

Gettysburg Address Literary Device

Writer: Abraham Lincoln | Generated: Jan 26, 2026

Figures of Speech - English Imagery Definition: The use of words that create mental pictures or appeal to the senses, helping readers visualize ideas or emotions. Example: "The brave men, living and dead, who struggled here, have consecrated it."

Figures of Speech - English

Imagery

- **Definition:** The use of words that create mental pictures or appeal to the senses, helping readers visualize ideas or emotions.
- **Example:** "The brave men, living and dead, who struggled here, have consecrated it."
- **Explanation:** The words "living and dead" and "struggled here" create a vivid image of the battlefield where soldiers fought and sacrificed their lives. The reader can almost feel the solemn atmosphere of devotion and courage.
- **Effect:** This imagery evokes respect, grief, and gratitude. It helps the audience visualize the sacredness of the battlefield and the heroic spirit of the soldiers who gave their lives for the nation.

Allusion

- **Definition:** A reference to a historical, political, or religious idea without explicitly naming it.
- **Example:** "That this nation, under God, shall have a new birth of freedom."
- **Explanation:** The phrase "under God" alludes to divine guidance and the moral foundation of the nation's freedom.
- **Effect:** It elevates the speech to a spiritual and moral level, suggesting that the struggle for freedom is not only political but also sacred and God-inspired.

Parallelism

- **Definition:** The use of similar grammatical structures to express related ideas.
- **Example:** "Of the people, by the people, for the people."

- **Explanation:** The three parallel phrases create balance and rhythm while emphasizing democracy's essence.
- **Effect:** This structure makes the idea memorable and powerful. It has since become one of the most quoted expressions in history. It symbolizes true democratic governance.

Personification

- **Definition:** Giving human qualities to non-human things or abstract ideas.
- **Example:** "This nation... shall have a new birth of freedom."
- **Explanation:** The nation is described as a living being capable of "birth," suggesting moral and political rebirth.
- **Effect:** It transforms the idea of America into a living, breathing entity—capable of renewal, growth, and transformation through sacrifice.

Symbolism / Symbols

- **Definition:** The use of objects, places, or events to represent larger ideas or moral truths. Lincoln's short speech is rich with symbolic meaning that transcends the literal battlefield.
- **The Battlefield of Gettysburg:** Symbolizes the sacred ground of sacrifice and rebirth. It is not just a piece of land but a living monument of devotion, courage, and national unity.
- **The Nation:** Represents the American ideal of democracy, equality, and liberty. Lincoln personifies the nation as something "conceived in Liberty and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal." It becomes a living, moral entity fighting for its survival.
- **New Birth of Freedom:** A powerful symbol of moral and political renewal. It suggests that from the suffering and sacrifice of war, the nation will rise again, stronger, freer, and more just.

The Dead Soldiers: Symbolize selfless sacrifice and eternal honor. Their deaths are not meaningless; they become the seed of a new democratic life.