

LESSON 9: MEET METAPHOR

MATERIALS

- Student notebooks
- Teacher’s copy of “Clouds” by Christina Rossetti (available at <https://rainydaypoems.com/poems-for-kids/nature-poems/clouds-by-christina-rossetti/>)
- What’s the Metaphor? Prompt Sheet (one copy per student)
- Animal Metaphor Prompt Sheet (copies available for students who have difficulty generating ideas)

OBJECTIVES



BIG IDEA

Poets use metaphor to connect readers to important ideas through imagery and to propose new ideas and connections to the readers.

Poetry helps readers see the extraordinary in the ordinary.

Students will be able to:

- identify literary devices, including metaphor
- identify the main idea of a selection
- generate ideas for writing
- develop the skills to participate as knowledgeable, reflective, creative and critical members of a literary community



LANGUAGE

Important Vocabulary:

- Imagery
- Metaphor

SEQUENCE

Poetry for Appreciation



CLASS

Invite students to find a comfortable place for listening. Remind students to listen to and enjoy the way the poem sounds, and they might also listen for some of the imagery and details used by the poet.

Read “Clouds” by Christina Rossetti.

TEACHER NOTES

Biographical information about Christina Rossetti, who remains one of the best loved English poets, is also available at www.poets.org, along with several of her other poems.



CLASS

Introducing Metaphor

Read “Clouds” again, this time asking students to think about the **images** the poet uses to describe clouds (white sheep) and sky (blue hill). Discuss unknown words as needed.



COMPREHENSION

Tell students that sheep are a good image for clouds because they look white and fluffy, the way sheep look, especially from a distance. Clouds move across the sky the way sheep move across the ground as they graze.



LANGUAGE

Explain that the kind of image Rosetti uses in “Clouds” is called a **metaphor**.

Have students copy the word and definition for metaphor into their workbooks: *A metaphor is a comparison between two unlike nouns (people, places, or things).*

Give some other examples of metaphors in everyday language (e.g., *time is money; I am in a sea of trouble; my friend was a rock during my time of trouble*), and see if students can suggest some others. If you’d like, have students work with a partner to come up with a metaphor for an animal (such as a family pet), a person they are familiar with (such as a family member, or friend), or an object in the classroom or school.



BIG IDEA

Continue by explaining that metaphor is a powerful tool used by poets to connect readers to important ideas. Poets don’t usually use common, everyday metaphors like the ones discussed above. Instead, they create their own metaphors so that they can help readers see something in a surprising way that they have never before considered.

Consider “Clouds” without the metaphors: *Clouds are white/Clouds are fluffy/Clouds move across the sky when the wind blows them around*. In this version, the poet is *telling* readers straight out what she wants to say. But what goods poets do is *show*, through the use of strong imagery, instead of *tell*. A good image sticks in the reader’s mind, so the important message also sticks.

Explain that another benefit of using metaphors is they help us see things differently, which lets us learn new things about the world



TIP

During lessons 9 and 10, you might wish to search online for additional resources for teaching metaphor; some are available at <https://www.udemy.com/blog/metaphor-examples-for-kids/>. These resources may be helpful for struggling students as well as those needing an anchor activity.

Consider sharing two more famous poems about clouds with students, “I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud” by William Wordsworth (<https://www.poetseers.org/themes/poems-about-nature>) and “Alone Looking at the Mountain” by Li Po (<https://www.poetseers.org/poem-of-the-day-archive/poems-about-mountains>). Ask students to think about the similar and different ways each poet describes the way clouds look and move across the sky. Students may wish to copy one or both of these poems to include in their poetry anthologies.

around us. This is one of the benefits of reading and writing poetry. There is an infinite amount of metaphors in the world. Everyday, new people make new connections that lead to new poems. This is something we can do all the time because our intelligence and knowledge continue to grow the more we read and write new things.

For example, consider the metaphor: *Life is a river*. Ask students what is being described (life). What do we usually associate with a river? In order to understand that, start with the qualities of the river. Rivers are _____. Life is also _____. Ask students to consider and describe a river. Compare and contrast student responses with how life is being described in this metaphor. How does this make us consider life differently? (Possible answers could include the idea that sometimes life is slow, and sometimes it is fast. Life isn't always "good," and it's not always "bad." It's a mix of the two. This can be related to why some people might be pessimists, and others might be optimists.) The more unique the connections the students make here, the better. This indicates they are learning something new, rather than simply stating what they already know about life.

Consider sharing the lyrics to Garth Brooks's song, "The River" (<https://genius.com/Garth-brooks-the-river-lyrics>) and/or showing a video of him singing the song. This is a good way to help students think about the ways that songs are (and are not!) poems, as well as showing them the way Brooks uses the river as an analogy for life in the song.

Recognizing Metaphor



COMPREHENSION

- Give each student a copy of the What's the Metaphor? sheet. Work through the first example or two as a whole class by reading the excerpts aloud and discussing the metaphors that are used by each poet.






GROUP

- Allow students to work individually or in small groups of 2–3 to identify one or more metaphors used by the poet in each example.
- Spend some time as a whole group discussing each example. Ask students to describe the image that the metaphor makes for them.



For students who are ready to extend this lesson, have them write down the metaphor on a sheet of paper and then fold their sheet in half. On one side of the sheet, they can draw the literal representation of the metaphor (i.e., for "hope is a bird," they would draw a bird. On the other side of the paper, they can draw the metaphorical meaning (i.e. showing someone who is hopeful). Students could

	<p>also write a short description explaining the meaning of the metaphor as a caption.</p>
<p>Animal Metaphors</p> <div data-bbox="217 451 391 661">  <p>WRITING</p> </div> <p>Invite students to close their eyes and try to imagine that they have turned into an animal that is important to them or an animal important to their area. Think about the animals they interact with (pets, livestock, hunting, fishing). Give them a minute or two to imagine which animal they have turned into and what it would be like to be that animal.</p> <p>Ask students to open their notebooks. Students should write down or draw some of the characteristics and actions of the animal they imagined. How would that animal be similar to or different from how people think they act or behave?</p> <div data-bbox="217 842 391 1052">  <p>INDEPENDENT</p> </div> <p>Ask several students to share their animal with the class and to say whether the animal would make a good metaphor for them in a poem. That is, do the characteristics or actions of the animal tell us something important about that student?</p>	<div data-bbox="1182 405 1356 594">  <p>READINESS</p> </div> <p>Provide the <u>Animal Metaphor Prompt Sheet</u> to students who have difficulty generating ideas for characteristics and actions.</p> <p>It would be helpful and enjoyable for the students if the teacher also generates a metaphor animal to represent themselves.</p> <p>Suggest to students that they might like to use their animal metaphor in a future poem.</p>