

2.9 Simile and Metaphor

Pep walks in and finds Pip slithering on the floor and acting like a snake.

Pep: What are you doing down there on the ground, Pip?

Pip: What does it look like, Pep? I'm slithering.

Pep: You call *that* slithering?

Pip: You think *you* can do better, Pep?

Pep: No, Pip... that's cool. I don't want to be like a snake. Everyone can say that Pip is like a snake.

Pip: Simile!

Pep: What's that?

Pip: Simile!

Pep: Is that the name of the snake you're pretending to be?

Pip: No, it's the name of a comparison between two unlike things using the words "like" or "as."

Pep: Wait... I thought you were doing the slithering thing. Now you're similithering?

Pip: No, Pep. You used a simile.

Pep: When?

Pip: Just now.

Pep: How?

Pip: You said, Pep, and I quote, "everyone can say that Pip is like a snake."

Pep: I didn't mean to hurt your feelings, Pip.

Pip: No, no – listen. You compared me to a snake. You said, "Pip is like a snake."

Pep: (*Sarcastically*) Oh, Pip... (*pretending to cry*) can you ever forgive me?

Pip: Sure. Now listen. You compared me, a person, to something that is not like me at all, a snake.

Pep: A reptile, in fact.

Pip: Right. But my point is that the comparison, between me and a snake, is a technique that writers use. It's a figure of speech – also called figurative language.

Pep: You mean they compare everyone to snakes?

Pip: *(Sighs)* No, Pep. *(Pip uncovers an imaginary plate with a donut on it)* Hey, Pep... it's your favorite.

Pep: It sure is! *(Grabs the imaginary donut and gobbles it up – then burps loudly)* That was de-licious.

Pip: I would say that you were as hungry as a bear.

Pep: Are you saying I'm like a hungry bear? *(Stops and thinks for a moment)* But I'm not a bear at all! I'm a person.

Pip: Precisely. I made a simile about you. I compared you, a person, to something not like you at all, a bear.

Pep: But I'm kind of like a bear. We both like donuts.

Pip: You know what I mean. A bear is an animal. You're a human being. They are two unlike things... a person and a bear.

Pep: *(Growls)* You've made me angry, Pip. Now I'm an angry bear.

Pip: No, Pep. Now you're using a metaphor.

Pep: *(Confused)* Who's-it-for?

Pip: You made a comparison between two unlike things directly – that is you did *not* use the words "like" or "as."

Pep: Wait, I thought we were talking about simile.

Pip: Well, you see Pep, they're very similar.

Pep: How so?

Pip: Well, a simile compares two unlike things and uses the words "like" or "as." For example, I said "Pep is as hungry as a bear," and you said, "Pip is *like* a snake."

Pep: *(Laughs)* I'm bigger than you because I'm a bear and you're a snake.

Pip: See, now you're using metaphor.

Pep: *(Stamps foot)* No, now you're confusing me!

Pip: No, Pep. See, a simile compares unlike things *indirectly*. So, even though you're as hungry as a bear, you're still a person.

Pep: Then how did I use a metaphor just now?

Pip: Because, Pep. You said, "I'm a bear." You didn't use the words "like" or "as." You compared yourself *directly* to a bear – as if you actually *are* a bear.

Pep: So a simile would be, "Pip was like a slithering snake in the grass."

Pip: Right! And a metaphor would be, "Pep was a hungry bear, eating the delicious donut."

Pep: Are there any more donuts?

Pip: Well, no. I only brought one donut to illustrate the point that...

Pep: (*Growls*) Bear no like only one donut! Bear want more donuts!

Pip: Pep, you're being ridiculous.

Pep: (*Keeps growling*) Bear still hungry! Bear going to eat snake!

Pip: (*Growing impatient*) You know what, Pip? This conversation is a disaster area. How about that metaphor?

Pep: (*Loudly*) Little snake better slither like the wind! How's about that for a simile?!

Pip: Surely you don't mean to actually try to...

Pep: (*Shouts*) Eat you?!

Pip: (*Hides slightly under desk*) Lesson over!

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Post-Reading Activity

What are some similes you could write using the following words:

Rain - Needles

Clouds – Cotton

Snow - Diamonds

Sun - Furnace

Now, rewrite your similes as metaphors.