

Oroonoko Literary Device

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Figure of speech

Metaphor: Oroonoko is called ***“the Royal Slave.”*** This phrase compares his true noble identity to his condition as a slave. His name “Caesar” is also a metaphor. It connects him to the dignity and authority of a Roman emperor, despite his enslavement.

Simile : There are several similes. Imoinda is described as ***“the beautiful black Venus to our young Mars.”*** Here Imoinda’s beauty is compared to the goddess Venus, and Oroonoko is compared to Mars—the god of war.

Another simile appears when Oroonoko’s beauty is described: ***“as if he had been sculpted by the most famous statuary.”***

Personification : There is personification when Behn describes Nature. She writes ***“(Nature) better instructs the world than all the inventions of man.”*** Here, ‘Nature’ is treated as if it can teach like a person.

Irony : It is ironic that Oroonoko, a great prince and hero, is reduced to the status of a slave. There is also irony in the promises of freedom made by the white men; they continuously lie and betray, despite acting like civilized people

Allusion : There are references to Roman gods and heroes. Imoinda is called “Venus,” and Oroonoko “Mars,” which alludes to classical mythology. The name “Caesar” itself is an allusion to Roman emperors.

Symbol : The “Royal Veil” is a symbol. It represents royal power and the fate of women in this society. The chain or fetter is also a symbol of slavery and lost freedom.

Hyperbol Oroonoko’s beauty and Imoinda’s loveliness are often described in exaggerated terms:

“She was female to the noble male... as charming in her person as he.” Or “He was adored as the wonder of all that world.”