Paragraphs 4 and 5 treat the last and most sinister of the rooms. Paragraph 4 stresses the mood brought out by the colors black and scarlet or "deep blood." Paragraph 5, because it deals with the clock, on which Poe lavishes great detail, is the high point of the essay's body. Throughout the paragraph, the topic idea is that the clock, because of its seemingly living connection with the malign world of death, is Poe's major means of achieving an atmosphere complementary to the eerie action.

The conclusion summarizes the central idea, stressing that Poe goes beyond simple description to heighten the eerie, macabre atmosphere of his story.

Special Topics for Studying and Discussing Setting

1. Compare and contrast how details of setting are used to establish the qualities and traits of the following characters: Mrs. Popov of *The Bear*; Miss Brill of "Miss Brill"; the speakers of "Patterns," "Rhine Boat Trip," or "Dover Beach"; or Prince Prospero of "The Masque of the Red Death."
2. In what ways might we say that both "The Story of an Hour" and "The Masque of the Red Death" are inseparable from their settings? To answer this question, consider the relationship of character to place and circumstance. How could the actions of the stories happen without the locations in which they occur?
3. Compare and contrast how details of setting establish qualities and traits of the following female characters: Faith of "Young Goodman Brown," Miss Brill of "Miss Brill," Nora of "First Confession," and Louise of "The Story of an Hour." To add to your comparison, you might introduce details about women in paintings or works of sculpture that you know.
4. Choose a story included in Appendix C and rewrite a page or two, taking the characters out of their setting and placing them in an entirely new setting, or in the setting of another story (you choose). Then write a brief analysis dealing with these questions: How were your characters affected by their new settings? Did you make them change slowly or rapidly? Why? As a result of your rewriting, what can you conclude about the uses of setting in fiction?
5. Write a short narrative as though it is part of a story (which you may also wish to write for the assignment), using options a and/or b.
   a. Relate a natural setting or type of day to a mood—for example, a nice day to happiness and satisfaction, or a cold, cloudy, rainy day to sadness. Or create irony by relating the nice day to sadness or the rainy day to happiness.
   b. Indicate how an object or a circumstance becomes the cause of conflict or reconciliation (such as the lost necklace in "The Necklace," the dead canary in *Trifles*, or the trip through the forest in "Young Goodman Brown").
6. In your library locate two books on the career of Edgar Allan Poe. On the basis of the information you find in these sources, write a brief account of Poe's uses of setting and place to evoke atmosphere and to bring out qualities of human character.

8

Writing About an Idea or a Theme

The Meanings and the Messages in Literature

The word **idea** refers to the result or results of general and abstract thinking. Synonymous words are *concept, thought, opinion,* and *principle* (see also Chapter 1, page 22). In literary study the consideration of ideas relates to *meaning, interpretation, explanation,* and *significance.* Although ideas are usually extensive and complex, separate ideas can be named by single words, such as *right, good, love, piety, causation, wilderness,* and, not surprisingly, *idea* itself.

Ideas and Assertions

Although single words alone can name ideas, we must put these words into operation in *sentences* or *assertions* before they can advance our understanding. Good operational sentences about ideas are not the same as ordinary conversational statements such as "It's a nice day." An observation of this sort can be true (depending on the weather), but it gives us no ideas and does not stimulate our minds. Rather, a sentence asserting an idea should initiate a thought or argument about the day's quality, such as "A nice day requires light breezes, blue sky, a warm sun, relaxation, and happiness." Because this sentence makes an assertion about the word *nice*, it allows us to consider and develop the idea of a nice day.

In studying literature, always express ideas as assertions. For example, you might state that an idea in Chekhov's *The Bear* is "love," but it would be difficult to discuss anything more unless you make an assertion promising an argument, such as "This play demonstrates the idea that love is irrational and irresistible." This assertion could lead you to explain the unlikely love that bursts out in the story. Similarly, for Bierce's "An Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge," an assertion like the following would advance further argument: "Farquhar embodies the idea that perception is produced in human beings more by hope than by reality."

Although we have noted only one idea in these two works, most stories contain many ideas. When one of the ideas seems to turn up over and over again throughout a work, it is called the **theme**. In practice, the words *theme* and *major idea* are the same.

Ideas and Values

Literature embodies **values** along with ideas. *Value*, of course, commonly refers to the price of something, but in the realm of ideas and principles, it is a standard of what is desired, sought, esteemed, and treasured. For example, *democracy* refers to our political system, but it is also a complex idea of representative government that we esteem most highly, and so also do we esteem concepts like honor, cooperation, generosity, and love. A vital idea/value is *justice*, which, put most simply, involves equality before the law and also the fair evaluation of conduct that is deemed unacceptable or illegal. Such an idea of justice is a major topic of Glaspell's play *Trifles*. Glaspell dramatizes the story of a farm wife who for thirty years has endured her husband's intimidation and her abject circumstances of life, but finally has risen up against him in his sleep. By a rigid concept of justice as guilt-conviction-punishment, the wife, Minnie Wright, is guilty and should be convicted and punished. But justice as an idea also involves a full and fair consideration of the circumstances and motivation of wrongdoing, and it is such a consideration that the two women in the story make during their examination of Minnie's kitchen. Many of their speeches showing their sympathy to Minnie are equivalent to a jurylike deliberation. Their final decision is like a verdict, and their final covering up of Minnie's crime is evidence for their idea that justice, to be most highly valued, should be tempered with understanding—even if they do not use these exact words in their discussions of Minnie's situation. In short, the idea of justice underlying Glaspell's *Trifles* also involves a deeply felt value.

The Place of Ideas in Literature

Because writers of poems, plays, and stories are usually not systematic philosophers, it is not appropriate to go "message hunting" as though their works contained nothing but ideas. Indeed, there is great benefit and pleasure to be derived from just savoring a work—following the patterns of narrative and conflict, getting to like the characters, understanding the work's implications and suggestions, and listening to the sounds of the author's words, to name only a few of the reasons for which literature is treasured.

Nevertheless, ideas are vital to understanding and appreciating literature: Writers have ideas and want to communicate them. For example, in *The Bear*, Chekhov directs laughter at two unlikely people suddenly and unpredictably falling in love. The play is funny, however, not only because it is preposterous but also because it is based on the *idea* that love takes precedence over other resolutions that people might make. Blake in "The Tyger" describes the "fearful symmetry" of a wild tiger in "the forests of the night," but the poem also embodies *ideas* about the inexplicability of evil, the mystery of life, and the unsearchability of divine purpose in the universe.

Distinguish Between Ideas and Actions

As you analyze works for ideas, it is important to avoid the trap of confusing ideas and actions. Such a trap is contained in the following sentence about O'Connor's "First Confession": "The major character, Jackie, misbehaves at home and tries to slash his sister with a bread knife." This sentence successfully describes a major action in the story, but it does not express an *idea* that connects characters and events, and for this reason it obstructs understanding. Some possible connections might be achieved with sentences like these: "'First Confession' illustrates the idea that family life may produce anger and potential violence" or "'First Confession' shows that compelling children to accept authority may cause effects that are the opposite of adult intentions." A study based on these connecting formulations could be focused on ideas and would not be sidetracked into doing no more than retelling O'Connor's story.

Distinguish Between Ideas and Situations

You should also make a distinction between situations and ideas. For example, in Lowell's poem "Patterns," the narrator describes what is happening to her as a result of her fiancé's death. Her plight is not an idea, but a situation that brings out ideas, such as that future plans may be destroyed by uncontrollable circumstances, or that fate strikes the fortunate as well as the unfortunate, or that human institutions often seem arbitrary, capricious, and cruel. If you are able in such ways to distinguish a work's various situations from the writer's major idea or ideas, you will be able to focus on ideas and therefore sharpen your own thinking.

How to Find Ideas

Ideas are not as obvious as characters or setting. To determine an idea, you need to consider the meaning of what you read and then to develop explanatory and comprehensive assertions. Your assertions need not be the same as those that others might make. People notice different things, and individual formulations vary. In Chopin's "The Story of an Hour," for example, an initial expression of some of the story's ideas might take any of the following forms: (1) Even in a good marriage, husbands and wives can have ambivalent feelings about their married life. (2) An accident can bring out negative but previously unrecognized thoughts in a wife or husband. (3) Even those closest to a person may never realize that person's innermost feelings. Although any one of these choices could be a basic idea for studying "The Story of an Hour," they all have in common the main character's unexpected feelings of release when she is told that her husband has been killed. In discovering ideas, you should follow a similar process—making a number of formulations for an idea and then selecting one for further development.

As you read, be alert to the different ways in which authors convey ideas. One author might prefer an indirect way through a character's speeches, whereas another may prefer direct statement. In practice, authors can employ any or all the following methods.

Study the Authorial Voice

Although authors mainly render action, dialogue, and situation, they sometimes state ideas to guide us and deepen our understanding. In the second paragraph of Maupassant's "The Necklace," for example, the authorial voice presents the idea that women have no more than charm and beauty to get on in the world. Ironically, Maupassant uses the story to show that for the major character, Mathilde, nothing is effective, for her charm cannot prevent disaster. Hawthorne, in "Young Goodman Brown," uses the following words to express a powerful idea: "The fiend in his own shape is less hideous than when he rages in the breast of man" (paragraph 53). This statement is made as authorial commentary just when the major character, Goodman Brown, is speeding through "the benighted wilderness" on his way to the satanic meeting. Although the idea is complex, its essential aspect is that the causes of evil originate within human beings themselves, with the implication that we alone are responsible for all our actions, whether good or evil.

Study the Character and the Words of the First-Person Speaker

First-person narrators or speakers frequently express ideas along with their depiction of actions and situations, and they also make statements from which you can make inferences about ideas. (See also Chapter 5.) Because what they say is part of a dramatic presentation, their ideas can be right or wrong, well-considered or thoughtless, good or bad, or brilliant or half-baked, depending on the speaker. The first-person speaker of Arnold's "Dover Beach," for example, laments the diminution of vital ideas from the past, concluding that this loss is accompanied by increasing ignorance, uncertainty, and violence in today's world. In Hardy's "Channel Firing," the speaker—a skeleton suddenly awakened by the noise of nearby naval gunfire—implies that warfare has been a constant menace from ancient days to the present. Even if the speaker is of dubious character, or is making a confession about personal shortcomings—as the speaker of Frost's "Desert Places" is doing—you may nevertheless study and evaluate the work's ideas.

Study the Statements Made by Characters

In many stories, characters express their own views, which can be right or wrong, admirable or contemptible. When you consider such dramatic speeches, you must do considerable interpreting and evaluating yourself. In Chekhov's *The Bear*, both Smirnov and Mrs. Popov express many silly ideas

about love and duty as they begin speaking to each other, and it is the sudden force of their love that reveals to us how wrongheaded their previous ideas have been. The men in Glaspell's *Trifles* express conventional masculine ideas about the need for men to control women. The play itself, however, demonstrates the shortcomings and pomposity of their thought.

Study the Work's Figures of Speech

Figurative language is one of the major components of poetry, but it also abounds in prose fiction (see also Chapter 9). In the sonnet "Bright Star," for example, Keats symbolizes the idea of constancy with his references to a fixed star (such as the North Star). Much figurative language is also to be found in both narratives and drama, as at the opening of Mansfield's "Miss Brill" where a sunny day is compared to gold and white wine. This lovely comparison suggests that the world is a place of beauty and happiness, an idea that contrasts ironically with the indifference and cruelty that Miss Brill experiences. Another notable figure occurs in Glaspell's *Trifles*, when one of the characters compares John Wright, the murdered husband, with "a raw wind that gets to the bone" (speech 103). With this figurative language, Glaspell conveys the idea that bluntness, indifference, and cruelty create great personal damage.

Study How Characters Represent Ideas

Characters and their actions can often be equated with certain ideas and values. The power of Mathilde's story in Maupassant's "The Necklace" enables us to explain that she represents the idea that unrealizable dreams can damage the real world. Two diverse or opposed characters can embody contrasting ideas, as with Louise and Josephine of Chopin's "The Story of an Hour." Each woman can be taken to represent differing views about the role of women in marriage. In effect, characters who stand for ideas can assume symbolic status, as in Hawthorne's "Young Goodman Brown," where the protagonist symbolizes the alienation that inevitably accompanies zealousness. Such characters can be equated directly with particular ideas, and to talk about them is a shorthand way of talking about the ideas.

Study the Work Itself as an Embodiment of Ideas

One of the most important ways in which authors express ideas is to interlock them within all parts and aspects of the work. The art of painting is instructive here, for a painting can be taken in with a single view that comprehends all the aspects of color, form, action, and expression, each of which can also be considered separately. In the same way, when a work is considered in its totality, the various parts collectively can embody major ideas, as in the third section of Bierce's "An Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge" (paragraphs 18–36), which is based on the idea that under great stress the human mind operates

with lightning speed. Most works represent ideas in a similar way. Even "escape literature," which ostensibly enables readers to forget immediate problems, contains conflicts between good and evil, love and hate, good spies and bad, earthlings and aliens, and so on. Thereby, such works *do* embody ideas, even though their avowed intention is not to make readers think but rather to help them forget.

Writing About a Major Idea in Literature

Most likely you will write about what you consider the work's major idea or theme, but you may also get interested in a subsidiary idea. As you begin brainstorming and developing your first drafts, consider questions such as those that follow.

Raise Questions to Discover Ideas

General Ideas

- What ideas do you discover in the work? How do you discover them (through action, character depiction, scenes, language)?
- To what do the ideas pertain? To the individuals themselves? To individuals and society? To religion? To social, political, or economic justice?
- How balanced are the ideas? If a particular idea is strongly presented, what conditions and qualifications are also presented (if any)? What contradictory ideas are presented?
- Are the ideas limited to members of any groups represented by the characters (age, race, nationality, personal status)? Or are the ideas applicable to general conditions of life? Explain.
- Which characters in their own right represent or embody ideas? How do their actions and speeches bring these ideas out?
- If characters state ideas directly, how persuasive is their expression, how intelligent and well considered? How applicable are the ideas to the work? How applicable to more general conditions?
- With children, young adults, or the old, how do the circumstances express or embody an idea?

A Specific Idea

- What idea seems particularly important in the work? Why? Is it asserted directly, indirectly, dramatically, ironically? Does any one method predominate? Why?
- How pervasive in the work is the idea (throughout or intermittent)? To what degree is it associated with a major character or action? How does the structure of the work affect or shape your understanding of the idea?
- What value or values are embodied in the idea? Of what importance are the values to the work's meaning?

- How compelling is the idea? How could the work be appreciated without reference to any idea at all?

Organize Your Essay on a Major Idea or Theme

In well-written stories, poems, and plays, narrative and dramatic elements have a strong bearing on ideas. In this sense, an idea is like a key in music or a continuous thread tying together actions, characters, statements, symbols, and dialogue. As readers, we can trace such threads throughout the entire fabric of the work.

As you write about ideas, you may find yourself relying most heavily on the direct statements of the authorial voice or on a combination of these and your interpretation of characters and action, or you might focus exclusively on a first-person speaker and use his or her ideas to develop your analysis. Always make clear the sources of your details and distinguish the sources from your own commentary.

Introduction As you begin, state your general goal of describing an idea and of showing its importance in the work. Your brief statement of the idea will be your central idea for your essay.

Body Each separate work will invite its own approach, but here are a number of strategies you might use to organize your essay.

1. **Analyze the idea as it applies to characters.** Example: "Minnie Wright embodies the idea that living with cruelty and insensitivity leads to alienation, unhappiness, despair, and maybe to violence." (Glaspell's *Trifles*.)
2. **Show how actions bring out the idea.** Example: "That Mrs. Popov and Smirnov fall in love rather than go their aimless and fruitless ways indicates Chekhov's idea that love literally rescues human lives." (*The Bear*)
3. **Show how dialogue and separate speeches bring out the idea.** Example: "The priest's responses to Jackie's confession embody the idea that kindness and understanding are the best means to encourage religious and philosophical commitment." (O'Connor's "First Confession")
4. **Show how the work's structure is determined by the idea.** Example: "The idea that horror can affect a nation's beauty and tradition leads Layton to introduce and conclude the poem by referring to aspects of the World War II Holocaust." ("Rhine Boat Trip")
5. **Treat variations or differing manifestations of the idea.** Example: "The idea that zealousness leads to harm in is shown in Brown's nightmarish distortion of reality, his rejection of others, and his dying gloom." (Hawthorne's "Young Goodman Brown")
6. **Deal with a combination of these (together with any other significant aspect).** Example: "Chekhov's idea in *The Bear* that love is complex and contradictory is shown in Smirnov's initial scorn of Mrs. Popov, his self-declared independence of character, and his concluding embrace." (Here the idea is traced through speech, character, and action.)

Conclusion Your conclusion might begin with a summary, together with your evaluation of the validity or force of the idea. If you have been convinced by the author's ideas, you might say that the author has expressed the idea forcefully and convincingly, or else you might show the relevance of the idea to current conditions. If you are not persuaded by the idea, you should demonstrate the idea's shortcomings or limitations. If you wish to mention a related idea, whether in the story you have studied or in some other story, you might introduce that here, but be sure to stress the connections.

Demonstrative Essay

The Idea of Love's Power in Chekhov's *The Bear*°

[1] In the one-act farce *The Bear*, Anton Chekhov shows a previously unacquainted man and woman, less than half an hour after they first meet, falling passionately in love. With such an unlikely main action, ideas may seem unimportant, but the play nevertheless contains a number of ideas. Some of these are that responsibility to life is stronger than to death, that people may justify even the most stupid and contradictory actions, that love makes people do foolish things, and that lifelong commitments may be made with hardly any thought at all. One of the play's major ideas is that love and desire are powerful enough to overcome even the strongest obstacles.* This idea is shown as the force of love conquers commitment to the dead, renunciation of womankind, unfamiliarity, and anger.†

[2] Commitment to her dead husband is Mrs. Popov's obstacle to love. She states that she has made a vow never to see daylight because of her mourning (speech 4), and she wallows in her own self-righteousness. Her devotion is so intense that she claims to be almost dead herself out of sympathy for her husband:

> My life is already ended. He lies in his grave; I have buried myself in these four walls . . . we are both dead. (speech 2)

In her, Chekhov has created a strong obstacle so that he might show the power of all-conquering love. By the play's end, Mrs. Popov's embraces with Smirnov are a visual example of the idea (speech 151, speech direction).

[3] Renunciation of women is Smirnov's obstacle. He tells Mrs. Popov that women have made him bitter and that he no longer gives "a good goddamn" about them (speech 69). These words seem to make him an impossible candidate for love; but, in keeping with Chekhov's idea, Smirnov soon confesses his sudden and uncontrollable love at the peak of his anger against Mrs. Popov. Within him, the force of love operates so strongly that he would even claim happiness at being shot by her "little velvet hands" (speech 140).

°See pages 349–357 for this play.
*Central idea.
†Thesis sentence.

[4] As if these personal causes were not enough to stop love, a genuine obstacle is that the two people are strangers. Not only have they never met, but they have never even heard of each other. According to the main idea, however, this unfamiliarity is no major problem. Chekhov is dramatizing the power of love, and shows that it is strong enough to overcome even the lack of familiarity or previous friendship.

[5] Anger and the threat of violence, however, make the greatest obstacle. The two characters get so irritated about Smirnov's demand for payment that, as an improbable climax of their heated words, Smirnov challenges Mrs. Popov, a woman, to a duel! He shouts:

> And do you think just because you're one of those romantic creations, that you have the right to insult me with impunity? Yes? I challenge you! (speech 105)

Along with their own personal barriers against loving, it would seem that the threat of shooting each other, even if poor Luka could stop them, would cause lifelong hatred. Yet love knocks down all these obstacles, in line with Chekhov's idea that love's power is as irresistible as a flood.

[6] The idea of love's power is not new or unusual. It is the subject of popular songs, stories, other plays, movies, and T.V. shows. What is surprising about Chekhov's use of the idea is that love in *The Bear* overcomes such unlikely conditions, and wins so suddenly. These conditions bring up an interesting and closely related idea: Chekhov is showing that intensely negative feeling may lead not to hatred but rather to love. The speeches of Smirnov and Mrs. Popov contain disappointment, regret, frustration, annoyance, anger, rage, and potential destructiveness. Yet at the high point of these negative feelings, love takes over. It is as though hostility finally collapses because it is the nature of people to prefer loving to hating. *The Bear* is an uproarious dramatization of the power of love, and it is made better because it is founded on a truthful judgment of the way people really are.

Commentary on the Essay

This essay follows the sixth strategy (page 123) by showing how various components from the play collectively exhibit the pervasiveness of the idea. Throughout, dialogue, situations, soliloquies, and actions are evidence for the various conclusions. Transitions between paragraphs are effected by phrases like "these personal causes" (paragraph 4), "greatest obstacle" (paragraph 5), and "the idea" (paragraph 6), all of which emphasize the continuity of the topic.

Paragraph 1, the introduction, notes that the play contains a number of ideas, the major one being that love has the power to surmount great obstacles. The thesis sentence lists the four obstacles to be explored in the body.

As the operative aspects of Chekhov's idea, paragraphs 2 through 5 detail the nature of each of the obstacles. The obstacle of paragraph 2, Mrs. Popov's commitment to her husband's memory, is "strong." The one in paragraph 3, Smirnov's dislike of women, is seemingly "impossible." The one in paragraph 4, their being total strangers, is a "genuinely real" difficulty. In paragraph 5, the obstacle of anger is more likely to produce "hatred" than love.

Paragraph 6, beyond providing a brief summary, suggests another related and important idea, namely that people cannot long sustain potentially destructive anger. Obviously this second idea is a broad generalization and could bear extensive treatment in its own right. Even though the topic would require greater development if it came at the beginning, it is effective as a part of the conclusion. The final sentence blends the two ideas, thereby looking both inward into the essay and outward toward the consideration of new ideas.

Special Topics for Studying and Discussing Ideas

1. Compare the ideas in two works containing similar themes. *Examples:* Arnold's "Dover Beach" and Hardy's "Channel Firing," Keats's "Bright Star" and Shakespeare's "Let Me Not to the Marriage of True Minds," Frost's "Desert Places" and Hawthorne's "Young Goodman Brown," Layton's Rhine Boat Trip" and Poe's "The Masque of the Red Death," Chopin's "The Story of an Hour" and Chekhov's *The Bear*. For help in developing your essay, consult Chapter 14 on the technique of comparison-contrast.
2. Consider Maupassant's "The Necklace" in terms of the idea of economic determinism (see also Appendix A). That is, to what degree are the circumstances and traits of the characters, particularly Mathilde, controlled and limited by their economic status? According to the idea, how likely is it that the characters could ever rise above their circumstances?
3. Write an essay criticizing the ideas in a work (from Appendix C) which you dislike or to which you are indifferent. With what statements in the work do you disagree? What actions? What characters? How do your own beliefs and values cause you to dislike the work's ideas? How might the work be changed to illustrate ideas with which you would agree?
4. Select an idea that particularly interests you, and write a story showing how characters may or may not live up to the idea. If you have difficulty getting started, try one of these ideas:
   a. Interest and enthusiasm are hard to maintain for long.
   b. Fortune has often given people an abundance of worldly things, but few people ever believe they have received enough.
   c. When people reach adulthood, they put away childish things.
   d. It is awkward to confront another person about a grievance.
   e. Making romantic or career decisions are difficult because they demand fundamental and complete changes in life's directions.
5. Using books that you discover in the card or computer catalogue in your college or local library, search for discussions of only one of the following topics, and write a brief report on what you find.
   a. Thomas Hardy on the power of the working classes.
   b. Nathaniel Hawthorne on the significance of religion, both good and bad.
   c. Keats on the significance of intuition and imagination as creative power.
   d. The ideas underlying Poe's concept of the short story as a form.

9

Writing About Metaphors and Similes

A Source of Depth and Range in Literature

Figures of speech, metaphorical language, figurative language, figurative devices, and **rhetorical figures** are terms describing organized patterns of comparison that deepen, broaden, extend, illuminate, and emphasize meaning. First and foremost, the use of figures of speech is a major characteristic by which great literature provides us with fresh and original ways of thinking, feeling, and understanding. Although figurative language is sometimes called "ornate," as though it were unnecessarily decorative, it is not uncommon in conversational speech, and it is essential in literary thought and expression. Unlike the writing of the social and "hard" sciences, imaginative literature does not purport to be direct and absolute, offering a direct correspondence of words and things. Yes, literature often presents specific and accurate descriptions and explanations, but it also moves in areas of implication and suggestiveness through the use of figurative language, which enables writers to amplify their ideas while still employing a relatively small number of words. Such language is therefore a *sine qua non* in imaginative literature, particularly poetry, where it compresses thought, deepens understanding, and shapes response.

The two most important figures of speech, and the most easily recognized, are *metaphors* and *similes*. There are also many other metaphorical figures, some of which are *paradox, anaphora, apostrophe, personification, synecdoche* and *metonymy, pun* (or *paronomasia*), *synesthesia, overstatement*, and *understatement*. All these figures are modes of comparison, and they may be expressed in single words, phrases, clauses, or entire structures.

Metaphors and Similes: The Major Figures of Speech

A Metaphor Shows That Something Unknown Can Be Understood Because It Is Identical to Something Known

A **metaphor** (a "carrying out a change") *equates* known objects or actions with something that is unknown or to be explained (e.g., "Your words are *music* to my ears," "You are the *sunshine* of my life," "My life is *a squirrel cage*"). The