A figure of speech is a unique way of saying something. It is a form of expression that intentionally deviates from the conventional mode of speech for the sake of being more powerful, pleasing or distinct. It is wrong to think that only stylists employ figures of speech to enrich their writing. They are, in fact a part of everyday speech. When we say ‘the story is as old as the hills’ or ‘as tall as a tree’, we use figures of speech. There are several figures of speech and for the sake of convenience they are broadly classified into six.

**Figures of speech based on resemblance**

**Simile**

The word simile is derived from the Latin word similis which means ‘likeness’. A simile is a definite expression of likeness between two different objects or events. A simile has essentially two elements:

1. The two events or objects compared
2. An expression of likeness

Note that the two objects or events compared must be different in kind. A simile is usually introduced by words such as like, as and as...so.

Examples are given below.

King Richard was as brave as a lion. (Here King Richard is compared with a lion.)
She sat like patience on a monument. (Shakespeare)
‘Thy soul was like a star, and dwelt apart’ (Wordsworth)
He roared like a lion.

Given below are examples of similes common in everyday speech.

Adjectives: as cool as a cucumber; as sober as a judge; as wise as Solomon; as cunning as a fox

Verbs: fit like a glove; fight like a demon; run like a deer; cry like a child; sing like a lark

Proper use of similes adds style to your writing. But try not to use too many similes in your writing. Before you use a simile ask yourself whether it would add force or clarity to a description or statement.

**Metaphor**

A metaphor is an implied simile. In a simile two different objects are compared with words such as like or as. In a metaphor we state that one thing is the same as the other.
Examples are given below:

Life is a dream. (He we are not comparing life with dream. Instead we state that life is the same as dream.)
Variety is the spice of life.
He is a mere cog in the wheel.

Common metaphors are given below:

A gleam of delight
Chicken-hearted fellow
A mere shadow of one’s former self
Give the cold shoulder
Play the fool
Fan the flames

Note that everyday speech is highly metaphorical, but we seldom notice the metaphors because of their constant use.