



Interpreting figurative language

Reading Comprehension Worksheet

Practice

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Authors use **figurative language** to make descriptions *more interesting*. **Figurative language** does not mean exactly what the words say.

- A **simile** compares two things in a creative way, *using the words “like” or “as.”* Similes are thought of as artistic ways to describe things.
- A **metaphor** compares two things in a creative way *without using the words “like” or “as.”* Metaphors are thought of as artistic ways to describe things.
- An **idiom** is a simile or a metaphor that *many people often use to describe something.*

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Here are some short descriptions. Think about what kind of **figurative language** the author is using to make the descriptions *more interesting*.

Crow tapped Miss Hickory’s hickory nut head with his long yellow beak. “Don’t be so hard-headed, Miss Hickory,” he said. “It is just as I have told you. The family is leaving, and you should start getting ready to move.”

1. What kind of figurative language is the underlined phrase?
 - A. a simile
 - B. a metaphor
 - C. an idiom

Miss Hickory held on tight as Crow flew her to the new house he had found for her. He set her down on the edge of a large bird’s nest. She looked around for a while, and decided to make the best of things. “Why, it is a penthouse!” she exclaimed.

2. What kind of figurative language is the underlined phrase?
 - A. a simile
 - B. a metaphor
 - C. an idiom

Squirrel looked embarrassed. “The reason that I keep forgetting where I buried my nuts is that I was an only child.”
Miss Hickory gave Squirrel a stern look. “That is no excuse at all,” she said. “Just look at you hopping about like a flea! You really should be more responsible.”

3. What kind of figurative language is the underlined phrase?
- A. a simile
 - B. a metaphor
 - C. an idiom

When spring came, Miss Hickory used some soft new leaves to sew herself a skirt, and she knitted a sweater out of blades of grass. She had made it through the winter, and she was feeling more and more at home in the forest. She was as happy as a clam.

4. What kind of figurative language use in this description?
- A. a simile
 - B. a metaphor
 - C. an idiom

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5. How does Crow’s calling Miss Hickory “hard-headed” make this description more interesting?

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6. How does Miss Hickory’s saying that the bird’s nest “is a penthouse” make this description more interesting?

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7. How does Miss Hickory’s saying that Squirrel is “hopping about like a flea” make this description more interesting?

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## Answer Key

**NOTE:** There are two decisions to be made in deciding what kind of figurative language is being used. First, is it a simile, or a metaphor? (If the words “like” or “as” are used, it is a simile, if not, it is a metaphor.) Then, if it is an expression that many people often use to describe something, it is an idiom; otherwise, it is either a simile or a metaphor

1. C – Since the phrase “hard-headed” is *often used* to describe someone who is very stubborn, this expression is an idiom.
2. B – Since the word “penthouse” is *not often used* to describe a bird’s nest (and the words “like” or “as” are not used), this expression is a metaphor.
3. A – Since the phrase “hopping about like a flea” is *not often used* to describe some jumping around at random (and the word “like” is used), this expression is a simile).
4. C – Since the phrase “as happy as a clam” is *often used* to describe someone who is very happy, this expression is an idiom.
5. Accept any reasonable responses, such as, “hard-headed” is a common expression that means someone is stubborn, and Miss Hickory’s head really is hard, because it is made of a hickory nut.
6. Accept any reasonable responses, such as, the plain bird’s nest is extremely far from being what we think of as a penthouse.
7. Accept any reasonable responses, such as, it makes it easy to picture Squirrel’s silly behavior.