

## FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE IN THE SCARLET LETTER

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### ABSTRACT

The purpose of this writing is to give a brief understandable of figurative language used in the *Scarlet Letter* novel and add references to understand the social value and its implication. Figurative language that stated in the novel connects any object or character to a symbolic meaning through simile, metaphor, allusion, or personification. Hawthorne's main device for communicating his message in *The Scarlet Letter* is figurative language that make the story flew strongly and has a highly stylized symbolic fable. The tight structure and figurative language of the novel is like walking in to many-sided of mirrors where we see every fact in unending succession of relation to every other fact. In other side, this writing can be used to broader knowledge about stylistics that it is reliable or recommended strategy in teaching linguistics and literature.

**Keywords:** *Figurative Language, Message, Symbol.*

### INTRODUCTION

Figurative language has been widely examined by linguist in the study of literature in recent years. It is because figurative language has the essence of style and beauty. Figurative language often provides a more effective means of saying what we mean than direct statement. In the specific sense, figurative language may take the form of figures of speech.

Figurative language is used in any form of communication, such as in daily conversation, articles in newspaper, advertisements, novels, poems, etc. The effectiveness of figurative language in four main reasons, Perrine (1982) First, figurative language affords readers imaginative pleasure of literary

works. Second, it is a way of bringing additional imagery into verse, making the abstract concrete, making literary works more sensuous. The third, figurative is a way of adding emotional intensity to otherwise merely informative statements and conveying attitudes along with information. And the last, it is a way of saying much in brief compass. She divides figurative language into seven types, namely metaphor, simile, personification, metonymy, paradox, overstatement, understatement, irony and illusion. Figurative language connects any object or character to a symbolic meaning through simile, metaphor, allusion, or personification.

This writing deals with discussion of the term of figurative language, the figurative of language used in the

Scarlet Letter novel, the function of figurative language in the novel. Moreover, *The Scarlet Letter* : A Romance is an 1850 work of fiction in a historical setting, written by American author Nathaniel Hawthorne. The book is considered to be his "masterwork". Set in 17th-century Puritan Boston, Massachusetts, during the years 1642 to 1649, it tells the story of Hester Prynne, who conceives a daughter through an affair and struggles to

create a new life of repentance and dignity. Throughout the book, Hawthorne explores themes of legalism, sin, and guilt.

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## **DISCUSSION**

### **Figurative Language**

The term of "figurative" language has traditionally referred to language which differs from everyday, "nonliterary" usage. Figures were seen as stylistic ornaments with which writers dressed up their language to make it more entertaining, and to clarify the meanings they wanted to convey. According to this view, literary devices such as metaphor, simile, personification and so on, embellished "ordinary" language, and so forced readers to work harder at making meaning in a text. Nowadays we recognize that all language is in some sense "figurative" : there are very few ways of talking and writing about the world that do not make of comparisons, symbols, and so on.

The following are some important figures

#### 1. Simile

The comparison of two elements, where each maintains its own identity. For example : "My love is like a red, red rose." Here a

person is compared to a flower in a way that suggests they have certain features in common such as beauty, fragility, and so on

#### 2. Metaphor

The merging of two elements or ideas, where one is used to modify the meaning of the other. For example: "The moon was a ghostly galleon tossed upon cloudy seas." Here the image of the moon in a cloudy night sky is merged with that of a sailing ship on stormy seas, so that some characteristics of the latter are transferred to the former.

#### 3. Personification

The description of a nonhuman force or object in term of a person or living thing. For example, "The gnarled branches clawed at the clouds." Here, the tree branches are given the characteristics of grasping hands.

#### 4. Symbol

The substitution of one element for another as a matter of convention rather than similarity. For example, in the biblical story of Adam and Eve, the serpent is used as a symbol of temptation. In the ceremonies of the modern Olympics, white doves symbolize peace and freedom. Language itself is also symbolic, since words and meanings are associated purely by convention.

5. Allusion

A reference to another literary work, historical event or culture meant to bring symbolic meaning to the text. In The Scarlet Letter, many of the allusions are Biblical or references to events during the height of the Puritans' influence in New England. Because so much of our language is "figurative" rather than literal, there is always room for disagreement about the meanings of words, phrases, and texts. Different groups of readers may well "decode" such language in different ways, according to their beliefs, values, and social practices. In exploring the language of "literary" and "nonliterary" texts, we need to consider the range of readings made possible by figures of speech, and

how this range of possibilities is limited or closed off by other features in the text and by specific ways of reading

**Figurative Language used in The Scarlet Letter novel**

The following extract is from Hawthorne's novel in *The Scarlet Letter*. In these passages, some of the figurative language has been set in a cutting part of the paragraph

*A crowd of somber, dreary-looking people has gathered outside the door of a prison in seventeenth-century Boston. The building's heavy oak door is studded with iron spikes, and the prison appears to have been constructed to hold dangerous criminals.*

No matter how optimistic the founders of new colonies may be, the narrator tells us, they invariably provide for a prison and a cemetery almost immediately. This is true of the citizens of Boston, who built their prison some twenty years earlier.

The one incongruity in the otherwise drab scene is the rosebush that grows next to the prison door. The narrator suggests that it offers a reminder of Nature's kindness to the condemned; for his tale, he says, it will provide either a "sweet moral blossom" or else some relief in the face of unrelenting sorrow and gloom.

Imagery is the other strong way in which Hawthorne helps us to depict his images. Imagery is the art of making images, the use of figurative language, and the ability to

create mental images. Imagery's hallmark is based on passion, using several similes and metaphors to create a vision in the readers mind. When placing two images next to each other to create a clear representation, you are probably using either a simile or a metaphor. A simile being when you would use the use of like or as such as in the first quote stated earlier.

An *allegory* in literature is a story where characters, objects, and events have a hidden meaning and are used to present some universal lesson. Hawthorne has a perfect atmosphere for the symbols in *The Scarlet Letter* because the Puritans saw the world through allegory. For them, simple patterns, like the meteor streaking through the sky, became religious or moral interpretations for human events. Objects, such as the scaffold, were ritualistic symbols for such concepts as sin and penitence.

Pearl is the strongest of these allegorical images because she is nearly all symbol, little reality. Dimmesdale sees Pearl as the "freedom of a broken law"; Hester sees her as "the living hieroglyphic" of their sin; and the community sees her as the result of the devil's work. She is the scarlet letter in the flesh, a reminder of Hester's sin. As Hester tells the pious community leaders in Chapter 8, ". . . she is my happiness! — she is my torture . . . See ye not, she is the scarlet letter, only capable of being loved, and so endowed with a million-fold the power of retribution for my sin?"

Every chapter in *The Scarlet Letter* has symbols displayed through characterization, setting, colors, and light. Perhaps the most dramatic chapters using these techniques are the chapters comprising the three scaffold scenes and the meeting in the forest between Hester and Dimmesdale. Hawthorne's ability to introduce these symbols and change them through the context of his story is but one of the reasons *The Scarlet Letter* is considered his masterpiece and a peerless example of the romance novel.

#### **The Function of Figurative language used by Hawthorne in *The Scarlet Letter***

Hawthorne is one of the most descriptive, detailed writers to have ever lived. Simply by beginning to read *The Scarlet Letter* we have already began to realize the great care and perfection that he exhibits in his writing. Imagery and Syntax definitely seem to be Hawthorne's skill. With the intricate word order, syntax, and the tremendous amount of comparisons he makes, imagery, he makes us, the reader, forget that we are doing just that, reading. While flipping each page of this novel it feels as if you were there living in the puritan society, feeling and seeing everything that occurs in Hester's life. This is a very difficult goal to accomplish, but we feel Hawthorne gives a more than adequate representation of each occurrence in this tale.

Hawthorne's main device for communicating his message in *The*

Scarlet Letter is figurative language. Figurative language connects any object or character to a

symbolic meaning through simile, metaphor, allusion, or personification.

## CONCLUSION

In conclusion figurative language that stated in the novel connects any object or character to a symbolic meaning through simile, metaphor, allusion, or personification. Hawthorne's main device for communicating his message in *The Scarlet Letter* is

figurative language that make the story flew strongly and has a highly stylized symbolic fable. The tight structure and figurative language of the novel is like walking in to many-sided of mirrors where we see every fact in unending succession of relation to every other fact.

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