

Figurative Language

Common Core Standards:
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.5.5.A
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.6.5.A

Simile

Metaphor

Personification



Be Creative...

Introduction to Figurative Language Grades 5-6

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Figurative language refers to words that are not intended to be taken literally. People use figurative language all the time in everyday conversation, and good writers use it whenever possible in their writing. A simple example of figurative language is something you've probably said or heard before: **"My backpack weighs a ton!"** This would be understood *figuratively*, not literally. Obviously, the point here is that the backpack is very heavy, but it could not possibly weigh a ton, which is the approximate weight of a fully grown Grizzly Bear. Likewise, you may have heard the expression, **"I'm buried in homework this weekend!"** and this too would be understood figuratively, not literally. Obviously, the point here is that there is a lot of homework to be done.

Good writers use figurative language to make their writing more interesting to readers. For example, rather than writing, **"The flowers moved back and forth in the wind,"** which is quite boring, one could write, **"The flowers swayed in the wind like belly dancers,"** which is much more creative and allows the reader to more easily visualize the scene in his or her mind.

In order to make your own writing stronger and more interesting, you want to use figurative language whenever appropriate.

In Lesson One you will be learning to *recognize* personification, similes, and metaphor.

In the Lesson Two you will practice *using* personification, similes, and metaphor.

Let's begin by defining these three types of figurative language:

Personification: Personification is a figure of speech that gives non-human objects or animals human characteristics or qualities. For example, to say that *the flowers danced in the wind* would be personification. Humans can dance, but flowers can't dance. Of course, flowers often *look* like they're dancing, so this would be a creative figurative description. Another example would be to say *the rain pounded angrily on the rooftop*. Rain doesn't have hands to pound, nor does it have feelings (these are human qualities), but this figurative description makes it clear the rain was coming down very hard.

The root word in *personification* is person, which makes this definition easy to remember!

Simile: A simile is a form of figurative language that makes a nonliteral comparison between two things and uses the words *like* or *as*. For example, one might say, "**When I had tonsillitis, I felt like I was eating glass every time I swallowed.**" Obviously, eating glass would be excruciating, so this figurative comparison makes it clear that swallowing was very painful. Another example would be to say, "**Mary's teeth are as white as snow.**" Snow is very white, which means by comparison that Mary's teeth are also very white.

Metaphor: A metaphor is similar to a simile. It also makes a nonliteral comparison between two things—but does not use the words *like* or *as*. For example, one might say, "**Life is a roller coaster.**" Just as a roller coaster can be both thrilling and frightening with its sudden ups and downs and twists and turns, life, by comparison, also has its "ups and downs" and "twists and turns" figuratively speaking.

LESSON 1

Directions: Following each of the sentences below, circle the type of figurative language being used:

1. The children I babysit *act like crazy animals* as soon as their parents leave the house. (metaphor—simile—personification)
2. The *wind screamed so loudly* through the trees that it was hard to sleep last night. (metaphor—simile—personification)
3. My parents forced me to attend the ballet with them, which was about *as fun as watching the grass grow*. (metaphor—simile—personification)
4. After watching the sad movie, we were all left in a very *dark mood*. (metaphor, simile, personification)
5. Since I'm never excited about going to school, *I move like a snail* in the mornings. (metaphor—simile—personification)
6. The students behave well with their teacher, but when there's a substitute, *the wheels fall off and they go crazy*. (metaphor, simile, personification)
7. We're all so tired of the rain and grateful the *sun is finally smiling down on us*. (metaphor—simile—personification)
8. Breaking the screen on my brand new cell phone nearly *broke my heart*. (metaphor, simile, personification)
9. The dark rain clouds loomed overhead *threatening to soak us* as we walked home from school without an umbrella. (metaphor—simile—personification)
10. Reading a book is like weight-lifting for your brain. (metaphor— simile—personification)

Lesson 2

Directions: In each of the sentences below, choose the word or phrase that would be considered *figurative language*.

1. Circle the word in the following sentence that **personifies** the house:
The (tattered—shabby—tired) house looked like it was from the 16th century.
2. Circle the word in the following sentence that **personifies** the tree:
The oak tree's long branches (blew—waved—moved) in the wind storm.
3. Choose the word in the following sentence that **personifies** the shoes:
The runner's track shoes (remained—waited—existed) by the front door.
4. Choose a **simile** to complete the following sentence:

My mom's chocolate cake

- a) is incredibly delicious.
- b) is my favorite dessert.
- c) is like a slice of heaven
- d) is the best in the world.

5. Choose a **simile** to complete the following sentence:

The kitten's fur was

- a) the softest fur in the world.
- b) as soft as silk.
- c) soft and fluffy.
- d) incredibly soft.

6. Choose a **simile** to complete the following sentence:

In the winter months, the Arctic wind is

- a) below freezing in temperature.
- b) painfully cold.
- c) as cold as ice.
- d) the coldest in the world.

7. Choose a **simile** to complete the following sentence:

Listening to my math teacher's irritating voice was

- a) like listening to nails scratch a chalkboard.
- b) the most annoying sound in the world.
- c) an unpleasant experience.
- d) the worst part of my day.

8. Finish the following sentence using a **metaphor**:

When my dog passed away,

- a) I was very sad.
- b) I was unhappy for weeks.
- c) it felt like a knife to my heart.
- d) a darkness overcame me.

9. Finish the following sentence using a **metaphor**:

I was afraid to try out for the school play, so my mom said to remember

- a) I'm very talented.
- b) I can act well.
- c) I'm as good as a professional actor.
- d) I'm a shining star.

10. Finish the following sentence using a **metaphor**:

Earning an A in my chemistry class was

- a) the most challenging task I've ever had.
- b) a long rocky road.
- c) like achieving the impossible.
- d) as tough as running a marathon barefoot.