

Lesson 15

Language and Meaning



Learning Target



Figuring out the meanings of figurative language in literary texts will help you better understand and enjoy such texts.

► **Read** Writers often use **figurative language** to help us imagine familiar things and events in new and sometimes strange ways.

- A **simile** uses the words *like* or *as* to compare two things that are not alike.
- A **metaphor** also compares unlike things, but does not use *like* or *as*.
- **Personification** gives human qualities to nonliving things.

Writers often use figurative language to produce a **mood**, or feeling.

As you read this poem, think about how its figurative language helps you imagine familiar things and events in new ways. Also think about how the poem might be making you feel.

The Tree Bats

The tree bats sway like fruit with wings,
From the branches of a tall old tree,
Prisoners of light throughout the day,
Till nightfall comes to set them free.

The sun goes down, the sleepers stir,
To the gentle voice of mother night.
Then the tree lets go its fluttering fruit—
A dark whirlwind of sudden flight!



► **Think** Consider what you know about figurative language. Use the chart below to help you think about the figurative language in “The Tree Bats.”

What I Read	Type of Figurative Language	What It Means
“The tree bats sway like fruit with wings,”	Simile: compares the bats to fruit	The tree bats are hanging upside down.
“Prisoners of light throughout the day,”	Personification: the light is a jailer, the bats are prisoners	
“the gentle voice of mother night.”		

► **Talk** Share your chart with a partner.

- What types of figurative language did you identify?
- Did you come up with similar meanings for each example?
- Pick **one** example from the “What I Read” column. What mood is the poet trying to make with that example?



Academic Talk

Use these words and phrases to talk about the text.

- figurative language
- personification
- metaphor
- mood
- simile

From Rain *in* Summer

BY HENRY WADSWORTH LONGFELLOW

How beautiful is the rain!
After the dust and heat,
In the broad and fiery street,
In the narrow lane,
5 How beautiful is the rain!

How it clatters along the roofs,
Like the tramp of hoofs
How it gushes and struggles out
From the throat of the overflowing spout!

10 Across the window-pane
It pours and pours;
And swift and wide,
With a muddy tide,
Like a river down the gutter roars
15 The rain, the welcome rain!

The sick man from his chamber looks
At the twisted brooks;
He can feel the cool
Breath of each little pool;
20 His fevered brain
Grows calm again,
And he breathes a blessing on the rain.

Close Reader Habits

When you reread the poem, **underline** any figurative language the poet uses to describe the rain.



A poet chooses words to help you imagine things and events in special ways.

Explore

What figurative language does the poet use to describe the rain?

Think

- 1 Use the chart below to identify and explain the poem’s figurative language.

What I Read	Type of Figurative Language	What It Means
<i>“How it clatters along the roofs, / Like the tramp of hoofs”</i>	Simile:	

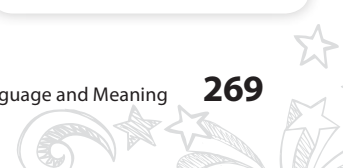
Talk

- 2 Suppose you want to draw a picture to show the motion and energy of the rain. First, talk about how the poet describes the rain. Then draw your picture on a separate piece of paper.

Write

- 3 **Short Response** Explain how the figurative language shows the change in the rain over time. Use examples to support your response. Use the space provided on page 272 to write your answer.

HINT Use the phrase “figurative language” and the words “metaphor,” “simile,” and “personification” in your response.





WILDLIFE WORRIES

by Annika Pederson

1 When my Aunt Sheryl and Uncle Don invited Mom and me to go hiking with them along the North Shore of Lake Superior, we couldn't wait to go. It wasn't until we got there that I found out that the woods are home to some serious wildlife—wolves, bobcats, coyotes, and bears! Although I was excited, I was also terrified of dangerous animals.

2 An amazing waterfall near the park entrance swept away my fears at first. Next, we hiked a trail that snaked upriver, through a gold mine of maple, birch, pine, and spruce. As we walked on, though, I felt myself sinking back into a black bog of dread. And just then, in a shallow glassy bend of the river up ahead, I saw an animal I *wanted* to see. "Look!" I said. "A moose! I'm going to go feed it!"

3 Aunt Sheryl grabbed my shoulder with an iron hand. "Nikki, stop, now," she said quietly. We all climbed to some rocks high above the river, with an eagle's nest view of the moose. Aunt Sheryl explained to me that a bull moose topped the list as one of the most dangerous wild animals in North America, and that it was more likely for a human to be hurt by a moose in these parts than a wolf or bear.

4 It felt strange, after all my misplaced fears, to discover that this beautiful animal that looked as tame as a cow back home had to be treated with caution. I decided that before our next trip, I was going to do a little homework about the animals here and trade my wildlife worries for . . . what should I call it? *Wildlife wonder*.



Close Reader Habits

How does the author describe the characters? Reread the story.

Underline any figurative language that describes the characters, including the moose.



Figurative language describes familiar events in interesting ways. For example, in paragraph 3 the narrator says she has “an eagle’s nest view of the moose.” This is an interesting way of saying, “I looked at the moose from above.”

Think Use what you learned from reading the story to respond to the following questions.

1 Read this sentence from the story.

Next, we hiked a trail that snaked upriver, through a gold mine of maple, birch, pine, and spruce.

What does the comparison of “maple, birch, pine, and spruce” to a “gold mine” suggest?

- A** The park is a valuable natural resource.
- B** The park is near a gold mine in which trees grow.
- C** The trees make the trail seem dark, like being in a mine.
- D** The park has several kinds of trees with yellow leaves.

2 Read the sentence from the text. Then answer the question that follows.

As we walked on, though, I felt myself sinking back into a black bog of dread.

What feelings is the author trying to create by using the metaphor black bog of dread? Select **two** options.

- A** a sense of adventure
- B** a feeling of fear
- C** a sense of happiness
- D** a sense of being stuck
- E** a feeling of regret
- F** a sense of awe

Talk

3 In paragraph 4, the narrator uses the phrase tame as a cow back home. What does this tell you about both the narrator and the moose? Use the figurative language chart on page 273 to capture your thoughts and evidence.

HINT The narrator refers to “a cow back home.” What can you infer about the kind of setting she knows best?



Write

4 Short Response Use the information from your chart to explain what the narrator’s use of the phrase tame as a cow back home tells you about both the moose and the narrator. Use the space provided on page 273 to write your answer.



Write Use the space below to write your answer to the question on page 269.

Rain *in* Summer

HINT Use the phrase “figurative language” and the words “metaphor,” “simile,” and “personification” in your response.

3 Short Response Explain how the figurative language shows the change in the rain over time. Use examples to support your response.



Don't forget to check your writing.

Check Your Writing

- Did you read the prompt carefully?
- Did you put the prompt in your own words?
- Did you use the best evidence from the text to support your ideas?
- Are your ideas clearly organized?
- Did you write in clear and complete sentences?
- Did you check your spelling and punctuation?

WILDLIFE WORRIES

3 Use the chart below to organize your ideas and details.

What I Read	Type of Figurative Language	What It Means



Write Use the space below to write your answer to the question on page 271.

4 Short Response Use the information from your chart to explain what the narrator’s use of the phrase tame as a cow back home tells you about both the moose and the narrator.

WORDS TO KNOW


As you read, look inside, around, and beyond these words to figure out what they mean.

- **infinitely**
- **progress**
- **confusion**

This story is from the first chapter of a novel about a boy whose family moves into a new home near a mountain. In the chapters that follow, the boy goes hiking on the mountain and meets a strange bird called a Phoenix, a famous creature from mythology. Throughout the novel, the boy and the Phoenix share exciting adventures together.

from

David and the Phoenix



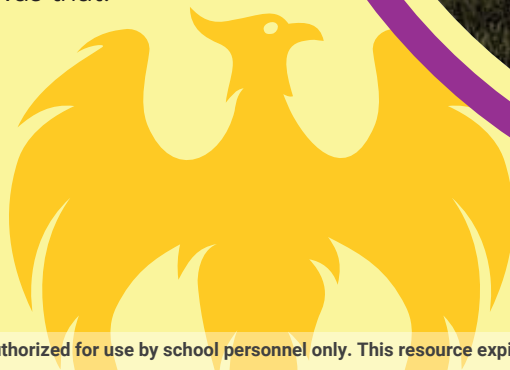
by Edward Ormondroyd

- 1 All the way there David had saved this moment for himself, struggling not to peek until the proper time came. When the car finally stopped, the rest of them got out stiffly and went into the new house. But David walked slowly into the backyard with his eyes fixed on the ground. For a whole minute he stood there, not daring to look up. Then he took a deep breath, clenched his hands tightly, and lifted his head.



- 2 There it was!—as Dad had described it, but infinitely more grand. It swept upward from the valley floor, beautifully shaped and soaring, so tall that its misty blue peak could surely talk face to face with the stars. To David, who had never seen a mountain before, the sight was almost too much to bear. He felt so tight and shivery inside that he didn't know whether he wanted to laugh, or cry, or both. And the really wonderful thing about the mountain was the way it looked at him. He was certain that it was smiling at him, like an old friend who had been waiting for years to see him again. And when he closed his eyes, he seemed to hear a voice which whispered, "Come along, then, and climb." . . .
- 3 But there was a great deal to do first. They were going to move into the new house. The moving van was standing out in front; the car must be unloaded. David would be needed to carry things. Regretfully, he waved his hand at the peak and whispered, "It shouldn't take long—I'll be back as soon as I can." Then he went around to the front door to see what could be done about speeding things up.
- 4 Inside, everything was in confusion. Dad was pushing chairs and tables around in an aimless way. Mother was saying, "They'll all have to go out again; we forgot to put down the rug first." Aunt Amy was making short dashes between the kitchen and the dining room, muttering to herself. And Beckie was roaring in her crib because it was time for her bottle. David asked, "Can I do anything?"—hoping that the answer would be no.
- 5 "C'mere," Aunt Amy said, grabbing him by the arm. "Help me look for that ironing board."

- 6 When the ironing board was finally located, Mother had something for him to do. And when he was finished with that, Dad called for his help. So the afternoon wore on without letup—and also without any signs of progress in their moving. When David finally got a chance to sneak out for a breathing spell, he felt his heart sink. Somehow, in all the rush and confusion, the afternoon had disappeared. Already the evening sun was throwing shadows across the side of the mountain and touching its peak with a ruddy blaze. It was too late now. He would have to wait until morning before he could climb.
- 7 As he gazed up miserably at the glowing summit, he thought he saw a tiny speck soar out from it in a brief circle. Was it a bird of some sort, or just one of those dots that swim before your eyes when you stare too long at the sky? It almost seemed like the mountain waving its hand, as if to say that it was quite all right for him to wait until morning. He felt better then, and returned more cheerfully to the moving.
- 8 It was long after dark before the moving van drove away. Beckie crooned happily over her bottle, and the rest of them gathered in the kitchen for a late supper of sandwiches and canned soup. But David could not eat until he had found the courage to ask one question:
- 9 “May I climb the mountain tomorrow?”
- 10 Aunt Amy muttered something about landslides, which were firmly fixed in her mind as the fate of people who climbed mountains. But Dad said, “I don’t see why not, do you?” and looked to Mother for agreement.
- 11 Mother said, “Well . . . be very careful,” in a doubtful tone, and that was that.



Think Use what you learned from reading the story to respond to the following questions.

- 1** This question has two parts. First, answer Part A. Then answer Part B.

Part A

What does David think about the mountain?

- A** It is kind.
- B** It is alive.
- C** It is haunted.
- D** It is dangerous.

Part B

Which example of figurative language from the story **best** supports the answer to Part A?

- A** "And the really wonderful thing about the mountain was the way it looked at him."
- B** "He was certain that it was smiling at him, like an old friend who had been waiting for years to see him again."
- C** "And when he closed his eyes, he seemed to hear a voice, which whispered, 'Come along, then, and climb.'"
- D** "Already the evening sun was throwing shadows across the side of the mountain and touching its peak with a ruddy blaze."

- 2** Read the sentence. Then answer the question.

It swept upward from the valley floor, beautifully shaped and soaring, so tall that its misty blue peak could surely talk face to face with the stars.

What mood is the author trying to create by using the personification talk face to face with the stars? Select **two** options.

- A** awe
- B** coldness
- C** fear
- D** wonder
- E** loneliness
- F** suspense

- 3** This question has two parts. First, answer Part A. Then answer Part B.

Part A

Read the sentence from paragraph 1.

But David walked slowly into the backyard with his eyes fixed on the ground.

What does the word fixed mean as it is used in the sentence?

- A** tied
- B** installed
- C** repaired
- D** focused

Part B

Which detail from the story provides the **best** clue for the meaning of the word fixed?

- A** "... David had saved this moment for himself, ..."
- B** "... not daring to look up."
- C** "... clenched his hands tightly, ..."
- D** "... and lifted his head."

- 4** Read the sentence and the directions that follow.

When David finally got a chance to sneak out for a breathing spell, he felt his heart sink.

Underline the sentence in the paragraph below that **best** helps you understand the meaning of the phrase sneak out for a breathing spell.

When the ironing board was finally located, Mother had something for him to do. And when he was finished with that, Dad called for his help. So the afternoon wore on without letup—and also without any signs of progress in their moving. When David finally got a chance to sneak out for a breathing spell, he felt his heart sink. Somehow, in all the rush and confusion, the afternoon had disappeared. Already the evening sun was throwing shadows across the side of the mountain and touching its peak with a ruddy blaze. It was too late now. He would have to wait until morning before he could climb.

**Write**

5 Short Response Read the following sentence from the story.

It almost seemed like the mountain waving its hand, as if to say that it was quite all right for him to wait until morning.

What does the phrase like the mountain waving its hand tell the reader about the mountain? Use details from the story to support your answer.

**Learning Target**

In this lesson, you looked at how texts use figurative language. Explain how figuring out the meanings of figurative language can help you better understand and enjoy such texts.
