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Tracy Was Mad

Identifying Similes

Lesson 1

Teacher Tips

It is likely that students use similes more than any other figure of speech. As we know, common similes are used so often that they constitute one of the largest groups of clichés. In this lesson, students are to identify four of those trite similes in a short story and then use them in sentences. All similes don't have to be hackneyed, this should be pointed out.

Introduction

Lead into the lesson by asking students to fill in a few of these expressions:

- blind as _____
- _____ as a tack
- smart as _____
- like taking candy from _____
- hungry as _____
- _____ as a doornail
- sicker than _____
- like shooting fish in _____
- like making a mountain out of _____

Substitute others if you believe these similes are not readily recognizable by your students.

Follow Through

The similes in the story about Tracy on page 6 are shown in this order:

1. as mad as a wet hen
2. shake like a leaf
3. Quicker than you can say "Jack Robinson"
4. make his ears ring like that cymbal
5. fell like a ton of bricks

"Make his ears ring like that cymbal" is not a trite simile. Encourage your students to be original.

Targeted Outcomes

- Identify five similes in a short story.
- Use four of the similes in sentences.

Tracy Was Mad

A. If you hear someone say that a friend is “happy as a lark,” you aren’t likely to think, “Oh, that’s a simile.” But that’s the name we give to expressions that compare things and use *as*, *like* and *than*. They are commonly heard, and denote a common characteristic. **A simile, then, is a figure of speech in which two unlike things are compared and has the words *as*, *like* or *than*.**

B. Identify five similes in the following paragraphs by underlining them.

Tracy was as mad as a wet hen! She had told her brother she needed her car at 3:00 so she could meet Whitney at the mall, and here it was 3:30 and he hadn’t come back. Tracy wasn’t able to let Whitney know why she was late because Whitney didn’t have a cell phone. Her father took it away from her because Whitney ran up such a whopping bill last month.

Tracy’s father had threatened to do the same with her cell phone. That had made her shake like a leaf because she wouldn’t be the same person without her cell phone. Fortunately, Tracy’s mother had intervened, telling her husband if he did that it wouldn’t be very pleasant in the house. Quicker than you can say “Jack Robinson,” the old guy gave in.

If Kyle ever showed up, she’d make his ears ring like that cymbal he was always hitting when he practiced his drums. Kyle was usually dependable, but lately his head was in the clouds. He’d fallen like a ton of bricks for Krista. Who could get sillier over a girl than her brother?

C. Four of the similes in the passage are used very often in common speech. Write them below; then use each simile in a sentence.

Simile #1: _____

Simile #2: _____

Simile #3: _____

Simile #4: _____

Like What?

Produce 12 Original Similes

Compile a List of Colorful and Effective Expressions

Teacher Tips

“Like What?” can be most effectively introduced after a student has used a colorful expression in class. If you’re fortunate to have students who frequently express themselves in unusual or quaint ways, your class will be aware of the attention-getting value of such language. However, if your students uniformly adopt current clichés, this lesson might follow up a colorful phrase read in a book. Teachers regularly attack the problem of “tired” language, and “Like What?” is well suited to illustrating how much more interesting speech can be when we abandon well-worn conversational devices.

The “warming up” activity offers an opportunity to point out how routinely we use the expressions that come to mind quickly; we have to hesitate a little not to say “sharp as a tack” or “stubborn as a mule.” Ask, “What comes after ‘sells like _____’?” Students will probably say “hot cakes,” and this will enable you to point out how much more interesting language can be when we avoid trite expressions and use vivid, thought-provoking words and phrases. It will also enable you to show how new and fresh analogies can lead to more honest expression. After all, hot cakes are not always best-sellers.

Part two of the lesson asks students to consider reasons for copycat language. Why do people tend to talk in the same manner as those around them? Students will likely begin to become more self-conscious about their own speaking and writing habits.

Follow Through

Note whether students can recognize similes, metaphors and other figures of speech in works they read. After completing this lesson, they should be better able to recognize a simile and other figures of speech.

A useful exercise to test this type of progress is to have students describe a photograph or painting so others can see the picture through the words of the writer or speaker.

Targeted Outcomes

- Complete 12 similes.
- Consider how language as a basic tool of communication has evolved.
- Compile a list of colorful and effective expressions.

Like What?

- A.** Have you ever heard expressions such as “sharp as a tack” or “snug as a bug in a rug”? Or “That’s like trying to find a needle in a haystack”? When we talk like that we are using similes. Similes point out likenesses or similarities in things. You will find the words *as*, *like* or *than* in a simile; *as* and *like* are most often used when we make comparisons.

In this activity think of unusual and colorful ways to compare things. Part of a simile is given; you are to complete it with words of your own. For example, if you were given “clear as _____,” you could supply an ending such as “a mountain stream in spring.” The usual ways to use *clear* as the beginning of a simile are to say or write “clear as a bell” or “clear as crystal,” but you are to think of other ways to convey the ideas.

- | | |
|------------------------|------------------------------|
| 1. pretty as a _____ | 7. like rolling _____ |
| 2. like stealing _____ | 8. crazy as _____ |
| 3. rough as _____ | 9. slippery as _____ |
| 4. straight as _____ | 10. _____ as the day is long |
| 5. smooth as _____ | 11. nervous as _____ |
| 6. black as _____ | 12. straight as _____ |

Let’s reverse the process.
Can you think of an adjective that fits a puppy?

like a puppy or _____ as a puppy.



- B.** Many expressions are heard and used so often that they no longer have much effect upon our ears. Why do you suppose so many of us use the same expressions over and over again?
