

Literary devices

Stage 3

Learning focus

Students will learn to identify literary devices in texts and analyse their effect. Students will explore simile, alliteration, metaphor and personification.

Syllabus outcome

The following teaching and learning strategy will assist in covering elements of the following outcomes:

- EN3-5B discusses how language is used to achieve a widening range of purposes for a widening range of audiences and contexts

Year 5 NAPLAN item descriptors

- interprets the meaning of a simile in a narrative
- identifies the use of a literary device in an informative text.

Literacy Learning Progression guide

Understanding Texts (UnT8-UnT10)

Key: C=comprehension P=process V=vocabulary

UnT8

- reads and views some moderately complex texts (see Text Complexity) (C)
- poses and answers inferential questions (C)

UnT9

- identifies how authors create a sense of playfulness (pun, alliteration) (C)
- identifies language used to create tone or atmosphere (V)

UnT10

- evaluates the effectiveness of language forms and features used in moderately complex or some sophisticated texts (C)

Resources

- Extract Tim Winton's 'Blueback' - Appendix 1
- Analogy posters - Appendix 2
- Analogy match-up - Appendix 3
- Character descriptions - Appendix 4
- Personification match-up - Appendix 5a
- Personification match up creating sentences - Appendix 5b
- Finding personification in text –Appendix 5c
- Metaphor comparison - Appendix 6
- Idiom skit cards - Appendix 7
- Identifying literary devices - Appendix 8

Background information

Literary devices

Literary devices are used in texts to connect with the reader and convey meaning. Accomplished readers are able to recognise and interpret the use of various language devices that composers use for effect. Explain to students that composers use different language devices for particular purposes. In a persuasive text, composers might use persuasive devices such as rhetorical questions, repetition, metaphors, hyperboles and modality to persuade readers to agree with a particular point of view. In narrative texts, composers might use literary devices such as personification, similes, alliteration, onomatopoeia and imagery to engage the reader and allow them to visualise the setting and characters.

Figurative language

Figurative language creates comparisons by linking the senses and the concrete to abstract ideas. Words or phrases are used in a non-literal way for particular effect, for example simile, metaphor, personification. Figurative language may also use elements of other senses, as in hearing with onomatopoeia, or in combination as in synaesthesia.

Simile

A figure of speech that compares two usually dissimilar things. The comparison starts with *like*, *as*, *as if*.

Alliteration

The recurrence, in close succession, of the same consonant sounds usually at the beginning of words. In 'ripe, red raspberry', the repetition of the 'r' sound creates a rich aural effect, suggesting the lusciousness of the fruit.

Personification

Attributing human characteristics to abstractions such as love, things (for example The trees sighed and moaned in the wind) or animals (for example The hen said to the fox ...).

Metaphor

A resemblance between one thing and another is declared by suggesting that one thing is another, for example 'My fingers are ice'. Metaphors are common in spoken and written language and visual metaphors are common in still images and moving images.

Reference: English K-10 Syllabus © NSW Education Standards Authority (NESA) for and on behalf of the Crown in right of the State of New South Wales, 2012.

Where to next?

- Vocabulary in context
- Inference

Teaching strategies

Onomatopoeia

1. Review student understanding of onomatopoeia and brainstorm examples. Using the examples, determine ways to categorise them, for example, we can categorise onomatopoeia into human, object and animal sounds. Students write examples of onomatopoeia on sticky notes and swap with a partner. The partner writes on the sticky note an example of how to use the onomatopoeia in a sentence.
2. Discuss how onomatopoeia also adds rhythm and impacts tone and atmosphere of a text.
 “The **moan** of doves in immemorial elms,
 And **murmuring** of innumerable bees...”
By Alfred Lord Tennyson ‘Come Down, O Maid’
3. Students use excerpt from Tim Winton’s ‘Blueback’ (Appendix 1) to highlight onomatopoeia examples and consider what they mean in context by suggesting an alternate example.

Analogy and simile

1. Analogy *Gallery Walk*: Display enlarged analogy posters (Appendix 2) for students to add ideas and make connections between an abstract and a concrete noun: how is fear like a microwave? How is laughter like a grasshopper? How is control like a barcode? Students discuss and compare responses. Discuss what analogy is and how comparing dissimilar items acts as a building block for future work with simile and metaphor.
2. Demonstrate the relationships between words in analogies written in the following form: doctor is to hospital as teacher is to school. Students work in teams to determine the missing element from the analogy table (Appendix 3).
3. *Visualising*: Teacher reads aloud a character description from excerpts using Appendix 4 or using a novel or picture book being explored in class. Students visualise the character, creating a visual representation as well as brainstorming vocabulary to describe the character.
4. Discuss how characters' physical and emotional descriptions can have similarities with other items. Give examples of similes in each category below and ask students to provide other examples:

How it feels compared to how something else feels:	How it looks compared to how something else looks:	How it smells compared to how something else smells:	How a character behaves compared with something else
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • His skin was as slippery as rocks covered in algae along the coastline. • Her skin was like newly-laundered satin. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • His hair was as spiky as the toothbrush bristles from a freshly opened pack. • His hands were wrinkled like prunes. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The air was as spicy as freshly-cracked black pepper. • The room smelled like rotting fruit and animal carcasses. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • He ran through the school gate like a cheetah in the race of its life.

5. Students read the remaining examples from Appendix 4 and create similes using information presented on the character.
6. Students read Appendix 1 and identify any similes in the text using a different colour to onomatopoeia.

Personification

1. Share examples of personification: the clouds marched across the horizon, the branches tickled my arms as I walked past, the sun scratched at my face etc. Teacher models identifying and colour-coding the noun and action verb in the examples.
2. Discuss definition of personification: Attributing human characteristics to abstractions such as love, things (for example: *The trees sighed and moaned in the wind*) or animals (for example *...the hen said to the fox.*).
3. Students use personification match up sentence guide (Appendix 5a) to create a sentence. Students first match a verb with a noun, visualise what this looks like, and finally creating a sample sentence.
4. The class is split in half; half think of an action verb, the other half think of a noun. Students write these on two different coloured sticky notes, so action verbs and nouns are easily distinguished and able to be read. Students find a partner with a different coloured sticky note to create an example of personification.
5. Students use personification match up (Appendix 5b) to create an example of personification, sharing with peers for feedback.
6. Read William Wordsworth's 'I wandered Lonely' (Appendix 5c) to identify personification examples. Share and discuss with the meaning of examples and how these add to the meaning of the text. Source: <https://www.familyfriendpoems.com/poem/i-wandered-lonely-as-a-cloud-by-william-wordsworth>

Metaphor

1. Define what a metaphor is with the class:
A resemblance between one thing and another is declared by suggesting that one thing is another, for example 'My fingers are ice'. Metaphors are common in spoken and written language and visual metaphors are common in still images and moving images (NSW English Syllabus Glossary, 2012).
2. *T-Chart*: Compare simile and a metaphor in a T-Chart. Teacher can prompt ideas by asking: What is being compared in the simile and metaphor? How is the simile and metaphor structured? What language is used to indicate a simile or metaphor? How could you teach someone the difference between the two?
3. Students use Appendix 6 to analyse the metaphors, identify the two elements being compared and re-writing as a simile and maintain meaning.
4. Students identify any examples of metaphor in Appendix 4, in a different colour to onomatopoeia, personification and simile.

Idiom

1. In groups of 3-4, students are given an idiom to act out for the class. Class guesses what the idiom is. At the completion of each skit, students share the idiom and the class discusses the idiom, the historical background and when you might use the idiom (See Appendix 7)
2. Students can research the background to the idioms to add context and further build understanding.
3. Students can think of their own version of the idiom, ensuring meaning is maintained.

Identifying literary devices

1. Discuss how literary devices add to the tone and atmosphere of a text, helping to convey meaning by using emotional language and personal connections to engage audience.
2. *Expert groups*: Students nominate themselves to work in an expert group on a literary device: simile, alliteration and assonance, metaphor, personification, metaphor and idiom. Students create an anchor chart giving details on their devices:
 - What is the device?
 - Why do authors use this?
 - What sorts of texts is this found in?
 - Give some examples

Alternate task: students can present this product in a different format such as a film or skit.

3. Students share with the class with students taking notes. Students then elect to work with an expert with a different literary device and work in a pair to build expertise in two concepts. This process can continue until expertise is shared with all students.
4. Teacher reads excerpt from Tim Winton's 'Blueback' (2008) to the class (Appendix 8).
5. Students use text to identify literary devices, based on what they have learnt from previous teaching and learning and work within expert groups. Students can appeal to the expert and the corresponding anchor chart whilst annotating text.

Appendix 1

'Blueback' by Tim Winton (2008) excerpt

Abel ran out of breath. He kicked back to the shining surface and hung there panting fresh air for a moment. His mother came gliding up with three abalone in her bag already. Her snorkel whooshed beside him. In a moment they dived again to work along the bottom, picking abalone and filling their bags. Up and down they went, hanging onto each breath, taking a couple of abalone from each clump, leaving the rest to breed and grow. Small fish came out of the weed and crevices to snaffle bits of meat and pick over the sediment they stirred up. Wrasse, sweep, scalyfins, blennies, foxfish and blue devils – all kinds – reef fish – darted about them in bursts of colour.

On the deepest dive, at his limit, Abel was almost at the end of his breath when he felt a rush in the water behind him. It felt like something big, like his mother passing. But at the corner of his eye he saw a blue shadow that blocked out the sun. He whirled around to see a huge mouth and an eye the size of a golf ball coming at him. The mouth opened. He saw massive pegs of teeth as it came on in a terrible rush. Abel screamed in his snorkel and pushed hard off the bottom, but the big blue shadow suddenly had him by the hand. The abalone he was holding came tearing out of his fingers. Abel thought he was about to die. He felt pain shoot up his arm. A vast flat tail blurred across his body. And then it was gone.

Abel shot to the surface and burst into the fresh air with a shriek. He wheeled around, looking for danger, waiting for another rush from the lurking shadow. His whole body quaked and trembled. He looked at his hand; a tiny thread of blood curled into the water. It was only a scratch.

His mother came slowly upward with her bag full. She gave him the thumbs up.

'Get in the boat!' he shouted when she surfaced. 'There's something down there!'

She grabbed him by the arm and squeezed. 'It's okay, love.'

'Mum it nearly got me!'

'Close call, eh?' she said with a smile.

'Look, it took skin off my fingers!'

'Look down now.'

'Let's get to the boat. Please!'

'Just look down,' said his mother.

Reluctantly he stuck the snorkel back in his mouth and put his head under. Near the bottom, in the mist left from the abalone gathering, a huge blue shadow twitched and quivered. There it was, not a shark, but the biggest fish he had ever seen. It was gigantic. It had fins like ping pong paddles. Its tail was a blue-green rudder. It looked as big as a horse.

How is fear like a microwave?

How is
enjoyment like a
grasshopper?

How is control
like a barcode?

How is power
like a
helicopter?

Appendix 3

Analogy match up

Draw a line to match the analogies and complete the column on the right.

Duck is to duckling
Heat is to fire
Knife is to cut
Student is to teacher
Doctor is to diagnose
Mother is to daughter
Baby is to adult
Train is to track
Computer is to type
Water is to drink

As car is to:
As father is to:
As puppy is to:
As foal is to:
As cold is to:
As patient is to:
As detective is to:
As _____ is to clean.
As food is to:
As _____ is to write

Analogy match up (support)

Fill in the missing part to the analogy.

Duck is to duckling as foal is to

Heat is to fire as cold is to

Knife is to cut as is to clean.

Student is to teacher as patient is to

Mother is to daughter as father is to

Baby is to adult as puppy is to

Train is to track as car is to

Computer is to type as is to write

Water is to drink as food is to

Appendix 4

Visualising character text excerpts

He was a big, beefy man with hardly any neck, although he did have a very large moustache. Mrs. Dursley was thin and blonde and had nearly twice the usual amount of neck, which came in very useful as she spent so much of her time craning over garden fences, spying on the neighbours. (p. 1)

Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone by J K Rowling (Scholastic, 1998)

"How clever he looked! How quick and sharp and full of life! He kept making quick jerky little movements with his head, cocking it this way and that, and taking everything in with those bright twinkling eyes. He was like a squirrel in the quickness of his movements, like a quick clever old squirrel from the park."

Charlie and the Chocolate Factory by Roald Dahl (1964)

We wore our best dresses on the outside to make a good impression. Rachel wore her green linen Easter suit she was so vain of, and her long whitish hair pulled off her forehead with a wide pink elastic hairband.... Sitting next to me on the plane, she kept batting her white-rabbit eyelashes and adjusting her bright pink hairband, trying to get me to notice she had secretly painted her fingernails bubble-gum pink to match. (p. 15)

The Poisonwood Bible by Barbara Kingsolver (HarperCollins, 1998)

He was most fifty, and he looked it. His hair was long and tangled and greasy, and hung down, and you could see his eyes shining through like he was behind vines. It was all black, no gray; so was his long, mixed-up whiskers. There warn't no color in his face, where his face showed; it was white; not like another man's white, but a white to make a body sick, a white to make a body's flesh crawl – a tree-toad white, a fish-belly white. As for his clothes – just rags, that was all. He had one ankle resting on t'other knee; the boot on that foot was busted, and two of his toes stuck through, and he worked them now and then. His hat was laying on the floor – an old black slouch with the top caved in, like a lid. (p. 11)

The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn by Mark Twain (Hayes Barton Press, 2005, originally published 1885)

My brother Ben's face, thought Eugene, is like a piece of slightly yellow ivory; his high white head is knotted fiercely by his old man's scowl; his mouth is like a knife, his smile the flicker of light across a blade. His face is like a blade, and a knife, and a flicker of light: it is delicate and fierce, and scowls beautifully forever, and when he fastens his hard white fingers and his scowling eyes upon a thing he wants to fix, he sniffs with sharp and private concentration through his long, pointed nose...his hair shines like that of a young boy—it is crinkled and crisp as lettuce. (p. 135)

Look Homeward, Angel by Thomas Wolfe (Simon and Schuster, 1995, originally published 1929)

Visualising character text excerpt – complex text

The Potato Factory

Bryce Courtney, Penguin Books - 1995

CHAPTER ONE

Ikey Solomon was so entirely a Londoner that he was a human part of the great metropolis, a jigsawed brick that fitted into no other place. He was mixed into that mould mortar, an ingredient in the slime and smutch of its rat-infested dockside hovels and verminous netherkens. He was a part of its smogged countenance and the dark, cold mannerisms of the ancient city itself. He was contained within the clinging mud and the evil-smelling putrilage. Ikey was as natural a part of the chaffering, quarrelling humanity who lived in the rookeries among the slaughterhouses, cesspools and tanneries as anyone born in the square mile known to be the heartbeat of London Town.

Ikey was completely insensitive to his surroundings, his nose not affronted by the miasma which hung like a thin, dirty cloud at the level of the rooftops. This effluvian smog rose from the open sewers, known as the Venice of drains, which carried thick soup of human excrement into the Thames. It mixed with the fumes produced by the fat boilers, fell mongers, gluerenderers, tripe-scrappers and dog-skinners, to mention but a few of the stench-makers, to make London's atmosphere the foulest-smelling place for the congregation of humans on earth.

...

Ikey Solomon was the worst kind of villain, though in respectable company and in the magistrate's courts and assizes he passed himself off as a small-time jeweller, a maker of wedding rings and paste and garnet brooches for what was at that time described as the respectable poor. But the poor, in those areas of misery after Waterloo, had trouble enough scraping together the means to bring a plate of boiled potatoes or toasted herrings to the table. If Ikey had depended for his livelihood on their desire for knick-knackery, his family would have been poorly served indeed.

In reality, he was a fence, a most notorious receiver of stolen goods, one known to every skilled thief and member of the dangerous classes of London. In Liverpool, Manchester and Birmingham young pickpockets, footpads, snakesmen and the like referred to him in awed and reverent tones as the Prince of Fences.

Ikey Solomon was not a man to love, there was too much the natural cockroach about him, a creature to be found only in the dark and dirty corners of life.

Appendix 5a

Personification match-up

marched	clouds
stomped	tree branches
tiptoed	waves
cried	soil
laughed	high chair
punched	computer
giggled	console
slapped	coffee machine
held	tree roots
embraced	sand
growled	desert
smiled	forest
scratched	water
pinched	storm clouds
licked	lightening
danced	thunder
twirled	glass window
pirouetted	front door
skated	mushroom
frowned	grass

Personification match-up - support

Instructions:

- read the examples
- visualise which matches make sense
- draw a line from the noun to a human characteristic of my choice.

You can cut these out and attempt different matches to find one I am happy with.

Noun	Human characteristic
sun	pinched
sword	hugged
jumper	swallowed
lounge	hid
dog	stomped
bag	cried
guitar	giggled



My favourite match and why:

Personification match-up - challenge

Instructions:

- create your own brainstorm of things, animals and abstract nouns
- create your own brainstorm of human characteristics, including emotions.
- match a characteristic with a noun and for pairs
- re-match in a different way.

Favourite pair and why it was effective:

Appendix 5b

Personification match-up sentences

Instruction: Match a human characteristic with a noun. You might like to choose one that you can visualise happening.

Example: I might match the human characteristic 'danced' with the noun 'coffee machine'.

Human characteristic	Noun (thing, animal, abstract noun)	What can you visualise?	Put in a sentence
danced	coffee machine	water splashing around and jumping up and down.	The coffee machine danced along the kitchen bench with water bubbling out the sides.

Appendix 5c

Finding personification in text

I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud

William Wordsworth

I wandered lonely as a cloud
That floats on high o'er vales and hills,
When all at once I saw a crowd,
A host, of golden daffodils;
Beside the lake, beneath the trees,
Fluttering and dancing in the breeze.

Continuous as the stars that shine
And twinkle on the milky way,
They stretched in never-ending line
Along the margin of a bay:
Ten thousand saw I at a glance,
Tossing their heads in sprightly dance.

The waves beside them danced; but they
Out-did the sparkling waves in glee:
A poet could not but be gay,
In such a jocund company:
I gazed—and gazed—but little thought
What wealth the show to me had brought:

For oft, when on my couch I lie
In vacant or in pensive mood,
They flash upon that inward eye
Which is the bliss of solitude;
And then my heart with pleasure fills,
And dances with the daffodils.

Source: <https://www.familyfriendpoems.com/poem/i-wandered-lonely-as-a-cloud-by-william-wordsworth>

Appendix 6

Metaphor comparison

Metaphor	What two things are being compared?	Re-write as a simile
He was the sun		
Her heart is gold		
You have a heart of stone		
The desk is a pigsty!		
My backpack is a bag of rocks		
The world is a stage		
Her voice was thunder		
Her hair was silk		
She is a graceful swan		
My mum is a teddy bear		
The baby was a blasting radio		

Appendix 7

Acting out idioms

Cut out and give one idiom to each group to act out

All in the same boat	Barking up the wrong tree
Crying over spilt milk	Put your foot in your mouth
I'll be there with bells on	Bite off more than you can chew
It takes two to tango	Keen as mustard
Rub salt in your wound	The straw that broke the camel's back
Birds of a feather flock together	Out of the frying pan and into the fire
Let the cat out of the bag	In the dog house
Zip your lip	To cry wolf
Add fuel to the fire	All bark and no bite
At the drop of a hat	Beating around the bush

Appendix 8

Text excerpt to identify literary devices

1. **Circle** vocabulary that is unfamiliar and attempt to define using context clues
2. **Highlight** any examples of figurative language you can identify and show what you think it means

Blueback, Tim Winton (2008)

Just as the sun came up, Abel pulled on his wetsuit and ran down the jetty.

Already his mother was in the dinghy with the outboard motor running. It was cold this morning and Abel was still half asleep. He got down into the boat, untied the bowline and pushed them clear. With a purr of the outboard they surged away.

In the bow, he looked around, slowly waking up in the cold rush of air. Sunlight caught the windows of the shack above the beach so that every pane of glass looked like a little fire. He watched his mother's hair blow back off her shoulders. She squinted a little. Her skin was tanned and wrinkled from the sun. He felt the sea pulsing under him as the little boat skimmed across the bay.

'Good morning, sleepyhead,' said his mother. 'Better get your gear out.'

He bent down to the plastic dive crate and pulled out his fins, snorkel and mask. He found his weight belt and bag and screwdriver and laid them on the seat beside him.

After a while his mother steered them around the front of Robbers Head and cut the motor. The anchor went down into the dark, clear water and everything was quiet.

'Stay close today, okay?'

'Okay,' he said, pulling on his fins and rubbing spit into his mask so it wouldn't fog up under water.

His mother pitched over the side, her fins flashing upwards. The boat rocked a little and Abel pulled his mask on and followed her.

He fell back into the water with a cold crash. A cloud of bubbles swirled around him, clinging to his skin like pearls. Then he cleared his snorkel – phhht! – and rolled over to look down on the world underwater.

Great, round boulders and dark cracks loomed below. Thin silver fish hung in nervous schools. Seaweed trembled in the gentle current. Orange starfish and yellow plates of coral glowed from the deepest slopes where his mother was already gliding like a bird.

Appendix 8

Teacher copy: annotated text excerpt to identify literary devices

Blueback, Tim Winton (2008)

Just as the sun came up, Abel pulled on his **wetsuit** and ran down the **jetty**. Already his mother was in the **dinghy** with the **outboard motor running**. It was cold this morning and Abel was still half asleep. He got down into the boat, untied the **bowline** and pushed them clear. With a **purr** of the outboard they surged away.

In the bow, he looked around, slowly waking up in the cold **rush** of air. **Sunlight caught the windows** of the shack above the beach so that **every pane of glass** **looked like a little fire**. He watched his mother's hair blow back off her shoulders. She squinted a little. Her skin was tanned and wrinkled from the sun. He felt the **sea pulsing** under him as the little boat **skimmed** across the bay.

'Good morning, sleepyhead,' said his mother. 'Better get your gear out.'

He bent down to the plastic **dive crate** and pulled out his fins, snorkel and mask. He found his **weight belt** and bag and screwdriver and laid them on the seat beside him.

After a while his mother steered them around the front of Robbers Head and cut the motor. The **anchor** went down into the dark, clear water and everything was quiet.

'Stay close today, okay?'

'Okay,' he said, pulling on his fins and rubbing spit into his mask so it wouldn't fog up under water.

His mother pitched over the side, her fins flashing upwards. The boat rocked a little and Abel pulled his mask on and followed her.

He fell back into the water with a **cold** **crash**. **A cloud of bubbles** swirled around him, **clinging to his skin like pearls**. Then he cleared his snorkel – **phhht!** – and rolled over to look down on the world underwater.

Great, round boulders and **dark cracks** loomed below. **Thin silver fish hung** **in** **nervous** **schools**. **Seaweed trembled** in the **gentle** **current**. Orange starfish and yellow plates of **coral glowed** from the deepest slopes where his mother was already **gliding like a bird**.

Vocabulary

Wetsuit, jetty, dinghy, outboard motor running, bowline, skimmed, dive crate, weight belt, anchor, current, schools

Onomatopoeia

Purr, rush, crash, phhht

Metaphor

A cloud of bubbles, coral glowed

Personification

Sunlight caught the windows, sea pulsing, thin silver fish hung in nervous schools, seaweed trembled,

Simile

Every pane of glass looked like a little fire, clinging to his skin like pearls, gliding like a bird

Alliteration and

assonance

Cold crash, dark cracks