ENGLISH, LITERACY, AND COMMUNICATION

Similes and metaphors

Difficulty level: Easy

English, Literacy, and Communication

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Overview of the concept

This is how you spot the comparisons that make writing vivid, like calling a runner as fast as lightning or saying a classroom is a zoo. A reader who spots a simile can see the picture the writer is painting, instead of taking the words literally. A student writing a story can use a comparison to make a character come alive in one sentence. Knowing similes and metaphors tells you how to read figurative language for what it means, and how to use it to make your own writing more vivid.



Rule

Similes and metaphors: a simile compares two things using like or as, and a metaphor says one thing is another without like or as.

If like or as is doing the comparing, it is a simile, and if it is not, it is a metaphor.

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Worked examples

EXAMPLE 1

Q Classify: 'Her smile was like the sun.' Simile or metaphor?

SOLUTION

Look for 'like' or 'as': the sentence uses 'like'.

A comparison using 'like' or 'as' is a simile.

So it is a simile.

EXAMPLE 2

Q Classify: 'Her smile was the sun.' Simile or metaphor?

SOLUTION

Look for 'like' or 'as': there is none.

It says one thing is another, directly.

So it is a metaphor.

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Practice questions

1 Classify: 'He runs as fast as lightning.'

A Simile

B Metaphor

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2 Classify: 'The classroom was a beehive.'

A Simile

B Metaphor

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3 Classify: 'Time is money.'

A Simile

B Metaphor

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4 Classify: 'She is brave like a lion.'

A Simile

B Metaphor

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5 Classify: 'His voice was as smooth as silk.'

A Simile

B Metaphor

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6 Classify: 'The night was a blanket.'

A Simile

B Metaphor

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7 Classify: 'Life is a journey.'

A Simile

B Metaphor

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8 Classify: 'She swims like a fish.'

A Simile

B Metaphor

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9 Classify: 'He eats like a horse.'

A Simile

B Metaphor

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10

Classify: 'Her words were music.'

A Simile

B Metaphor

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ANSWER KEY

1. Simile

2. Metaphor

3. Metaphor

4. Simile

5. Simile

6. Metaphor

7. Metaphor

8. Simile

9. Simile

10. Metaphor

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