Unit Five: The Poetry

Poetry is a genre of writing used to express emotions and ideas. This form of writing often uses figurative language along with different sounds and rhythms, and is structured in stanzas. Figurative language is the use of poetic and other literary devices to add meaning and emphasis to poetry.

One of the poets featured in this unit will be Langston Hughes. Many students identify with his poetry because of its simple style and themes. Hughes wanted to tell stories of people in ways that reflected their actual culture, including both their suffering and the love of music, laughter, and language itself. Two of his most enjoyable and well-known poems, “Dream Deferred” and “Dreams” offer different perspectives on the same topic: the importance of having dreams in our lives. To convey this theme, Hughes uses figurative language such as imagery, metaphors, and similes.
Here is a list of the more common types of figurative language:

- **Metaphors**—a comparison of two different things that is stated directly by saying one thing is the other.
- **Simile**—a comparison of two different things using “like” or “as”
- **Personification**—giving non-human things human qualities, characteristics, emotions, and actions
- **Imagery**—appealing to any of the five senses (sensory language) in a way that paints a picture with words
- **Alliteration**—repeating the beginning consonant sounds of words
- **Repetition**—repeating the same words, phrases, more than once for effect.

There are three main types of poetry. A **narrative poem** tells a story and can take the form of an **epic** (a long poem about the deeds of an epic hero) or a **ballad** (a songlike poem that tells the story of an adventure or romance). A **dramatic poem** tells a story using the character’s own thoughts or statements. Finally, a **lyric poem** expresses the feelings of the speaker. Lyric poetry relies on **rhyme** and **rhythm** to create a musical effect.

### Quizlet

The chart below contains the beginning of nine examples of similes. On a sheet of paper, re-write each of the examples. Then underline the two things that are being compared. Finally, complete each of the similes.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>High gas prices are like a _____ because…</th>
<th>Going to a movie on opening weekend is like _____ because…</th>
<th>Life is like _____ because…</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Going to a movie on opening weekend is like _____ because…</td>
<td>Life is like _____ because…</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The first day of high school is like _____ because…</td>
<td>Trying out for a sports team is like _____ because…</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Playing the lottery is like _____ because…</td>
<td>Going on your first date is like _____ because…</td>
<td>Taking the driving part of your driver’s licenses test is like _____ because…</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Example: Going on your first date is like riding a roller coaster because both events create a nervous feeling in the pit of your stomach.
Identifying Poetic Devices and Figurative Language in Music

One thing most people have in common is a love of music. Some may enjoy country music or pop music; some may prefer hip hop music or jazz. All genres of music have one thing in common: they are poetry with a beat. Take away the instruments, and all songs are simply poems that use figurative language and other poetic devices.

The following is a link to a YouTube video. Click (ctrl + Click) on the link, and as you watch, complete the exercise below.


Exercise: As you watch the video, identify examples of each of the poetic devices listed. First, in your own words, write a definition beside each of the literary terms. Next, on the lines write an example for the term that is used in the video. (You may need to pause the video as you write the example.)

1. Personification

2. Hyperbole

3. Alliteration

4. Imagery

5. Metaphor

6. Simile
Test Your Understanding:
Poetry with a Beat

Research different types of figurative language in modern music. Make a chart like the one to the right that includes the title of six songs and artists in one column, the lyrics from the song in the second column, the poetic device used in the third column, and an explanation in the fourth column.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Song/Artist</th>
<th>Lyrics</th>
<th>Poetic Device</th>
<th>Explanation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“Grenade” Bruno Mars</td>
<td>I’d catch a grenade for ya; jump in front of a train for ya…</td>
<td>hyperbole</td>
<td>This song uses exaggeration to express his love</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>