

About This Lesson: Figurative Language and Imagery

Common Core State Standards

Grade 6	Grade 7	Grade 8
<p>RL 4 Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative and connotative meanings.</p> <p>L 5, 5a Demonstrate understanding of figurative language; interpret figures of speech (e.g., personification) in context.</p>	<p>RL 4 Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative and connotative meanings.</p> <p>L 5, 5a Demonstrate understanding of figurative language; interpret figures of speech in context.</p>	<p>RL 4 Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative and connotative meanings.</p> <p>L 5, 5a Demonstrate understanding of figurative language; interpret figures of speech in context.</p>

Lesson Objectives

Tell students that, in this lesson, they will learn to

- identify sensory details and imagery
- identify different types of figurative language, such as simile, metaphor, and personification
- analyze how a writer's use of imagery affects meaning

Strategies for Teaching

How you use this interactive lesson will reflect your personal teaching style, your instructional goals, and your available technological tools. For example, *Figurative Language and Imagery* can work well as both a whole-class lesson or as a targeted small-group skill review.

Here are teaching tips for each screen in the lesson.

SHARE WHAT YOU KNOW

Screen 2: Describe the Scene

Encourage students to use their five senses when describing the scene and to be as specific and detailed as possible. Ask:

- What do you see around you?
- What sounds do you hear?
- What smells do you associate with the beach?
- What tastes does the beach bring to mind?
- What do you feel?

Have students review the descriptions and circle the ones they think are most effective.

Screen 3: The Power of Language

Discuss the circled descriptions on the last screen. Ask:

- How do the phrases you circled differ from those you didn't?
- What conclusions can you draw about how words paint pictures?

Help students conclude that vivid, specific sensory details make writing come alive.

LEARN THE SKILL

Screen 4: What Is Imagery?

Explain that writers use sensory language to help readers conjure up images in their minds. Provide these examples:

- The deafening explosion nearly knocked us out of our chairs.
- We heard a loud explosion.

Ask: Which sentence is more effective? (*the first one; it helps readers hear the explosion*)

Ask students what sensory words they might use to describe the photo. (*icy, snow-covered*)

Screens 5 and 17: Identify Sensory Language

You may want to read the passage aloud or have a volunteer read it as the class reads along. After completing the activity, ask: How does the imagery and sensory language help to create a mood in this short story?

Screens 6 and 18: Analyze the Meaning

Have students describe the images they visualized. Ask:

- How does the writer's choice of language and details contribute to the images in your mind?
- What effect does the knock on the door have on the man? (*seems to scare him*)
What makes you think so? (*drops matches, stands motionless and stops breathing*)

Screen 7: Types of Figurative Language

Discuss with students how the compared objects are alike. Ask:

- How are stars like diamonds? (*bright and shiny*)
- In what way is advice like a lighthouse beacon? (*shows the way*)
- What human quality does the sun possess? (*It whispers.*) What human quality does the city possess? (*It's sleepy.*)

Have students work in pairs or small groups to come up with other examples of similes, metaphors, and personification.

Screen 8: Types of Figurative Language

Ask students to explain the stated or implied comparison in each example of figurative language. For each one, ask: Do you think the figure of speech is effective? Why or why not? Challenge students to come up with more examples of figurative language.

Screens 9 and 19: Identify Figurative Language

Read the poem aloud as students follow along. Encourage them to picture the images in their mind as they listen. Explain that a *new moon* is the first phase of the moon, when it is between the earth and the sun. *Maiden*, as used in the last line, means “first” or “earliest.”

Screen 10: Analyze the Meaning

In addition to discussing each statement, ask:

- Why does the poet say she had to “wrest” (*take by force*) the gift? (*The day has been unkind to her, leaving her “nothing lovely.”*)
- How does the second line of the poem combine a simile with personification? (*The poet compares how the day has beaten her with how rain beats the sea, which she characterizes as “bright, proud.”*)

Screen 11: Tips for Analyzing Imagery

Here are some other possible sentence frames:

- The image most vivid in my mind is _____ .
- The writer uses personification to _____ .
- My favorite metaphor in the piece is _____ because _____ .

PRACTICE & APPLY

Screens 12 and 20: Identify Imagery in Fiction

Have volunteers highlight in yellow the words that appeal to the sense of sight, and in green the words that appeal to the sense of hearing. Ask others to identify and explain the simile and personification. Then ask: How do the sensory details and figurative language affect the reader? (*Possible answer: The imagery emphasizes the vastness of the natural setting.*)

Screen 13: Analyze the Meaning

Review the definition of *personification*: giving human qualities to something that is not human. Tell students that, in the novel, the author uses personification to share the thoughts and feelings of Old Dan. However, he also uses personification to make other comparisons, such as the one between the sound of Old Dan’s voice and a person struggling to escape from a confined space.

Screen 14: Identify and Analyze Imagery in Poetry

Before students begin, review the difference between *simile* (comparison using *like* or *as*) and *metaphor* (comparison without *like* or *as*). Have students use highlighters of different colors to mark examples that correspond to the tiles. For each example of figurative language, have students explain what the use of the technique helps to emphasize.

- **Sight Details:** “clasps the crag with crooked hands” (line 1); “azure world” (line 3); “he stands” (line 3) “wrinkled sea” (line 4); “mountain walls” (line 4); “like a thunderbolt he falls” (line 6)
- **Touch Detail:** “He clasps the crag” (line 1)—emphasizes the rough texture of the mountain
- **Personification:** “lonely lands” (line 2); “wrinkled sea beneath him crawls” (line 4)—helps readers visualize the motion of the sea”
- **Simile:** “And like a thunderbolt he falls” (line 6)—emphasizes the eagle’s speed and power

Screen 15: Word Pictures

Tell students to imagine they are describing the scene to someone who can’t see it. Encourage them to come up with sensory descriptions and examples of figurative language (similes, metaphors, personification), using phrases or complete sentences. Point out the blank tiles for students’ use.

Examples:

- The headlights gleam like bright eyes. (*Eyes* would appear on a blank tile.)
- Blazing blue lights wake up the night sky. (*Wake* would appear on a blank tile.)
- The towering buildings are like books aligned on a shelf.

Screen 16: Square Pair

Before students begin the activity, have them review the definitions:

- simile: a comparison between two things that uses the word *like* or *as*
- metaphor: a comparison between two things that does not use the word *like* or *as*
- personification: giving human qualities to something that is not human

Elicit one or more examples of each from the class.

Note: Printable versions of all public-domain selections in this lesson are available on the following pages of this document.

from “The Monkey’s Paw”
by W. W. Jacobs

Neither spoke, but lay silently listening to the ticking of the clock. A stair creaked, and a squeaky mouse scurried noisily through the wall. The darkness was oppressive, and after lying for some time gathering up his courage, he took the box of matches, and striking one, went downstairs for a candle.

At the foot of the stairs the match went out, and he paused to strike another; and at the same moment a knock, so quiet and stealthy as to be scarcely audible, sounded on the front door.

The matches fell from his hand. He stood motionless, his breath suspended. . . .

“The New Moon”
by Sara Teasdale

Day, you have bruised and beaten me,
As rain beats down the bright, proud sea,
Beaten my body, bruised my soul,
Left me nothing lovely or whole—
Yet I have wrested a gift from you,
Day that dies in dusky blue:

For suddenly over the factories
I saw a moon in the cloudy seas—
A wisp of beauty all alone
In a world as hard and gray as stone—
Oh who could be bitter and want to die
When a maiden moon wakes up in the sky?

“The Eagle”

by Alfred, Lord Tennyson

He clasps the crag with crooked hands;
Close to the sun in lonely lands,
Ring'd with the azure world, he stands.

The wrinkled sea beneath him crawls;
He watches from his mountain walls,
And like a thunderbolt he falls.