#### Metaphors, Similes, and Personification

**Read and think:**

I was seven. I laying the car

 Watching palm trees swirl a sickening pattern past the glass.

•

 My stomach was a melon split wide inside my skin.

Naomi Shihab Nye. ·Making a Fist," *Words Under the Words: Selected Poems*

##### Talk about it:

I. What is the metaphor in this poem? What is the literal term'? What is the figurative term'? What does the metaphor mean'?

How would the meaning and impact of these lines change if Nye said simply, “*M y stomach reallv hurt!”*

##### .Now you t Now you try it:

Rewrite the figurative term in Nye's metaphor. Try to express feelings of anxiety and pain-both physical and emotional-with your metaphor.

My stomach was ------------------------------

*:J iscovering* Voice. Nancy Dean © 2006 **Figurative Language I: Metaphors, Similes, and Personification *I* l9**

#### Metaphors. Similes. and Personification

**Read and think:**

He gossips like my grandmother, this man with my face, and I could stand

amused all afternoon

in the Hon Kee Grocery, amid hanging meats he

chops ...

Li- Young Lee. ..The Cleaving,"*The City in Which I Love You”*

**Talk about it:**

I. Look at the first line. Is *like my grandmother* a simile? Explain.

Is *this man/with* mv *face* figurative? If so, is it a metaphor or a simile? Explain.

##### Now you try it:

Write a poem in which you compare yourself to a family member or a friend. Your poem should be at least four lines long and contain at least one metaphor.

**Diction**

### Consider:

An aged man is but a paltry thing A **tattered** coat upon a stick ....

- W. B. Yeats. "Sailing to Byzantium"

### Discuss:

1. What picture is created by the use of t he word *tattered ?*

*2.* By understanding t he connotations of the word *tattered ,* w hat do we understand about t he persona's attitude toward *an aged* man?

### Apply:

List three adjectives that can be used to describe a pair of shoes. Each adjective should connote a different feeling about the shoes. Discuss your list with a partner. Share one of the best adjectives wit h the class.

# Diction

### Consider:

The man sighed **hugely.**

- E. Annie Proulx, *The Shipping News*

### Discuss:

1. W hat does it mean to sigh hugely ?

*2 .*How would the meaning of t he sentence change if we rewrote it as:

*The man sighed* ***loudly.***

### Apply:

Fill in the blank below with an adverb:

The ma n coughed \_

Your adverb should make t he cough express an attitude. For example, the cough could express contempt, desperation, or propriety. Do not state t he attitude. Instead, let the adverb imply it. Share your sentence with t he class.

# Diction

### Consider:

A rowan\* like a **lipsticked** girl. \* a small deciduous tree native to Europe, having white flower clusters and orange berries.

- Seamus Heaney, "Song, " *Field Work*

### Discuss:

1. Other than the color, what comes to mind when you think of a *lipsticked* girl?

*2.* How would it change the meaning and feeling of the line if , instead of *lipsticked girl ,* t he author wrote *girl with lipstick* on?

### Apply:

Write a simile comparing a tree with a domesticated animal. In your simile, use a word that is normally used as a noun (like *lipstick )* as an adjective (like *lipsticked ).* Share your simile with the class.

*Lesson 5: Diction /* 7

# Diction

### Consider:

###### Newts are the most common of salamanders. Their skin is a **lighted** green, like water in a su nlit pond, and rows of very bright red dots line their backs. They have gills as larvae; as

t hey grow they turn a luminescent red, lose t heir gills, and walk out of t he water to spend a few years padding around in damp places on the forest floor. Their feet look like **fingered baby hands,** and they walk in the same leg patterns as all four-footed creatures - dogs, mules, and, for that matter, lesser pandas.

- Annie Dillard. *Pilgrim at Tinker Creek*

### Discuss:

###### 1. What is t he difference between a *lighted* green and a *light* green? Which one do you think creates a more vivid picture?

*2 .* What is t he effect of saying *fingered baby hand s* instead of simply *baby hand s?*

### Apply:

Compare the neck of each of the animals below to something familiar. Use Dillard's comparison *( Their feet look like fingered baby hand s )* as a model.

###### The elephant 's neck looks like --------------------­

The gazelle's neck looks like ---------------------­

The flamingo's neck looks like --------------------­

Share one of your comparisons with the class and explain the attitude it conveys about the animal.

# Detail

## Consider:

He went on till he came to the first milestone, which stood in the bank, half-way u p a steep hill. He rested his basket on the top of t he stone, placed his elbows on it, and gave way to a convulsive t witch , which was worse than sob, because it was so hard and so dry.

- Thomas Hardy, *The Mayor of Casterbridge*

## Discuss:

1. How do the details in t his passage prepare you for the *convulsive twitch* at the end of t he passage?

*2 .* This passage does not describe t he character's face at all. What effect does this lack of detail have on t he reader?

# Detail

## Consider:

MRS. VENABLE: . . . and the sand all alive, all alive, as the hatched sea-turtles made their dash for the sea, while the birds hovered and swooped to attack and hovered and - swooped to attack! They were diving down on the hatched sea-turtles, turning them over to expose

t heir soft undersides, tearing the undersides open and rending and eating their flesh.

- Tennessee Williams, *Suddenly Last Summer*

## Discuss:

1. Williams uses the repetition of detail in three places in this passage. Underline the three places and discuss whet her the repetition enhances or detracts from the overall effect of t he passage.

*2.* What is Mrs. Venable's attitude toward the scene she describes? Which specific details reveal this attitude?

**Apply:**

With a partner write a detailed description of a sporting event. Emphasize some violent or extreme action by repeating at least two vivid details. Try to create a feeling of revulsion through your choice of details. Share your description with the class.

**Imagery**

**Consider:**

A woman drew her long black hair out tight And fiddled whisper music on t hose strings And bats with baby faces in t he violet light Whistled, and beat t heir wings

And crawled head downward down J blackened wall And upside down in air were towers

Tolling reminiscent bells, t hat kept t he hours

A nd voices singing out of empty cisterns and exhausted wells.

- T. S. Eliot, "The Waste Land"

**Discuss:**

l. Paraphrase the image of t he first two lines. What mood does t he image create?

1 List t he auditory images in these lines. How do these image help create the mood of t he passage?

### Apply:

Write four or five lines of poetry which create - through imagery alone - a mood of absolute triumph. Do not state t he nature of the triumph; do not explain or analyze. Instead, let the

images create the feeling of triumph. Use both auditory and visual images. Share your lines with a partner.

*Lesson 5: Imagery* / 51

**Imagery**

### Consider:

At first I saw only water so clear it magnified the fibers in the walls of the gourd. On the surface, I saw only my own round reflection. The old man encircled the neck of the gourd with his thumb and index finger and gave it a shake. As t he water shook, t hen settled, the colors and lights shimmered into a picture, not reflecting anything I could see around me. There at the bottom of the gourd were my mother and father scanning the sky, which was where I was.

- Maxine Hong Kingston, *The Woman Warrior*

### Discuss:

1. What kind of imagery is used in t his passage? Circle the images.

*2 .* Compare and contrast t he imagery of the last sentence with the imagery of t he first four sentences.

**Apply:**

Write a sentence which uses precise visual imagery to describe a simple action. Share your sentence with a partner.

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### Syntax

##### Read and think:

He was a year older than I, skinny, brown as a chocolate bar, his hair orange, his hazel eyes full of mischief and laughter.

Esmeralda Santiago. *When I Was Puerto Rican*

##### Talk about it:

1. Look carefully at t he way this sentence is written. All of the words t hat follow t he word *I* are used to describe the *he* of the sentence. They are adjectives and adjective phrases. This is not t he way words are usually ordered in English. ( In English. adjectives are usually right before

The nouns t hey modify, or at least right next to t hem.) What effect does t his word order have on the meaning of the sentence'?

Placing all of the adjectives and adjective phrases one after the other is called **layering.** What effect does t his layering have on t he impact of t he sentence?

##### Now you try it:

Fill in the blanks to create a sentence simi lar to Santiago's sentence.

He was a year older than I, skinny,

comparative of an adjective adjective

brown as a chocolate bar, his hair orange.

simile that describes adjective the subject

his hazel eyes full of mischief and laughter.

adjective phrase



|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| comparative of an adjective |  | adjective |
| sim ile that describes the subject |  |  |
| his/her hair his/her eyes -- | -- | -------- |
| adjecti ve |  | Adjective phrase |

### Syntax

**Read and think:**

When I had waited a long time, very,very patiently, without hearing him lie down. I resolved to open a

little-a very, very little crevice in the lantern. So I opened it-you cannot imagine how stealthily, stealthily--until at length, a single, dim ray, like the thread of a spider, shot from out the crevice and fell upon the vulture eye.

Edgar Allan Poe . ..The Tell-Tale Heart:· *The Tell -Tale Heart and Other Writing s*

##### Talk about it:

I. Look carefully at t he first sentence. There are several groups of words called **phrases** (very,very patiently, without hearing him lie down, *a very, very little)* that interrupt the flow of the sentence. Why do you think Poe w rote t he sentence like this'?

Look at the second sentence. What is the purpose of the dashes'? How do these dashes. and the words t hey set off. involve t he reader i n the action of the passage'?

##### Now you try it:

Write a sentence about doi ng your homework. Try to imitate the way Poe uses phrases to slow dow n the way you read the sentence. Use at least one dash.

When I

# Syntax


### Consider:

The impact of poetry is so hard .and direct t hat for t he moment t here is no other sensation

except t hat of t he poem itself. W hat profound depths we visit t hen - how sudden .and

complete is our immersion! There is nothing here to catch hold of: nothing to stay us in our flight. . . . The poet is always our contemporary. Our being for t he moment is centered, and constricted , as in any violent shock of personal emotion.

- Virginia Woolf , "How Should One Read a Book? "

### Discuss:

1 . Woolf uses a variety of sentence types in this selection. Among t hem is t he exclamatory sentence. Identify the exclamatory sentence and explain its effect.

Classify each sentence as to length: short, medium, or long. How is t he meaning of t he passage reinforced and clarified by sentence length?

### Apply:

Write a declarative sentence about college entrance examinations. Then write an exclamatory sentence which amplifies or clarifies the declarative sentence. Share your sentences wit h t he class.

# Syntax

### Consider:

He slowly ventured into t he pond. The bottom was deep, soft clay, he sank in. and the water clasped dead cold round his legs.

- D. H. Lawrence, "The Horse-Dealer's Daughter"

### Discuss:

1. What effect does sentence length have on this passage?

*2 .* Examine t he second sentence. How does t he structure of the sentence reinforce t he meaning?

### Apply:

Write a sentence in which you make an inanimate object active by using an active verb. Remember t ha t your verb is not just a n action verb (like *talk* or *flow ).* The verb must make your inanimate object into an actor, a doer. Share you r sentence with t he class.

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**Tone**

### Consider:

And I started to play. It was so beautiful. I was so caught u p in how lovely I looked t hat a t

first I did n 't worry how I would sound . So it was a surprise to me when I hit t he first wrong note and l realized something didn't sound quite right. And then I hit another and another followed t ha t. A chill started at t he top of my head and began to trickle down. Yet I could n 't stop playing. as though my hands were bewitched . I kept t h inking my fingers would adjust

themselves back, like a train switching to the right track. l played t his strange jumble t h rough

two repeats. t he sour notes staying with me all t he way to t he end.

- A my Tan. *The Joy Luck Club*

### Discuss:

1. How does t he narrator's attitude toward her performance change i n t he passage?

1 How does t he author's use of detail, diction. and imagery reveal t he narrator's changing attitude? · '

### Apply:

Write a paragraph about an outing that turned out badly. In your paragraph, express a change in tone. Begin with a positive tone and end with a tone of disappointment. Use detail, diction , and imagery to create t he changing t one. Share your paragraph with a partner.