

## FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE IN CONTEXT #2

The following excerpts from literary texts contain different types of figurative language. For each excerpt, identify whether the writer uses **simile**, **metaphor**, **allusion (mythological, biblical, literary, or historical)**, or **personification**.

- ① We had some stormy weather, which only proved the qualities of the HISPANIOLA. Every man on board seemed well content, and they must have been hard to please if they had been otherwise, for it is my belief there was never a ship's company so spoiled since Noah's Ark put to sea.

– Adapted from Robert Louis Stevenson, *Treasure Island*

<b>Type of figurative language:</b> biblical allusion	<b>How it is used:</b> <u>Stevenson uses the allusion to Noah, who was blessed and protected by God even when the rest of the world was being flooded, to emphasize the relatively favorable conditions under which the crew of the HISPANIOLA was living.</u>
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- ② I bought a dozen books on banking and credit and investment securities, and they stood on my shelf in red and gold, promising to unfold the shining secrets that only Midas knew.

– Adapted from F. Scott Fitzgerald, *The Great Gatsby*

<b>Type of figurative language:</b> mythological allusion	<b>How it is used:</b> <u>Fitzgerald alludes to King Midas, who had the ability to turn everything he touched to gold. This reveals to the reader that the character wanted to be wealthy and successful.</u>
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- ③ “To look at,” said the sergeant-major to Mr. and Mrs. White and their son Herbert, “it’s just an ordinary little trinket. But an old fakir put a spell on it so that three men could each have three wishes from it.” Mrs. White laughed, as did her husband and son. “Sounds like the *Arabian Nights*,” she said. As Mr. White held the talisman, the sergeant-major said gruffly, “If you must wish, wish for something sensible.”

– Adapted from W. W. Jacobs, “The Monkey’s Paw”

<b>Type of figurative language:</b> literary allusion	<b>How it is used:</b> <u>Jacobs alludes to the famous collection of magical stories known as <i>The Arabian Nights</i> and the “three wishes” granted in one of those stories. He uses this allusion to foreshadow something truly magical but sinister about the paw in the story.</u>
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- ④ Romeo: *[as he gazes up at Juliet]*  
 But soft! What light through yonder window breaks?  
 It is the East, and Juliet is the sun!

– Adapted from William Shakespeare, *The Tragedy of Romeo and Juliet*

<b>Type of figurative language:</b> metaphor	<b>How it is used:</b> <u>William Shakespeare’s metaphorical comparison of Juliet to the sun emphasizes how magnificent Romeo thinks Juliet is and how her very existence brings light into his life, just as the sun brings light at the beginning of a new day.</u>
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Keep going! Identify whether the writer uses **simile**, **metaphor**, **allusion** (**mythological**, **biblical**, **literary**, or **historical**), or **personification**. Explain how the figurative language is used to develop meaning in the excerpt.

- 5 [Before Karana decides to leave the deserted village on the island where only she remains]  
 It was a morning of thick fog and the sound of far off waves breaking on the shore. I had never noticed before how silent the village was. Fog crept in and out of the empty huts. It made shapes as it drifted and they reminded me of all the people who were dead and those who were gone.

– Adapted from Scott O’Dell, *Island of the Blue Dolphins*, Copyright 1960 by Scott O’Dell

**Type of figurative language:**  
 personification

**How it is used:** O’Dell personifies the fog, which “crept in and out of the empty huts,” to paint an eerie picture of the village. This emphasizes Karana’s loneliness as the only person left in the deserted village.

- 6 [Protagonist Guy Montag’s thoughts after seventeen-year-old Clarisse asks him if he’s happy]  
 He was not happy. He said the words to himself. He recognized this as the true state of affairs. He wore his happiness like a mask.

– Adapted from Ray Bradbury, *Fahrenheit 451*, Copyright 1953 by Ray Bradbury

**Type of figurative language:**  
 simile

**How it is used:** Bradbury uses a simile to compare Montag’s happiness to a mask that he now realizes he’s been wearing to hide how he feels. This shows that Montag appeared happy to others but that he didn’t truly feel happy.

- 7 [Discussing the impact of positive and negative thoughts on one’s life]  
 So long as Mistress Mary’s mind was full of disagreeable thoughts about her dislikes and sour opinions of people and her determination not to be pleased by or interested in anything, she was a yellow-faced, sickly, bored and wretched child. Circumstances, however, were very kind to her, though she was not at all aware of it. They began to push her about for her own good.

– Adapted from Frances Hodgson Burnett, *The Secret Garden*

**Type of figurative language:**  
 personification

**How it is used:** Frances Hodgson Burnett personifies “circumstances,” giving the sense that they were intentionally kind to Mary. The circumstances were pushing Mary’s life to improve.

- 8 Like young Washington, Mr. Bhaer ‘couldn’t tell a lie’, so he gave a somewhat vague reply.

– Adapted from Louisa May Alcott, *Little Women*

**Type of figurative language:**  
 historical allusion

**How it is used:** Alcott uses the historical allusion to the legend of George Washington and the cherry tree, which tells the story of Washington’s honesty as he admitted to damaging his father’s cherry tree. This allusion emphasizes Mr. Bhaer’s honest character.