

Writing: A Comprehensive Guide to the Writing Process

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Name _____ Date _____

Imagery



Imagery is figurative language that appeals to the senses of the reader: taste, touch, sight, smell, and hearing. Carefully chosen words can help your readers “see” or “hear” what you are describing.

Examples

Sight: The square of sky I saw through my window changed from the night’s flat velvet black to the shot-silk grey of early dawn, that lustrous grey that suggests the sunrise soon to come.

Smell: The air was rich with the sweet, yeasty essence of new bread, tickling the nostrils, making the mouth water.

Sound: As the truck lumbered over the bridge, the old boards creaked and groaned under its weight.



Exercise 3.3

Practice using imagery by adding “sensory” words to the following sentences.

Example

We heard the bells.

The jangling bells chimed the hour.

1. The rusty gate was noisy.

2. The pizza was hot.

3. They jumped into the river.

4. The machinery was noisy.

5. We heard the sound of traffic.

6. Cobwebs covered the entrance to the cave.

7. Ricardo walked toward the house.

Name _____ Date _____

Irony

Irony is a figure of speech in which the literal meaning (the word-for-word meaning) is the opposite of the author's intended meaning.

At first glance, this may seem to make little sense. Still, we use and hear irony every day. Have you ever lost something you needed and said, "Well, this is great, isn't it"? Did you really mean that what happened was good? Of course you didn't. You meant just the opposite. You were using irony.

Read the paragraph below. Underline the words that are meant to be ironic.

Marie learned the hard way that not all friends can be trusted. She had not

meant to tell her secret to anyone. In a moment of weakness and hoping for understanding, she told Angelica. Later she learned that Angelica had repeated it. Now, after two days, everyone in school knew. "What a great friend Angelica is," she thought.

If you underlined the last sentence, you are absolutely right. Angelica was not a great friend. The writer meant just the opposite of what she wrote.

**Exercise 3.4**

Underline the examples of irony in the following sentences and explain why each is ironic.

1. As Monica finished the huge stack of work she said, "That was a good time!"

Ironic because: _____

2. "Oh, wonderful," Lloyd said, as the lightning and thunder moved closer.

Ironic because: _____

3. The lionhearted hunter was frightened by the mouse that darted between his feet.

Ironic because: _____

4. The runner arrived at home plate to learn that he had never touched first base. His homerun was a "no run."

Ironic because: _____

5. "It's nothing," Max announced as he turned in his 56-page report.

Ironic because: _____



Name _____ Date _____

Simile

Similes compare two unlike things, using the form “like a” or “as . . . as.”

Example

Kimi’s face was as white as a camellia blossom.

Similes work by giving one of the things being compared the characteristics of the other thing. In the example above, we don’t know what Kimi’s essential characteristics are. But one of the characteristics of a camellia flower is whiteness. By comparing Kimi’s face and a camellia flower, this simile is saying, “Kimi’s face was absolutely white.” In fact, a girl’s face would never really be as white as a flower, but the simile helps us visualize her face as unusually white, whiter than a face should be. The same is true in similes like “biceps like a rock,” or “hands soft as thistledown.” The comparison lends one thing the essential characteristics of another thing.

Read this excerpt from Charles Dickens’s *A Christmas Carol*. Notice Dickens’s use of similes in his description of Scrooge. Underline each simile.

Oh! But he was a tight-fisted hand at the grindstone was Scrooge! A squeezing, wrenching, grasping, scraping, clutching, covetous old sinner! Hard and as sharp as flint, from which no steel had ever struck out generous fire; secret and self-contained, and solitary as an oyster. . . .

Do you see how Dickens used words with distinct characteristics in his comparisons?

**Exercise 3.5**

Practice identifying the essential characteristics of things. List as many characteristics as you can for each word below.

Example

concrete—hard, grey, waterproof, man-made, moldable, durable

1. spring water _____
2. snow _____
3. knife _____
4. asphalt _____
5. granite _____



Name _____ Date _____

**Exercise 3.6**

Now try to think of things that have the essential characteristics of these adjectives.

Example	dry—dust, sand, desert, wind
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1. wet _____
2. cold _____
3. hard _____
4. thick _____
5. gentle _____

**Exercise 3.7**

Now choose words to complete the similes below. Find nouns with the characteristics you want to suggest in your comparison.

Example	Grass is like a blanket covering the earth.
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1. The child was as thoughtful as _____ .
2. Summer is like _____ .
3. The moon is like _____ .
4. The weather is as changeable as _____ .
5. Friendship is like _____ .
6. Good friends are like _____ .
7. Her remarks are as sharp as _____ .
8. He ran as fast as _____ .
9. The book is as dull as _____ .

Overused Similes

Like other figures of speech, similes can be overused. Some similes have been used so often that they have lost their freshness. Similes like the ones listed here are so overused that they won't add anything to your writing. Avoid them, and look for fresh comparisons of your own.

Overused Similes	
as strong as an ox	as slow as molasses
as wise as an owl	as pretty as a picture
as pale as a ghost	as quiet as a mouse

