Figurative Language Vocabulary

1. **Metaphor** - A figure of speech that makes a comparison between two unlike things. An implied comparison, usually says A is B.
   
   *Life is a yo-yo, constant ups and downs.*

2. **Simile** - A stated comparison between two things that are actually unlike, but that have something in common. Expresses comparison using *like* or *as*.
   
   *I want to glue the bones together in a heap like firewood.*

3. **Allusion** - A reference to an historical or literary person, place, or event with which the reader is assumed to be familiar.
   
   *“An Adonis, he swept her off her feet.”*  
   *“In Adam’s fall, we sinned all.”*

4. **Hyperbole** - Overstatement or exaggeration for effect.
   
   *I’ve told you a million times not to exaggerate!  
   Tears flooded my eyes.*

5. **Onomatopoeia** - Creating or using words that imitate sounds.
   
   *“The buzz saw snarled and rattled in the yard…” —Robert Frost  
   “The engine of my car clanks.*

6. **Oxymoron** - A kind of “paradox,” it has two successive (means side by side) words which apparently contradict each other.
   
   *Barbed velvet.*

7. **Paradox** - A statement that seems to be contradictory or ridiculous but is actually quite true.
   
   *The day brought back the night.  
   I laughed until I cried.*

8. **Personification** - A figure of speech in which human qualities are attributed to an object, an animal or an idea.
   
   *The clouds cried.  
   Her clothes wait patiently on hangers.*

9. **Symbol** - An object stands for an abstract idea.
   
   *Stone walls do not a prison make, nor iron bars a cage.  
   Brown bags (for lunch)—humble testament to suburbia.*

10. **Alliteration** - The repetition of *initial* consonant sounds.
    
    *The moon was a ghostly galleon tossed upon a cloudy sea.  
    Peter Piper picked a peck of pickled peppers.*

11. **Consonance** - Related to alliteration, it is the repetition of consonant sounds in the middle or end of a series of words.
    
    *…from jingling and the tingling  
    of the bells.  
    Sneak a pickle for a crackly tickle.*
12. **Assonance** - The repetition of a vowel sound within words. Used to give musical quality.

...Alike the conqueror silent sleeps;
And time the ruined bridge has swept
Down the dark stream which seaward creeps.

13. **Synaesthesia** - The description of one kind of sense in terms of another.

*Her blouse was a cool green.*
*It's smoky scent struck the air like a sound.*

14. **Syntax** - Grammatical rules governing word order. A major determinant of literary style. Changes in syntax can be used to control pacing, create suspense, create poetry, etc.

*“It's rather a mystery…”*

15. **Imagery** - Language in a literary work that invokes sense impressions by literal or figurative reference. These may not be mental “pictures”, but may appeal to senses other than sight.

*Metaphor; Simile*


*“…your scruples are quite ill founded.”*

17. **Tone** - Vague critical term usually designating the mood or atmosphere of a work. Can also mean the author's attitude toward the reader (e.g. formal, intimate, pompous) or the subject matter (e.g. ironic, light, solemn, satiric, sentimental)

18. **Metonymy** - A figure of speech that replaces the name of one thing with the name of something closely associated with it.

*the press for journalism*
*the bottle for alcoholic drink*
*The pen is mightier than the sword.*

19. **Synechdoche** - A special kind of metonymy in which something is referred to indirectly by naming some part of it.

*All hands on deck.*
*My heart belongs to you.*

20. **Litotes** - An affirmation made indirectly by denying its opposite, usually with an effect of understatement.

*No mean feat.*
*Not uncommon.*

21. **Euphemism** - Substitution of a mild, indirect or vague term for one considered more harsh, blunt or offensive.

*Passed away for died.*
*Ethnic cleansing for murder.*

22. **Anaphora** – Repetition of a word or phrase repeated (usually at the beginning) in successive lines, clauses or sentences.

*We have petitioned; we have remonstrated; we have prostrated ourselves.*
23. **Apostrophe** - Rhetoric where the speaker addresses a dead or absent person, or an abstraction or inanimate object.

*Pity you ancient stones, those tender babes
Whom envy hath immured within your walls.*

~Elizabeth in Richard III to the Tower of London

24. **Chiasmus** - Figure of speech in which the order of terms in the first of two parallel clauses is reversed in the second. May be a repetition of the same words. A-B-B-A pattern.

“What’s Hecuba to him, or he to Hecuba?” Hamlet
“Pleasure’s a sin, and sometimes sin’s a pleasure.” Byron

25. **Periodic Sentence** - A long sentence in which the completion of the syntax and sense is delayed until the end, usually after a sequence of balanced subordinate clauses. Causes suspense as the reader’s attention is propelled forward to the end.


Either it will rain tomorrow or it will not rain tomorrow.
Adequate enough.

27. **Aphorism** - Statement of general principle condensing much wisdom into a few words.

*Give man a mask and he will tell you the truth.* ~Wilde

28. **Asyndeton** – The omission or absence of a conjunction between parts of a sentence.

“…and that government of the people, by the people, for the people shall not perish from the earth.”

29. **Polysyndeton** – Using several conjunctions in close succession, especially where some might be omitted.

“If there be cords, or knives, poison, or fire, or suffocating streams, I’ll not endure it.” ~Shakespeare