

Figurative Language

Aim: To consider the use and forms of figurative language and the effect they have on the reader.

The Jungle Fugitives

Edward S. Ellis

No time was lost. There was a hurried scrambling on board, the water fortunately being deep enough near shore to allow all to step upon the boat dry shod. The faint moon revealed the smooth surface of the Ganges for nearly a hundred yards from land, but the further shore was veiled in darkness. It was at this juncture that Miss Marlowe made an annoying discovery.

"Oh, papa, I have forgotten my pistol!"

"Wait and I'll soon get it," she added, starting to leap the short distance from the gunwale to land, but Jack Everson caught her arm.

"You must not think of it; tell me where you left the weapon and I'll bring it."

"I laid it on the table in the dining-room and in the hurry forgot it when we left."

Jack turned to his friends.

"Don't wait here," he said, aware of the nervousness of the whole party. "Push down stream, and I'll quickly overtake you."

Without waiting for further explanation, he leaped the slight space and started up the lawn on a loping trot. For convenience he left his rifle behind, but made sure that his revolver was in his hip pocket. He did not apprehend that he would need the weapon in the short time he expected to be absent, but if anything went awry it would be more useful than the rifle.

In that moment of profound stillness following the disappearance of the young man among the trees grouped about the lawn, the motionless people on the boat felt a thrill of terror at the unmistakable sound of oars from some point on the river not distant.

"Let us land and take refuge in your house," suggested young Wharton; "we cannot make a decent fight in this boat."

"We shall have a better chance than in the house," was the reply of the physician; "the bank of the river is shaded by trees a little further down; we must lose no time in getting there, and avoid the least noise."

There were two long poles belonging to the boat, one of which was grasped by Wharton, while Anderson swayed the other, the remainder watching their movements, which could not have been more skillful. Pressing the end against the bank, and afterwards against the clayey bottom, the craft speedily swung several rods from shore.

While the two men were thus employed, the others peered off in the gloom and listened for a repetition of the sounds that had frightened them a few minutes before. They were not heard again, nor could the straining vision detect anything of the dreaded object, which could not be far away. Not a person on board doubted that a number of their enemies were near and searching for them. Dr. Marlowe would have taken comfort from this fact had the circumstances been different; for the men who were hunting for him would go to his house, since it was there they must gain their first knowledge of his flight; but, as he viewed it, it was impossible that they should be wholly ignorant of the boat and its occupants, which must have made most of the distance before night closed in.

It followed, therefore, that if they were looking for the doctor and his family they were also looking for the boat and the fugitives it contained. The low-lying shore, with no trees fringing the bank, was the worst place for him and his friends, and he was in a fever of eagerness to reach the protecting shadows along shore. The nerves of all were keyed to the tensest point, when they caught the dim outlines of the overhanging growth, with the leafage as exuberant as an extraordinary painting, as it always is in a subtropical region at that season of the year. The men toiled with vigor and care, while the others glanced from the gloom of the river to the deeper gloom of the bank, which seemed to recede as they labored toward it. With a relief that cannot be imagined the bulky craft glided into the bank of deeper gloom, which so wrapped it about that it was invisible from any point more than a dozen yards distant.

It is inconceivable how a narrower escape could have come about, for the two men had hardly ceased poling, allowing the boat to move forward with the momentum already gained, when their enemies were discovered. Mary Marlowe's arm was interlocked with that of her father, when she nervously clutched it and whispered:

"Yonder is their boat!"

All saw the terrifying sight at the same moment. Almost opposite, and barely fifty yards out on the river, could be traced a moving shadow, the outlines of which showed a craft similarly shaped to their own, except that it was somewhat smaller and sat lower in the water. The men were too dimly seen for their number to be counted or their motions observed, but, as in the former instance, the sounds indicated that they were using paddles.

Since it was certain that the natives were searching for the fugitives in the boat under the shadows of the bank every one of the latter wondered that the pursuers

remained out in the stream, when there was need of unimpeded vision. They half expected their enemies to turn to the left and come directly for them. But nothing of the kind took place. The craft headed down the river, the sound of the paddles so slight that only the closely listening ear could hear them, until it melted in the gloom and vanished from sight.

It was a vast relief for the moment, but little comfort could our friends take from the fact. Their enemies were not likely to go far, when they would suspect that something of the nature described had occurred, and they would return and grope along shore for their victims. So certain was Dr. Marlowe of this turn that he believed the wisest course was for the entire party to abandon the boat, and, as may be said, "take to the woods." They had the whole night before them, and, with his intimate knowledge of the roads, paths and trails of the country and jungles, he was confident of guiding them beyond danger and to some place where, when morning dawned, there would be little to fear in the way of discovery.

This course would have been taken except for the absence of Jack Everson. There was no way of apprising him of the change of plan, and, with his ignorance of the topography of their surroundings, he would be certain to go astray, and for any one in his situation, to go astray meant death.

Section A - Thinking about it

1. Onto what vehicle are the characters climbing aboard at the beginning of the text?

2. What did the water being deep near shore allow the passengers to do?

3. Why does Miss Marlowe become stressed soon after the boat leaving?

4. What does the word 'loping' mean?

5. After the young man leaves, why do the party suddenly become terrified?

6. Describe how the men move the boats along the river.

7. 'with the leafage as exuberant as an extraordinary painting, as it always is in a subtropical region at that season of the year'

What form of figurative language is the writer using here? How do you know?

8. What is the effect on the reader of the writer telling us that the bank 'seemed to recede as they labored toward it'?

9. This piece of text is an extract from a larger book about lives and journeys of Americans in India. Read through the text again. What do you think is happening in this part of the story? What has just happened before?

10. What do you think will happen next?

11. 'until it melted in the gloom and vanished from sight'

Comment on the writer's choice of verbs here. What is the effect on the reader of the word 'melted' here?

12. Read back through the whole text. Look carefully at the choice of verbs the writer has used, as well as their use of figurative language and the structure of the entire piece. Comment on the tone of the writing here. What sort of atmosphere does the writer create? How do they make you feel reading it?

Section B - Focus

Figurative language is an important tool used by writers to heighten the emotional impact of their work and allow the reader to more easily access the content and emotional landscape that the writer wishes them to reach.

For each of the questions below, work out what the poet in question is describing, then identify the type of figurative language that is being used, before commenting on the overall effectiveness of the language.

1. 'The teaching of the wise is a fountain of life' - Proverbs 13:14

2. "People moved slowly then. There was no hurry, for there was nowhere to go, nothing to buy and no money to buy it with, nothing to see outside the boundaries of Maycomb County." - 'To Kill a Mockingbird' by Harper Lee

3. “All the world’s a stage, and all the men and women merely players. They have their exits and their entrances.” - ‘As You Like It’ by William Shakespeare

4. “Time has not stood still. It has washed over me, washed me away, as if I’m nothing more than a woman of sand, left by a careless child too near the water.’ - ‘The Handmaid’s Tale’ by Margaret Atwood

5. “Pearl Button swung on the little gate in front of the House of Boxes. It was the early afternoon of a sunshiny day with little winds playing hide-and-seek in it.” - ‘How Pearl Button Was Kidnapped’ by Katherine Mansfield

Section C - Composition

Get us glued to the sofa with a vivid and engaging review of your favourite TV programme. The programme can be anyone you choose, provided you can talk about in an exciting way and make us want to watch it too. You should be able to describe it in enough detail that we have an understanding as to what it's about and why you enjoy it so much.

Throughout your review you should try to use as wide a variety of verbs as possible, as well as different forms of figurative language, including metaphor, simile, hyperbole and personification. Try to use them in such a way that your review becomes even more engaging and exciting!

Things to Consider:

- What programme are you reviewing for us? Why do you like the programme so much?
- Try using a variety of verbs to make the review as vivid and exciting as possible.
- Try using figurative language as much as possible and in many different forms throughout your review.
- Use paragraphs to separate out your ideas.
- You will also need a strong close to your review. How will you end in such a way that we're definitely going to watch?
- Ensure you proofread your work and edit it before handing it in.

Planning Box
