



New York State ELA

English Language Arts

**Sample
Lesson**

Continental Press

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Figurative Language

Standard 2.R.5, 6, 11

Writers use words in different ways to help you picture or feel what is happening. When they do this, writers are using **figurative language**.

An **idiom** is a phrase that has a meaning separate and distinct from the words in the phrase. For example, we say that someone “came down with a cold.” *Came down* is an idiom that means “became ill.” It has nothing to do with the usual meanings of *came* or *down*.

Onomatopoeia describes words that imitate the sound of what they mean. Writers use it to give readers a sense or feeling. “The wind whistled as rain pattered the sidewalk.” In this sentence, the words *whistled* and *pattered* are examples of onomatopoeia.

A **simile** compares two very different things using the words *like* or *as*. It helps you understand something in an unusual way. “The wind tapped like a tired man” is an example of a simile.

If you compare things without using *like* or *as*, you are using a **metaphor**. “Autumn is a waterfall of leaves” is an example of a metaphor. It compares falling leaves to falling water.

Personification is another kind of comparison. The writer makes something that is not human seem like a person in some way. “November wears a gray hood” is an example of personification. It makes the month seem dull and sad.

Writers also contribute to meaning through **hyperbole**: making a point through exaggeration. “I’ve told you a million times to clean your room!” is an example of hyperbole.



Writers also add to meaning through **literary devices**.

One common literary device is **irony**: making a point by using words that seem to mean the opposite of what you're saying. A common example of irony is saying "Yeah, right!" to mean "I don't believe it."

Foreshadowing is a literary device that acts as a pre-indication or warning of something that will happen later. A description of a gloomy day with storm clouds gathering can be a foreshadowing that something bad is going to happen—or at least that it's going to rain.

Dialect, non-standard form of the language, conveys the speech of a character or a region. In the line "My luvie is like a red, red rose," poet Robert Burns uses the regional dialect of his native Scotland.

Guided Practice

Read this selection from a story and answer the questions that follow.

It was August and tourists had taken over San Francisco like an invading army. We watched them charging up our hill, gasping and choking. Some were taking pictures of views they could have found on any of a zillion postcards. They stood in the middle of Hyde Street to shoot videos of the cable cars clang-clang over the hill, then dashed out of the way to avoid being hit. Every afternoon the fog would blow in through the Golden Gate and spread across the city. Then the tourists would shiver in their t-shirts, and you'd hear one quoting some writer who had said, "The coldest winter I ever spent was a summer in San Francisco." Now and then you'd see a freezing mom or dad in shorts tugging at a screaming five-year-old and growling, "I dunno, yer the one who wanted tuh come here instead a goin' tuh Disneyland."



Flor and I were hanging on Dwight’s front steps. We had spent the morning playing video games. Now we were trying to make up our minds about what to do with the afternoon. No one wanted to go to the North Beach Recreation Center or the comics store or Golden Gate Park. It was that part of summer when boredom stretches flatly from horizon to horizon and you’re actually thinking about school starting again.

If someone had told us that we’d all be famous by evening, I would have figured that he was crazy.

Flor stood up. “Let’s do *something*,” she said. “I’d be embarrassed to write in my journal that I spent the afternoon looking at tourists.”

“Let’s go to Za’s for pizza,” Dwight suggested.

“We just had lunch,” I reminded him. “How about we ride our bikes to Fort Point?”

Dwight objected, “You need to do that early before the wind kicks up.”

“Oh, Dwight, don’t be a pain,” Flor said. “I’m with Josh. It beats sitting around.”

Dwight was right. Once the fog blew in, riding into the sea breeze was like winter. But Flor was also right. It beat sitting around. We coasted down Russian Hill and along side streets to the Marina. We pedaled past the park where we all played soccer and baseball, past the library, and past the white school building that would soon be our home away from home again. We came out onto Marina Green, and then it was really windy. Boats bounced up and down on the bay like popcorn, and the cottony sky was full of kites. We threaded the obstacle course of runners and skaters past the Exploratorium and the old hippie man twisting wire into mermaids, out along the beach toward the brick fort at the foot of the Golden Gate Bridge.

Taken over in the first paragraph is an idiom that means “got control of.” Which of these phrases is another example of an idiom?

- A make up our minds
- B out along the beach
- C riding into the sea breeze
- D where we all played soccer

An idiom is a phrase that has a different meaning than that of the words in it. *Taken over* has a sense that is different from the usual meanings of “taken” and “over.” The only answer choice that uses words in a similar way is *make up our minds*. Choice A is correct.



Which excerpt from the selection is a metaphor?

- A like an invading army
- B shiver in their t-shirts
- C before the wind kicks up
- D the obstacle course of runners

Choice A is a simile. The narrator shows us what he thinks of the tourists by saying they are *like* an invading army. Choice B uses words in a literal way. In choice C, Dwight uses personification by comparing the wind to someone kicking with his feet. Choice D is the correct answer. It's a metaphor. It lets us see what the bike ride was like by comparing it to an obstacle course without using the words *like* or *as*.

When the narrator describes people climbing the hill as “gasping and choking,” he is using

- A personification
- B foreshadowing
- C hyperbole
- D dialect

If people were really gasping and choking, the narrator would not be joking about it. He really means that they were out of breath. Such exaggeration to make a point is hyperbole. Choice C is correct.

Which of these phrases uses onomatopoeia?

- A shoot videos
- B threaded the obstacle course
- C clang-clang over the hill
- D blow in through the Golden Gate

Onomatopoeia is the use of words that imitate the sound of what they mean. “Clang-clang” imitates the sound of the bell on a San Francisco cable car. Choice C is the correct answer.



From the selection, find examples of irony, foreshadowing, and dialect. Write one example of each in this chart.

irony	
foreshadowing	
dialect	

The quote about summer in San Francisco is an example of irony. It makes its point by saying that it's colder than winter, when it's summer—an extremely cold summer. The narrator foreshadows what will happen by telling us that they will be famous by evening. The author uses dialect—pronunciations such as “tuh” for *to* and “goin'” for *going*—when he imitates the rough speech of the tired tourist.

Test Yourself

Now read these haiku and answer the questions that follow.

More Urban Haiku

by Jamaica Leontes

Roaring through tunnels
 Inside the dragon's belly—
 The subway uptown

See how their paths cross—
 Jet rising from the airport,
 Heron from the marsh

Thunderstorm stomps in:
 Downtown shoppers take cover,
 So too the pigeons

Notes rising like smoke,
 Swirling like neon orange—
 Sidewalk saxophone

Backhoes, jackhammers,
 The din of Earth's last battle—
 Silence surrounds me



- 1 Simile in one haiku is represented by the images of
- A a subway train and a dragon
 - B a marsh and an airport
 - C an orange and a saxophone
 - D musical notes and smoke
- 2 The phrase “take cover” is an example of
- A dialect
 - B an idiom
 - C a metaphor
 - D onomatopoeia
- 3 Which of these does the poet compare with a human being through the use of personification?
- A a jet plane
 - B thunder
 - C pigeons
 - D an orange
- 4 Describing the noise of machinery as “the din of Earth’s last battle” is an example of
- A a simile
 - B an idiom
 - C hyperbole
 - D foreshadowing
- 5 How does the poet use irony in these haiku?

