

Middle School Literacy: Poetry Concepts

Grade 8

Simile

Introduction:

Concepts are the fundamental building block of English and Literacy comprehension, as the instruction deals with less concrete physical realities as mathematics and the physical sciences. Therefore, the procedure of concept teaching is crucial to Literacy educators, as elaborating on English hypothetical concepts is more complicated than comparing examples and non-examples that are tangible and non-subjective. As such, to effectively instruct Literacy, knowledge and familiarity with concept teaching is essential.

In our instruction of poetry concepts, we are hoping to illustrate and elaborate on the tenets of concept teaching, in particular the method of direct presentation. The reasoning behind our choice of direct presentation lies in there is typically many concepts to cover in a limited amount of time. As well, at this stage, many students will be inexperienced with poetry and may require the direct approach for better comprehension at these early stages.

Note: While understanding all “poetry concepts” is not critical to the grade 8 curriculum, according to the Curriculum documents students are expected to “understand the effect of language, style, and format” and “demonstrate understanding” (p.162, Atlantic Provinces English Arts Middle School Curriculum) of poetry, so the basics gone over in this lesson would qualify.

Background:

My portion of the lesson will be based on the concept of simile, which is typically defined as a figure of speech that makes a comparison between essentially unlike things using like, as, or than. It is one of the most well known poetry concepts, and is typically taught in a direct presentation fashion.

Simile is a conjunctive concept, meaning the rule structure is always constant i.e. any comparison uses like, as, or then will almost invariably be a simile. Therefore, the “rule-to-example” approach will be used, as it appears to be the best option for a non-difficult concept.

Materials Needed:

Overhead Projector
3-4 Transparency Sheets

Instruction:

I: Introduce to the class the concept of simile by placing an overhead containing the following similes.

Overhead I:

Jane is as cute as a button

He is as blind as a bat

I was sleeping like a log

Her eyes are like the stars

Clouds like cotton candy

He is larger than life

Superman is faster than a speeding bullet

Ask the class if they look familiar. After a brief minute, tell the class that all of these share a similarity-- they belong to a family of speech known as a simile. Then place the next section on the overhead:

Overhead II:

SIMILE: a comparison between two things using “like”, “as”, or “than”.

Jane is as cute as a button.

This is comparing Jane to a button using “like”.
It is a simile.

Clouds like cotton candy.

This is comparing clouds to cotton candy using “as”.
It is a simile.

Superman is faster than a speeding bullet.

This is comparing Superman to a speeding bullet using “than”.
It is simile.

II:

Place an overhead up asking students to identify similes. This is to set up the concept examples and non-examples for the instruction :

Overhead III:

1) John was as wise as an owl.

2) The stars are bright tonight.

3) I was as still as a statue.

4) My computer is like the desk it sits on.

5) It was harder than that.

III:

For the final activity, ask the class to come up with a simile describing the person to the left of them. Then, I will ask select tables to share their similes, and then ask them why their choice is a simile.

At this point, the instruction will switch to another poetry concept and/or a recap of the concept teaching used will be done.

Conclusion:

With this lesson, “simile” was taught using the concept teaching instructional strategy. Students attained knowledge of the concept through instruction, guided discovery, and using their own critical skills.

The first overhead was a brief example of the inductive method (where students were asked to examine several different forms of similes and asked if there was any similarity between them all).

After this, the lesson switched to using the deductive method, where the students began moving in a “rule-to-example” approach. The definition of simile was shown and explained, and examples were shown (see Overhead II).

Students were asked to identify examples and non-examples of similes with overhead III.

Finally, the students were asked to develop their own simile and explain why they can be defined as a simile.

Therefore, the lesson adheres to the four steps of concept teaching:

- Clarify goals & conditions (introduction to simile)
- Illustrate examples & non-examples (Overhead II)
- Students provide examples & non-examples to demonstrate attainment of concept (Overhead III)
- Guide students to think about their own thinking i.e. examine their decisions, consequences of choices, how concept fits in with bigger picture (asking the class to develop their own similes)