

Miranda Tsang

## **Hair Like A Broom!** **Figurative Writing with Simile and Metaphor**

In this hour-long workshop, students will write descriptively about their hair using simile and metaphor. We'll start out with physical descriptions of hair, then dig deeper to draw out metaphor and simile, ending by adding in personal details to their figurative writing. We'll use an excerpt from *The House on Mango Street* to see how Sandra Cisneros describes a family through hair. Students will get to write and share out their descriptions by the end of the class.

**Objectives:** 1. Students will write down physical descriptions of their hair (ie. Black, curly, shiny). 2. Students will think of and write down other things that have those characteristics, to compare their hair to (ie. Black=night, curly=notebook spiral, shiny=new car). 3. Students are read *The House on Mango Street's* hair chapter (below) and introduced to the concepts of simile and metaphor. 3. Students will try out writing similes and metaphors for their hair using their lists. 4. Students will share out the metaphors and similes they come up with.

**Materials:** • paper for each student to write on • "Hair" from *The House on Mango Street* by Sandra Cisneros (to display on screen, chart paper or white board), included at the end of this document • Any other good examples of descriptions of hair or good examples of simile and metaphor for students to see.

**Process:** Talk through the idea of hair describing who a person is on many levels—it can tell you what a person looks like, but it can also tell you what kind of personality they have. First, start with the first level of description: physical. Ask students to come up with words to describe hair as a group.

Then, students fold their piece of paper into 4 quadrants. In the first quadrant, students will write a list of physical descriptions for their own hair (ie. Black, curly, shiny).

Next, students will brainstorm some things to compare those traits to, as a group (ie. Black=night, curly=notebook spiral, shiny=new car). They can especially try to use examples present in the classroom, for example, hair straight as a pencil. Once they get the concept as a

group, they can write down their own examples for their own hair characteristics in the second quadrant.

Students are introduced to the concepts of simile and metaphor. They'll practice the techniques as a group using the lists we have generated as a group, and then they'll write their own in the third quadrant of the paper. They can share out some of their examples.

Read *The House on Mango Street's* hair chapter and discuss what makes the language so much more rich than the descriptions we came up with. Talk about the personal connections in the writing, and how it makes the metaphors and similes more powerful and interesting. Walk students through adding their own personalities to the metaphors and similes. For example: My hair is as straight as the pen my sister writes uses to write stories. In the fourth quadrant, students will try to add personal details to their metaphors and similes.

At the end of the exercise, students get to share with the class what they came up with!

### **Tips for a great activity:**

While students are writing, walk around and chat with students who want help, and make sure that everyone is doing the exercise correctly.

Take it slow: if students are taking a while to grasp the concepts, take your time. Make sure they understand most of the lesson before moving on to the next step.

Have fun and get to know your students! Along with teaching them figurative writing, you'll learn more about your students and get to hear their creative writing. Enjoy!

If you're hoping to incorporate more creative writing into your classroom, I recommend this book of writing prompts gathered from students, tutors, and authors at writing center 826 Valencia. These can be used as "do-nows" or warm-up activities in the classroom:

<http://www.barnesandnoble.com/w/home-gift-642-things-to-write-about-young-writers-edition/27386961>

(Note: While I did compile and introduce this book, I don't receive any profits from sales, I just want to share the exercises!)

## **The House on Mango Street**

Sandra Cisneros, 1984

### Hairs

Everybody in our family has different hair. My Papa's hair is like a broom, all up in the air. And me, my hair is lazy. It never obeys barrettes or bands. Carlos' hair is thick and straight. He doesn't need to comb it. Nenny's hair is slippery—slides out of your hand. And Kiki, who is the youngest, has hair like fur.

But my mother's hair, my mother's hair, like little rosettes, like little candy circles all curly and pretty because she pinned it in pincurls all day, sweet to put your nose into when she is holding you, holding you and you feel safe, is the warm smell of bread before you bake it, is the smell when she makes room for you on her side of the bed still warm with her skin, and you sleep near her, the rain outside falling and Papa snoring. The snoring, the rain, and Mama's hair that smells like bread.