

Chasing Metaphors

Students can better understand and appreciate the figurative qualities of language by connecting them in meaningful ways to images and sounds present in their environment. Using metaphors also assists students to see commonly experienced objects, events, and people in new and more meaningful ways.

Project Description

In this project, students explore the figurative language of metaphors by turning a series of objects, concepts, events, or characters into metaphors, first in written form and then by creating a video with images, text, and sound.

First, the class reviews a number of metaphors from works they have recently read and by visiting a website. The class discusses how the relationship between the two subjects of the metaphor helps them to understand both subjects in new ways. Students brainstorm a list of people, characters, objects, events, or places that would make interesting subjects for metaphors. Students attempt to view each suggested subject through the eyes of other characters or objects that might have a unique relationship with or perspective on the subject. For example, how might a honeybee view a flower? How might an ant view a large rock?

The class comes up with metaphorical statements that capture something of the relationship between the pairs of subjects. For example: A flower is a soda shop to a bee. It sips sweet nectar (soda pop) through a curled straw (its proboscis).

Small groups of students create their own metaphorical statements by selecting one or several of the suggested metaphors and creating a one- or two-line stanza that compares the selected object to its metaphorical equivalent. This format can be used: A(n) _____ is a _____ to/for a _____. Example: Grass is a jungle to a millipede. It is an anaconda in the weeds.

The class discusses which of the metaphorical relationships might be captured in images or video within the area of the school, school grounds, or neighborhood. Groups are then assigned one or more of their metaphorical statements and poems to use as a basis for an iMovie project. Students complete a storyboard for their project, planning how they will depict their metaphors. Students use a digital video camera to capture video clips and a digital still camera to take photos in their surroundings. Students can also use a scanner to capture images from books. Students import photos into iPhoto and organize and edit the images. Students locate any music they want to use for the background and import it into iTunes. Students import their video clips into iMovie. Students edit the photos and video clips to better display the relationships between the pairs of subjects in the metaphors. Students import the photos into their iMovie project and add text to coordinate the metaphor as text with the video clips and images.

Note: This project has potential as a telecollaborative project using the Internet with students soliciting contributions of metaphors from other classrooms around the world. These can also be assembled as one larger project in iMovie or presented on the Internet as QuickTime movies.

Outcomes

After completing this project, students will be able to:

- Distinguish figurative from literal language.
- Work collaboratively to revise and enhance textual and media formats.
- Create a desired impression or mood through language, sentence patterns, camera angles, and audio clips.
- Integrate a variety of media and display techniques to enhance the appeal and persuasiveness of a presentation.

Technology Skills

After completing this project, students will be able to:

- Create a multimedia presentation incorporating visual images, text, sound clips, and video clips.
- Use a word-processing application to organize ideas in poetic verse and storyboard the key elements of the presentation.
- Use a digital video camera, digital still camera, or scanner to capture video clips and visual images.
- Use iPhoto to import, organize, and edit photos.
- Use iMovie to import and edit video clips and sound clips as needed.

Assessment Suggestions

- Imaged metaphors can be assessed by their ability to evoke the written metaphor. In other words, will a viewer of the imaged metaphor arrive at a similar verbal metaphor when viewing the video sequence without text?
- A rubric can be used to assess each imaged metaphor according to the following criteria:
 - The poem includes words with strong emotive qualities and clear images.
 - Each verse in the poem is effectively centered around a metaphor.
 - Images and video clips effectively depict the metaphor.

Tools and Resources

Books

- Mary Anne Hoberman, *A House Is a House for Me*, Puffin Books, 1982
- George Lakoff, *Metaphors We Live By*, University of Chicago Press, 1983
- Elyse Sommers, *Metaphors Dictionary*, Visible Ink Press, 2001

Internet

- <http://www.vsg.edu.au/samples/poetry/npsample.htm>
- <http://abcteach.com/writing/naturemet.htm>
- <http://www.dositey.com/language/readwrite/rollerp.html>
- iLife How-To Guides: <http://www.apple.com/education/ilife/howto/>

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Tools

Macintosh computers (computer with a CD burner or SuperDrive is optional), digital video camera, digital still camera, scanner (optional), iMovie, iPhoto, iTunes, iDVD (optional), AppleWorks

Facilitation Tip

It is important that students have a specific objective and plan before venturing out to capture a metaphor. If the metaphor is, "A rock is a mountain to an ant," students need to have decided upon a location for their shoot where there are rocks and ants. Students should list each metaphor, a proposed visual image, and a planned shooting location before they leave the classroom.

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