Hyperbole

- A *hyperbole* is a figure of speech that uses exaggeration to describe something as better or worse than it really is.
- They are usually marked by such exaggeration that they are not meant to be taken literally.
- Hyperbole utilizes exaggeration for the sake of emphasis upon the truth of the statement. Many employ hyperbole in everyday speech.
    - For example: "Your suitcase weighed a ton!" The suitcase did not actually weigh one thousand pounds; rather, it was very heavy, and the speaker is placing emphasis on its weight through exaggeration.
- Hyperbole, like metaphor and simile, makes a comparison. However, hyperbole often creates a humorous effect through use of an overstatement.
- In literature, hyperbole can create contrast by relating common human emotions to remarkable situations. Authors will often describe one idea using an un-exaggerated, normal comparison and follow up with hyperbole. This contrast of the ordinary and the extraordinary comparisons catches readers' attention.
- Examples-

    From W.H Auden's poem *"As I Walked One Evening,"*

    I'll love you, dear, I'll love you
    Till China and Africa meet,
    And the river jumps over the mountain
    And the salmon sing in the street,
    I'll love you till the ocean
    Is folded and hung up to dry

    The speaker employs hyperbole to make his love seem enduring. Rivers do not jump over mountains, and salmons do not sing in the street. Nor will the speaker's love ever end.

    From William Shakespeare's *Macbeth*, Act II, Scene II.

    "Neptune's ocean wash this blood
    Clean from my hand? No. This my hand will rather
    The multitudinous seas incarnadine,
    Making the green one red."

    Macbeth employs hyperbole by saying that not even the oceans could wash away the blood of murder from his hands. While of course the ocean could wash off blood, Macbeth's sin will remain with him forever.

Helpful link:

http://literarydevices.net/hyperbole/