

"Seize the Day Literary Device

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Figures of Speech

1. **Metaphor:** one thing is directly compared to another without using like or as.

Example:

"Tommy Wilhelm drowns in the tide of his own life."

Explanation: Here, "drowning" is not literal but metaphorical. It expresses how Tommy is overwhelmed by the pressures of his failures, debts, and emotions. The metaphor of drowning shows his helplessness and inability to rise above his problems. It symbolizes how life's emotional and financial struggles can bury a person completely, just as water buries a drowning man.

2. **Irony:** Irony occurs when the opposite of what is expected happens.

Example: Dr. Tamkin preaches wisdom and truth but is actually a liar and a fraud. The irony lies in the contrast between Tamkin's words and his actions. He teaches Tommy to "Seize the Day" and live in the present, but he himself lives through deceit and manipulation. The irony also lies in Tommy's life — he dreams of success and security, but every choice he makes leads him to loss. This irony deepens the tragic tone of the novel and shows the gap between human desire and reality.

3. **Symbolism:** It is an object, action, or character represents a deeper meaning or idea.

- **The Funeral:** Symbol of death and rebirth. It represents the death of Tommy's old self and the beginning of his emotional awakening.
- **Tears:** Symbol of emotional freedom. Tommy's tears at the end symbolize the release of his pain and his spiritual renewal.
- **Money:** Symbol of false security. Tommy believes money will solve his problems, but it leads to his ruin. This shows the emptiness of materialism.
- **Dr. Tamkin:** Symbol of false hope and moral confusion. He represents the modern world's empty spiritual guidance and deception.

- **New York City:** Symbol of modern life's isolation. The crowded, noisy city reflects Tommy's emotional loneliness and confusion.

4. **Allusion:** A brief and indirect reference to a well-known idea, text, or saying.

Example:

The title "Seize the Day" is an allusion to the Latin phrase Carpe Diem.

Explanation: Carpe Diem means "Live in the present." The title reminds readers of the ancient idea that one should value the present moment rather than worry about the past or future. Saul Bellow uses this allusion to express the novel's central message — that true peace comes from accepting life honestly, not from chasing success or wealth.

5. **Imagery:** Descriptive language that appeals to the senses (sight, sound, touch, etc.).

Example:

"He felt the weight of the air pressing against his chest."

Explanation: This image helps the reader feel Tommy's suffocation and hopelessness. The sensory language makes his inner pain visible and real, helping us understand the depth of his emotional struggle.