

Marvellous Metaphors

Lesson plan

Topics: The use of metaphor; Shakespeare

Level: C1/C2

Time: 70 minutes

Aims

- to develop students' awareness of metaphors and similes
- to give practice of recognising and analysing metaphors
- to develop students' confidence in writing metaphors

Introduction

This lesson looks at metaphors in general and then Shakespeare's metaphors in more detail. It gives students reading and speaking practice. It provides students with an opportunity to think about metaphors and similes and makes Shakespeare's language more accessible.

Tip – A few lines from Shakespeare's *Sonnet 73* are analysed during the lesson. The whole sonnet and a contemporary translation are included at the end of the lesson plan in case you want to show students the poem in more detail; you may wish to make photocopies of this.

Procedure

Warmer – My love is like ... (10 minutes)

The warmer is a short activity to engage students and introduce the concept of metaphors and similes. It also prepares students for **Task 4 – Writing metaphors**.

- Write the sentence *My love is like a red, red rose* on the board.
- Tell students that it is from a poem by a Scottish poet called Robert Burns.
- Explain that 'my love' refers to a person, rather than love itself, and ask students if they think that the comparison is an effective one. Why?

Suggested answers: *The comparison is effective as roses are beautiful, delicate and smell sweet. Also, the colour red is often used to represent love, possibly because of the link with a heart.*

- Tell students that this is an example of a **simile**, where two things are compared using 'like'.
- Now rub off the words 'red, red' and replace them with 'blue, blue'.
- Ask the students if they can think of a replacement for the word 'rose' to go with the colour blue. (*sky/sea/eye* etc.)
- Now rub off the words 'blue, blue' and replace them with 'green, green'.
- Ask the students if they can think of another replacement for the word 'rose' to go with the colour green. (*leaf/tree/wood*)
- Now write up the line *My love is a red, red rose*.

- Explain to students that this line is now an example of a metaphor. Like a simile, a metaphor links two different things by comparing them, but it does not use 'like'.
- Ask students if the sentence seems different without 'like'.

Suggested answers: *Without 'like' the comparison seems more confident, but it only makes sense to us if there is an obvious link between the two things. For example, 'My love is a red, red sock' would mean nothing to the reader.*

Task 1 – As brave as a lion (10 minutes)

This task gives the opportunity for students to use similes. It also provides speaking practice.

- Tell students to work in pairs and choose a word from the box to complete the similes.
- Feedback answers.
- Tell the students to ask their partner if they know anyone who matches the similes.

Student A: Do you know anyone who is as strong as an ox?

Student B: Yes, my uncle is as strong as an ox.

Student A: Why?

Student B: Because he goes to the gym every day.

- Ask students if they can think up two new similes using animals from their country.
- Elicit feedback.

Answers

1. a bee
2. an ox
3. a tortoise
4. an owl
5. a peacock
6. a mule

Task 2 – Finding metaphors (15 minutes)

This activity gives students practice in recognising metaphors in a text and working out what they mean. It prepares them for Task 3 – Discussing metaphors and Task 4 – Writing metaphors.

- (a.) Ask students to read the short text about Mrs Smith's problem children and underline any expressions they see related to roads, travel or transport.
- Check answers.

Answers:

Mrs Smith has really got problems with her children. Her oldest son Jake is at a crossroads. He was in a dead-end job so he gave it up. Now he can't find another one and he doesn't know which way to turn. His relationship with his girlfriend is over. They have had a bumpy ride so they have decided to separate. Meanwhile the younger son, Cyril, has gone off the rails. He has stopped going to school. 'It's very worrying,' said Mrs Smith. 'I want both my sons to get back on track as soon as possible.'

- (b.) Tell students to work with a partner and match the six metaphors with the definitions in the worksheet.
- **Elicit answers.**

Answers:

1. ended up in a chaotic state = gone off the rails
2. something which has no future = dead-end
3. a difficult time = a bumpy ride
4. a point where a decision must be made = a crossroads
5. start working normally again = get back on track
6. what to do next = which way to turn

Task 3 – Discussing metaphors (15 minutes)

This task is to give students a brief insight into how Shakespeare used different metaphors to describe the same thing, in this case old age. It prepares students for having a go at writing their own metaphors in Task 4 – Writing metaphors. There is a contemporary translation of the poem at the end of this lesson plan.

- Explain to students that extracts a. and b. come from the same poem, Sonnet 73. In both extracts Shakespeare paints a picture of himself as an old man, but using different metaphors.
- Ask students to read a. and b. in groups and answer the questions.
- Elicit feedback.

Suggested answers: 1. Extract a. refers to autumn. 2. Extract b. refers to evening.

3. There is no right answer for this question, the aim being to get students discussing the good points of each extract.

Good points students might notice about a: The image of a few yellow leaves, or none, reminds us of an old man with thinning or no hair. The image of a tree shaking against the cold again reminds us of someone old and frail, who can't protect themselves against the cold.

Good points students might notice about b: The image of a sunset fading is a good comparison with old age, when someone can lose their looks, strength and health. The use of 'by and by', in the third line, gives the impression that night is gradually creeping up, just like death does.

Task 4 – Writing metaphors (20 minutes)

This fun activity is to try and get students to use their imaginations and become more confident about using English creatively.

- Tell students to read the three Shakespeare metaphors and their meanings and then, in groups, come up with their own metaphor for each meaning.
- When students have finished, ask the groups to read out their three metaphors in a different order so the other students have to guess which meanings the metaphors refer to.

Homework

Ask students to write a short description either of themselves or someone they know well. Ask them to use at least three of the metaphors or similes that they have encountered in the lesson.

Sonnet 73 by William Shakespeare

- 1 That time of year thou mayst in me behold
- 2 When yellow leaves, or none, or few, do hang
- 3 Upon those boughs which shake against the cold,
- 4 Bare ruined choirs where late the sweet birds sang.
- 5 In me thou seest the twilight of such day
- 6 As after sunset fadeth in the west,
- 7 Which by and by black night doth take away,
- 8 Death's second self, that seals up all in rest.
- 9 In me thou seest the glowing of such fire
- 10 That on the ashes of his youth doth lie
- 11 As the death-bed whereon it must expire,
- 12 Consumed with that which it was nourished by.
- 13 This thou perceiv'st, which makes thy love more strong,
- 14 To love that well which thou must leave ere long.

Contemporary translation of Sonnet 73 by William Shakespeare

- 1 I might remind you of that time of year
- 2 When yellow leaves, none or just a few hang
- 3 Upon branches that shake with the cold,
- 4 Bare and dying, where a sweet choir of birds used to sit and sing.

- 5 In me you see the twilight of a day
- 6 After the sun has faded in the west
- 7 A twilight which black night gradually takes away,
- 8 Another kind of death, that seals everything with sleep.
- 9 In me you see the glowing of a fire
- 10 Lying on the ashes of my youth
- 11 As if on the death-bed where it must die,
- 12 Consumed by what once fed it.
- 13 You see all this and it makes your love stronger,
- 14 So you can love what you will soon lose.