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Lesson Five

FOCUS: Figurative Language

Writers use figurative language such as imagery, similes, and metaphors to help the reader visualize and experience events and emotions in a story. Imagery—a word or phrase that refers to sensory experience (sight, sound, smell, touch, or taste)—helps create a physical experience for the reader and adds immediacy to literary language.

Some figurative language asks us to stretch our imaginations, finding the likeness in seemingly unrelated things. Simile is a comparison of two things that initially seem quite different but are shown to have significant resemblance. Similes employ connective words, usually “like,” “as,” “than,” or a verb such as “resembles.” A metaphor is a statement that one thing is something else that, in a literal sense, it is not. By asserting that a thing is something else, a metaphor creates a close association that underscores an important similarity between these two things.

Discussion Activities

Divide the class into groups. Assign each group a chapter (1–4) and ask them to identify figurative language used in that chapter. They should specifically identify images, similes, and metaphors. In those chapters, how does the figurative language assist in telling the story? Have groups present their findings to the class.

Writing Exercise

Have students pick literary terms out of a hat and write a sentence that reflects the literary technique. Have each student read aloud the sentence he or she wrote. The rest of the class must identify what technique the student was attempting to master.

Have students write a few paragraphs telling a story about an important childhood event. In their stories, students should use imagery, simile, and metaphor at least twice. Can they see how developing figurative language in a story contributes to the artistry of the novel?

Homework

Read Chapter 5 (pp. 81–96). Students should find examples of one (or two) of the literary techniques discussed in class. They should be ready to present them to begin the next discussion.