

The Metaphor Game

Metaphors are figurative language tools that compare two unlike things to create a deeper understanding of a concept or idea. They're powerful—they can transcend language and cultural barriers and tap into universal human experiences and symbols, making messages accessible to a broader and more diverse audience. But they can be challenging for beginners. The metaphor game offers a playful and accessible approach to unlocking the magic of metaphors.

How it works

In the metaphor game, you practice making imaginative connections between two seemingly unrelated entities. First, gather materials, including index cards, writing tools, and notebooks. Next, choose a theme like 'emotions' or 'nature,' and compile a list of related words. Shuffle this list and form teams of two. One team member draws a word, keeping it a secret, while the other sets up the structure for a simple metaphor by writing "[the word they drew] is a _____." Then, set a 2-minute timer and let the second team member provide 15 random nouns. Swap roles, collaborate to refine your metaphors, and, finally, share and discuss the most intriguing ones with the group. This activity promotes creativity and teamwork in an engaging way.

Step-by-step instructions

- 1 Brainstorm 10 themes or ideas and randomly choose one to use for the game. For example, "nature," "emotions," "the ocean," etc.

- 2 Brainstorm 30 nouns based on your chosen theme. Chose your favorite 20, and write each one on a separate index card or scrap of paper. For example, if “emotions” was the theme, this list could include words like Joy, Happiness, Laughter, Melancholy, Fury, Serenity, Confusion, Elation, Anxiety, Anger, Contentment, Bitterness, etc.

| | | |
|-----|-----|-----|
| 1. | 11. | 21. |
| 2. | 12. | 22. |
| 3. | 13. | 23. |
| 4. | 14. | 24. |
| 5. | 15. | 25. |
| 6. | 16. | 26. |
| 7. | 17. | 27. |
| 8. | 18. | 28. |
| 9. | 19. | 29. |
| 10. | 20. | 30. |

- 3 Shuffle the list on a table or in a box.
- 4 Divide into teams of two. Each team chooses one member to start. The selected team member draws a word from the pile of related words without showing it to their partner.

- 5 The selected team member writes the word they drew in the first blank below of each line below, leaving the second blank space empty for the metaphorical comparison.

1. _____ is a _____.
2. _____ is a _____.
3. _____ is a _____.
4. _____ is a _____.
5. _____ is a _____.
6. _____ is a _____.
7. _____ is a _____.
8. _____ is a _____.
9. _____ is a _____.
10. _____ is a _____.
11. _____ is a _____.
12. _____ is a _____.
13. _____ is a _____.
14. _____ is a _____.
15. _____ is a _____.

- 6 Set a timer for 2 minutes and have the other team member provides 15 random nouns (objects, animals, places, etc.) to their partner. The first team member fills in the blank with each of the provided nouns to create 15 different metaphors. The emphasis here is on quick, spontaneous creativity.
- 7 Switch roles within the team. Now, the second team member draws a word and the first team member generates random nouns.
- 8 As a team, review both sets of metaphors created. Look for opportunities to combine, expand, or refine them into more elaborate and compelling metaphors.
- 9 Have teams share their most intriguing metaphors with the group. Encourage discussion and exploration of the metaphors' meanings and imagery.



A metaphor is a figure of speech that pulls comparisons between two unrelated ideas. There are different types of verbal metaphors, here are some of the most common:

1. **Standard Metaphor:** This is what you've create above. A standard metaphor states one idea is another, making a direct comparison between two unrelated ideas.
2. **Implicit Metaphor:** This type of metaphor does not explicitly state the comparison but relies on the reader or listener to infer it. For example, "The classroom buzzed with energy," where "buzzed" implies the comparison between the classroom and a beehive.
3. **Extended Metaphor:** In an extended metaphor, the comparison between two things is drawn out over several sentences or throughout an entire work, providing a deeper exploration of the metaphor. An example is Shakespeare's "All the world's a stage, and all the men and women merely players."
4. **Implied Metaphor:** Implied metaphors suggest a comparison indirectly without using "like" or "as." For instance, "His heart of stone finally melted," where "heart of stone" implies a person's emotional coldness.
5. **Mixed Metaphor:** A mixed metaphor occurs when two or more metaphors that are incompatible or inconsistent are combined within the same expression. This often results in unintentional humor or confusion, like saying "He's a loose cannon, and we're all in the same boat."
6. **Absolute Metaphor:** In an absolute metaphor, one of the elements in the comparison is implied, not explicitly stated. For instance, "She was lightning."



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