

“I Have a Dream” as a Work of Literature

Literary Terms

1. **Figurative language** (From Prentice Hall Literature: Bronze, 1991): “writing or speech that is not meant to be taken literally. The many types of figurative language are known as figures of speech, which include (among others) metaphor, personification, simile and symbol.”

- **Metaphor:** Something in a literary work described as though it were something else. “The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune.”

- **Personification:** When a non-human subject is given human characteristics. The wind ate through the boy’s flesh.

- **Simile:** A figure of speech that makes a direct comparison between two unlike subjects using either like or as. She sings as a lark sings but stings like a wasp.

- **Symbol:** Anything in literature that stands for or represents something else. The sun symbolizing hope; night symbolizing fear; the tides symbolizing change.

2. **Oratory** (From Merriam Webster’s Encyclopedia of Literature, 1995): “the rationale and practice of persuasive public speaking.”

Some oratorical devices include:

- **Refrain:** A regularly repeated line or group of lines in a poem or song

- **Dramatic pause:** An intentional pause in delivery in order to build suspense or magnify the importance of a point.

- **Hyperbole:** exaggeration used for emphasis or dramatic effect. We will not breathe again until the injustice has stopped.