

Figurative Language Activities

Before the activities, introduce the idea with a character. "Freddy Figurative" is a wizard who doesn't like to say things directly. He uses magic words to paint pictures in our minds! This frame makes the concept feel like a fun game.

1. Simile Sculptures

Concept: Similes compare two things using like or as. This activity gets them moving and thinking creatively.

How to Play:

1. Call out a starter phrase: "As busy as a..." "As slow as..." "She was as happy as..."
2. Students shout out their ideas (e.g., "bee!", "a sloth!", "a kid on the last day of school!").
3. Then, call out a new simile and have students freeze their bodies into a sculpture that represents it.

Example: "Freeze like you are as brave as a lion!" or "Show me you are as tired as a dog after a long walk."

2. Metaphor Match-Up

Concept: Metaphors are direct comparisons without using like or as (e.g., "He is a night owl").

How to Play:

1. Create a set of cards. One set has straightforward metaphors ("My big brother is a couch potato"). The other set has the meanings ("My big brother is lazy and watches a lot of TV").
2. Students work in pairs or small groups to match the metaphor with its meaning.
3. Extension: Have them draw the metaphor literally. What does a "couch potato" actually look like? (A potato with eyes, sitting on a couch remote). This highlights the figurative meaning through humor.

3. Personification Charades

Concept: Personification gives human traits to non-human things.

How to Play:

1. Write down non-human nouns on slips of paper (e.g., the wind, a pencil, a cookie, a basketball, the sun).
2. Write down human actions/emotions on another set (e.g., danced, cried, whispered, cheered, smiled).
3. A student picks one slip from each pile and must act out the combination.
 - Example: "The wind" + "whispered" = The student acts like the wind gently whispering through the trees.
 - Example: "The sun" + "smiled" = The student beams a big, bright smile.
4. The class has to guess both the object and the action to form the personified sentence: "The wind whispered" or "The sun smiled."

4. Idiom Illustration: Literal vs. Figurative

Concept: Idioms are phrases with hidden meanings (e.g., "It's raining cats and dogs").

How to Play:

1. Give each student a large piece of paper folded in half.
2. On the left side, label it "Literal" and have them draw the idiom exactly as it sounds. For "I'm all ears," they would draw a person whose head is just two giant ears.
3. On the right side, label it "Figurative" and have them draw what it actually means (a person listening very carefully).
4. Create a hilarious classroom gallery walk to show off all the silly literal drawings.

5. Figurative Language Scavenger Hunt

Concept: Apply their new skills to real books.

How to Play:

1. Provide students with a checklist: ☐ Simile ☐ Metaphor ☐ Personification ☐ Idiom
2. In pairs, give them a familiar picture book or poem (Shel Silverstein's works are perfect for this!).
3. Their mission is to be "Figurative Language Detectives" and find one example of each type on their checklist. They write down the sentence and the page number.

6. "Build Your Own" Figurative Language

Concept: Students become the authors and create their own examples.

How to Play:

1. Simile Spinner: Create a wheel with adjectives (happy, sad, fast, slow, bright, messy) and a wheel with nouns (cheetah, tornado, lightbulb, pigsty, rainbow). Spin both and have students create a simile: "He was as messy as a pigsty after a rainstorm."
2. Personification Prompt Jar: Have students pick an object from a jar (e.g., "my sneakers," "the moon," "the classroom clock"). Their challenge is to write one sentence giving it a human action. "My sneakers screamed for me to stop running."

Simple Definitions to Use with Students:

Simile: A comparison using like or as. (Her smile was as bright as the sun.)

Metaphor: A comparison that says something is something else. (He is a night owl.)

Personification: Giving human traits to non-human things. (The flowers danced in the wind.)

Idiom: A silly phrase with a hidden meaning. (Hold your horses! means Wait a minute!)