

Mental Menagerie: Animal Imagery

Teacher Notes

Grade: 5 to 9

Subject: Language Arts

Group Size: Whole class or small groups

Duration: 50-minute period

Skills: Figurative language (introduction or review)

Vocabulary: Imagery, figurative language, literal language, metaphor, simile, symbol

OBJECTIVES:

Upon completion of this lesson, students should be able to:

- Tell the difference between literal language and figurative language
- Understand the purpose of figurative language
- Distinguish between similes and metaphors
- Use similes and metaphors to enhance their writing

MATERIALS:

- **Worksheets: A: Practice With Similes and Metaphors; B: Write Your Own Similes and Metaphors; C: Figurative Language in Ray Bradbury's "A Sound of Thunder"**

BACKGROUND:

Animals are powerful symbols of certain qualities we admire or despise. This lesson will show how we often use animal references or imagery in describing human behavior and feelings.

PROCEDURES:

- Introduce this activity by discussing the symbolic power of animals. Ask the class why, for example, is the eagle a symbol of

America? What does this bird of prey represent? What qualities do we admire in the eagle?

- Introduce or review the following terms with the class:

Literal language states the truth or facts. For example: The horse is thin.

Figurative language describes one thing in terms of another and is not meant to be taken as literally true. For example: The horse is as thin as a rail (simile). The horse is a bag of bones (metaphor)

Imagery is language that appeals to the senses. Most images are visual, they create pictures in the reader's mind. Imagery can appeal to the sense of sight, hearing, taste, touch and smell. Imagery is important in all writing, but it is an especially important element in poetry.

A metaphor is a comparison between two unlike things in which one thing becomes another. For example: The man has a heart of stone. The woman has eagle eyes.

A simile is a comparison between two unlike things using words such as like, as, than, or resembles. For example: The man's heart was as hard as stone. The woman had eyes like an eagle.

- Hand out the worksheets. (The worksheets are geared to ascending levels of expertise; choose the ones best for your class or have them do all of them.)

Worksheet A provides an introduction to the use of animal imagery in figurative language by asking students to recall common metaphors and similes using animal imagery.

Worksheet B requires students to think of their own similes and metaphors. Have them work alone or in small groups to come up with original similes and metaphors using animal imagery.

Worksheet C asks students to find examples of figurative language in an excerpt from Ray Bradbury's short story "A Sound of Thunder." For further exploration, the worksheet directs students to rewrite Bradbury's passage using literal language rather than figurative language.

- Have each student complete the assigned worksheets or divide the class into smaller groups to work collaboratively.
- When they have finished the worksheets, have students share and discuss their work.

Worksheet A: Practice with Similes and Metaphors

Try these similes!

1. _____ as a fox
2. _____ as an eel
3. _____ as a mouse
4. _____ as a clam
5. _____ as a mule
6. _____ as a bear
7. _____ as a robin
8. _____ as a lion
9. _____ as a bee
10. _____ as a hare

11. _____ as a lamb
12. _____ as a puppy
13. _____ as an owl

If you have a good memory, you have a memory like

_____.

If you are very angry, you are mad as

_____.

Try these metaphors!

1. If you tell on someone, you _____ on that person!
2. A brave person is _____-hearted.
3. Someone who sees well is _____-eyed.
4. Someone who stays up late is a night _____.
5. Something old and outdated is a _____.
11. Someone who looks for opportunities to benefit from the misfortunes of others is a _____.
12. A person in an unfamiliar situation is a _____ out of water.
13. Someone in a position of vulnerability is a sitting _____.
14. A person whom you cannot trust, who will betray you, is a _____ in the grass.
10. Someone who is lazy is _____.
11. What do you mean when you say something sounds fishy? _____

Try some verbs!

1. You figure out a way to join the conversation: You _____ your way into the conversation.
2. If you stop talking abruptly or suddenly, you _____ up.
3. If you gulp your food, you _____ it down.
4. If you nag and bother someone, you _____ him or her.
5. If you outsmart someone, you out _____ that person.
6. If you boast or brag about something, you _____ about it.
7. If you want to find out about something in a roundabout way, you _____ out the information.
8. If you are goofing off, you are _____ around.

9. If you hide things, you _____ them away.
10. If you sell things, you are _____ merchandise.
11. If you eat a huge amount, you _____ out!
12. If you have a small appetite, you _____ like a bird.
13. If you are at ease in the water, you swim like a _____.

Associations & Symbols!

What animals do you associate with the following qualities:

- Power _____
- Integrity _____
- Freedom _____
- Bravery _____
- Cowardice _____
- Weakness _____
- Greed _____
- Dishonesty _____
- Strength _____
- Endurance _____
- Patience _____
- Intelligence _____
- Stupidity _____
- Cowardice _____
- Loyalty _____
- Courage _____

In prose or poem describe what animal symbolizes you and why. Begin with the words, “I am a” (Use a sheet of notepaper if you need more space.)

Worksheet C: Figurative Language in Ray Bradbury's "A Sound of Thunder"

Read the following passage from Ray Bradbury's story "A Sound of Thunder." The passage contains quite a few **similes** and **metaphors**. See how many you can find. Circle each **simile** and underline each **metaphor**. On a separate sheet of paper, tell what the implied comparison is in each **metaphor**.

In this passage the hunters, who have returned in a time machine to the prehistoric jungle of the past, are positioned to shoot a *Tyrannosaurus rex*. In this scene, the animal is coming through the tangle of trees and ferns and underbrush toward the terrified hunters.

Maybe this passage will tempt you to read the entire story! It can be found in a collection of Bradbury's short stories. The **THEME** of the story is the web of life. Bradbury, through the genre of science fiction, explores what can happen when a species is destroyed. As you study ecosystems and endangered species, this story will be thought-provoking.

"It came on great, oiled, resilient, striding legs. It towered thirty feet above half of the trees, a great evil god, folding its delicate watchmaker's claws close to its oily reptilian chest. Each lower leg was a piston, a thousand pounds of white bone, sunk in thick ropes of muscle, sheathed over in a gleam of pebbled skin like the mail of a terrible warrior. Each thigh was a ton of meat, ivory, and steel mesh, and from the great breathing cage of the upper body those two delicate arms dangled out front, arms with hands which might pick up and examine men like toys, while the snake neck coiled. And the head itself, a ton of sculptured stone, lifted easily upon the sky. Its mouth gaped exposing a fence of teeth like daggers. Its eyes rolled, ostrich eggs, empty of all expression save hunger. It closed its mouth in a death grin. It ran, its pelvic bones crushing aside trees and bushes, its taloned feet clawing the damp earth, leaving prints six inches deep wherever it settled its weight. It ran with a gliding ballet step, far too poised and balanced for its ten tons. It moved into a sunlit arena warily, its beautifully reptilian hands feeling the air."

Ray Bradbury
"A Sound of Thunder"

Now, see if you understand the difference between **literal language** and **figurative language**. When scientists write, they use **literal language** to record observations and data. Their purpose is to state information clearly and accurately. This differs from the fiction writer's purpose which is to make a reader experience a person, event or object by creating vivid images that appeal to the senses.

On a separate sheet of paper, rewrite Ray Bradbury's description using literal language by pretending you are a scientist recording observations.