

Figurative Language - Definitions

Figurative language enables us to explore language in new and interesting ways. Figurative language is a form of language that uses concrete, literal images as a base. The concrete image is combined with a startling and seemingly unrelated image to create something new.

We will focus on three types of figurative language on this page: **similes, metaphors and idioms.**

Simile: a statement that one thing is like another. Similes use the words *like* and *as* to combine ideas. For instance, '*her skin was like milk,*' or '*her eyes were as blue as the sky.*'

Metaphor: an implied comparison between two different things. Unlike simile, metaphor is indirect rather than direct. For instance, '*the boy was a monkey when he climbed.*'

Idiom: an idiom is an expression, word or phrase that is in common usage, which means something different from what the words literally imply. A common idiom is, '*a wolf in sheep's clothing.*'

Figurative Language – Model Scenario

The avalanche came thundering down the mountain. *Like a huge wave of white foamy water it covered everything in its path.*

Like a huge wave of white foamy water is a....

- A. metaphor
- B. simile
- C. idiom

Answer: The correct answer is **B**; simile. The passage uses the phrase '*like a huge wave.*' Similes can be recognised easily because they contain the words **like** or **as** in their statements.

Figurative Language – Activities

1. My little brother's ate the French fries very quickly and left no crumbs, nor a trace of salt. His mouth was a vacuum cleaner.

His mouth was a vacuum cleaner is a...

- A. metaphor
- B. simile
- C. idiom

2. We had to line up in a queue which wasn't much fun. The queue was as slow moving as a turtle crossing muddy ground.

The queue was as slow moving as a turtle is a...

- A. metaphor
- B. simile
- C. idiom

3. It was a very sunny day at the coast. The sea glittered like diamonds under lights.

The sea glittered like diamonds under lights is a...

- A. metaphor
- B. simile
- C. idiom

4. We stayed on the beach until the sun went down. The beach is our playground and the sun our closing sign.

The beach is our playground and the sun our closing sign is a...

- A. metaphor
- B. simile
- C. idiom

5. My friend doesn't have a lot of tact or manners. He doesn't always mean to, but he hurts peoples' feelings by calling them names. He's like a bull in a china shop.

He's like a bull in a china shop is a...

- A. metaphor
- B. simile
- C. idiom

6. Matthew caught the ball in his outstretched hand and fell to the ground. What a great catch! Matthew has the hands of a monkey that swings from branch to branch in the trees.

Matthew has the hands of a monkey is a...

- A. metaphor
- B. simile
- C. idiom

7. My sister's agility is amazing. She is a cat. She can leap effortlessly through the air and still land on her feet.

My sister's agility is amazing. She is a cat is a...

- A. metaphor
- B. simile
- C. idiom

8. Once in a blue moon we get to have fish and chips for dinner.

Once in a blue moon is a...

- A. metaphor
- B. simile
- C. idiom

9. Our new coach is like a mythical, fire-breathing, scaly beast that swoops down out the clouds. He is very difficult to get along with.

Our coach is like a fire-breathing, scaly beast is a...

- A. metaphor
- B. simile
- C. idiom

10. I had no idea that seagulls were that fast. Quick as a flash the chip in my hand disappeared.

Quick as a flash is a...

- A. metaphor
- B. simile
- C. idiom

Answer Key:

1. A
2. B
3. B
4. A
5. C
6. A
7. A
8. C
9. B
10. B