Analogies

An analogy is a comparison made between two things to show how they are alike. Writers often use analogies to show how something unfamiliar is like something well known. Please note that the two things being compared do not have to be unlike — if they were unlike that would be a simile or metaphor, which is a kind of analogy. Again, with an analogy, the two things being compared do not have to be alike. Put another way, all similes and metaphors are analogies, but not all analogies are similes and metaphors.

For example, if I were trying to explain to you the charisma, the magnetic personality of Ronald Reagan as he campaigned for president in 1980, I might ask you to remember to charisma of Barack Obama as he campaigned for president in 2008 — and that would be an analogy.

Or suppose you asked me what the climate is like in Perth, Australia — where I lived and worked for a time. I would tell you it was a Mediterranean climate, much like the Los Angeles area. Both cities are on the coast and are surrounded by mountains. That would also be an analogy.

Analogies can also come in the form of word analogies that show like relationships:

fish : water :: bear : forest
stove : kitchen :: bed : bedroom
flower : petal :: fruit : seeds

painting : eyes : music : ears
think : thought : give : gave
fisherman : rod : hunter : rifle

Analogies can also be in the form of statements:

Hot is to cold as soft is to hard.
Teacher is to school as doctor is to hospital.

Apple is to fruit as steak is to meat.
Eagle is to bird as trout is to fish.

Analogies can show many kinds of relationships:

function / purpose
characteristic action
relative size and degree
attribute
cause and effect
synonym
synonym / antonym
symbol / meaning
item / category

part / whole
characteristic location
type
descriptive pair
characteristic use
antonym
singular to plural
worker / tool