

Grade 5 Playlist: Determine the Meaning of Figurative Language

Aligns with CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.5.4:

- Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative language such as metaphors and similes.

Welcome

Writers of fiction use colorful language to describe settings, characters, and events. Sometimes, words mean something other than their dictionary definition. Figurative language, such as metaphors and similes, makes comparisons between two things in order to describe one of them in a new and different way. Understanding the meaning of figurative language can help with understanding not only the words on the page, but the emotions and sense of imagination the author wants to express.

Objectives

In this playlist, the student will learn and practice how to:

- identify examples of figurative language.
- explain what a metaphor and simile is.
- use context to determine the meaning of words and phrases.

Review

Key Terms

- **Context clues** are words, phrases, and sentences surrounding an unfamiliar word or phrase that can provide information that helps determine the meaning of the unfamiliar word or phrase.
- **Literal meaning** is the exact definition of a word.
- **Figurative meaning** is a meaning implied by the word or phrase that is not the literal meaning.
- **Simile** is a type of figurative language that compares two unlike things using the words **like** or **as**.
- **Metaphor** is a type of figurative language that compares two unlike things using the word **is**.

Exploring the Standard

When reading text, often a reader will find words and phrases that he or she does not understand. This is especially common if the text uses figurative language. However, there are steps a reader can take to understand the unfamiliar language!



A Closer Look: Figurative Language

Figurative language is when the author uses words to say something other than the literal meaning of the word. The literal meaning of the word is the dictionary definition. But words can have other meanings as well. This is because authors use figurative language for effect. Figurative language helps readers feel and imagine what the author has written. Consider the following examples.

Example 1

Look at the following sentences:

1. Would you like a piece of cake?
2. Doing this homework will be a piece of cake after the work we did in class earlier today.

The phrase “a piece of cake” is used in both a literal and figurative way in the sentences. In the first sentence, the phrase is used literally. Someone is slicing a cake and offering pieces to people. In the second sentence, the phrase is used figuratively. The sentence is about homework, not cake. But, the use of the phrase “a piece of cake” lets readers know that the author thinks the homework will be easy. The student already completed a more difficult assignment earlier in the day. “A piece of cake” is used to emphasize that something is easy.

Read!

For a basic overview of figurative and literal language, read this document:

- <http://www.readwritethink.org/files/resources/lesson-docs/LiteralFigurativeHandout.pdf>

Watch!

Also, watch this video about identifying literal and figurative language:

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lcr8F33Xgb0>

A Closer Look: Metaphors and Similes

Metaphors and similes are two important and common types of figurative language. Both metaphors and similes make comparisons to emphasize something. The emphasis could be on an emotion, idea, action, etc. These types of figurative language help the reader picture what the author means and adds depth to the text.

Example 2

1. Shoes are articles of clothing worn to protect feet; they can take on the odor of the foot. (literal)
2. The shoes are as smelly as two-week-old leftovers. (simile)
3. The shoes are weapons aimed against my nose. (metaphor)



Teaching Notes: Determine the meaning of Figurative Language

The goal of RL.5.4 is for students to understand and be able to determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text by looking at context clues. In particular, students should be able to understand and determine the meaning of figurative language, such as metaphors and similes. The following information contains ideas that teachers can incorporate into their classroom as well as additional resources to peruse and integrate into instruction as appropriate.

Classroom Activities:

1. Present students with an object. Ask students to use figurative language to come up with as many creative descriptions of the object as they can. Encourage every student to share one description. Write descriptions on the board. Finally, have students identify which descriptions are metaphors and which are similes.
2. Encourage students to identify figurative language such as metaphors and similes during the class read-aloud. Keep a list of metaphors and similes the author has used. Ask students to explain the figurative term, using context from the paragraph to support their answer.

Writing Prompts

1. Assign students an excerpt from a grade-appropriate literary text that has at least five examples of figurative language, including metaphors and similes. Direct students to show their understanding of figurative language by answering the following question in an essay: What is the meaning of at least two examples of figurative language, and what does it add to the excerpt?
2. Have students write two paragraphs on the same topic—one using only literal language and one using figurative language. Have students compare and contrast the paragraphs so they recognize the impact that figurative language can have on the reader.

Additional Teaching Resources

Consider these additional resources when teaching RL.5.4:

RL.5.4 curriculum: This resource provides lessons around RL.5.4.

- <https://www.engageny.org/ccls-ela/rl54>

RL.5.4 Worksheets: This resource provides worksheets on R.5.4.

- <http://www.education.com/common-core/CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.5.4/worksheets/>

Lesson 5: Figurative Language: These resources provide a lesson plan on teaching figurative language using different texts.

- <http://www.readworks.org/lessons/grade5/leaf-leaf-autumn-poems/lesson-5>
- <http://www.readworks.org/lessons/grade5/words-wings-treasury-african-american-poetry-and-art/lesson-5>

