

Where the Red Fern Grows

Literature/Language Focus: Figurative Language

Figurative language communicates ideas beyond their literal meaning to create an image in the reader's mind. The author chooses his words carefully to convey meaning to the reader. There is a purpose (intent) behind his word choices. Sometimes figurative language is used to help develop a character or setting while at other times, it can be used to set the mood of a piece. Sometimes, it is used simply to add interest to his writing. Simile and metaphor are two types of figurative language, used to *compare* two unlike people or things.

- A **simile** compares two unlike things *using* the words "like" or "as."

For example:

"When Billy was training his dogs he was as busy as a bee." In this simile, which uses *as* in the comparison, Billy's energy level is being *compared* to a bee that is scurrying around quickly and energetically among the flowers.

The **author's intent** in using this simile is to develop Billy's character by comparing him to the bee, a very active insect, showing that Billy was working incredibly energetically.

- A **metaphor** compares two unlike things *without using* the words like or as.

For example:

"Billy was a warrior when he was training his dogs." In this metaphor, which does not use either like or as, Billy is being *compared* to a warrior.

The **author's intent** in using this metaphor is to further develop Billy's character by comparing Billy to a warrior, who is tough, loyal, fearless, and strong, and doesn't give up on accomplishing his goal.

Directions: For each of the passages below write whether it includes a simile or a metaphor. Then explain what is being compared and the effect of this on the reader.

1. "With eyes as big as a hoot owl's, I looked and listened."

a. Type of Figurative Language _____

b. Comparison and Author's Intent _____

2. "Papa's words perked me up just like air does an inflated inner tube."

a. Type of Figurative Language _____

b. Comparison and Author's Intent _____

3. "The girl pup saved him. Like a cat in a corn crib, she sneaked in from behind and sank her needle-sharp teeth in the coon's back."

a. Type of Figurative Language _____

b. Comparison and Author's Intent _____

4. "The day hunting season opened I was as nervous as Samie, our house cat."

a. Type of Figurative Language _____

b. Comparison and Author's Intent _____

5. "Old Dan...just lay there in the sunshine all stretched out and limber as a rag."

a. Type of Figurative Language _____

b. Comparison and Author's Intent _____

6. "The starlit heaven was a large blue umbrella, outspread and with the handle broken off."

a. Type of Figurative Language _____

b. Comparison and Author's Intent _____

7. "I had never seen a night so peaceful and still. All around me, tall sycamores gleamed like white streamers in the moonlight."

a. Type of Figurative Language _____

b. Comparison and Author's Intent _____

8. "I took a deep breath and threw back my head to give the call of the hunter, but something went wrong. My throat was an enormous knot. I swallowed a couple of times and the knot disappeared."

a. Type of Figurative Language _____

b. Comparison and Author's Intent _____

9. "White sheets of water, knocked high in the moonlight by his churning feet, gleamed like thousands of tiny white stars."

a. Type of Figurative Language _____

b. Comparison and Author's Intent _____

10. "While prowling the woods, I had seen the big tree many times. I had always stopped and admired it. Like a king in his own domain, it towered far above the smaller trees."

a. Type of Figurative Language _____

b. Comparison and Author's Intent _____

11. "It had taken me quite a while to find a name suitable for the big sycamore. For a while, I had called it 'the chicken tree.' In some ways, it reminded me of a mother hen hovering over her young in a rainstorm. Its huge limbs spread out over the small birch, ash, box elder, and water oak as if it alone were their protector."

a. Type of Figurative Language _____

b. Comparison and Author's Intent _____

12. "Little Ann started turning in circles, a whirlwind of excitement."

a. Type of Figurative Language _____

b. Comparison and Author's Intent _____

13. "At first it was easy. My ax was sharp and the chips flew. Two hours later things were different. My arms felt like two dead grapevines, and my back felt like someone had pulled a plug out of one end of it and drained all the sap out."

a. Type of Figurative Language _____

b. Comparison and Author's Intent _____

14. "When my sister came with the lunch bucket, I could have kissed her, but I didn't. She took one look at the big tree and her blue eyes got as big as a guinea's egg."

a. Type of Figurative Language _____

b. Comparison and Author's Intent _____

15. "You had better get out of there," I said. "If that tree takes a notion to fall, it'll mash you flatter than a tadpole's tail."

a. Type of Figurative Language _____

b. Comparison and Author's Intent _____
