

Phaedra Literary Device

Writer: Lucius Annaeus Seneca | Generated: Jan 26, 2026

Figures of Speech

- **Metaphor:** Definition: When one thing is directly compared to another, without using like or as. Example: "A malady feeds and grows within my heart." (A disease grows in the heart.) Explanation: Here, love is described as a disease. Phaedra expresses her forbidden love as if it were an illness slowly consuming her heart. This is a metaphor, where love symbolizes a destructive sickness.
- **Irony:** Definition: When the opposite of what is expected happens, irony is created. Example: Phaedra says, "Passion forces me to take the worser path." Explanation: The irony is that although Phaedra is a queen, she cannot control her emotions. She understands reason, yet passion drives her down the wrong path. The audience expects a queen to show wisdom and morality, but instead, her downfall comes from her own restless desire. Seneca highlights the irony of human weakness here.
- **Symbolism:** Definition: When an object, character, or place expresses a deeper meaning or idea.
- **Phaedra:** Symbol of forbidden love, desire, and self-destructive passion.
- **Hippolytus:** Symbol of purity, chastity, and love of nature. His death shows how the innocent fall victim to injustice.
- **Venus:** Symbol of vengeance and destructive passion. The goddess's influence lies behind Phaedra's downfall.
- **The Sea (Poseidon's promised waves):** Symbol of fate and revenge. Hippolytus' death comes through the sea waves, showing the cruelty of destiny.
- **Theseus:** Symbol of royal authority and blind fatherhood. Unable to recognize his son's innocence, he drives him to destruction.

Moral Lessons from Seneca's Phaedra

- Uncontrolled passion destroys life.
- Innocence suffers for others' sins.

- Fate cannot be escaped.
- Truth must not be hidden.
- Reason must rule over desire.

Lx Notes