

Overview of key image terms: simile, metaphor, personification, dominant impressi...

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Key Image Terms 1. simile- compares two dissimilar objects using like or as.

Example #1: N. Scott Momaday describes shadows from clouds “ that move upon the grain like water. ” Commentary: This simile shows vs. tells. It helps me to picture what the shadows looked like. They weren’t stationary, they were moving very fluid over a field of grain. By comparing the shadows to water, Momaday paints a picture of something being intangible to something that is tangible. I didn’t directly see the shadows moving over the field, but he took something unfamiliar to me and compared it to something I am familiar with.

The simile also instills a sense of calm and peace because he says, “ move upon then grain like water,” and it’s not a threatening tone. He doesn’t say they crashed down upon the grain because this would create an impression that he wasn’t trying to portray. Example #2: Roxanne Roberts describes blood on the floor of her kitchen. She says the blood was “ like jell-o. ”

Commentary: When I think of jell-o I think of a sticky red film over the floor. She talks about how she tried to clean it off. She says that it’s been 20 years and she’s still cleaning up.

As difficult as the blood was to clean up, she had even more trouble cleaning up her life after her father’s suicide. Not only was the blood like jell-o, but so was her hope. The more you try to rub the jell-o away, the more pieces it is split into. It then becomes even harder to clean up. You would have to scrape for a long time to even begin to remove the blood from the tile floor. 2.

Metaphor- compares two things by saying that one thing his something else.

Example #1: Mark Twain says, “ A broad expanse of the river was turned to

blood. Commentary: Twain is saying that the sunset over the river turned the
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water red. At first it was a deep “ blood” red, and then it brightened into gold. He didn’t say that the river was blood, but he said that it “ turned to” blood. The word “ turn” is a form of the word “ be”, so saying the river “ was turned to blood” is saying the river became blood, or the river was blood. Saying that the river was blood is a metaphor because it is saying that one thing turned into something else, or was something else.

This metaphor could mean that there was something bad happening. The river didn’t literally turn into blood. It means that far away there was foreshadowing that there would soon be conflict. Example #2: In Alex Hess’ college application essay, “ Sharing Time,” he describes an experience from kindergarten in which he was seeking the glory of sitting on the “ orange line” on the classroom’s carpet. He then goes on to describe how he has been continuing to pursue the “ orange line”. Commentary: Alex Hess used the “ orange line” as a metaphor for his life.

He wants to sit on the “ orange line” that is being worthy of the Lord’s approval. The orange line itself is not the Lord, but it changes to Him from representing the spot on which kindergarteners would strive to be worthy to sit. After he lost his opportunity in kindergarten to sit on it, he was determined to reach the line. He worked hard and continued to pursue the “ orange line” throughout his life to feel worthy of the Lord’s approval. This metaphor shows that Alex Hess is a very strong-willed person who will never give up on what he believes in. 3.

Personification- gives personal nature or human characteristics to something nonhuman. Example #1: The wind whispered. Commentary: Wind cannot

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actually whisper; it isn't human. This personification makes the wind sound quiet and mysterious. If it was just, "the wind blew," there would be no way to tell exactly what the wind was doing. It could have been "whispering", barely a small breeze, or even blasting through the air turning into a storm. Personification helps to identify how the wind is blowing to give the reader a better idea of what is happening.

It could have been, "The wind blew softly," but saying that it whispered gives it a more mysterious sound. When there is whispering happening around me I want to know what is being said, so I become silent and try to hear someone else's private conversation. It's like the wind is blowing so gently that you have to strain to hear it. Example #2: A student applying to Cornell University personified a dead rat prepared for and served to her in a Super Deer restaurant. She says, "The roasted rat and its crispy skin stared back at the Shaolin family." Commentary: A rat can stare, but its skin cannot.

The personification of the cooked rat's "crispy skin" staring back at her creates an uncomfortable impression in the essay, making the reader feel and understand how repulsed the other students had been at the "specialty of the house". It wasn't the rat itself staring (its head had been removed), it was the rat's skin. This not only sounds disgusting, but it also evokes creepy and distressing emotions in the reader. By personifying the roasted rat's skin, the writer is giving a better idea of what everybody thought of their dinner. She doesn't have to come right out and say that everybody thought it looked atrocious.

She showed that by the way she went about describing the rat that was served to them. 4. Dominant Impression- the principal effect the writer is trying to convey to the reader. Example #1: “ The sculptures that adorn Philadelphia’s City Hall are a catalog of nineteenth-century artistic styles. ”

Commentary: The dominant impression I receive from this sentence is a feeling of elegance and serenity. This is important because it sets the reader up for the remainder of the story. Without giving a dominant impression, the reader will be expected to assume the purpose of the paragraph or essay based on its thesis.

This can be done, but the reader won’t be left with an impression about what he or she just read. A dominant impression exists in almost every essay, whether intended or not. Example #2: In “ The Valley of Windmills”, the writer uses word connotations, personification, and sensory detail to convey a very creepy, ethereal, ominous dominant impression. Commentary: The writer made a point about the dominant impression that the valley being described is not something you would see in a fairytale, it is a barren and lonely place.

The writer used words like precarious, ghostly, broken, abandoned, decayed, and desolation to try to cause a feeling of uneasiness to surface in the reader. He personifies the windmills by saying that they were “ distinctly evil... with remnants of arms hanging derelict from their snouts. ” This personification greatly adds to the overall dominant impression of the descriptive essay. The reader can picture the windmills standing looking like dark, creepy ancient makings that have been undisturbed for a long time. 5.

Connotation- an idea or feeling one associates with a given word in addition to its literal meaning. Example #1: In “ The Valley of Windmills”, Mary Lim depicts the hazardous windmills by using the words: “ squat forms”, “ boulders”, “ fortifications” and “ broken wooden crosses”. Commentary: All of these words have menacing connotations. The word “ broken” makes me think of a ceramic vase falling to the floor and shattering on impact, propelling hazardous glass shards outward at dangerous speeds. This is a very negative and possibly painstaking connotation for broken.

To add to the negative connotation of broken, the crosses were broken. this turns the negativity into a more ominous connotation. So together, the “ broken wooden crosses” evoke negative, painful, and ominous emotions in the reader. Example #2: In “ The Yellow Stick”, the writer describes a time in elementary school when her teacher would threaten students to volunteer in class with a can of colored popsicle sticks. The writer expresses her dread of the yellow stick with her name “ scorched” onto it, and the fear of being chosen by her teacher to undergo the torture of reading aloud.

Commentary: By using the word scorched to describe the way her name was written on the yellow stick, the reader associates the word “ scorched” with fire, which usually has a negative connotation. Scorched means destroyed by fire so as to leave nothing salvageable. By saying that her name was scorched onto the popsicle stick, she is making the reader think of damage or pain. This helps the reader to understand how she felt about her teacher, and how she was being damaged by the yellow stick.