

To His Coy Mistress Literary Device

Writer: Andrew Marvell | Generated: Jan 26, 2026

Figures of Speech

Simile

A simile is a comparison using the words “like” or “as.”

Example:

“Sits on thy skin like morning dew”

The speaker compares the freshness of the lady’s youth to morning dew on her skin. This shows her beauty and purity. This comparison also suggests that her beauty will fade away quickly, like the morning dew.

Metaphor

A metaphor is a direct comparison between two different things. It does not use “like” or “as.”

Example 1:

“Time’s wingèd chariot hurrying near”

Here, time is compared to a fast-moving chariot. The poet shows that time is chasing them quickly.

Example 2:

“My vegetable love should grow”

The poet compares his love to a plant/garden (vegetable) that grows slowly but becomes huge. This shows how patient and deep his love could be.

Personification

Personification means giving human qualities to something that is not human.

Example:

“Time’s wingèd chariot”

Time is imagined as a person driving a flying chariot. It feels like time is running after them. This creates a sense of urgency.

Hyperbole

Hyperbole is an extreme exaggeration, used to show strong feelings.

Example 1:

***“Two hundred to adore each breast,
But thirty thousand to the rest”***

The speaker exaggerates how much time he would spend admiring his lover’s body. He wouldn’t really take that many years—he just wants to show how deep his love is.

Alliteration

Alliteration is the repetition of the same consonant sound at the beginning of nearby words.

Example:

“Sits on thy skin like morning dew”

The ‘s’ sound in “sits” and “skin” creates a smooth and musical sound.

Allusion

Allusion means using a reference to something well-known, from the Bible, myth, or history.

Example:

“Love you ten years before the flood”

Here, the **“flood”** is the great flood during the time of Prophet Noah from the Bible/the Qur'an. The speaker says this to show that he wants to love and admire the lady for a long time.

Symbols

Dust: Dust is the symbol of death and decay. The speaker says the woman's honor (virginity) will turn to dust. It means it will become nothing after death. He wants to say that there's no use in saving it, because death destroys both the body and pride.

Ashes: In this poem, ashes stand for burned-out passion or lust. Love and desire are like fire, but after death, they become just cold ashes. So the speaker says they should enjoy love before it fades away.

Morning Dew: Morning dew is the symbol of beauty and youth. The speaker says her skin is like dew—fresh, soft, and beautiful, but it will disappear quickly, just like dew dries up as the day goes on. So he asks her to enjoy love while she is still young.