Spotlight on Images

SIMILES AND METAPHORS

In Lesson 7 you practiced creating strong images that show instead of just tell. Focusing on the senses is one way to ensure your lyrics are compelling and original. Similes and metaphors, both figures of speech that use comparisons, are another way you can illustrate your point in a colorful way.

Note: A simile is a comparison using “like” or “as.” A metaphor is a comparison that doesn't use “like” or “as.”

EXAMPLES

The song “Red” by Taylor Swift uses both similes and metaphors.

The first verse features a series of similes:

Loving him is like driving a new Maserati down a dead-end street
Faster than the wind, passionate as sin, ending so suddenly
Loving him is like trying to change your mind once you're already flying through the free fall
Like the colors in autumn, so bright just before they lose it all

Instead of saying “loving him is exciting but dangerous,” or “loving him is hard not to do,” or “loving him is beautiful but fleeting,” Swift uses similes to communicate each of these ideas through images.

• Look closely at the images Swift uses. How does each one communicate what loving him is like?

The chorus uses metaphors in lines 1, 2, 4, and 5 (and a simile in line 3):

Losing him was blue like I’d never known
Missing him was dark grey all alone
Forgetting him was like trying to know somebody you never met
But loving him was red
Loving him was red

• What is Swift saying by using these three metaphors? What does she mean that losing him and missing him were “blue” and “grey” but loving him was “red”?

ACTIVITY

1. Pick the most basic way to describe an object or a feeling. (Example: Being in love feels exciting.)

2. Brainstorm something else that shares that same characteristic. (Example: Driving a fast car down a dead-end street.)

3. Make a comparison between the two by using either a simile or a metaphor. Remember, you often can make a simile into a metaphor by simply removing “like” or “as” from the comparison.

Note: Verbs are the great amplifiers of description, much more so than adjectives. Use descriptive verbs to breathe more life into a description.