FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE IN CONTEXT #3

The following excerpts from literary texts contain different types of figurative language. For each excerpt, identify whether the writer uses **verbal irony, pun, allusion (mythological, literary, or biblical), or personification**. Explain how the figurative language is used to develop meaning in the excerpt.

1 "Mine is a long and a sad tale!" said the Mouse, turning to Alice and sighing.
"It *is* a long tail, certainly," said Alice, looking down with wonder at the Mouse's tail; "but why do you call it sad?" And she kept on puzzling about it while the Mouse was speaking.

— Adapted from Lewis Carroll, *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*

Type of figurative language:	**How it is used:** Carroll uses a pun on the word "tale" to add humor and to
pun	show that Alice is confused by the situation. The mouse means his story is long and sad, but Alice misunderstands "tale" to mean a physical tail.

2 A chill wind was blowing that nipped him sharply and bit with especial venom into his wounded shoulder. He lay down on the snow and attempted to sleep, but the frost soon drove him shivering to his feet.

— Adapted from Jack London, *The Call of the Wild*

Type of figurative language:	**How it is used:** Jack London uses personification to make the cold seem alive,
personification	as though it is a creature specifically trying to harm the character and keep him from sleeping.

3 "Shouldn't someone give a pep talk or something?" Minho asked...
"Go ahead," Newt replied.
Minho nodded and faced the crowd. "Be careful," he said dryly. "Don't die."
Thomas would have laughed if he could, but he was too scared for it to come out.
"Great. We're all inspired," Newt answered.

— Adapted from James Dashner, *The Maze Runner*, Copyright 2009 by James Dashner

Type of figurative language:	**How it is used:** Dashner uses verbal irony to convey a sense of dark humor in
verbal irony	a foreboding scene by having Newt claim to be inspired by a brief "pep talk," but the speech is obviously not inspirational.

4 I walked as solitary as Adam before the creation of Eve.

— Adapted from Avi, *Crispin: The Cross of Lead*, Copyright 2002 by Avi

Type of figurative language:	**How it is used:** Avi alludes to the biblical story of Adam and Eve to emphasize
biblical allusion	how the character feels. Before the creation of Eve, Adam was the only person in the world, so this character feels like he is the only person in the world.

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Keep going! Identify whether the writer uses **verbal irony, pun, allusion (mythological, literary, or biblical), or personification**. Explain how the figurative language is used to develop meaning in the excerpt.

(5) Mercutio: *[after being mortally wounded in a battle]*
Ask for me tomorrow, and you shall find me a grave man.

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

Type of figurative language: pun	**How it is used:** Shakespeare uses a pun on the word "grave" to bring wit and humor to a play that readers know will end tragically. Mercutio's use of "grave" means "serious" and also indicates that he is dying.

(6) There were only a few people, and these moved more rapidly, as if the film had been sped up. One white-faced man in a dark suit looked directly at the children, said, "Oh dear, I shall be late," and flickered into the building. "He's like the white rabbit," Meg giggled nervously.

— Adapted from Madeleine L'Engle, *A Wrinkle in Time*, Copyright 1962 by Crosswicks

Type of figurative language: literary allusion	**How it is used:** Madeleine L'Engle alludes to the white rabbit from the book *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*. The white rabbit is always nervous about being late, so this allusion is used to show the nervousness of the man.

(7) "Yes, you are now rich—quite an heiress."
Silence followed...
"You unbend your forehead at last," said Mr. Rivers. "I thought Medusa had looked at you, and that you were turning to stone. Perhaps now you will ask me how much you are worth?"

— Adapted from Charlotte Brontë, *Jane Eyre*

Type of figurative language: mythological allusion	**How it is used:** Charlotte Brontë uses a mythical allusion to Medusa, whose gaze can turn a person to stone, to show that the character's face is shocked and unmoving when she learns of her good fortune.

(8) "It's lovely in the woods now. All the little wood things—the ferns and the satin leaves and the crackerberries— have gone to sleep, just as if somebody had tucked them away until spring under a blanket of leaves."

— Adapted from Lucy Maud Montgomery, *Anne of Green Gables*

Type of figurative language: personification	**How it is used:** Montgomery uses personification to bring the beauty of nature to life. The character describes the plants as "sleeping" to help the reader visualize the quiet and calm beauty of the woods during the winter.