

Assignment on Simile/Metaphor/Analogy

“By far the greatest thing is to be master of metaphor. It is the one thing that cannot be learned from others. It is a sign of genius, for a good metaphor implies an intuitive perception of similarity among dissimilars.” ---Aristotle

Comparison by simile and metaphor can lead to a deeper, more profound understanding than can literal description and objective detail. “We use the word analogy for a comparison that makes or illustrates a point at greater length than a metaphor or a simile. An analogy can be extended into a whole essay, sermon, or even a book. An analogy often runs through a work like a thread in tweed, not separated into patches of assertion followed by comparison, but interwoven throughout” (*Writing Well* 117).

For this assignment you will write an analogy on the topic of your choice (see suggestions below). You will then write it again, taking the analogy/extended metaphor out of it, **as per the samples at the end of this document**. Then write a short reflection as indicated.

Directions: Write a 3/4 - one page analogy on your chosen topic, maintaining the same comparison throughout. Then rewrite it without the analogy.

Reflection: What did you learn through this assignment? Which version of your writing do you like better? Why? What did you struggle with, if anything? Do you see yourself using simile, metaphor, or analogy more in your writing?

Some suggested topic choices: Choose **one** topic of your choice.

1. Writing a paper
2. Reading a book
3. A good friendship
4. Your drive to school
5. Your family at (dinnertime, Christmas, gatherings, etc.)
6. The day a ... (loved one died, sibling got married, sibling moved out, etc.)
7. Choosing a college
8. An abstract emotion: guilt, grief, joy, fear, etc.
9. Life
10. *A topic of your own*

Some ideas for comparison—remember, your comparison should be appropriate. You should know enough about your comparison choice so that you can employ its many dimensions in your extended metaphor/analogy. Each analogy/extended metaphor you write should compare your topic to one thing (using its many parts/aspects). Stick to the same analogy in one comparison; don't mix war and cooking!

1. A particular sport (running, basketball, football, etc.)
2. Cooking (making a soup, dessert, etc.)
3. Gardening
4. War
5. Crafting (sewing, etc.)
6. Torture (do you know enough about this?)
7. Zoo
8. *So many more! Your choice ☺*

Sample with Analogy

James Thurber wrote this witty analogy about working with the editor of *The New Yorker*, Harold Ross:

Having a manuscript under Ross's scrutiny was like putting your car in the hand of a skilled mechanic, not an automotive engineer with a bachelor of science degree, but a guy who knows what makes a motor go, and sputter, and wheeze, and sometimes come to a dead stop; a man with an ear for the faintest body squeak as well as the loudest engine rattle. When you first gazed, appalled, upon an uncorrected proof of one of your stories or articles, each margin had a thicket of queries and complaints—one writer got a hundred and forty-four on one profile. It was as though you beheld the words of your car spread all over the garage floor, and the job of getting the thing together again and making it work seemed impossible. Then you realize that Ross was trying to make your Model T or old Stutz Bearcat into a Cadillac or Rolls-Royce. He was at work with the tools of his unflagging perfectionism, and, after an exchange of growls or snarls, you set to work to join him in his enterprise.

James Thurber, *The Years with Ross*

Sample without the analogy:

Consider the impact if Thurber had written without the analogy--omitting the garage and substituting abstraction and generality for the analogy. This gutted version is slightly shorter, but this paragraph lacks the energy and expression of the original:

Having a manuscript under Ross's scrutiny was an edifying if terrifying experience. He was a skilled editor, not an academic, but a practical man. When you first gazed, appalled, upon an uncorrected proof of one of your stories or articles, each margin had a number of queries and complaints—one writer got a hundred and forty-four on one profile. You beheld all your work torn apart, and it seemed impossible to put it together. Then you realized that Ross was trying to make ordinary prose into prose of the highest order. He was using his editorial skills with unflagging perfectionism, and, after an exchange of growls or snarls, you set to work to join him in his enterprise.