

5

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 selection of chapters (1–4, 5–8, or 9–12), asking them to identify figurative language used in those chapters. They should identify specific 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.

Once they have collected some evidence from the novel, students can reflect on whether some of the figures should be taken literally. What clues help a reader know when the author uses words figuratively? Can you find these clues in the novel?

Writing Exercise

Find an image in the text. Expand the image by turning it into a simile. For example, Lee expands an ordinary image with a simile: “She did give Jem a hot biscuit-and-butter... It tasted like cotton” (p. 103).

Have students write a few paragraphs telling a story about an important childhood event. In their story, 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 Chapters 13–15 (pp. 127–155). What might Mrs. Dubose symbolize? Aunt Alexandra believes the “Finch Family” captures or symbolizes certain values. What does she think this family symbolizes? How does Scout fit into this image?