

WRITING ESSENTIALS IN STYLE & COMPOSITION

Week 3: Metaphor and Simile

The Greek word “apologia” means “a defence.” As you read, think about these questions:

- Why does poetry need to be defended?
- What is the poet’s power?
- What is Sidney’s definition of poetry? Do you think it is a good one?

Reading 1: Philip Sidney, an excerpt from *An Apology for Poetry*

(<https://www.gutenberg.org/files/1962/1962-h/1962-h.htm>)

[Poetry Must be Defended]

...And yet I must say, that as I have more just cause to make a pitiful defence of poor poetry, which, from almost the highest estimation of learning, is fallen to be the laughing-stock of children; so have I need to bring some more available proofs...

[Poetry is the “First Light-Giver”]

[Poetry] hath been the first light-giver to ignorance, and first nurse, whose milk by little and little enabled them to feed afterwards of tougher knowledge.

[Philosophy uses Poetry]

And, truly, even Plato, whosoever well considers shall find that in the body of his work, though the inside and strength were philosophy, the skin, as it were, and beauty depended most of poetry. For all stands upon dialogues...

[History uses Poetry]

And even historiographers, although their lips sound of things done, and verity be written in their foreheads, have been glad to borrow both fashion and, perchance, weight of the poets; so Herodotus ... and all the rest that followed him, either stole or usurped, of poetry, their passionate describing of passions, the many particularities of battles which no man could affirm; or, if that be denied me, long orations, put in the mouths of great kings and captains, which it is certain they never pronounced.

[Impact of Poetry on Various Cultures]

So that, truly, neither philosopher nor historiographer could, at the first, have entered into the gates of popular judgments, if they had not taken a great disport of poetry; which in all nations, at this day, where learning flourishes not, is plain to be seen; in all which they have some feeling of poetry. [Even if you] did seek to ruin all memory of learning from among them,

yet do their poets, even to this day, last; so as it is not more notable in the soon beginning than in long - continuing.

[The Poet's Power]

...Only the poet... lifted up with the vigour of his own invention, doth grow, in effect, into another nature; in making things either better than nature brings forth, or quite anew; forms such as never were in nature, as the heroes, demigods, Cyclops, chimeras, furies... so as he goes hand in hand with Nature, not enclosed within the narrow warrant of her gifts, but freely ranging within the zodiac of his own wit. Nature never set forth the earth in so rich tapestry as divers poets have done; neither with so pleasant rivers, fruitful trees, sweet - smelling flowers, nor whatsoever else may make the too - much - loved earth lovelier; her world is brazen - the poets only deliver a golden.

... Poesy, therefore, is an art of imitation; for so Aristotle terms it ... a representing, counterfeiting, or figuring forth: to speak metaphorically, a speaking picture, with this end, to teach and delight....

Reading 2: Aristotle on Poetry

(source :Aristotle's *Poetics* and *Rhetoric*)

[How History and Poetry Differ]

"... It is not the function of the poet to relate what has happened, but what may happen,—what is possible according to the law of probability or necessity. The poet and the historian differ not by writing in verse or in prose. The work of Herodotus (*a Historian*) might be put into verse, and it would still be a species of history, with metre no less than without it. The true difference is that one relates what has happened, the other what may happen. Poetry, therefore, is a more philosophical and a higher thing than history: for poetry tends to express the universal, history the particular. By the universal, I mean how a person of a certain type will on occasion speak or act, according to the law of probability or necessity; and it is this universality at which poetry aims in the names she attaches to the personages."

-The Poetics, Chapter IX

[The Genius of Metaphor]

"It is a great matter to observe propriety in these several modes of expression... But the greatest thing by far is to have a command of metaphor. This alone cannot be imparted by another; it is the mark of genius, for to make good metaphors implies an eye for resemblances."

- Aristotle, Poetics

[What Makes a Good Metaphor]

Metaphors must be drawn...from things that are related to the original thing, and yet not obviously so related – just as in philosophy also an acute mind will perceive resemblances even in things far apart.

- Rhetoric Book III, chapter 11

[The Difference Between a Metaphor and a Simile]

The simile also is a metaphor; the difference is but slight. When the poet says of Achilles that he Leapt on the foe as a lion this is a simile; when he says of him 'the lion leapt', it is a metaphor – here, since both are courageous, he has transferred to Achilles the name of 'lion'.

- Rhetoric Book III, Chapter 4

In class exercise:

- In your own words, define a metaphor as clearly and as simply as possible.
- Define a simile, clearly distinguishing it from a metaphor.

Now consider how a metaphor is different from an extended metaphor:

“The term “extended metaphor” refers to a comparison between two unlike things that continues throughout a series of sentences in a paragraph, or lines in a poem. It is often comprised of more than one sentence, and sometimes consists of a full paragraph.” (<https://literarydevices.net/>)

Keep in mind that for this assignment you will write an EXTENDED metaphor (or simile).

Now, Identify all the metaphors and similes in the following examples.

1) All the world's a stage, And all the men and women merely players They have their exits and their entrances... -Shakespeare, *As You Like It*

2) Now when the men of both sides were set in order by their leaders, The Trojans came on with clamour and shouting, like wildfowl, as when the clamour of cranes goes high to the heavens, when the cranes escape the winter time and the rains unceasing and clamorously wing their way to the streaming Ocean, bringing to the Pygmainan men bloodshed and destruction: at daybreak they bring on the baleful battle against them. But the Achaian men went silently, breathing valour, stubbornly minded each in his heart to stand by the others. -Homer, *Iliad*

3) Life's but a walking shadow, a poor player
That struts and frets his hour upon the stage
And then is heard no more: it is a tale
Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury,
Signifying nothing.
-Shakespeare, *Macbeth*

4) “You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt loses its flavour, how shall it be seasoned? It is then good for nothing but to be thrown out and trampled underfoot by men. “You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.” -Matthew 5:14-16

5) “The lamp of the body is the eye. If therefore your eye is good, your whole body will be full of light.” -Matthew 6:22

6) “Do not give what is holy to dogs; nor cast your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn and tear you in pieces.” -Matthew 7:6

7) A psalm by David. The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want. He makes me to lie down in green pastures; He leads me beside the still waters. He restores my soul; He leads me in the paths of righteousness For His name's sake. Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for You are with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me. You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; You anoint my head with oil; My cup runs over. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me All the days of my life; And I will dwell in the house of the Lord to the end of my days. -Psalm 23

8) Then Jesus said to them again, “Most assuredly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep. All who ever came before Me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not hear them. I am the door. If anyone enters by Me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture. The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly. “I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd gives His life for the sheep. But a hireling, he who is not the shepherd, one who does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and flees; and the wolf catches the sheep and scatters them. The hireling flees because he is a hireling and does not care about the sheep. I am the good shepherd; and I know My sheep, and am known by My own. As the Father knows Me, even so I know the Father; and I lay down My life for the sheep. And other sheep I have which are not of this fold; them also I must bring, and they will hear My voice; and there will be one flock and one shepherd.” -John 10:7-16

9) Another parable He put forth to them, saying: “The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed, which a man took and sowed in his field, which indeed is the least of all the seeds; but when it is grown it is greater than the herbs and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and nest in its branches.” Another parable He spoke to them: “The kingdom of heaven is like leaven, which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal till it was all leavened.” -Matthew 13:31-33

10) “Again, the kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and hid; and for joy over it he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field. “Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant seeking beautiful pearls, who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had and bought it.” “Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a dragnet that was cast into the sea and gathered some of every kind, which, when it was full, they drew to shore; and they sat down and gathered the good into vessels, but threw the bad away. So it will be at the end of the age. The angels will come forth, separate the wicked from among the just, and cast them into the furnace of fire. There will be wailing and gnashing of teeth.” - Matthew 13:44-50

Assignment:

- Write at least 100 words to describe a person/group using an original metaphor or simile.
- Choose a person (or a group of people) that you have some knowledge of who would be a good subject of comparison. You may even write about yourself.
- Compare this person/group to an object to which it *seems* like it has nothing in common. Remember metaphors and similes compare two *unlike* things.
- Use only one metaphor or simile for the entire assignment. You are writing an EXTENDED metaphor/simile. Introduce the comparison and then continue it through the paragraph.
- Here are some examples. Compare your brother to a tornado, your soccer team to a zoo, yourself to a piano, your teacher to an owl, your friend to a quilt, etc.

INVENTION:

For easy comparison brainstorm the characteristics of each object. Think of how you will show that these two objects, while they seem very unlike, might actually be similar.

Characteristics of Object 1:

Characteristics of Object 2:
