

COMPREHENSION SKILLS SERIES

● Appreciation of Literary Forms

● Retaining Concepts &
Organizing Facts

● Isolating Details &
Recalling Specific Facts

Comprehension Skills Series

Appreciation of Literary Forms

...when reading

CB-7

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Each Comprehension Skills Booklet is divided into four parts.

Part One clearly defines, explains, and illustrates the specific skill discussed.

Part Two offers an interesting and informative lesson presented in clear, readable language, using illustrations from the student's own experience. A simple preview technique is used regularly throughout Parts One and Two; it requires the student to anticipate and respond.

Part Three consists of a sample exercise with four questions. An explanation supporting the correct answers is given as well as reasons explaining where wrong answers are faulty. The sample exercise is designed to prepare the student for the work required in the following section.

Part Four contains 30 practice exercises with questions. Edward Fry's formula for estimating readability was used to grade the exercises. The passages begin at grade 6 and advance gradually to grade 11. The student is advised to complete the 30 practice exercises thoughtfully and carefully. He is also urged to consult his instructor if extra help is needed before proceeding to Part Four.

An optional tape cassette is available for each Comprehension Skills Booklet. The tapes add an audio dimension to the series and are especially helpful to students who need assistance in comprehending written material. The cassettes help by enlisting the student's listening comprehension ability. All of the instructional matter and exercise paragraphs are recorded on the tape, permitting the student to listen as he reads along.

The Comprehension Skills Booklets and optional Cassettes offer a practical and solid program of reading comprehension instruction.

PART ONE

TYPES OF LITERATURE

Preview Quiz 1



As a preview to what will be discussed in Part One, try to answer this question:

Which types of writings may be considered "literature"?

- ☐ a. Only those that are fictional
- ☐ b. All those that deal with human experiences
- ☐ c. Only those that have a narrator

Begin reading Part One to discover the correct answer.

The purpose of this booklet is to help you distinguish among various forms of literature in order to understand figurative language.

In this booklet we use the term "literature" to include all writings which deal with human experiences and universal ideas in graceful and accurate language. All of the following types of writing may be considered literature: poetry, novel, short story, play, biography, autobiography, letters, diaries, journals, history, essay, documentary, book review, movie review, and so on. Even a well-written magazine article or an effective editorial may be considered literature.

Poetry is a branch of literature which explores ideas, emotions, and experiences in a distinctive form and style. Poetry, sometimes called "verse," depends greatly on the natural rhythms and sounds of language for its special effects. Poetry, even more than prose (all other writings), depends on precise and suggestive wording. In other words, a poem says much in little space.

Poetry differs from prose in obvious ways, also. Most often the first word of every line begins with a capital letter, even in the middle of a sentence. Poems sometimes contain rhyme, and often they have a particular rhythm, like music.

Generally speaking, everything which is not poetry is called prose, a broad category of writing which divides into two major areas: fiction and nonfiction.

Fiction is imaginative writing. It involves characters who do not really exist, events (plot) which have never occurred, and places (settings) which may not be real. Like poetry, fiction may entertain, present a universal truth of life (theme), or teach a lesson (moral). It is through fiction that we escape from the worries and cares of everyday life and explore new worlds. Our imagination is stimulated so that we become part of the action as it unfolds, sympathetic towards characters as they develop, and aware of the world in which these characters "live."

Short stories, novels, and plays are fictional writings, and since each of these writing types has a narrator—someone who tells the story—we call them narrations. Fiction and narration, then, mean just about the same thing.

Like fiction, nonfiction, too, may deal with people, places, and events, but with one important difference: the people, places, and events are real. Nonfiction, then, is less an outgrowth of a writer's imagination, and more a realistic recording of real people, involved in real activities, in real places.

If the nonfictional writing is about a person's life, it is called biography. If someone writes his own life story, he writes an autobiography (*auto-* means self). People in the fields of sports, politics, and entertainment are often subjects of biographies and autobiographies because their lives present a wealth of interesting experiences.

Preview Quiz 2



As a preview to what will be discussed next, try to answer this question:

A book which argues the pros and cons of eating organic foods can be placed in which of the following categories?

- ☐ a. Non-fiction/biography
- ☐ b. Fiction/novel
- ☐ c. Non-fiction/argumentation

Continue reading to discover the correct answer.

Another important difference between fiction and non-fiction is that nonfiction can deal solely with the expression of an author's ideas, views, and attitudes. Exposition and argumentation are the literary forms which deal with ideas, views, and attitudes. Notice the word "argument" in argumentation. Although argumentation is not really an argument, it is concerned with differing views and controversial issues.

Exposition, the other category of nonfiction, includes the formal essay and the many types of informal essays found in newspapers and magazines. Included are news stories, travel reports, book and movie reviews, sports stories, feature articles, fashion articles, editorials, and so on. Whether formal or informal, expository writing generally informs or instructs. Exposition concerns itself with ideas, rather than with telling a story or with presenting opinions.

In literature there is much more to enjoy and discover than the plot, character, and setting of narration; the author's opinions in argumentation; the author's ideas in exposition; and the writer's observations in description. In all these forms of literature extra discovery and enjoyment comes through an understanding of figurative language.

Figurative language is language which departs from the straight-forward use of words. It creates a special effect, clarifies an idea, and makes writing more colorful and forceful. Figurative language adds an extra dimension to writing, giving plain writing richness and depth.

Part Two will explore figurative language in detail and discuss many figures of speech commonly found in literature.

It is not necessary to memorize any of the definitions in this section or in Part Two. It is important, however, that you develop a general awareness of literary forms as outlined in this section and an understanding of figurative language as it is presented in Part Two.

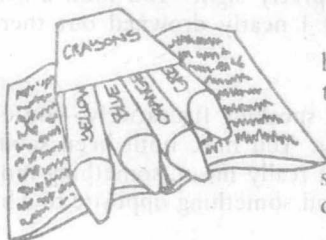
In this lesson we will discuss in detail the use of figurative language to describe. Emphasis will be placed on recognizing and understanding the uses of speech rather than on memorizing them.

We use figurative language so much in our daily lives that we do not always realize we are using it. We "don't want to go" or we often "blow up" or we "let the cat out of the bag." We don't stop to say, "Ah, that is a 'blow-up' action." We don't stop to say, "Ah, a 'cat'." or "What a 'cat' metaphor." We use them naturally.

PART TWO
FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE

Each more than we do figurative language to express our ideas clearly and direct. However, when we wish to color our ideas and add interesting depth to our words, we depend on figurative language.

Preview Quiz 3



As a preview to what will be discussed in Part Two, try to answer this question:

Figurative writing and speech relies on what kind of language?

- ☐ a. Straightforward and honest
- ☐ b. Unbelievable and deceiving
- ☐ c. Colorful and imaginative

Begin reading Part Two to discover the correct answer.

In this lesson we will discuss in detail the use of figurative language in literature. Emphasis will be placed on recognizing and understanding figures of speech, rather than on memorizing them.

We use figurative language so much in our daily lives that we do not always realize we are using it. We "boil with anger" or an idea "dawns on us," "The years roll by," and the election is a "landslide victory." We don't stop to say, "Ah, a simile," or "Wow! What a terrific metaphor!" We use them naturally.

Notice that these examples are colorful and imaginative. Literal language, in contrast, relies on the straight-forward, dictionary definition of words. Naturally we use literal language more than we do figurative language to express ourselves clearly and directly. However, when we wish to color our ideas and add interesting depth to our views, we depend on figurative language.

Let's take a typical conversation which relies heavily on figurative language. You notice a friend coming in out of the rain and you say, "You're a pretty sight. You look a little damp." His reply is, "Damp! I nearly drowned out there! It's raining buckets!"

Even though you both are speaking figuratively, you understand each other perfectly. You have both been saying something less than what you really mean, something more than what you really mean, and something opposite to what you mean.

Literally, the conversation makes no sense at all because you did not mean that your friend was a "pretty sight." Instead you meant that he looked terrible. You did not really mean that he looked "a bit damp;" you meant that he looked very wet. Similarly, your friend did not really mean that he was nearly drowned, but that he was soaked. And, of course,

it could not rain buckets, only water. Thus, figurative language makes very good sense on the imaginative level, but no sense at all on the literal level.

Writers use figurative language for the same reason that we use it in everyday conversation: to convey ideas in a clear, colorful, and forceful manner. For example, in a newspaper, we read that the President cleared away the "red tape" on the new legislation. In a magazine article, we read about a dam under construction at the "mouth" of the Amazon River. In a novel, we read about a character who is "inching" his way to safety. In one of Carl Sandburg's poems, we see fog coming in "on little cat feet." These examples of figurative language are only a few of the many types found in literature.

The difference between spoken figures of speech and those found in literature is a matter of usage. Those that are used every day are worn out. Those used in good writing are fresh and original. The more original they are, the more interesting the writing is.

Preview Quiz 4



As a preview to what will be discussed next, try to answer this question:

Figurative language encourages the reader

- ☐ a. to use his imagination.
- ☐ b. to recognize the importance of literal language.
- ☐ c. to look up words in the dictionary.

Continue reading to discover the correct answer.

It may seem absurd to say one thing and mean another, but, in fact, it is not. Figurative language catches the reader's attention and allows the author to express himself with forcefulness and color.

Figurative language encourages the reader to bridge gaps between ideas, fill in details, make associations, and form mental pictures. All of these uses of the imagination are highly satisfying, for there is great enjoyment in understanding that which has not been spelled out for us.

Figurative language is a means of clarifying unclear and unfamiliar ideas. It makes the abstract real. For example, when D.H. Lawrence describes a bat as "a black glove thrown up at the light and falling back," he is painting a figurative word picture which makes the bat real.

Figurative language adds emotional impact to writing. When W.H. Auden writes, "I'll love you dear, I'll love you/Till China and Africa meet," he shows much more emotion than if he had written, "I will love you, dear, for a long time." Thus, through figurative language, writers express emotion and viewpoint.

Although some experts on language have established nearly 250 figures of speech, there is so much overlapping that we will discuss only the ten most common ones. So that you will recognize them as they appear, they are

- | | |
|--------------------|-------------------|
| 1. symbol | 6. understatement |
| 2. simile | 7. change-of-name |
| 3. metaphor | 8. sound-words |
| 4. personification | 9. alliteration |
| 5. overstatement | 10. allusions |

Every figure of speech is created in a different way, has its own unique appearance, and is used for special purposes. It is not important for you to recognize each figure of speech, but you should be able to understand and appreciate them in your reading.

Symbol

One of the most common figures of speech is the symbol. A symbol is a concrete object used to represent an abstract idea; in other words, something which stands for something else. The cross, for example, is the symbol of Christianity. The flag is the symbol of a country. And the wedding ring is a symbol of marriage.

In literature some symbols have been used so often that they have become accepted by writers universally. The sea, for example, is generally accepted as a symbol of life. A flower or a butterfly is usually a symbol of delicate and fragile beauty. A rock is the symbol of strength and permanency.

Simile

Similes (and metaphors) are comparisons which use symbols. A simile is a comparison which uses "like," "as," or "than." If you have ever described someone as being "slow as molasses," or "faster than lightning," you have used similes. Molasses is accepted as a symbol for slow movement and lightning represents speed.

Preview Quiz 5



As a preview to what will be discussed next, try to answer this question:

Which one of these expressions is a simile?

- a. Without a moment to spare
- b. Busy as a bee
- c. My love is a thing of beauty.

Continue reading to discover the correct answer.