Daily Warm-Ups

FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE

Level II
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**Daily Warm-Ups: Figurative Language**

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Daily Warm-Ups: Figurative Language
Figurative Language

There are so many reasons why we use figurative language: to add color, drama, persuasiveness, ornament, clarity, and wit. We also use it for concealment when we want to cover up our real feelings. To speak literally all the time would make language dull and limit our abilities to express our emotions.

The exercises that follow will invite you to think about figurative language and use it more imaginatively.

To begin with, haul out a comprehensive dictionary and look up the word **figurative**. Write the definition.

Did you notice the use of the word *haul* in the directions above? That is figurative language. If your dictionary is easy to handle, you can see that this is playing with language a bit to give the sentence a little color and drama.
Figurative Language

In your dictionary, look up *figure of speech*, *imagery*, and *trope*, and write the definitions below. Including *figurative language*, what do all four terms have in common? Write your answer below.
In your dictionary, look up the words *literal* and *denotative*, and write their definitions. Then look up the words *figurative* and *connotative*, and write their definitions. What is the difference between a literal, denotative use of language and a figurative, connotative use of language?
Imagery

**Imagery is** the words and details that create images and impressions in the reader's mind. Often, when we read, our minds go beyond the printed words to experience a sight, a smell, or a feeling that is suggested by the writing. Imagery is the language that appeals to and calls upon our senses. It makes writing more vivid, thus helping the writing come alive. Imagery is not just visual; it can appear in many forms and can go beyond our five senses.

Look at the following example of imagery from Adah Isaacs Menken's poem “Answer Me.” The author calls upon our senses of sight and hearing as well as our emotions of fear and recklessness.

The trees clash in vain their naked swords against the door . . .

The darkness presses his black forehead close to the window pane, and beckons me without.

What vivid language is used by the author? What image is created by the use of the language?

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What vivid language is used by the author? What image is created by the use of the language?
Imagery

In the space below, write a short paragraph about a topic of your choice, in two ways. First write the paragraph without any imagery. Then rewrite the paragraph using imagery. You should call upon all five sentences to rewrite the paragraph. Which paragraph is more interesting? Why?
### Imagery

Read the descriptive words below that appeal to the senses. On the line beside each word, write **SI** for sight, **SM** for smell, **TO** for touch, **TA** for taste, or **H** for hearing. You may use a dictionary for help.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Word</th>
<th>Sight</th>
<th>Smell</th>
<th>Touch</th>
<th>Taste</th>
<th>Hearing</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>aromatic</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>SI</td>
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<td>piquant</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>SM</td>
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<tr>
<td>bitter</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>SI</td>
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<td>pungent</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>SM</td>
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<tr>
<td>chartreuse</td>
<td>SI</td>
<td></td>
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<td>shrill</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td>TO</td>
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<tr>
<td>chattering</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>smooth</td>
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<td>dissonant</td>
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<td>staccato</td>
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<td>ebony</td>
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<td>stark</td>
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<td>H</td>
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<tr>
<td>fragrant</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>SI</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tangy</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>SM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>iridescent</td>
<td>SI</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>velvety</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>TO</td>
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<tr>
<td>melodious</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>SI</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>vermilion</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>SM</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>nubby</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>SI</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>viscous</td>
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Read the paragraph below. Notice the author’s use of imagery.

The ground was rich brown and smelled of growing things. In the round, stone-encircled garden bed, flowers in a dizzying variety of colors waved in the gentle breeze. Lydia trod upon the grassy, verdant pathway, pausing to look at a stand of cheery yellow daylilies. Upon them shiny, red beetles swarmed, from stem to petal.

On another sheet of paper, draw a picture, in color, of what the paragraph describes. Compare your picture with that of a classmate. How do they differ?
Imagery

Choose a color photograph or other image to work with. It could be a photograph in your textbook, a magazine photo, a reproduction of a painting, or any other image. Try to choose one that shows an interesting scene.

Write a paragraph that describes the scene. Where do you think it might be? If there are people in the picture, what might they be doing? What is the weather like? Try to appeal to all the senses in your paragraph, so that your readers can imagine what it is like to be in the scene you describe.
Writers use imagery to give readers a sense of a scene. To do this, they use words that give lots of sensory detail, not just facts about the scene.

Write three or four sentences to describe the appearance of someone you know. Your description MUST NOT use any of the words below.

- tall
- short
- fat
- thin
- handsome
- ugly
- pretty
- fair
- dark
- blonde
- light
- beautiful

imagery
Imagery

Writers use imagery to appeal to the senses. They do this by adding details about color, texture, scent, and so forth. The same idea can often be presented in different ways, to appeal to different senses.

The sentence below gives a straightforward description of an event. Rewrite the sentence five times, using words that appeal to each of the five senses: hearing, smell, touch, taste, and sight.

As the snow fell, she walked down the street with a cup of hot chocolate.

hearing: ________________________________________________

smell: ________________________________________________

touch: ________________________________________________

Taste: ________________________________________________

Sight: ________________________________________________
Good writing often means not using the obvious word to describe something. For example, to describe grass, you could use the word green. Or you could use the name of a specific shade of green, such as olive, sap, lime, or mint.

Read the following facts about flamingos.

Flamingos are a type of wading bird. Their feathers are pink. They are about five feet tall, with long, thin legs.

Now, write a description of a flock of flamingos. Do not use any of the following adjectives in your description.

pink  long  tall  thin
Imagery

Read the paragraph below. Notice that it is devoid of vivid imagery! After you have read the paragraph, think about ways the author could have enticed a reader by including descriptive language. Then rewrite the paragraph using imagery. Try to appeal to all a reader’s senses. But remember, too much imagery can seem forced or can bore the reader.

Yesterday, we walked down to the pond. It was hot outside. We went swimming in the water. Inez did a cannonball off the dock. We swam for hours. We ate sandwiches under a tree. Then we took a walk. At the end of the day, bugs started biting us. We headed home, just in time to see the sun setting.

Rewritten version:

Yesterday, we walked down to the pond. It was hot outside. We went swimming in the water. Inez did a cannonball off the dock. We swam for hours. We ate sandwiches under a tree. Then we took a walk. At the end of the day, bugs started biting us. We headed home, just in time to see the sun setting.
Each adjective below applies to at least one of the senses. On the line beside each word, write **SI** for sight, **SM** for smell, **TO** for touch, **TA** for taste, or **H** for hearing. (Some words may fit in more than one category.)

| ____ abrasive ____ fresh ____ rustling |
| ____ acrid ____ glowing ____ salty |
| ____ bright ____ hazy ____ shadowy |
| ____ clinking ____ luminous ____ sour |
| ____ coarse ____ muttering ____ sweet |
| ____ fetid ____ rank ____ waxy |
Imagery

Imagery in writing often appeals to our sense of sight. But remember it can also appeal to our senses of hearing, smell, taste, and touch as well.

Read the following description of a Thanksgiving dinner:

The turkey was the centerpiece of the table, golden and crisp, with steam wafting delicately from the skin. The table was set with orange candles in wooden holders, celebrating the autumn harvest season. The ice cubes in the water goblets gleamed in the candlelight, making the evening meal even more magical and festive. The family, from toddlers to grandparents, encircled the table, anticipating the meal ahead.

Now rewrite the paragraph about a Thanksgiving turkey dinner, without using any visual imagery. Instead, appeal to the senses of hearing, smell, taste, and touch. Share your descriptions with classmates. Discuss the feeling that each student’s description conveys.

Imagery
Simile

A simile is a comparison using the word *like* or *as*. Similes are used often and are easily recognizable. Some similes are so common, they are almost cliché. Read the examples below.

- blind as a bat
- slept like a log
- thin as a rail
- as white as snow

Write similes to complete the following phrases. Avoid clichés.

- as fresh as _________________________
- as busy as _________________________
- hurt like __________________________
- smooth as _________________________
- shone like _________________________
Simile

Write a poem describing a friend using only similes. Include both physical characteristics and personality traits.
Some similes create comparisons you can visualize. For example, if someone said “That cake is as light as a feather,” you could imagine a cake being lifted off a table by the breeze. If someone was described as being “busy as a bee,” you could visualize someone with a large pair of wings, flying quickly from task to task.

Create a simile of your own that calls up a visual image. Write your simile on the line below. Then either sketch the image or write a sentence or two describing it.

______________________________________________________
Simile

**Similes often compare** two things that don’t have much in common. This makes the comparison more striking. For example, someone might say, “Her eyes are like stars.” The two things being compared are eyes and stars, which are not very similar. What the writer wants to suggest, though, is the brightness of the eyes, or the magic and mystery the eyes hold—like distant stars.

Below are two lists of words. Match each word on the left with a word on the right. Use the two words to write a simile. Then compare your similes with those of classmates.

- hair
- smile
- puppy
- car
- test

- brick
- snow
- waterfall
- tree
- sunshine
Simile

Read the similes below. Then answer the questions that follow.

The parent supported his child as sclerenchyma supports a plant.

The girl's mother said the girl was like a tatterdemalion for dressing in such old clothes.

She was so happy she glowed like a bioluminescent creature.

1. What is unusual about the similes above?

2. Do similes lose their effectiveness when the words used in them are not easily recognizable? Explain.

3. Rewrite one of the similes above using more standard vocabulary.
Simile

Choose an object from the list below. Then write as many similes as you can about it. Try to come up with at least five.

- pencil
- apple
- plant
- book
- key
- lake

1. ___________________________________________________________________
2. ___________________________________________________________________
3. ___________________________________________________________________
4. ___________________________________________________________________
5. ___________________________________________________________________
Simile

Similes are often used in poetry. Since musical lyrics are poetry, similes are often found in music. Bob Dylan’s “Like a Rolling Stone” is a popular example of a simile used in music. Think of the lyrics to some of your favorite music. If you can’t think of any, actually read the lyrics. The lyrics often come with the CD, or you may search for them on the Internet. The title of the song may contain a simile, or there may be similes within the lyrics. Find as many examples as you can. Write them below. Then share your examples with your classmates.