

Teaching Seventh Graders to Use Figurative Language
A Unit Plan

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English 574

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Unit Plan: Figurative Language

Seventh grade is the time when students' writing takes the step from elementary to secondary, from simple to sophisticated. The thought processes of students are more mature than in past years. Their vocabularies have grown and their mechanical skills have improved. The students have the tools necessary to advance to the next level of writing.

In light of this (and to borrow a concept from Neil Armstrong) instead of a step, seventh grade teachers should encourage each of their students to make a leap. Teachers can accomplish this by instructing students in the use of figurative language. Figurative language adds detail to writing. It gives the reader clear images of the writer's intentions. Figurative language makes writing more sophisticated.

Sophistication is not the only benefit of teaching students to use figurative language. Not only does it enhance each student's writing, but it accomplishes one of the "Goals for Teaching Grammar" set forth in Grammar Alive by Brock Haussamen, et al. Goal C of Grammar Alive reads as follows:

Every student will complete school with an understanding of, and appreciation for, the natural variation that occurs in language across time, social situation, and social group. While recognizing the need for mastering Standard English, students will also demonstrate an understanding of the equality in the expressive capacity and linguistic structure among a range of language varieties both vernacular and standard, as well as an understanding of language-based prejudice.

While all students need to use figurative language in order to make their writing more sophisticated, it is students with limited English proficiency that especially benefit from lessons in figurative language. They receive direct instruction in the many quirks of the English language.

Beyond the goals set forth in Grammar Alive, figurative language skills are sited in the Michigan Standards for English Instruction at the seventh grade level. Standard 2 (Meaning and Communication), Benchmark 2; Standard 4 (Language), Benchmark 4; and Standard 8 (Genre and Craft of Language), Benchmark 4 all make reference to the use of figurative language. With this skill being mandated by the State, it now becomes the educator's job to find an interesting method of instruction.

The following writing program teaches students to use figurative language to improve their writing. It is an on-going project throughout the school year. In a variety of activities, students will focus on the following: similes, metaphors, alliteration, onomatopoeia, hyperbole, personification and idioms. Using the "Hamill Approach" described in Image Grammar, by Harry R. Noden, students will keep a log of the various figures of speech that they encounter in classroom literature. This will culminate in a journal that will serve as a resource for students to use when creating their own written works.

Teaching Seventh Graders to Use Figurative Language: Unit Plan

Lesson 1: Introduction of Terms

Read Good Work, Amelia Bedelia by Peggy Parish aloud. Discuss the aspects of the story which make it humorous.

Introduce the concept of “Figures of Speech.”

- Distribute the figures of speech handout adapted from Shirley Poulton’s Power Writing Plus: Teach the Traits of Effective Writing (April 2004). This lists the figures of speech along with their definitions and examples.
- Students work in groups of four to generate new examples of each term.
- Each group writes one example on the board. The class matches a figure of speech to each example.

Lesson 2: Finding Figures of Speech in Literature

Read “Amigo Brothers” by Piri Thomas. This short story is found in Prentice Hall Literature: Bronze Edition, Prentice Hall, Englewood Cliffs New Jersey, 1989.

Distribute the “Figures of Speech Scavenger Hunt” worksheet. Students list sentences from the story next to the appropriate terms.

Lesson 3: Figures of Speech Booklet

Students create an illustrated booklet of figures of speech.

Lesson 4: Ongoing journal

Students keep a log of figures of speech found in the literature selections that are read throughout the school year. Students should record in notebooks examples of the figures of speech they encounter during each literature activity.

Extended Activities:

Patchwork Quilt of Preposition Idioms. (This is from the book 20 Hands-On Activities for Learning Idioms, by Scholastic Professional Books.)

Collage of Published Figures of Speech. Students use newspapers and magazines to create a collage of all figures of speech

Charades. Students act out various figures of speech and classmates guess the phrases.

SIMILE

A simile is a sentence comparing two things by the use of like or as.

Example: The pale moon was as white as a ghost.

METAPHOR

A metaphor is a sentence in which you are comparing two things without using like or as.

Example: The marshmallow is a big puffy pillow.

ALLITERATION

Alliteration is when a group of words all start with the same sound.

Example: She sells sea shells by the shore.

ONOMATOPOEIA

Onomatopoeia is sound words.

Example: Swoosh! Plop! Smack!

HYPERBOLE

Hyperbole is a big lie or exaggeration.

Example: The ice cube was so big you could skate across it.

PERSONIFICATION

Personification is to give something that's not human, human abilities or qualities.

Example: The trees whispered in the wind.

IDIOM

Idioms are sentences that mean something different than their words imply.

Example: That's a horse of a different color.

Name _____

Figures of Speech Scavenger Hunt

Each of the following figures of speech can be found in “Amigo Brothers” by Piri Thomas. Next to each term, write a sentence from “Amigo Brothers” that includes that figure of speech. Also write the page number on which you found it.

Simile: _____

Metaphor: _____

Alliteration: _____

Onomatopoeia: _____

Hyperbole: _____

Personification: _____

Idiom: _____

Figures of Speech Scavenger Hunt - Answer Key

Simile: p.82, 2nd column, 1st paragraph “He cut negative thinking real quick by doing some speedy fancy dance steps, bobbing and weaving like mercury.”

p. 85, 1st paragraph “His left hand was like a piston pumping jabs one right after another with seeming ease.”

Metaphor: p.83, 1st column, 2nd paragraph “The morning of the fight Tompkins Square was a beehive of activity with numerous workers setting up the ring, the seats, and the guest speakers’ stand.”

Alliteration: p.80 “Antonio then beat the air with a barrage of body blows.”

Onomatopoeia: p.83, 2nd column, 5th paragraph “Bong-bong-bong.”

Hyperbole: p.86 at the top “His long legs turned to jelly.”

p.86, 2nd column, 1st paragraph “The crowd ate it up.”

Personification: p.81, 1st column, 11th paragraph “Antonio admired the courage of a tugboat pulling a barge five times its welterweight size.”

Idiom: p. 82, 4th paragraph “The challenger, confident that he had the championship in the bag, threw a left.”

Figures of Speech Booklet

Use the following figures of speech to create a reference booklet:
Simile, metaphor, alliteration, onomatopoeia, hyperbole, personification. and
idiom.

Materials:

- Three sheets of plain white paper
- One sheet of colored paper
- Pencil
- Colored pencils or crayons
- Stapler

Procedure:

- Fold each piece of plain white paper in half to make six 8 " by 5 " pages.
- Fold the sheet of colored paper in half to make a cover.
- Make a booklet by placing the folded sheets inside each other and stapling the colored paper to the outside along the fold.
- Place the following items on each page of the booklet:
 - The type of figure of speech; i.e. simile, metaphor, alliteration, etc.
 - A sentence that includes that type of figure of speech.
 - An illustration for the sentence.
- Design a cover page that includes a title and your name.

Rubric:

All spelling is correct.	7 _____
Each page contains one figure of speech	7 _____
Each page contains a complete sentence that includes that figure of speech.	7 _____
Each page contains an illustration that depicts the sentence	7 _____
The cover page contains a title	2 _____
The cover page contains your name and hour	2 _____
All pages (including the cover) are illustrated in color	8 _____

Total _____/40

Due Date:

Figures of Speech Journal Sample

Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone, J.K. Rowling, p. 115:
Harry's heart gave a horrible jolt. Alliteration

Tangerine, Edward Bloor, p. 99: But at least I had broken the ice.
Idiom. p. 106: I was in the far goal again. I may
as well have been in Houston. Hyperbole

Bud, Not Buddy, Christopher Paul Curtis, p. 13: Even though
Todd was a rich old mama's boy who wore a robe and slippers he
could hit like a mule and it wasn't too long before I'd decided
enough was enough. Simile

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