

# Metaphor through Tableau



## Language Arts and Drama

Grade  
6

### ELA Common Core Standard(s) Grade 6

Standards for Reading Literature Craft and Structure  
RL4 CCR Anchor Standard

Interpret words and phrases as they are used in a text, including determining technical, connotative, and figurative meanings, and analyze how specific word choices shape meaning or tone.

RL4: Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the impact of a specific word choice on meaning and tone.

Essential Skills and Knowledge:

- Demonstrate an understanding of figurative language and connotations

### Drama (MD) Standard(s) Grade 6

3.2.a. Use selected posture, movement, expression, and vocal skills to create characters.

## CONNECTED OBJECTIVES

Students will use the actor's tools and skills to convey meaningful connections between the subjects of a metaphor and interpret the meaning of metaphors in a

p o e m .

## MATERIALS & RESOURCES

- [Bridges](#) textbook (or similar text)
- Copies of poems: "Winter Dark", "Metaphor," "A Light in the Attic," "Dreams"
- Gardner's definition of metaphor
- Tableau rubric
- Laminated cards with metaphors describing the teacher, a different one for each group: eg. Mrs. \_\_\_\_\_ is a flashlight, skipjack, juke box, paintbrush, monkey, conductor, jeweler's loupe, magnifying glass, etc.

## KEY CONTENT VOCABULARY

- Figurative Language
- Metaphor

## KEY ARTS VOCABULARY

- Actor's Tools: body, voice, imagination
- Actor's Skills: ensemble (a small group working together), focus (concentration on staying in character), sense memory (understanding the emotions and experiences of characters), commitment (using all your energy to enter and stay in the world of the theater)
- Kinosphere
- Tableau(x)

# A S S E S S M E N T

- Students read “Winter Dark” to themselves. What are the 3 metaphors? What are they describing? What is the genius connection? How are the two things alike? Is there more than one level on which these metaphors work?
- Students create a Triptych drawings to illustrate the poem, with one panel for each stanza. Draw, label, and explain the metaphors. (Extension: Show some examples of triptychs and briefly explain their historical significance)
- Teams independently read, discuss, and compose tableaux to represent their interpretation of another poem. The Basho Haiku in the Literature text are good material for this. The audience can take notes and evaluate their peer’s performances, using the Tableau Rubric.

# L E S S O N S T E P S

- Background Information:
  - Personal acting space (kinosphere)
  - Tableau
- Opening

Read Shel Silverstein’s poem, “A Light in the Attic” and follow with a teacher led discussion about what the poet really means by the “light” and the “attic.” Share that students could be the attic, and the light shining out represents when they really “get it” in class. Tell them that this kind of figurative language is a challenge for readers, but that by participating in this Theater Arts integrated lesson, they will have a better understanding of how metaphors work. Read objectives.

Elicit student definitions of metaphor. Use the Gardner’s definition to move them toward a fuller understanding. (Attached) This is very dense but excellent definition. It’s worth unpacking it for students.

Emphasize the idea that understanding metaphor is a sign of “genius,” and that’s what we’ll be looking for!
- Guided Practice:
  - Read “Metaphor” poem, allow students to demonstrate the metaphor using two blank sheets of paper. They may work in small groups or individually to respond to the poem by writing something good that happened in a bright color, then something unpleasant in a dark color. Fold it up and “file it away,” then pull out a fresh new sheet. Or, teacher may just model this response.
  - Team discussion: why would the poet use this metaphor? What is the theme? Is this “genius”? Is it true? How? Students should find ways that the paper and the words mentioned in the poem are like the days, words, and actions of people. Good metaphors have more than one connection, or similarity.
  - Individual Tableaux: teach the guidelines and boundaries for tableaux: personal space, silence, levels (high, medium, low), dynamics (positive and negative space, shape), and focus by doing a brief warm up exercise. Create personal theater space using guided imagery (kinosphere, or bubble---use imaginary chalk to draw an outline around the body---this is your “space.”) Guide students to create individual living statues with their bodies. Invite students to use their acting tools and skills to portray the “bright words and the dark words” as suggested in the “Metaphor” poem. Interact with the living statues, walk around the classroom and ask individual statues to explain how they are using the actor’s tools and skills to convey an idea, get feedback for classmates, and offer positive reinforcement for stillness, dramatic gesture, evocative facial expressions, and commitment to the exercise. Point out the students’ use of different levels. If students have never done Tableaux, show some photographs of statues and explain that they will be using their own bodies, as individuals and in groups, to create living statues.
  - Team Metaphor Challenge: each team (4-6 students) receives a card with a metaphor that describes the teacher. Brainstorm to come up with at least 3 ways in which this metaphor is “genius”---write these connections in their spiral notebooks. Improvise 10 seconds of movement that leads into a tableau which describes the meaning of the metaphor (not how the teacher looks or acts, but how the noun used to describe him or her looks, acts, behaves, etc.). Teams should have a total of 10-15 minutes for this, including a rehearsal. (I have created index cards that say Mrs. Groo is a flashlight, skipjack, juke box, monkey, paint brush, and dictionary. Choose metaphors that you think work for you, or create metaphor cards for the principal of your school.)
  - Perform tableaux for the class to analyze, classmates demonstrate their “genius” by interpreting the connections in the metaphor. (Performers should read the metaphor aloud to the class first, so they know what they are seeing). Students may take notes about what they see, appreciate, or question as the teams perform.
- Independent Practice:
  - Students work in small groups to compose a tableau that conveys the metaphors in the Langston Hughes poem, “Dreams.” Perform and receive feedback from classmates. See Tableau rubric.
  - Students read “Winter Dark” to themselves. Read aloud a second time with student’s eyes closed as they listen for the speaker’s use of figurative language to create imagery. Team discussion: what are the 3 metaphors? What are they describing? What is the genius connection? How are the two things alike? Is there more than one level on which these metaphors work?

# EXTENSIONS & OPTIONS      SOURCES & RESOURCES

## GET SMART THROUGH THE ARTS

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### Supporting Documents

#### Tableau Rubric

	1	2	3	4
<b>Collaboration and Cooperation</b>	I was a member of my group	I contributed an idea or two, and generally went along with the group decisions	I contributed several ideas and listened to others	I was actively involved in decision making and enthusiastically listened to the ideas of my team mates
<b>Focus</b>	I was involved in the tableau, but I broke concentration at one or more points	My concentration was mostly on my part in the tableau	I was fully involved in the tableau, and maintained the pose and expression	. My concentration allowed me to stay perfectly still and my expression was completely focused
<b>Levels</b>	Our tableau was mostly on one level	Our tableau featured at least two levels	Our tableau was interesting to see because we created more than two levels	Our tableau was dynamic and captivating, with at least 3 different levels
<b>Verbal</b>	I was able to use one meaningful word to label my part	I used a vocabulary word from the text to describe my part	I used a meaningful noun and a relevant verb for my part	My choice of noun and verb to describe my part will help others to understand the concept in a vivid and meaningful way

**Howard Gardner, Art, Mind, and Brain: A Cognitive Approach to Creativity**

*“Metaphor as a figure of speech has intrigued and stimulated scholars for thousands of years. Aristotle considered metaphor a sign of genius, believing that the individual who could make unusual connections was a person of special gifts. From that ancient tradition has emerged a working definition of metaphor: the capacity to perceive a resemblance between elements from two separate domains or areas of experience and to link them together in linguistic form.”*

**Metaphor**  
(unknown)

Morning is  
a new sheet of paper  
for you to write on.

Whatever you want to say,  
all day,  
until night  
folds it up  
and files it away.

The bright words and the dark words  
are gone  
until dawn  
and a new day  
to write on.