

100 Metaphor in Literature

Examples

- “All the world’s a stage, And all the men and women merely players.” – William Shakespeare, “As You Like It”
Shakespeare uses this metaphor to express the idea that life is a performance, and we are all actors playing our roles.
- “I am the way into the city of woe.” – Dante Alighieri, “Inferno”
This metaphor introduces the entrance to Hell, personifying it as a sentient being and establishing the tone of suffering and despair.
- “Her heart was a secret garden and the walls were very high.” – William Goldman, “The Princess Bride”
Goldman uses this metaphor to convey the character’s guarded emotions, with a hidden garden representing her inner feelings.
- “The night was a tide of darkness.” – Thomas Hardy, “Far from the Madding Crowd”
Hardy employs this metaphor to create an image of night as a force of nature, covering everything like a tide.
- “The road was a ribbon of moonlight.” – Alfred Noyes, “The Highwayman”
Noyes’ metaphor turns a road at night into a ribbon illuminated by moonlight, painting a romantic and ethereal picture.
- “Men’s words are bullets, that their enemies take up and make use of against them.” – George Savile
Savile uses this metaphor to emphasize the power of words and how they can be used by others as weapons.

- “Man is but a reed, the weakest in nature, but he is a thinking reed.” – Blaise Pascal
Pascal’s metaphor depicts humans as fragile but distinguishes them for their intellect and consciousness.
- “Hope is a waking dream.” – Aristotle
Aristotle likens hope to a dream that occurs while awake, suggesting its elusive and abstract nature.
- “The news has come like a house falling.” – Chinua Achebe, “Things Fall Apart”
Achebe uses this metaphor to illustrate the shattering impact of certain news on the characters, likening it to a physical collapse.
- “My soul is an enchanted boat.” – Percy Bysshe Shelley, “Prometheus Unbound”
Shelley employs this metaphor to convey the ethereal quality of the soul, likening it to a mystical and magical vessel.
- “Time is a river sweeping away all that is born towards the sink of being and nothingness.” – Victor Hugo
In this metaphor, Hugo likens time to a river, inexorably carrying everything towards oblivion, underscoring the transient nature of life.
- “Life’s but a walking shadow.” – William Shakespeare, “Macbeth”
Shakespeare’s metaphor here emphasizes the ephemeral and insubstantial nature of life.
- “My love is a red, red rose.” – Robert Burns
Burns compares his love to a red rose, symbolizing beauty and passion.
- “Memory is the mother of all wisdom.” – Aeschylus
This metaphor underscores the essential role of memory in gaining wisdom and understanding.
- “The world breaks everyone, and afterward, some are strong at the broken places.” – Ernest Hemingway, “A Farewell to Arms”

Hemingway uses this metaphor to explore resilience and personal growth following adversity.

- “A laugh is a smile that bursts.” – Mary H. Waldrip
Waldrip’s metaphor turns a laugh into a blooming smile, capturing its spontaneous joy.
- “Conscience is a man’s compass.” – Vincent Van Gogh
This metaphor likens conscience to a navigational tool, guiding moral direction.
- “The mind is its own place, and in itself can make a heaven of hell, a hell of heaven.” – John Milton, “Paradise Lost”
Milton’s metaphor speaks to the mind’s power to create its reality, for better or worse.
- “Her voice was a string of coloured beads.” – Virginia Woolf
Woolf uses this metaphor to depict a voice with variation and beauty, as unique as colored beads.
- “I wandered lonely as a cloud.” – William Wordsworth
Wordsworth compares his solitary wandering to a lone cloud, invoking a sense of connection with nature.
- “Knowledge is a treasure, but practice is the key to it.” – Lao Tzu
Lao Tzu likens knowledge to a treasure that requires practice as a key, emphasizing the value of experience.
- “Fear is a beast that feeds on attention.” – Zora Neale Hurston
Hurston personifies fear as a beast, accentuating how it grows with attention.
- “Love is an endless mystery, for it has nothing else to explain it.” – Rabindranath Tagore
Tagore’s metaphor portrays love as an eternal mystery, emphasizing its ineffable quality.

- “Death is the dropping of the flower that the fruit may swell.” – Henry Ward Beecher
Beecher compares death to a natural process in a plant’s life cycle, providing a more comforting perspective on mortality.
- “Fame is a bee. / It has a song— / It has a sting— / Ah, too, it has a wing.” – Emily Dickinson
Dickinson’s metaphor likens fame to a bee, illustrating its allure, its potential to harm, and its fleeting nature.
- “Chaos is a friend of mine.” – Bob Dylan
Dylan personifies chaos as a friend, suggesting an acceptance and understanding of life’s unpredictability.
- “Our lives are but a candle in the wind.” – Edith Wharton
Wharton’s metaphor emphasizes the fragility and transient nature of life.
- “The pen is mightier than the sword.” – Edward Bulwer-Lytton
This famous metaphor underlines the power of words and writing over physical force.
- “A room without books is like a body without a soul.” – Marcus Tullius Cicero
Cicero compares books to the soul, highlighting their vital importance.
- “A good laugh is sunshine in the house.” – William Makepeace Thackeray
Thackeray likens laughter to sunshine, portraying it as a source of warmth and joy.
- “The eye is the lamp of the body.” – Matthew 6:22, Bible
This biblical metaphor compares the eye to a lamp, symbolizing insight and enlightenment.
- “Hope is the thing with feathers.” – Emily Dickinson
Dickinson metaphorically describes hope as a bird, symbolizing its delicate yet enduring nature.

- “The past is a foreign country; they do things differently there.” – L.P. Hartley, “The Go-Between”
Hartley likens the past to a foreign country, emphasizing its distance and unfamiliarity.
- “The world is a book, and those who do not travel read only one page.” – Augustine of Hippo
This metaphor compares the world to a book, portraying travel as a way to gain knowledge and experience.
- “Love’s fire heats water, water cools not love.” – William Shakespeare, “Sonnet 154”
Shakespeare uses this metaphor to convey the relentless and overpowering nature of love.
- “Her laughter was a question he wanted to spend his whole life answering.” – Nicole Krauss, “The History of Love”
Krauss’s metaphor turns laughter into a question, encapsulating the intrigue and devotion of love.
- “Man is a wolf to man.” – Thomas Hobbes
Hobbes’s metaphor paints a bleak picture of human nature and its inherent aggression.
- “The child was our lone prayer to an empty sky.” – Cormac McCarthy, “Blood Meridian”
McCarthy uses this metaphor to illustrate a desperate plea for hope in a seemingly indifferent universe.
- “The moon was a ghostly galleon.” – Alfred Noyes, “The Highwayman”
Noyes turns the moon into a spectral ship, creating a haunting and atmospheric image.

- “Ideas are the shadows of our feelings.” – Friedrich Nietzsche
Nietzsche likens ideas to shadows, suggesting they are mere reflections of deeper emotions.
- “Words are but the signs of ideas.” – Samuel Johnson
Johnson’s metaphor illustrates words as mere symbols, pointing to the underlying thoughts.
- “The human heart is like a ship on a stormy sea driven about by winds blowing from all four corners of heaven.” – Martin Luther King Jr.
King compares the human heart to a ship on a tumultuous sea, symbolizing emotional turbulence.
- “Sleep is the cousin of death.” – Nas, “N.Y. State of Mind”
Rapper Nas uses this metaphor to equate sleep with death, highlighting their similarities.
- “You are the salt of the earth.” – Matthew 5:13, Bible
This biblical metaphor depicts people as essential and valuable, like salt.
- “The mind is a garden.” – Earl Nightingale
Nightingale’s metaphor likens the mind to a garden, illustrating the importance of nurturing thoughts.
- “Life’s but a walking shadow.” – William Shakespeare, “Macbeth”
Shakespeare captures the fleeting and insubstantial nature of life with this metaphor.
- “The news hit me like a freight train.” – Stephen King
King vividly describes the impact of shocking news, likening it to being hit by a train.
- “The heart of a mother is a deep abyss at the bottom of which you will always find forgiveness.” – Honoré de Balzac

Balzac's metaphor explores the profound love and forgiveness found in a mother's heart.

- "The road to wisdom is a road paved with excess." – Tom Robbins, "Even Cowgirls Get the Blues"

Robbins's metaphor suggests that the path to wisdom often includes going to extremes.

- "Her voice was a string of coloured beads." – Virginia Woolf

Woolf's metaphor turns voice into visual imagery, creating a sensory experience.

- "I am the way, the truth, and the life." – John 14:6, Bible

This metaphor from Jesus highlights his spiritual leadership and guidance.

- "Memory is the diary that we all carry about with us." – Oscar Wilde

Wilde likens memory to a diary, emphasizing its function in storing personal experiences.

- "Knowledge is a treasure, but practice is the key to it." – Thomas Fuller

Fuller's metaphor emphasizes the importance of practice in unlocking the value of knowledge.

- "Language is the dress of thought." – Samuel Johnson

Johnson compares language to clothing, illustrating its role in shaping and presenting thoughts.

- "Time is a great teacher, but unfortunately, it kills all its pupils." – Louis Hector Berlioz

Berlioz's metaphor underscores time's unyielding progression and its effect on all living things.

- "Hope is a waking dream." – Aristotle

Aristotle's metaphor portrays hope as a form of dreaming while awake, emphasizing its imaginative quality.

- “The White House is the crown jewel of the federal penal system.” – Lewis Black
Black’s satirical metaphor likens the White House to a prison, emphasizing its constraints.
- “He was a wolf in sheep’s clothing.” – Aesop’s Fables
This ancient metaphor warns of deceit hidden behind an innocent appearance.
- “Death is the black camel that kneels unbidden at every gate.” – Arabian Proverb
This metaphor depicts death as an inevitable visitor, emphasizing its universality.
- “A loving heart is the truest wisdom.” – Charles Dickens
Dickens’s metaphor equates a loving heart with wisdom, suggesting an emotional intelligence.
- “A poem is a painting.” – Horace
Horace likens a poem to a painting, emphasizing the vivid imagery and artistry in poetry.
- “The world is a stage.” – William Shakespeare, “As You Like It”
Shakespeare’s metaphor compares the world to a stage, with life being a series of performances.
- “Love is a battlefield.” – Pat Benatar, Song Lyric
This song lyric likens love to a battlefield, highlighting the conflicts and struggles within relationships.
- “A leader is a dealer in hope.” – Napoleon Bonaparte
Napoleon’s metaphor portrays leaders as providers of hope, emphasizing their inspirational role.
- “Writers are the engineers of the human soul.” – Joseph Stalin
Stalin’s metaphor ascribes a profound role to writers, likening them to engineers of human emotions.

- “The mind is a garden.” – Voltaire
Voltaire’s metaphor compares the mind to a garden, illustrating how thoughts can be cultivated and nurtured.
- “All the world’s a stage, and all the men and women merely players.” – William Shakespeare, “As You Like It”
Shakespeare’s metaphor paints life as a performance, where everyone has their part to play.
- “Her laughter was a question he wanted to spend his whole life answering.” – Nicole Krauss, “The History of Love”
Krauss’s metaphor turns laughter into a profound inquiry, reflecting a deep emotional connection.
- “Ideas are the ghosts of birds.” – Victor Hugo
Hugo’s metaphor portrays ideas as ethereal and fleeting, like the ghosts of birds.
- “War is the father of all and the king of all.” – Heraclitus
Heraclitus uses metaphor to depict war as a fundamental and dominant force in human existence.
- “The world is a book, and those who do not travel read only one page.” – Augustine of Hippo
This metaphor compares the world to a book, emphasizing the importance of travel in gaining knowledge.
- “Conscience is a man’s compass.” – Vincent Van Gogh
Van Gogh’s metaphor likens conscience to a compass, guiding moral direction.
- “The eyes are the windows to the soul.” – Traditional Proverb
This age-old metaphor suggests that eyes reveal deep, inner emotions and thoughts.
- “Life is a journey that must be traveled no matter how bad the roads and accommodations.” – Oliver Goldsmith

Goldsmith's metaphor likens life to a journey, emphasizing its challenges and the necessity to proceed.

- "The soul is a candle." – Yiddish Proverb

This proverb uses metaphor to portray the soul as a source of light and guidance, similar to a candle.

- "Man is but a reed, the most feeble thing in nature, but he is a thinking reed." – Blaise Pascal

Pascal's metaphor illustrates human fragility but also our unique ability to think.

- "The moon was a ghostly galleon tossed upon cloudy seas." – Alfred Noyes, "The Highwayman"

Noyes's metaphor compares the moon to a ship, creating a romantic and mysterious image.

- "His words are pearls of wisdom."

This metaphor equates wise words with pearls, emphasizing their value and beauty.

- "Life is a broken-winged bird that cannot fly." – Langston Hughes

Hughes's metaphor portrays life as a bird with a broken wing, symbolizing hopelessness.

- "The winds were ocean waves, thrashing against the trees limbs." – Emily Dickinson

Dickinson's metaphor turns the wind into waves, illustrating the force of nature.

- "Our lives are rivers, gliding free to that unfathomed, boundless sea, the silent grave!" – Jorge Manrique

Manrique likens our lives to rivers flowing into the sea, symbolizing death.

- "The sun in the west was a drop of burning gold." – Stephen Crane

Crane compares the setting sun to a drop of gold, painting a vivid picture.

- “My heart is a lonely hunter.” – Carson McCullers
McCullers’s metaphor expresses a deep sense of longing and loneliness.
- “Books are the mirrors of the soul.” – Virginia Woolf
Woolf uses a metaphor to illustrate how books reflect the inner self.
- “The world breaks everyone, and afterward, some are strong at the broken places.” – Ernest Hemingway
Hemingway’s metaphor speaks to the resilience that can emerge from life’s trials.
- “Education is the kindling of a flame, not the filling of a vessel.” – Socrates
Socrates likens education to igniting a flame, emphasizing understanding over memorization.
- “Death is a dialogue between the spirit and the dust.” – Emily Dickinson
Dickinson’s metaphor frames death as a conversation between life and decay.
- “The mind is a universe and can make a heaven of hell, a hell of heaven.” – John Milton
Milton’s metaphor portrays the mind’s power to create our reality.
- “A good conscience is a continual Christmas.” – Benjamin Franklin
Franklin likens a good conscience to the joy and peace of Christmas.
- “Courage is a wild stallion.”
This metaphor compares courage to a wild horse, emphasizing its untamed strength.
- “Chaos is a friend of mine.” – Bob Dylan
Dylan’s metaphor personifies chaos, reflecting a comfort with disorder and unpredictability.
- “My love is a red, red rose.” – Robert Burns
Burns’s metaphor compares love to a red rose, symbolizing passion and beauty.

- “Time is a dressmaker specializing in alterations.” – Faith Baldwin
Baldwin’s metaphor gives time the role of a dressmaker, highlighting its transformative nature.
- “A word is dead when it is said, some say. I say it just begins to live that day.” – Emily Dickinson
Dickinson’s metaphor explores the power and life of words once spoken.
- “Her mind is a hive of mysteries.”
This metaphor compares a mind to a hive, emphasizing complexity and intrigue.
- “Gossip is a sort of smoke that comes from the dirty tobacco-pipes of those who diffuse it.” – George Eliot
Eliot’s metaphor likens gossip to smoke, depicting its spreading and polluting nature.
- “Fear is a darkroom where negatives develop.” – Usman B. Asif
Asif’s metaphor likens fear to a darkroom, illustrating how it can cultivate negative thoughts.
- “Truth is a torch that gleams through the fog without dispelling it.” – Claude Adrien Helvetius
Helvetius’s metaphor portrays truth as a torch, illuminating but not entirely clearing confusion.
- “Hope is the pillar that holds up the world.” – Pliny the Elder
Pliny’s metaphor illustrates hope as a supporting pillar, emphasizing its essential role.
- “Wisdom is a tree that grows in the heart.”
This metaphor depicts wisdom as a growing tree, symbolizing its development within a person.
- **Copyright @ Examples.com**