

AS FIT AS

*The*  
Armchair  
Philologist



SY AS PIE

H-A-I-R L-I-K-E C-O-R-N-S-I-L-K ♦ AS MUCH

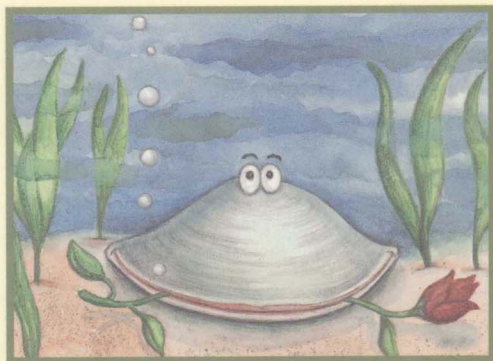
HAPPY AS

F-U-N A-S-A P-U-P-P-Y I-N A H-Y-D-R-A-N-T

A CLAM

F-A-C-T-O-R-Y ♦ AS HAPPY AS A BOY AT

A B-A-S-E



E-D A-S-A

B-A-N-A-N-A

P-I-C-T-U-R-E

A-S-F-U-N A-S-A S-K-U-N-K ♦ AS LOW AS

And 9,999

A S-N-A-K-E'S B-E-L-L-Y ♦ AS DEAD AS

Other Similes

O-O-R-O-O-R-K-N-O-B ♦ LAUGHED LIKE A

LARRY WRIGHT

# HAPPY

.....

*as a*

.....

# CLAM

.....

*and 9,999 Other Smiles*

江苏工业学院图书馆

藏书章

Larry Wright



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**First Edition**

# **Dedication**

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To Margaret, Sara, and Alison,  
whom I love like a cat loves cream.

# Acknowledgments

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\* = Deceased

# Definition of Simile

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**simile** (sim' ə lē) **n.** a figure of speech in which one thing is likened to another, dissimilar thing by the use of *like*, *as*, etc. (Ex.: a heart as big as a whale, her tears flowed like wine): distinguished from metaphor.

—*Webster's New World Dictionary*,  
Third College Edition, 1994, Prentice Hall

# **Introduction**

.....

I've been an avid collector of similes since 1948 when I was 13 years old. I spent that summer at our family's summer home in the Missouri Ozarks near the town of Doniphan. At that time I didn't know what a simile was!

An Ozark native, Arthur Brooks, was helping with the many chores around the place. One hot day he wiped his brow and said "I'm as busy as a tick in a tar barrel," and I laughed at this humorous comparison. During that summer I jotted down dozens of similes that Arthur said. I'm not sure that even Arthur knew he was a fount of similes, he was merely repeating expressions he'd heard over the years from his parents, grandparents, and others.

Later I bought a notebook and began to seriously record the similes. I was on the alert for them. They popped up in novels, commercials, old movies (especially Westerns), newspapers, talk shows, old books, sports programs, and in conversations with rural and city folk. By 1970, my notebook contained more than 5,000 similes, so I purchased a personal computer and entered my growing collection on floppy disks.

I've collected similes for enjoyment like other people collect stamps, coins, baseball cards, or beer cans (although simile collecting is less profitable than the collecting of just about anything else). My goal in publishing this book is to encourage people to use similes and to preserve their popularity and prevent their extinction. If you have any similes that should be included in this book's next printing, please send them to me and I will include your name on the acknowledgments page. Write to: Larry Wright, Box 640, Grafton, IL 62037.

I hope you like reading the similes as much as I've enjoyed collecting them!

## **About This Book**

"Happy as a clam" is one of the oldest similes in the United States. But who ever saw a clam smile or laugh? This simile is actually a

## **viii     Introduction**

shortened version of the original, "happy as a clam at high tide." As clams are gathered when the tide is out, it seems clams are happy when it's high tide and there are no diggers around.

Similes are often humorous and lighthearted; some are ironic, nasty, and even vulgar. They enhance language to make points more vivid and clear as they colorfully express an idea or description. Similes build mental pictures in the reader's or listener's mind and increase the importance and clarity of the thought being expressed. They heighten persuasiveness, bring thoughts to life, and add spice to language to make it more interesting and entertaining.

For the sake of simplicity and consistency I've used the masculine pronoun when a pronoun is needed. For the most part, past tense has been used since most similes that are written down are recorded in this manner. The entries are arranged in alphabetical order by adjective (or noun). To avoid repetition and save the reader time in locating a simile, the first few words of each sentence have been deleted. For example, if the commonly known sentence was "He was as mad as a bear," the entry is found under **Mad** and reads "Mad as a bear."

Although some of the similes listed here are a bit racy, sexist, racist, and otherwise offensive, and probably unfit as pieces of conversation at dinner, they are included as a record of the language and to make this reference complete. Also, many of the similes included do not follow standard grammar rules, but they make delightful reading nonetheless.

## **A Note About Sources**

The sources of many similes are provided. They do not necessarily represent that author's or speaker's view on the subject (the similes are taken from fiction and nonfiction works), and it would be erroneous to make any implication of the author's intent based on the simile attributed to him or her. Rather, the sources are listed because they are thought to be the originators of the similes. In some cases, it is obvious that the simile is an original one created by the author; in other instances, it isn't quite as clear, but the author listed is probably the originator or the first one to publish the simile. Many others are commonly used and have been handed down for many years, thus making it nearly impossible to find the originator, so there is no source listed.



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## **Abandoned**

Abandoned as a drive-in theater at noon.—Dan Rather

Abandoned as a ghost town.

Abandoned like a babe at a doorstep.

Abandoned like a one-pump gas station.

*Also see* Desolate.

## **Ablaze**

Ablaze like poppies in the sun.—Ouida

Ablaze like a firebombed bamboo hut.

*Also see* Blazed, Burned, Flamed.

## **Abrupt**

Abrupt as a guillotine.

Abrupt as a scissor cut.—T. C. Boyle

Abrupt as an axe chop.

*Also see* Sudden.

## **Absurd**

Absurd as a Hottentot marooned on an iceberg.

Absurd as to expect a harvest in the dead of winter.—Robert South

Absurd as to instruct a rooster in the laying of eggs.—H. L. Mencken

Absurd as using a guillotine to cure dandruff.—Clare Booth Luce

Absurd as trying to put out a fire with applications of kerosene.

—Tallulah Bankhead

*Also see* Crazy, Foolish, Funny, Mad, Nutty, Silly.

## **Abundant**

Abundant as air and water.

Abundant as dandelions.

Abundant as the light of the sun.—Thomas Carlyle

*Also see* All over, Plentiful.

## **2    Abysmal**

### **Abysmal**

Abysmal as death.—Stephen R. Donaldson

Abysmal as deep depression.

*Also see* Deep.

### **Ached**

Ached like a broken rib.

Ached like a freshly stubbed toe.

Ached like a rotted tooth.

*Also see* Hurt, Painful, Sore.

### **Acted**

Acted like a bad-mannered schoolboy.

Acted like a committee.

Acted like a five-year-old.

Acted like a fool.

Acted like a love-starved calf at feeding time.

Acted like a ninny.

Acted like a scared rabbit.

Acted like he had no training.

Acted like its going out of style.

*Also see* Behaved.

### **Active**

Active as a beehive.

Active as a Chinese fire drill.

Active as a fire department during a conflagration.

Active as a hornet's nest.

Active as a pea on a griddle.

Active as a squirrel in a cage.—Aphra Behn

Active as an anthill.

Active and strong as a little lioness.—William James

About as active as a leftover fly in January.

About as active as the town drunk on Sunday morning.

*Also see* Busy.

### **Adored**

Adored him like a champ.

Adored him like an idol.

Adored him like a schoolgirl with a crush.

### **Advanced**

Advanced like Grant through Richmond.

Advanced like the shadow of death.—John Ruskin

Advanced like Sherman's army.

### **Adventuresome**

Adventuresome as a bee.—*Old Testament*

Adventuresome as a puppy.

About as adventuresome as a sick hound dog.—T. C. Boyle

*Also see* Bold.

.....  
**Advice**

Advice is like castor oil—easy enough to give, but dreadfully uneasy to take.  
Advice is like kissing; it costs nothing and is a pleasant thing to do.

—Josh Billings

**Ageless**

Ageless as a South Sea idol.—James Wilcox

Ageless as the mountains.

Ageless as the sun.—A. C. Swinburne

**Agile**

Agile as a ballet dancer.

Agile as a cat.

Agile as a monkey.—Alexandre Dumas

Agile as a pickpocket.—Richard Harding Davis

Agile as an otter.—John Wingate

About as agile as a fat, old-maid washwoman in the change of life.

About as agile as a walrus.—Terry Ganey

*Also see* Lively, Nimble, Spry.

**Agreeable**

Agreeable as an uninvited guest.—Abe Martin

Agreed like pickpockets at a fair.

Agreed about like Lent and fishmongers.—John Marston

Agreed about like the clocks of London.—*Partridge's*

Agreed about like the Three Stooges.

**Alert**

Alert as a coyote at hunt.

Alert as a child.

Alert as a fox.

Alert as a prowling cat.

*Also see* Careful, Cautious, Wary.

**Alien**

Alien as a cockroach in an anthill.—Hank Searles

Alien as a whore in church.

**Alike**

Alike as a row of trees.

Alike as birds of a feather.

Alike as eggs.—William Shakespeare

Alike as flakes of snow.—Josh Billings

Alike as one pea is to another.—Edward Bulwer-Lytton

Alike as twins.—Robert Browning

Alike as two burrs in a mule's tail.

Alike as two halves of an apple.

Alike as two pins.

Alike as if the same mule kicked the whole family.

Alike as if they were split from the same piece of kindling.

—F. Hopkinson Smith

## **4 All over**

About as alike as an apple and an oyster.

About as alike as Mutt and Jeff.

*Also see* Go together, Similar.

## **All over**

All over like shit in a pig yard.

All over him like a cape on a vampire.

All over him like a cheap suit.

All over him like city birds on stale bread crumbs.—James Patterson

All over him like a rainstorm.

All over him like an iguana on a sand beetle.—Dean R. Koontz

All over him like body lotion.—Lee Smith

All over him like scum on a pond.

All over him like stink on a skunk.

All over him like stink on shit.—Bob Leuci

All over him like ugly on an ape.

*Also see* Abundant, Came down on him, Plentiful, Scattered.

## **Alluring**

Alluring as a ripe peach.—Guy De Maupassant

Alluring as the apple of Eden.

*Also see* Appealing, Attractive, Charming, Enticing.

## **Alone**

Alone as a jilted bridegroom.

Alone as a leper.

Alone as a lost ship at sea.

Alone as a scarecrow.—Truman Capote

Alone as Crusoe.—Edward S. Martin

*Also see* Forlorn, Lonely.

## **Aloof**

Aloof as a lottery winner.

Aloof as a thumb in a mitten.—Susan T. Cromartie

Aloof as Lady Nevershit.—Arnold Wesker

*Also see* Arrogant, Cool, Indifferent, Remote.

## **Ambitious**

Ambitious as a salmon in the falls.—George Garrett

Ambitious as a Baltimore pimp.

Ambitious as Lady Macbeth.—James G. Huneker

## **Ambled**

Ambled like a lame beggar.

Ambled like a lawnmower out for a stroll.—T. C. Boyle

Ambled like a man with the gout.

*Also see* Walked.

## **American**

American as a catcher's mitt.—George Jean Nathan

American as the World Series.

.....  
 American as apple pie.  
 American as baseball.  
 American as corn on the cob.  
 American cities are like badger holes ringed with trash.—John Steinbeck

### **Amiable**

Amiable as a cookie lady.  
 Amiable as a fruit merchant.  
 Amiable as a tarantula with its belly full.—John Crosby  
*Also see* Kind.

### **Amorous**

Amorous as a pair of lovebirds.  
 Amorous as a warm spring day.  
 Amorous as the first of May.—Alfred Tennyson  
*Also see* Horny, Passionate, Randy.

### **Amusing**

About as amusing as a boil on your butt.  
 About as amusing as breaking your leg.  
 About as amusing as sitting on a tack.  
 About as amusing as a groin injury.

### **Ankles**

Ankles like Chianti bottles.—George Jean Nathan  
 Ankles small and curved like axe handles and they looked as tough.  
 —F. Hopkinson Smith

### **Anonymous**

Anonymous as a railroad bum.  
 Anonymous as the assistant purchasing agent of a one-saw sawmill.

### **Anxious**

Anxious as a bull at a gate.  
 Anxious as a hen with one chick.—Mary Stewart  
 Anxious as a taxpayer with an audit notice from the IRS.  
 Anxious as an investor watching his stock go down.  
 Anxious as high school love.  
*Also see* Edgy, Frightened, Nervous, Restless, Scared, Tense, Touchy, Uneasy.

### **Appalling**

Appalling as a great fat mother-in-law.—R. S. Surtees  
 Appalling as a murder scene.

### **Appealing**

Appealing as apple pie à la mode.

## **6    Appetite**

About as appealing as a hooded cobra.—George MacDonald Fraser

*Also see Alluring, Attractive, Charming, Enticing.*

### **Appetite**

Appetite like a farmhand at hay time.

Appetite like a hungry bear.

Appetite like a long-hunted hound.

Appetite like a longshoreman.

Appetite like a lumberjack.

Appetite like an elephant.

*Also see Ate, Hungry.*

### **Arched**

Arched like a bow with a hundred-pound pull.

Arched like a cat's back at a dog show.

Arched like a mule's back in a hailstorm.

*Also see Bent, Drooped.*

### **Arms**

Arms as thin as pencils.

Arms like a mule's hind legs.—Tom Wicker

Arms like gateposts.—Leslie Thomas

Arms like ham hocks.

Arms like legs of mutton.—W. Somerset Maugham

Arms like logs.—James Crumley

Arms like sledgehammers.—F. Hopkinson Smith

Arms like thighs.

Arms looked like buggy whips with fingers.—Fred Allen

### **Arrogant**

Arrogant as a sergeant major in the Foreign Legion.—Charles Willeford

Arrogant as Caesar.—Stephen King

*Also see Aloof, Cool.*

### **Ascended**

Ascended as the smoke of a furnace.—*Old Testament*

Ascended like a gas-filled balloon.

### **Ate**

Ate like a bird.

Ate like a bull.—Robert Louis Stevenson

Ate like a cart horse.

Ate like a church mouse.

Ate like a dray horse.

Ate like a famished wolf.—Louisa May Alcott

Ate like a fat lady in an ice cream shop.

Ate like a hog.

Ate like a horse.

Ate like a lumberjack.

Ate like a one-man army.—Ivan Doig

Ate like a pig.

Ate like a sailor saved from an island.—Robert Lewis Taylor

Ate like a trucker.

Ate like a vacuum cleaner.—Tom McEwen

Ate like a well man and drank like a sick one.—Benjamin Franklin

Ate like he was going to the chair.

Shoveled in food like a stoker at the boiler fare.—Charles Gidley

*Also see Appetite, Hungry.*

## Attacked

Attacked like a wild animal.

Attacked like something gone mad.—Max Crawford

Attacked like Teddy Roosevelt at San Juan Hill.

Attacked like the Indians at Little Big Horn.

*Also see Came down on him, Charged.*

## Attracted

Attracted like a bitch in heat.

Attracted like a lofty oak tree attracts lightning.—Jack Matthews

Attracted like a moth to a flame.

Attracted like bees to honey.

Attracted like old people to day-old bread.—Tom McEwen

Attracted attention about as much as a dirty fingernail in the third grade.

—Ring Lardner

*Also see Drawn.*

## Attractive

About as attractive as a dead toad.

About as attractive as a sump pump.

About as attractive as a truck-struck weasel.—TV show “Bob Newhart”

*Also see Alluring, Appealing, Charming, Enticing, Handsome, Pretty.*

## Avoided it

Avoided it like a beast avoids a fire.—Ridley Wills

Avoided it like a dead cow.—Owen Ulph

Avoided it like a dog turd on the sidewalk.

## Awkward

Awkward as a baby's first steps.

Awkward as a bear.

Awkward as a blind dog in a butcher shop.

Awkward as a bull in a china shop.

Awkward as a cow on ice.

Awkward as a cow with a wooden leg.

Awkward as a cub bear with an armload of shelled corn.

Awkward as a fish out of water.

Awkward as a lame elephant.

*Also see Clumsy.*



# B

## **Babbled**

Babbled like a bunch of guinea hens.

Babbled like hyenas.

Babbled like women at a bridge club.

*Also see* Chattered, Jabbered, Prated.

## **Back and forth**

Back and forth like a Ping-Pong ball.

Back and forth like a shuttlecock.

Back and forth like a tennis ball.

Back and forth like arguing fruit peddlers.

Back and forth like timed metronomes.—Richard Bachman

*Also see* To and fro.

## **Backbone**

About as much backbone as an angleworm.—Rex Beach

About as much backbone as a chocolate éclair.—Theodore Roosevelt

About as much backbone as an eel.

About as much backbone as wet spaghetti.

## **Bad**

Bad as a dig in the eye with a blunt stick.—*Partridge's*

Bad as a jab in the ass with a sharp stick.

Bad as a kick in the ass.

Bad as a kick in the balls with a frozen boot.

Bad as a kick in the pants.

Bad as a slap in the belly with a wet fish.—*Partridge's*

Bad as a witch.

Bad as holding a horse in the rain.

Bad as old King Kong.—Jim Croce, "Bad, Bad Leroy Brown."

Bad as standing in the rain.

Bad as stepping on a rake.

*Also see* Mean.