the times well, as has the content with its examples from classical literature.

If you're looking for short introduction to the figures of speech—one which isn't over-the-top hilarious like Forsyth's "The Elements of Eloquence"—this may be the book you want. It is replete with examples that are listed in blocks, one under the other, preceded and followed by explanations but without any attempt to integrate them into the text the way Forsyth does. It's unpretentious and lays no grand claims, but gives a splendid overview of how the various figures have been applied through the ages.

Well-worth the time and the shelf-space; will serve as a good reference.

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### **Felix says**

Many reviewers have mentioned that the book seems far from comprehensive, and I agree. Though the author approaches the subject in a novel way, it didn't cover enough about the subject as an introduction. He makes his case for doing what he did in the book, but in the end, if you want to read this book, it's because

you want more than the cursory discussion he provides.

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### **Shannon says**

"Fair is foul and foul is fair."

"Circumstances rule men; men do not rule circumstances."

"Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you."

By now, you may have noticed the similarity among these three phrases: an inverse repetition of words. But you may not know this style has its own technical term (epanados). Figures of Speech: 60 Ways to Turn a Phrase, a tiny tome, lists and explains the technical terms of 60 such style devices.

Rooted in Latin, these terms are not important in that each and every one should be memorized. In fact, the author himself notes the foolishness of such a pursuit. But writers (and editors!) should know how to recognize them, and, ideally, experiment with them in their own writing.

Arthur Quinn does a solid job of explaining how to use these figures of speech. He provides brief definitions and illustrates them by listing examples from eminent writers and the Bible. However, I do have a few complaints. Sometimes Quinn glosses too quickly over a term, not giving it a full definition. He also often does not explain how his examples show a particular style device (it would be nice if he bolded them, when possible). Sure, sometimes the examples are self-explanatory but for the confusing concepts it would aid comprehension. His glossary is also a little erratic, sufficiently explaining one term while insufficiently explaining another.

Overall, however, Quinn has created a valuable resource for creative writers. It's a gem of a book in its brevity, and I wish another edition would come out to renew people's interest.

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### **Christopher Porzenheim says**

If you want a short introduction to rhetoric that reads like a witty conversation rather than a pedantic lecture, this book is for you. Quinn is just as interested in making you smile as he is in educating you. He presents "figures of speech:"

"The simplest definition of a figure of speech is 'an intended deviation from ordinary usage.' (An intended deviation from ordinary grammatical usage is the specific figure of speech, enallage.) Here it will be the philosopher, not the romantic, who will be out to cause us trouble. 'What, pray tell, is ordinary usage really? Must an intention be conscious? And how do you know a deviant when you see one?' If he wishes to flagellate himself with such questions, we will let him-while we get on with the mundane task of learning how to turn a phrase." -P6

Quinn provides lots examples, usually at least 10 for each figure of speech. The examples often come from Shakespeare or the Bible, but he is not partisan in his selections. I'll finish by showing how he presents one figure of speech, the asyndeton:

“The omission of an expected conjunction is called an asyndeton. Caesar is supposed to have said about Gaul: ‘I came, I saw, I conquered.’ Lincoln concluded the Gettysburg Address, ‘That government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth.’

Caesar seems to have omitted his conjunction to speed things up; he is emphasizing how quickly the conquest of a place follows from its being sighted by a great and ambitious general. Lincoln’s omission is more subtle—or so it seems to me. Usually the items on a list are different but related things; eggs, butter, cheese. Sometimes they achieve a unity in which their distinctiveness is lost to all but the analytic mind, a good cheese omelet. Or perhaps we might even decide that they are but manifestations or expressions of the same thing. Lincoln would have us see these three aspects of government as constituting an inseparable whole. The asyndeton helps him do this.” -P6

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### **David Leroy says**

The over all idea, and principles used in this book to demonstrated how to structure sentences in "just the right way" is interesting. I enjoyed some of the examples, But the book is very dated, plus it uses a lot of examples for Shakespearian English, or the King James Bible. Unless you are writing historical fiction set during that time period, those examples are not very useful.

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### **W.B. says**

I can't believe I never added this before. I've always loved this book. It seems funny that the best terms/concepts in which to speak about language are mostly ancient. There's logic and then there's rhetoric. This book is all about rhetoric, in the classic and modern sense. Surprise: the classic and modern sense are actually one. Technology might have changed over the past few millennia drastically, but rhetoric really hasn't changed all that much. We'll probably need to reinvent language for that to happen. It would certainly hold possibilities for species renewal. And I don't mean "poetry reinvention." I mean symbolic overhaul.

This book is a linguistic bestiary of the rhetorical creatures that go in and out of your body everyday, camouflaged as "straightforward communication." And I suppose some might take issue with my dichotomy of "logic" versus "rhetoric." I suppose some would argue that logic is only another form of rhetoric. But that's beside the point. Because I think this is an invaluable resource for anyone interested in language as anything other than pure denotative, "cat on the mat" Russell, Wittgenstein type symbolism--that dreary philosopher's dream of a "well-behaved language." (This was the early 20th century, mostly London and Viennese dream that language could be as well-behaved as mathematics and symbolic logic.) But who could only be interested in that language really? You exist as a body with nearly infinite possibilities of signification, from nihilism to beatitude and everything between. Why any philosopher would even want that dream of a language of well-behaved monads--when this isn't even a well-behaved symbolic universe--is beyond me. Of course, no poet would want that.

Language, a true virus, quickly reverts to wild forms. And this book catalogs those forms. Some of these devices are rare birds, only glimpsed in the strangest modalities of human speech. But the vast majority are pretty common. It's funny how once you know how these rhetorical devices operate, you start to see them more and become more able to distinguish an author's (sometimes unconscious) use of these devices. For example, the concept of catachresis (as defined in this book) helps me understand why I think poets as

seemingly diverse as Walt Whitman, Emily Dickinson and Hart Crane all belong together. They all practice catachresis to an extreme degree. So does Gertrude Stein, for that matter.

I'm sorry to see some of the negative reviews here for this book, but I imagine some people were tortured with this book as part and parcel of this or that syllabus. I know at least one person who wanted to burn this book at the time they were being tasked with it in a postdoctoral program. And I guess many would consider this a "dry" subject or part of an antiquated scholastic regimen. But to do that is to miss a valuable aid in understanding the manipulations inherent in authorship itself. And maybe I'm just linguistically perverse, but I actually considered this challenging book (afraid to say it)...fun.

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### **Keith says**

I've read this little book no less than 10 times. It never ceases to entertain me. It's not the author's ingratiating, stiff humor that is appealing, but the figures themselves – the excerpts that he uses as examples. It's a pleasure to read them out loud. Sometimes they are like puzzles because you have to figure out what the authors intended and how they turned the phrase.

Some may think the book lacks rigor or depth. But to my mind, figurative language isn't meant to be pored over and dissected. It's not meant to be quibbled over and endlessly refined to smaller and smaller points, and narrower and narrower definitions.

No, I think a book this length is about right for this subject. A writer should be aware of the tools available in their language toolbox, and know how to use them. Who cares what they are called or how they are classified?

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### **Tybalt Maxwell says**

Essential reading for anyone interested in taking their writing beyond high school level writing classes. Arthur Quinn takes examples from the English Language's most influential pieces of literature (The works by Shakespeare and The Bible mostly) to illustrate the effectiveness of different turns of phrase.

The writing here is engaging. While the examples bog down the pacing, they are essential stops in his otherwise entertaining lectures. Quinn writes with an almost sanguine charisma, speaking with a tone personable enough to draw interest but not so informal as to distract from his expertise.

While this work is not a complete treatise on literary device (my favourite, montage, is sadly missing), the breadth of knowledge is complete enough to secure this as a valuable asset for any budding writer.

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### **Deb says**

Neither a style manual nor a book of poetic forms, this slim gem offers a whole zoology for the techniques penned in passages that catch your ear and eye, with plenty of examples to point out their range of use. Quinn avoids quibbling in the theoretical, saying, "Style...is like a frog; you can dissect the thing, but it

somehow dies in the process....a naturalist would have understood that poor frog long before the vivisectionist got his hands on it." While this book might come in handy for post-graduate literary scholars, it was written very much with writers in mind. I can't recommend it higher.

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### **Eric says**

Quinn's book is good for what it is: a litany of figures of speech, some more familiar than others, laden with examples.

Despite his occasional comments about the difficulty of dividing figural from non-figural language, however, and the clever meta-figuration present in his own prose, the book doesn't go too far beyond cataloging.

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### **Jess Gulbranson says**

I believe this utterly useless and fascinating book is an indispensable addition to any writer or editor's utility shelf. It has inspired my current hyperminimal neoplasty. The one thing I have to say about this book is that its examples of the figures used are a bit one-note: I would guess at least 75% are from the Bible or Shakespeare. I'd like to see an updated or revised edition with a more varied body of examples.

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### **Brent Pinkall says**

Quinn's explanations and examples are helpful and succinct. There were a small handful of examples that I did not understand and wished he would have explained, but overall this is an excellent reference book and very readable.

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