

Understatement (litotes)

Litotes: a figure of speech that uses an understatement by using double negatives, or a positive statement that is expressed by negating its opposite expression.

Ex: 'not too bad', which actually means 'very good'

Understatement: An understatement is when a speaker makes a situation seem less important than it is in reality. It is the opposite of exaggeration.

Poem Example:

FIRE AND ICE

By: Robert Frost

Some say the world will end in fire,
Some say in ice.

From what I've tasted of desire
I hold with those who favor fire.

But if it had to perish twice,

I think I know enough of hate

To say that for destruction ice

Is also great

And would suffice.

To say that ice 'would suffice' to destroy the world could be considered an example of understatement, like saying that a million dollars would suffice to buy a new iPad.

Also, if the speaker of the poem has seen a huge amount of hatred, then it is also an understatement to write, "I think I know enough of hate".