Pretty as a Picture, Busy as a Bee

Teacher		**Class**	Grade 4
Subject	ELA	**Topic**	Similes and metaphors
Date		**Room**	
Lesson length	60 minutes	**Country**	United States

Students learn to spot similes and metaphors and explain what they mean. They play a team showdown to name and explain comparisons in context.

Curriculum links

- Explain the meaning of simple similes and metaphors (e.g., as pretty as a picture) in context.

Learning objectives

- Students will identify similes with like or as and metaphors with is.
- Students will explain the meaning of simple similes and metaphors in context.

Success criteria

- I can find like, as, or is to name simile or metaphor.
- I can say what a simile or metaphor means in context.

What students already know

Ask: What do you already know about like or as in a comparison? Show thumbs up if you have heard as busy as a bee.

Key words

simile	a comparison that uses the word like or the word as [4]
metaphor	a comparison that says one thing is another thing without like or as [4]
compare	to show how two different things are alike in some way [4]
context	the sentences before and after that give clues to meaning [20]

Materials

- Slides 1–5, 7, 11–12 projected
- whiteboards, markers, timer
- sentence list for showdown printed as large cards
- Worksheet Task A copies (page 1)

Before the lesson

- Test Slides 1–5, 7, 11–12 and projector
- Print Worksheet Task A copies, one per pair
- Print sentence list cards: as pretty as a picture, The classroom was a zoo, The bag felt as light as a feather, my mind is a sponge
- Set out whiteboards, markers, timer and make two team areas

Lesson outline

0–8 min **Starter** 8 min · Whole class

To hook students and check what they know about comparisons.

YOU DO

1. Show Slide 1 Similes and Metaphors [title]: Painting pictures with words and Slide 2 Today we will objectives.
2. Say the hook from the game: Two teams, one point for the right name, two points for the right meaning. Are you ready?
3. Do a 2-minute prior check: ask who has heard as busy as a bee and what busy might mean.
4. Explain that today we will spot similes with like or as and metaphors that say is, then explain meanings in context.

STUDENTS DO

1. Students look at Slide 1 and Slide 2 and repeat the goals in own words.
2. Students answer what as busy as a bee might mean and show thumbs up or down.

Say: Today we will spot similes with like or as, and spot metaphors that say is. You will work in two teams. One point for the right name, two points for the right meaning. Are you ready to crack the meanings?

Ask: When you hear as busy as a bee, what picture comes to mind? (A buzzing bee moving fast and working hard; very busy.) · What words can signal a simile? (The words like or as [4].)

Check understanding: Thumbs up if you can say the two goals; if many are unsure, reread Slide 2 together before moving on.

Support: Show picture clues of a bee and a picture frame while saying the phrases. **Stretch:** Ask a student to predict how a metaphor without like or as might sound.

Use: Slides 1–2

8–20 min **Teaching** 12 min · Whole class

To model how to find the two things compared and explain meaning.

YOU DO

1. Show Slide 3 Steps to Crack the Meaning and Slide 4 From Words to Meaning chain.
2. Explain that similes compare two different things using the words like or as [4] and metaphors compare two different things without using like or as [4].
3. Model with art display example: Read: as busy as a bee. Picture a buzzing, fast bee. Feel hard work and hurry. Know it means very busy.
4. Show Slide 5 question: The classroom was a zoo. What does that mean? Model that metaphors make a direct comparison between things that seem different but have something in common [20].

STUDENTS DO

1. Students follow the steps on fingers and repeat signal words like, as, is.
2. Students turn and tell a neighbor the two things compared in The classroom was a zoo.

Say: Similes compare two different things using like or as. Metaphors compare two different things without like or as. We find the two things, make a picture in our mind, then say the meaning in our own words.

Worked example: Sentence: The classroom was a zoo. Step 1: Find the two things compared: classroom and zoo. Step 2: Look for like, as, or is: no like or as, uses was, so metaphor [4]. Step 3: Picture: wild, noisy, crowded place. The classroom is a zoo, which means it is wild and noisy like one [13]. Step 4: Say in own words: The classroom was very loud and wild during dismissal.

Ask: In The classroom was a zoo, what two things are compared and is it simile or metaphor? (Classroom and zoo; metaphor because it has no like or as [4].) · What does as busy as a bee mean in a story about morning work? (Very busy, working fast and hard, like a buzzing bee.)

Check understanding: Hold up 1 finger for simile, 2 for metaphor for each example; reteach signal words if split.

Support: Pre-highlight is in metaphors and like or as in similes so the signal words stand out. **Stretch:** Ask students to change one word in the sentence and explain how the meaning changes.

Use: Slides 3–5

20–32 min **Guided practice** 12 min · Pairs

To practice sorting and explaining meanings together in pairs.

YOU DO

1. Show Slide 7 Similes and Metaphors in Action cards: as pretty as a picture, as quiet as a mouse, as busy as a bee.
2. Hand out Worksheet Task A and read directions together: Tick the correct meaning for each comparison.
3. Model one Task A item with think-aloud using context clues around it and how similes help readers picture exactly what you mean [13].
4. Show Slide 11 mystery: The bag felt as light as a feather. What does it show? Confirm simile meaning very, very light.

STUDENTS DO

1. Pairs sort Slide 7 cards into simile pile by finding like or as.
2. Pairs complete Worksheet Task A, ticking meanings and saying reasons aloud.

Say: With your partner, find like, as, or is. Name simile or metaphor. Then tick the meaning that fits the context. Say why the other choices do not fit.

Worked example: Card: as pretty as a picture. Two things: art display and picture. Signal as, so simile [4]. Picture: nice colors, neat, fun to look at. Meaning: Simile meaning very pretty to look at. In context of an art display, it means the work looks beautiful and careful.

Ask: What does as quiet as a mouse mean if the class is taking a test? (Very quiet and still with no noise.) · Why does comparing tears to a river ("her tears ran like a river") help a reader? (It describes sadness more completely and makes a stronger picture [4].)

Check understanding: Walk around and look at Task A ticks; pull two pairs to explain one ticked choice if many miss it.

Support: Limit to four pairs first and read each meaning aloud together. **Stretch:** Pairs add what the simile tells about the first thing and what clue helped.

Use: Slides 7, 11 and Worksheet Task A

Created with LessonDino.com · AI lesson planner with checkable sources

32–50 min **Main activity** 18 min · Groups

To identify and explain similes and metaphors in sentences for points.

YOU DO

1. Split class into two teams with whiteboards, markers, and timer visible.
2. Show sentences one at a time from the printed cards: 1. The art display is as pretty as a picture. 2. The classroom was a zoo. 3. The bag felt as light as a feather. 4. My mind is a sponge when I read.
3. Remind students that a simile uses like or as and a metaphor says one thing is another thing [13]; teams hold up Simile or Metaphor, then write what it means in context.
4. Score one point for right name, two points for right meaning, and have teams practice the skill to determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative language such as metaphors and similes [16].

STUDENTS DO

1. Teams read each card, decide simile or metaphor, and hold up boards on time.
2. Teams write the meaning in own words and read one answer aloud to explain clues.

Say: I will show a sentence and start the timer. Whisper-check with your team, then hold up Simile or Metaphor. Next, write what it really means in this sentence. One point for the name, two points for the meaning.

Worked example: Sentence: My mind is a sponge when I read. No like or as, uses is, so metaphor. Two things: mind and sponge. A sponge soaks up water; mind soaks up new facts. In context when I read, it means I learn and remember a lot quickly. If switched to simile: My mind is like a sponge when I read.

Ask: Is The snow was a white blanket over the town simile or metaphor, and what does it mean? (Metaphor, no like or as; means snow covered everything smoothly and thickly like a blanket.) · Is The baby was as gentle as a lamb simile or metaphor, and what does it mean? (Simile with as; means very gentle, soft and calm.)

Check understanding: Check boards each round; if a team misses meaning, ask them to point to context clues and retry for one point.

Support: Let students whisper-check with a partner before holding up the board. **Stretch:** Teams write a new sentence with the same meaning but switch from simile to metaphor, or the other way.

50–60 min **Plenary** 10 min · Whole class

To review goals and check who can explain meanings in own words.

YOU DO

1. Show Slide 12 Exit ticket and review Slide 10 mindmap: like or as = simile, no like or as = metaphor.
2. Ask students to say in own words what as sweet as honey and my mind is a sponge mean in a lunch and reading context.
3. Collect exit slips with one thing learned, one question, and one favorite example.

STUDENTS DO

1. Students chorally name each example as simile or metaphor and give meanings.
2. Students write exit ticket on paper On their own.

Say: Like or as means simile. No like or as means metaphor. Both make a mind picture and show feeling clearly. Tell me in your own words what our examples mean.

Ask: How do you decide simile or metaphor quickly? (If you see like or as in the comparison, it is a simile [13]; if not, it is often a metaphor.) · Why not just write My stomach growled instead of My stomach was a roaring lion? (The comparison helps you picture just how loudly it growled [20] and makes stronger description [4].)

Check understanding: Read three exit slips aloud; if meanings are literal, model saying real meaning again tomorrow.

Support: Offer sentence frame: This compares ___ to ___. It means ___ . **Stretch:** Ask students to use their favorite simile in two connected sentences so context makes meaning clear.

Use: Slides 10, 12

Common mistakes

Mistake	How to spot it	How to fix it
Thinking a metaphor is literally true, like the room became animals.	Student draws or says desks turned into cages for The classroom was a zoo.	Remind that metaphors compare without like or as [4] to show wild and noisy like one [13]; ask what is alike.
Calling any sentence with like a simile even when nothing is compared.	Student marks I like honey as a simile.	Check for two different things compared using like or as [4]; ask what two things are alike.

Support

- Pre-highlight is and like or as on cards and allow whisper-check with partner.
- Use sentence frames and picture starters like cloud and mouse outlines.

Stretch

- Explain what clue helped figure out meaning and why author used comparison.
- Rewrite same meaning switching simile to metaphor or using two sentences for context.

For the LSE or teaching assistant

Stay near showdown teams that need reading help; prompt to find like, as, is first, then ask for meaning in own words.

Check for understanding

Question	Answer
The art display is as pretty as a picture. Simile or metaphor, and what does it mean?	Simile with as; means very pretty and nice to look at.
The classroom was a zoo at dismissal. Simile or metaphor, and what does it mean?	Metaphor; means very wild, loud and crowded.
My mind is a sponge when I read. What two things are compared and what does it mean?	Mind and sponge; means I soak up and remember a lot of new facts.

Sources

1. ELA Grade 4 - Chicago Public Schools · cps.edu · https://www.cps.edu/sites/skyline/curriculum/ela/grade-4/
2. English Language Arts - Chicago Public Schools · cps.edu · https://www.cps.edu/sites/skyline/curriculum/ela/
3. What is a Simile? || Oregon State Guide to Literary Terms · liberalarts.oregonstate.edu · https://liberalarts.oregonstate.edu/wlf/what-simile
4. Similes and Metaphors student handout - learn.k20center.ou.edu · learn.k20center.ou.edu · https://learn.k20center.ou.edu/lesson/448/Similes%2520and%2520Metaphors%2520student%2520handout.pdf?rev=31806&language=English
5. Metaphors in Creative Writing - Purdue OWL® · owl.purdue.edu · https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/resources/writing_tutors/tutoring_creative_writing_students/metaphors_in_creative_writing.html
6. Metaphor - Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy · plato.stanford.edu · https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/metaphor/
7. Similes And Metaphors Worksheet - Online Lesson · articulate.strayer.edu · https://articulate.strayer.edu/simile-and-examples/similes-and-metaphors-worksheet
8. Metaphor, Symbolism, and Symbols - ENG134 - Literary Genres · open.baypath.edu · https://open.baypath.edu/eng134/chapter/metaphor-symbolism-and-symbols/
9. What are metaphors and similes? - BBC Bitesize · bbc.co.uk · https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/articles/z9tkxfr
10. Metaphor - Wikipedia · en.wikipedia.org · https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Metaphor
11. 60+ Simile and Metaphor Examples for Kids (Updated 2026) · similelife.com · https://similelife.com/simile-and-metaphor/
12. 300+ Similes and Metaphors for Kids: Fun Ways to Make Learning Magical · similessons.com · https://similessons.com/similes-and-metaphors-for-kids/
13. Simile and Metaphor for Kids: Easy Definitions and Fun Activities · similebridge.com · https://similebridge.com/simile-and-metaphor-for-kids/
14. Simile vs Metaphor for Kids: A Fun, Easy Examples and Tips · idiom101.com · https://idiom101.com/simile-vs-metaphor/
15. Similes and Metaphors for Kids - Grammer Pro · grammerpro.com · https://grammerpro.com/similes-and-metaphors-for-kids/
16. Simile or Metaphor? Printable Similes Metaphors And Practice Identify ... · superteacherworksheets.com · https://www.superteacherworksheets.com/printable-pdf-worksheets/similes-metaphors/66923-Simile-or-Metaphor
17. Similes and Metaphors | Teaching Resources · tes.com · https://www.tes.com/teaching-resource/similes-and-metaphors-11097926
18. Metaphor and Simile - Kenn Nesbitt's Poetry4kids.com · poetry4kids.com · https://poetry4kids.com/poetic-device/metaphor-simile/
19. Similes and Metaphors for Kids: Fun with Words ???? · allsimiles.com · https://allsimiles.com/similes-and-metaphors-examples-for-kids/
20. Difference Between Metaphors and Similes for Kids ... · yourdictionary.com · https://www.yourdictionary.com/articles/metaphors-similes-kids
21. 190+ Similes and Metaphors Elementary (Easy Meanings & Fun ... · similesphere.com · https://similesphere.com/similes-and-metaphors-elementary/
22. difference between a metaphor and a simile? | Learn English · preply.com · https://preply.com/en/question/difference-between-a-metaphor-and-a-simile-41028
23. Third Grade Writing Lessons on Metaphors & Similes · 0685.com · https://www.0685.com/k12/elementary-school/14887.html
24. Similes and Metaphors Worksheets | edHelper · edhelper.com · https://www.edhelper.com/language/Similes_and_Metaphors.htm
25. Similes and metaphors worksheets | K5 Learning · k5learning.com · https://www.k5learning.com/vocabulary-worksheets/fourth-grade-4/similes-metaphors