**What is the difference between idioms and figures of speech such as similes and metaphors?**

**Idioms**

An idiom is an expression that conveys something different from its literal meaning, and that cannot be guessed from the meanings of its individual words. “Between a rock and a hard place” is an idiom that means “in a difficult or bad position with no good way of getting out of it.” What makes an idiom different from a figure of speech is that its non-literal meaning is often already familiar to speakers of the language.

**Figures of speech**

A figure of speech is a phrase or an expression that expresses an idea by using words in a non-literal and imaginative way. Unlike an idiom, it is possible to understand a figure of speech even if you have never heard it before. Metaphors and similes are figures of speech.

**• Metaphors**

A metaphor is a word or phrase typically used to describe one thing but unexpectedly used to describe something different. Metaphors make language interesting and help create imagery. They also make us aware of connections that we may not have thought of before e.g. The peaceful lake was a mirror.

**• Similes**

A simile is an expression that uses the words like or as to describe something by comparing it with something else. A simile is like a metaphor except that a simile uses the words like or as to signal that a comparison is being made. “She’s as fierce as a tiger” is a simile, but “She's a tiger when she's angry” is a metaphor.

**So can a metaphor be an idiom? Yes**

For example,“He was drowning in paperwork” is a metaphor that makes a connection between having to deal with a lot of paperwork and drowning in water. It’s also an idiom because you cannot guess at the meaning from its individual words.