

Boost Free Lessons - Year 9 English

Lesson 9: Figurative Language and Idioms

Name: _____ Grade: _____ Date: _____

Worked Example 1

Name the technique and explain its effect.

The old bridge groaned under the weight of the traffic.

1. **Groaned** is something a living thing does, but here it describes a bridge.
2. Giving human qualities to something non-human is **personification**.
3. Now explain the effect, which is where the marks are.
4. It makes the bridge sound exhausted and close to failing, which creates unease.

Personification. It makes the bridge sound strained and unsafe, creating a sense of unease.

Worked Example 2

Explain the idiom below, and say why a writer might use it.

After the interview, Ravi was walking on air.

1. An **idiom** is a phrase whose meaning cannot be worked out from the individual words.
2. Nobody literally walks on air. The phrase means feeling elated.
3. Idioms are informal and familiar, so they suit casual writing and dialogue.
4. In formal writing they can sound like a cliché, so use them deliberately rather than by habit.

It means he felt elated. Idioms sound natural and familiar, but in formal writing they can read as cliché.

Remember: A **simile** compares using like or as. A **metaphor** says one thing is another.

Personification gives human qualities to non-human things. An **idiom** means something its words do not say.



Question 1: Name the technique used in each sentence.

1. Her voice was a warm blanket.

2. The wind whispered through the fence.

3. He was as steady as a rock.

4. She let the cat out of the bag.

5. Time is a thief.

6. The stars winked above the paddock.

7. They were miles apart on the issue.

8. The exam was a mountain to climb.



Question 2: Read the passage below, then answer the questions.

The afternoon was still, like a held breath. Heat pressed down on the tin roofs and nothing moved in the yard. Everyone in the house had been on edge since the phone call, and nobody would say why.

1. Find one simile in the passage and explain its effect.

2. Find one example of personification.

3. Find one idiom and explain what it means.

4. Which technique is most effective here? Explain.

5. Rewrite one sentence without any figurative language. What is lost?



Question 3: Answer the following questions.

1. Write a simile describing a crowded train.

2. Write a sentence using personification to describe a storm.

3. Explain why an idiom may confuse a reader from another culture.

4. When should a writer avoid idioms?





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Answers and Model Responses: Figurative Language and Idioms**Question 1**

1. Metaphor
2. Personification
3. Simile
4. Idiom
5. Metaphor
6. Personification
7. Idiom
8. Metaphor

Question 2

1. Model: *like a held breath*, which suggests tension and the sense that something is about to happen.
2. Model: *the heat pressed down*.
3. Model: *on edge*, meaning tense or anxious.
4. Model: the simile, because comparing the stillness to a held breath makes the tension physical.
5. Model: The afternoon was very still and hot. The rewrite states the conditions but loses all the tension.

Question 3

1. Model response: The carriage was as packed as a jar of pickles, and just as impossible to move in.
2. Model response: The storm shouldered its way across the valley and slammed every door it found.
3. The meaning cannot be worked out from the individual words, so a reader who has not met the phrase before has no way to decode it.
4. In formal or academic writing, and whenever the audience may not share the same first language or cultural background.

