

Project Title: Comparing Apples and Oranges: Unlocking the Imagination Through Metaphor

Target Audience: Grades 3-5

## You Can't Compare Apples and Oranges...

### Or Can You?

Metaphors describe one thing in terms of something else. They are useful for animating difficult points, or helping to convey experiences and emotions that we may not easily be able to put into words directly. By comparing seemingly unrelated objects, metaphors also point out unlikely connections and similarities. This makes them an endless source of surprise and a favorite literary device among poets.

Metaphors are different than similes. Similes use words such as “like” or “as” to indicate that a comparison is being made. Metaphors cut out the middle-man (to use a metaphor!). This makes them a little more complicated than similes, but can also make them more captivating, vibrant and rewarding once understood.

This workshop explores metaphor by having students create illustrations of both the literal and figurative meanings of metaphoric images.

Objectives:

- 1) To help students recognize metaphor in everyday speech and in poetry
- 2) To help students develop tools for exploring metaphoric images

Supplies:

- 1) Copies of the phrase(s) or poem(s) being used (examples are supplied below)
  - 2) Paper and something to draw with (markers, crayons, etc.)
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- 1) Depending on your class's level and needs, select 4-5 of the common metaphors and/or 1-2 of the poems to work with.
  - 2) Ask the class if they are familiar with the phrase or read one of the poems together.

- 3) Discuss with the class the literal meaning. For example, for “couch potato,” discuss what it would mean to actually be a potato that sits on a couch. What would that look like? What would it be like to sit next to a giant potato? Would that start to smell? Would it start to sprout?
- 4) Now discuss the metaphoric meaning. For example, how a couch potato is someone who sits on the couch all day watching TV.
- 5) Divide your class into two groups. Have group A draw illustrations of the literal interpretation of the image you’ve just discussed. Have group B draw illustrations of the metaphoric meaning of the phrase or poem.
- 6) Once all the drawings are done, compare samples of illustrations from each group. Discuss in what ways the two groups’ illustrations resemble each other. Why might someone choose to use this metaphor instead of saying what they mean more directly?

## COMMON METAPHORS

Surfing the net  
She’s a ray of sunshine  
You’re a night owl  
This classroom is a zoo  
I’m hungry as a lion  
He’s so cool  
You’re a zombie in the morning  
I was lost in a sea of nameless faces  
This office is a prison  
Life is a roller-coaster  
The teacher planted the seed of wisdom  
Laughter is the music of the heart  
Your brain is a computer  
The car was a furnace in the sun  
My brother is a couch potato  
Her stomach is a black hole  
You’re a light in the darkness  
You’re a storm cloud  
That ice cream is a rainbow of flavors  
She’s a bad apple  
He’s a rotten egg  
Don’t get cold feet  
Her voice is music to my ears  
She’s a fish in the water

## POEMS

### **Eclipse**

F. R. Scott

I looked the sun straight in the eye.  
He put on dark glasses

### **Toaster**

William Jay Smith

A silver-scaled Dragon with jaws flaming red  
Sits at my elbow and toasts my bread.  
I hand him fat slices, and then, one by one,  
He hands them back when he sees they are done.

### **Taking Turns**

Norma Farber

When sun goes home  
behind the trees,  
and locks her shutters tight

then stars come out  
with silver keys  
to open up the night.

### **Steam Shovel**

Charles Malam

The dinosaurs are not all dead.  
I saw one raise its iron head,  
To watch me walking down the road  
Beyond our house today.  
Its jaws were dripping with a load  
Of earth and grass that it had cropped.  
It must have heard me where I stopped,  
Snorted white steam my way,  
And stretched its long neck out to see,  
And chewed, and grinned quite amiably.

\* The metaphors in the following poems are more abstract and therefore challenging than the previous ones. Students won't as easily be able to draw literal interpretations for them. Instead, discuss the abstract concept (life's difficulties, and the power of words respectively) and then have students choose one or two lines each to illustrate. Encourage them to incorporate aspects of both the literal and figurative meanings in their illustrations. For example, for Edwards' poem, have students choose some examples of "loving words," then have students draw these words "clutching crimson roses".

### **Mother to Son**

Langston Hughes

Well, son, I'll tell you:  
Life for me ain't been no crystal stair.  
It's had tacks in it,  
And splinters,  
And boards torn up,  
And places with no carpet on the floor—  
Bare.  
But all the time  
I've been a-climbin' on,  
And reachin' landin's,  
And turnin' corners,  
And sometimes goin' in the dark  
Where there ain't been no light.  
So boy, don't you turn back.  
Don't you set down on the steps  
'Cause you finds it's kinder hard.  
Don't you fall now—  
For I've still goin', honey,  
I've still climbin',  
And life for me ain't been no crystal stair.

### **The Word Party**

Richard Edwards

Loving words clutch crimson roses,  
Rude words sniff and pick their noses,  
Sly words come dressed up as foxes,  
Short words stand on cardboard boxes,  
Common words tell jokes and gabble,

Complicated words play Scrabble,  
Swear words stamp around and shout,  
Hard words stare each other out,  
Foreign words look lost and shrug,  
Careless words trip on the rug,  
Long words slouch with stooping shoulders,  
Code words carry secret folders,  
Silly words flick rubber bands,  
Hyphenated words hold hands,  
Strong words show off, bending metal,  
Sweet words call each other 'petal',  
Small words yawn and suck their thumbs,  
Till at last the morning comes.  
Kind words give out farewell posies.  
Snap! The dictionary closes.

#### BOOK LIST

Consult these anthologies for other wonderful poems with strong metaphors.  
Many have accompanying illustrations.

*Talking Like The Rain*

Selected by X. J. Kennedy and Dorothy M. Kennedy

*Whisper and Shout: Poems to Memorize*

Edited by Patrice Vecchione

*One Hundred Years of Poetry for Children*

Selected by Michael Harrison and Christopher Stuart-Clark

*A Family of Poems: My Favorite Poetry for Children*

Selected by Caroline Kennedy

Sterling Publishing's "[Poetry for Young People](#)" series is also a very useful resource.