

What is Metonymy?

Metonymy definition entails using the name of one particular thing being replaced by the name of something that is closely associated with it. Metonymy in Greek literally means 'a change of name'. This figure of speech helps to indirectly refer to something. Like, in Julius Caesar, when Mark Antony, after the death of Caesar addresses the people of Rome as "Friends, Romans, countrymen, lend me your ears", he means he wants people to listen to what he has to say. Given below are a few more examples, which will help clear your doubts regarding metonymy vs synecdoche.

Word	Actual Meaning	Metonymic Usage
Sweat	Perspiration	To work hard towards something
Hollywood	A section of Los Angeles	The American film industry
Wall Street	A street in lower Manhattan in New York	The American financial and banking industry
Madison Avenue	An avenue running the length of Manhattan Island in New York	The American advertising industry

- In *Julius Caesar*, when Mark Antony, after the death of Caesar, addresses the people "Friends, Romans, countrymen, lend me your ears", he means that he wants the people to listen to what he has to say.
- The Sergeant in *Macbeth*, while talking about the king refers to Macbeth's sword as steel in 'Disdaining fortune, with his brandish'd steel, which smok'd with bloody execution'.
- In *Hamlet*, one can find many references like the ghost of Hamlet's father referring to his murderer as 'the serpent that did sting thy father's life'. Another mention is where Polonius instructs his son Laertes to 'give every man thy ear' to say that he must listen to what other people have to say.

What is Synecdoche?

Synecdoche is a figure of speech in which a word or term is used to refer to a whole thing or effect, a part of it, or a specific class of things related to that word. Synecdoche in Greek originally means accepting a part as responsible for whole or vice versa. This figure of speech is closely related to synecdoche, in fact, synecdoche is sometimes considered to be a subclass of metonymy. Given below are a few examples of synecdoche that will help you understand how to compare metonymy vs synecdoche better:

- Referring to a characteristic of a person for the person itself, like 'the gray beard' for an old person.
- Describing a vehicle as 'wheels'.
- He has many mouths to feed.
- There are so many pairs of hands working there.
- Using the term 'bug' for any kind of insect or small creature.
- Using 'John Hancock' for the signature of any person.
- Using a well known generic term for a certain related thing, like calling any kind of cola 'Coke'.
- Saying 'lead' for bullets, 'rubber' for condoms, 'plastic' for credit cards, etc.

Litotes

Litotes is a figure of speech in which a certain statement is expressed by denying its opposite. For example, rather than merely saying that a person is attractive (or even very attractive), one might say they are "not unattractive".

Functions as an understatement/meiosis

- Oh, you think you're so special because you get to play Picture Pages up there? Well, my five year old daughter could do that and let me tell you, she's not the brightest bulb in the tanning bed."
(Allison Janney as Bren in *Juno*, 2007)
- "Because though no beauty by fashion-mag standards, the ample-bodied Ms. Klause, we agreed, was a not unclever, not unattractive young woman, not unpopular with her classmates both male and female."
(John Barth, "The Bard Award," in *The Development: Nine Stories*. Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2008)