

# Hyperbole

hyper·bo·le [ hī pŭrbŏlee ]

NOUN

exaggeration: deliberate and obvious exaggeration used for effect, e.g. "I could eat a million of these" [15th century. Via Latin < Greek huperbolē "excess," literally "overthrow" < ballein "to throw"]

-Encarta Dictionary

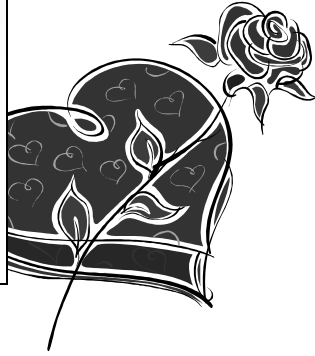
Da mi basia mille,  
deinde centum, dein  
mille altera, dein  
secunda centum, deinde  
usque altera mille,  
deinde centum.

Give me a thousand kisses,  
then a hundred, then another  
thousand, then a second  
hundred, then still another  
thousand, then a hundred.

- Catullus

Catullus is using exaggeration to get his point across to his wife which he loves, and wants to see that love returned.

Describing Love



My vegetable love should grow  
Vaster than empires, and more slow;  
An hundred years should go to praise  
Thine eyes and on thine forehead gaze;  
Two hundred to adore each breast,  
But thirty thousand to the rest.

-Andrew Marvell, "To His Coy Mistress"

Andrew Marvell is doing a similar thing; he is trying to show his love to his mistress, but gets his point across through exaggeration

Describing something which  
is hard to be described  
Can't Put It in Words



- They ran like greased lightning.
- He's got tons of money.
- Her brain is the size of a pea.
- He is older than the hills.
- I will die if she asks me to dance.
- She is as big as an elephant!
- I'm so hungry I could eat a horse.
- I have told you a million times not to lie!

-<http://www.englishclub.com/vocabulary/figures-hyperbole.htm>

## These are Simple English Examples

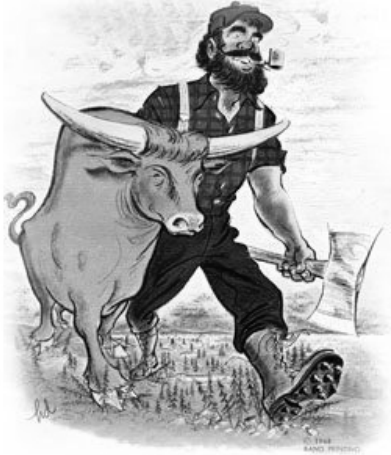
You can't actually do the things described here. You can't eat an entire horse (but who would want to?). You can't say something a million times.

But all of these examples are using exaggeration to describe something which is hard to describe, so one exaggerates for effect.

# Tall tale

## Size + scale

### Paul Bunyan The Giant Lumberjack



- It took five giant storks, working overtime, to deliver him to his parents.
- It is said that rocking in his sleep he caused huge waves which sunk many ships.
- He would eat forty bowls of porridge just to whet his appetite.
- Paul and Babe were so large, the tracks they made gallivanting around Minnesota filled up and made the 10,000 lakes

This American folk tale shows the size and scale of the vast expanses of unexplored countryside of the Old West. It also conveys the "Think Big!" attitude of the time in that region.



- "The walls [of Troy] reached towards the clouds, casting a vast shadow on the earth below"  
Again, to best convey the size and scale of the walls of Troy, the authors exaggerated them to convey their feeling to the reader.
- Four times [Achilles chased Hector around Troy]  
It's hard to run around the city of Troy 4 times, while being pursued by someone who wants to kill you. I think that this is an exaggeration of the actual strength of the warriors of Troy. This was possibly done to make them seem superior to the readers to give them extra power.

The story may also have gotten grander with each retelling, as the orator would try to impress his listeners.