

## Literary Devices Defined: Simile and Metaphor

A **SIMILE** compares two **UNLIKE** things, using a word such as *like, as, than,* or *resembles*.

A **METAPHOR** compares two **UNLIKE** things in which one thing *is* said to be the other thing.

In either case, the idea is to show how two **UNLIKE** things are, in fact, **alike, similar,** or **the same**. Authors use similes and metaphors to convey ideas and give meaning in interesting, dramatic ways. These devices can cause us to understand something in a new way that we may not have considered without the use of simile or metaphor. When these devices are used, your task is to infer or understand the meaning intended by the author.

### A Simile-Metaphor Comparison

Simile	Metaphor
<p>My cousin, Dennis, eats like a pig.</p> <p>My cousin, Dennis, resembles a pig when he eats.</p> <p>My cousin, Dennis, is as dirty as a pig.</p> <p>My cousin, Dennis, is sloppier than a pig.</p>	<p>My cousin, Dennis, is a pig.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Each of the above similes compares Dennis to a pig.</li> <li>• Obviously, they are two <b>unlike</b> things — one is a farm animal, the other a human being.</li> <li>• And yet, the speaker says they <b>are alike when it comes to how they eat and/or groom themselves</b>.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The above metaphor compares Dennis to a pig.</li> <li>• Obviously, they are two <b>unlike</b> things — one is a farm animal, the other a human being.</li> <li>• And yet, the speaker says they <b>are so much alike that they ARE the same thing</b>.</li> <li>• Now we know that Dennis is not really (literally) a pig, but because he acts so much like a pig this speaker says he <b>is or has become</b> a pig — that it is perhaps difficult or even impossible to tell the difference in their behavior.</li> <li>• “He is a pig” can also mean that someone is very crude, rude, or completely self-centered.</li> </ul>

## What a Simile Is NOT

Example	Why it is NOT a simile
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Dennis is as tall as his father.</li> <li>Dennis is smarter than his father.</li> <li>Dennis is like his father when it comes to basketball and baseball.</li> <li>Dennis resembles his father.</li> </ul>	<p>Although these are comparisons, they are NOT comparisons between two UNLIKE things: A father and a son are very much alike, as are ANY two human beings.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>After riding the horse all day, he was as tired as he could be.</li> </ul>	<p>There is no comparison of two unlike things.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The horse likes apples more than carrots.</li> </ul>	<p>This is not a comparison between two unlike things, nor does the sentence try to identify how apples and carrots might be alike. This is a statement about which food the horse prefers — and nothing more.</p>

## Examples of Similes and Metaphors

Examples of Similes	Explanation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Emily was as brave <b>as</b> a lion.</li> <li>Emily had more courage <b>than</b> a lion.</li> </ul>	<p>Emily and a lion ARE two unlike things; Emily's bravery is being compared to a lion.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Brad's face felt <b>like</b> sandpaper.</li> <li>Brad's face <b>resembled</b> sandpaper.</li> </ul>	<p>Brad's face and sandpaper ARE two unlike things; they are being compared for their rough texture.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Jan's broken nose swelled up <b>like</b> a big red balloon.</li> </ul>	<p>Jan's nose and a balloon ARE two unlike things; they are being compared for their size and color.</p>
Examples of Metaphors	Explanation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>John has the heart of a lion.</li> </ul>	<p>John and the lion ARE two unlike things, but John is said to have a lion's heart and the courage that goes with it.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Love is a lemon — either bitter or sweet.</li> </ul>	<p>Love and lemons ARE two unlike things, but love is said to be a lemon that has the qualities of being sad and disappointing or happy and fulfilling.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The moon was a ghostly galleon.</li> </ul>	<p>The moon and a galleon (sailing ship) ARE two unlike things, but the moon is said to be a ship sailing through the night sky.</p>