VIRGINIA MUSEUM OF FINE ARTS

Writing to Learn: Simile and Metaphor

Exploring figurative language with works of art activates students' imaginations while allowing them to make insightful comparisons and analogies.

Grade Level: Grades 6-8, Grades 9-12
Subject Area: English
Activity Type: Engagement Activity

SIMILE AND METAPHOR

Use or adapt the template below as a prompt for writing similes and metaphors.

A *simile* is a descriptive phrase that compares two things using **like** or **as**. A simile is one way to create an immediate visual image of what you are describing. For instance, you could compare a subject in a work of art (dog) using an adjective (white) with another noun (snow):

> This *dog* is **as** *white* **as** *snow*.

You can also compare a subject (shawl) directly with another noun (night) to help:

> Her *shawl* is **like** *night*.

Select an object from a work of art, and use nouns and adjective to try writing a couple of similes.

> This _____ is as _____ as _____.
> This _____ is like _____.

A *metaphor* is a writing device that makes an implied comparison that forms an expressive and complex image. Metaphors enliven poetry, stories, and conversations by creating a visual picture to describe something. For instance, the simile mentioned above, "Her shawl is like night" could be turned into a metaphor by saying: Her shawl is night, concealing her vulnerability in darkness. Here are some other examples of metaphors: Her shawl is the night sky, expanses of black scattered with light. Her shawl is smoke, rising warmly from the fire at her feet. Her blouse is a pastry, with cotton candy sleeves and cuffs of swirling taffy. Now you try!