

Grade 7 English Language Arts

Week of January 18 – January 22

Lesson 4: Imagery in Poetry

Similes and Metaphors

Writers use a number of different techniques to create imagery in their poems. Two of the most common ways are by adding **similes** and **metaphors**.

Simile is the easier one to spot. It nearly always includes the word *like* or *as*. Many examples of simile have slipped into our everyday language: *cool as a cucumber*, *smart like a fox*, and *neat as a pin* (though, really, what's so neat about a pin?).

Metaphor does not use *like* or *as*. It is more direct. It implies that one thing **IS** the other, not just like it.

Observe the differences between the following paired examples.

Metaphor: The sea is a plate of glass.

Simile: The sea was smooth as a plate of glass.

Metaphor: She had diamonds for eyes

Simile: Her eyes sparkled like diamonds.

Personification

Another device that poets use to create imagery is **personification**. Personification gives human qualities to things that aren't human.

e.g.,

The wind stroked her white curls.

Obviously wind can't stroke a girl's hair, but it's an interesting image for a poem, isn't it? The poem is much more creative and interesting than it would have been if the poet had just said, *The wind blew the girl's hair around her face*.

Personification is easy to spot in a poem. Just look for the non-human thing that is described with human qualities.

In the following poem, the author uses several metaphors and similes to describe himself. How might you compare yourself?

Identity

Let them be as flowers,
always watered, fed, guarded, admired,
but harnessed to a pot of dirt.

I'd rather be a tall, ugly weed,
clinging on cliffs, like an eagle
wind-wavering above high, jagged rocks.

To have broken through the surface of stone,
to live, to feel exposed to the madness
of the vast, eternal sky.
To be swayed by the breezes of an ancient sea,
carrying my soul, my seed, beyond the mountains of time
or into the abyss of the bizarre.

I'd rather be unseen, and if
then shunned by everyone,
than to be a pleasant-smelling flower,
growing in clusters in the fertile valleys,
where they're praised, handled, and plucked
by greedy, human hands.

I'd rather smell of musty, green stench
than of sweet, fragrant lilac.
If I could stand alone, strong and free,
I'd rather be a tall, ugly weed.

-Julio Noboa Polanco

4.3 Identity Poem

Polanco's "Identity" is an extended metaphor poem. Polanco tells us a lot about his character by simply describing this "weed" that he identifies himself with.

Now, it's your turn to write an extended metaphor poem!

First, let's find something you might identify yourself with...

Answer the following open-ended questions:

1.If I were a plant or animal, I'd be a _____.

2.If I were a piece of furniture, I'd be a _____.

3.If I were a color, I'd be _____.

4.If I were a vehicle, I'd be a _____.

Now choose one!

On the following page, use the model of the poem to create your comparisons OR use your own form.

Note you do NOT need to use every single line as is. Just remember to use descriptive adjectives, strong verbs and unique similes.

Refer back to the poem in your course for help in writing yours.

Identity

Let them be as _____

always _____

but _____ .

I'd rather be a _____ ,

_____ like _____

_____ .

To have _____ ,

to _____ .

To be _____

or _____ .

I'd rather be _____ , and if

then _____ ,

then to be _____

where _____

by _____ .

I'd rather _____

than _____ .

If I could _____ ,

I'd rather be a _____ . (repeat first line)

Based on: <http://englishlessoncollection.blogspot.com/2010/05/identity-poetry-activity.html>.