

LEARNING FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE THROUGH LITERACY

Course Content and Student Population

This course is designed to teach fourth grade students figurative language in an online environment. In particular, this document will address figurative language as it relates to idioms and personification. Several other modules could eventually be added to instruct student in other forms of figurative language, such as similes, metaphors, etc. According to the Minnesota State Standards of Education (2010), under the section Language Progressive Skills, students in fourth grade need to:

Demonstrate understanding of figurative language, word relationships, and nuances in word meanings.

- Explain the meaning of simple similes and metaphors (e.g., *as pretty as a picture*) in context.
- Recognize and explain the meaning of common idioms, adages, and proverbs.

For most fourth grade students, this is their first introduction to understanding and using figurative language. Most of these students live in the inner-city, and have limited access to computers, internet, and resources. Another consideration of this student population is their experience and practice typing on the computer. Although many students seem to be proficient using the internet, many of them have not had the training to type accurately and quickly in a word processing format. Further considerations include the lack of independence on the part of these fourth grade students. Many have not yet developed the skills (such as time management) to be independent learners. Furthermore, reading levels amongst these students varies from second grade, to sixth grade. Accommodating these levels in an online environment will also be a major consideration as I plan instruction. One way to resolve this issue might be to provide an audio version of the literature. In that way, students can read along, and develop stronger oral language skills and fluency by hearing the literature read professionally.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES AND FINAL OUTCOME

Students will be able to:

1. Identify the literal representations of idioms through class discussions, drawings, and writing, posting once and at least two responses to other discussions.
2. Research the origins of selected idioms to reinforce the metaphorical meanings with at least 90% accuracy as required by rubric.

3. Demonstrate comprehension and practice analysis by discussing personification and how it affects the mood of specific poetry, using e-Pals blog with at least 80% accuracy as required by rubric.
4. Apply their knowledge of figurative language by using a graphic organizer to create personification using random phrases and by writing original poems with 95% accuracy as required by rubric.

By the end of the unit, students will be able to understand figurative language (in particular idioms and personification), make meanings by identifying it in literature, analyze it as they discover it in literature, and use it in their own writing.

MODULE 1 – Figurative and Literal Meanings of Idioms

Learning Objective # 1 states students will:

- Identify the literal representations of idioms through class discussions, drawings, and writing, posting once and at least two responses to other discussions.

Using Moodle, students will be able to read various examples of idioms both literally and view drawings to represent the figurative element of idioms. They will then post a discussion of at least 1 idiom sharing their understanding of this idiom figuratively and literally giving an example. They will also be able to explain what an idiom is – we will try to come to a class definition after all students have posted.

Then, from the literature

- Students will select a different idiom that they have not already discussed, and post a drawing they generate and scan, or post a photo, or clip art that might represent the literal version of the idiom of their choice. If students are using photos, I will provide a personal search engine of photo options that are not copyrighted.
- Students may use paint, Microsoft Word, or PowerPoint, to draw their pictures, and then post to discussion. They could also draw pictures by hand, and then scan drawings into their computer. Other classmates will try to determine which idiom this might be.

Assessment Criteria:

- Post only drawing, photo, clipart, to discussion area;
- Respond to at least two other posts explaining what idiom the drawing represents and why.

Assessment Tool:

Assessment will be done through the use of Moodle discussions. Moodle is an open-source, course management system (<http://moodle.org>). I chose Moodle because I have had the opportunity to practice discussions in Moodle and, after learning how to thread discussions to make them easier to follow, I found Moodle to be an easy format and clean look on the page. However, it may not be so user friendly for 4th grade students who have never used it before. After researching Moodle further:

One **advantage** of using Moodle, is that in the Moodle forum, discussions are posted where the oldest is at the top of the forum, the newest is on the bottom. Another advantage to using Moodle discussion forum is that when someone posts to the discussion area, that post is also sent to your email (unless you change that option). In this way, you don't have to open Moodle to read discussions. You simply open your email. A **disadvantage** however, is that you still have to go back into Moodle to post a reply (<http://moodle.org>).

Moodle is primarily used as a discussion board. However, there is an option to add an image to your discussion if you so choose. The **disadvantage** is that you must first save the image to a website like Flickr or perhaps to the school's website for safety to be able to import it into your discussion, instead of simply having the option to cut and paste an image from another program. However, the other option is to embed the image in a word document and post it to your discussion area (<http://moodle.org>).

Another option is to have students scan their drawings and send them to me. As an instructor, I can store the images on my hard drive, then upload them to Moodle using the same Insert Image icon for all their drawings, then pick it from the list of icons. The **challenge** is that as students, this option is not available to them (<http://moodle.org>) .

The last option, which might be easiest for fourth graders, is to tick a box to attach a file. It is easy to do, and I can show the students the steps for this option. The **disadvantage** to this option is that the image would not be open in front of you and you'd have to open the attachment to view (<http://moodle.org>) .

Another challenge I face using Moodle, is that I would certainly have to provide a great deal of discussion practice in Moodle before I began this undertaking for 4th grade students in an online environment, and examples of "how to" post an image to students once they became proficient in posting to a forum.

Plagiarism

Plagiarism is not an issue in this activity since students will be looking at copyrighted works online and identifying the literal and figurative representations of idioms independently. Posting their own literal representation of an idiom will not affect plagiarism, and when students respond to two other posts, it should be fairly easy to identify if someone is copying someone else's response based upon time of post and wording. However, I would have to find copyright free

pictures to prevent plagiarism for students to use, or perhaps create a personal search engine that generated copyright free photo options for students.

Authenticity, Diversity, Student-Centered Learning Environment

The authenticity of this activity is that students will be able to understand and apply figurative language when they read, write or speak it. Figurative language is used every day and students at this age level are not even aware that certain phrases are figurative.

I meet the needs of diverse learners, and provide a student-centered learning environment by allowing students not just to read about figurative language, but also to draw out, or select clip art or photos they feel would best represent an idiom of their choice. In this way, students have several options from which to choose, so that they don't feel they have to be artists to apply their learning, and they have an opportunity for peer assessment as they view literal representations of others' works and identify the idiom that was posted. This also allows those who may not be such good writers, to use their drawing skills to support their learning. This activity provides various outlets for student-centered learning.

MODULE 2 – Researching Idioms for Metaphorical Meanings

Learning Objective #2 – Students will:

- Research the origins of selected idioms to reinforce the metaphorical meanings with at least 90% accuracy as required by rubric.

Using internet resources I've selected and prepared in a personal search engine, students will:

- Research the origins of selected idioms to reinforce the metaphorical meanings;
- then choose four idioms to prepare and present in PowerPoint for instructor evaluation and classmates to enjoy;
- Students can post their presentation as an attachment in the Moodle forum; Finish with discussion answering how knowing the historical context of idioms and reflection on personal experience can make it easier to understand the metaphorical meanings of these phrases.

Assessment Criteria:

Choose four idioms you have researched to reinforce the metaphorical meanings, and then create a PowerPoint presentation for the four idioms sharing your discoveries with at least 90% accuracy as required by the rubric. PowerPoint Presentation Rubric – Attachment A.

Assessment Tool:

I chose Microsoft PowerPoint as the assessment tool for students to prepare their presentations. **Advantages** of using PowerPoint are primarily that students do not have to post to the internet, and therefore there is safety in this feature. Students will not have to register online and share

private information. At a fourth grade level, all their information should remain private. Although PowerPoint is more a slide show, it can still tell a story with student information. I would have preferred to use a program like Prezi, however, due to privacy issues, it is not recommended for use by anyone under 18 years of age. Once you have had a chance to use features of PowerPoint, it can be fun to create various options for slides to appear and disappear at the click of the mouse. Students can create their visual representation of their research however they choose using the animation feature. The 2010 version of PowerPoint allows you to embed a video and edit it, although fourth grade students will not be using this feature now. (<http://office.microsoft.com/en-us/powerpoint/>).

Disadvantages of using PowerPoint are that it is only a slide show. Assuming this is the first time students are using PowerPoint, it can be a difficult program to learn. PowerPoint offers a lot of options as to how to present your program, but it would be helpful for students to see a video presentation on options within PowerPoint. I would include that in this lesson for them. Also, although PowerPoint is not the easiest program to learn, after searching online for various options, I found there didn't seem to be many that were safely available to young students. I really did not want students registering to use an online program, and share any private information about themselves. Another disadvantage is that I have to ensure all students have access to PowerPoint and I'm not sure if that can be done through the school, or if they would have to have it on their own computers at home. PowerPoint 2010 has many features that would be applicable to a corporation. However, many of its features are overwhelming for fourth grade purposes.

Plagiarism

I have taught several different groups of fourth graders this lesson in a face-to-face environment. I am familiar with the sites the students will research from, and I am familiar with the verbiage. As I continue to get to know the students, I should be able to determine if they are using their own language in their presentations or language from the site. I have also included a rubric for plagiarism discouraging it. I know students at this age are lacking skills to summarize into their own words, therefore this is good practice for them.

Authenticity, Diversity, Student-Centered Learning Environment

Students will, most likely for the rest of their lives, be researching something online, therefore the activity is authentic, allowing them to practice research skills, and learn how to summarize and synthesize the information they've read. This activity allows for diversity and is student-centered, because the students have the choice to select up to four idioms they want to present after they have researched, and they can prepare the presentation as they choose, within the rubric guidelines. It is also student-centered learning because students have the opportunity to wrap up the lesson by discussing what they have learned about the historical context of idioms.

MODULE 3 – Discuss Personification and How It Affects Mood

Learning Objective #3 – students will:

- Demonstrate comprehension and practice analysis by discussing personification and how it affects the mood of specific poetry, using epals blog, with at least 80% accuracy as required by the rubric.

Using three poems I selected, students will:

- Read the poems that contain examples of personification, one type of figurative language used in writing;
- They will discuss several questions in a blog in ePals, establishing an understanding that personification is the attribution of human qualities (such as emotion) and actions to nonhuman objects or ideas.

Assessment Criteria:

Using an established rubric, students will be expected to discuss, using a blog in ePals, how personification affects the mood of a specific poem with at least 80% accuracy.

Assessment Tool:

Students will be writing a blog in ePals. I choose ePals because it is one of the few user friendly online tools for elementary aged students. In short, ePals is a free collaborative learning tool supported by Microsoft that provides a student safe learning environment. Teachers and students can share projects and connect with others around the globe. According to David Nagel, in the article, ePals Delivers Free E-Mail, Blogging for Schools, epals allows students "to express their ideas, collaborate with other students and teachers, and involve parents in a secure online environment."

The greatest **advantage** of using a blog in epals, is the safety feature controlled through epals. This is one of the few sites available specifically designed with elementary students in mind. Furthermore, epals has other features that could be used by students readily. For example, there are various forums to select collaborative projects such as National Geographic Teacher Created Projects, ePals Video, Digital Storytelling or Team Earth e-films. This tool is free.

The one **disadvantage** of using epals as an assessment tool is the accessibility and monitoring options of epals at home. At school in a face to face environment, the teacher can monitor what is being blogged or emailed. Although the site is protected, students may try to write something inappropriate or something out of context. I'm not quite certain how to ensure safe blogging using epals from a distance, other than setting up netiquette. Further research is required.

Plagiarism

The rubric for this module will address plagiarism. The students will also be able to quote selections and phrases from the poems they are reading and discuss how they interpret

personification within the poem. I don't believe this particular activity will lend itself to plagiarism since students will be quoting and explaining examples.

Authenticity, Diversity, Student-Centered Learning Environment

This is an authentic activity because it lends itself to reading and understanding personification in poetry. Students may not read poetry for the rest of their lives, but they will read other forms of literature and personification is a writer's tool in many genres. Understanding personification will aid the student in understanding it in anything they read, and will enable them to include it in their own writing as well. This activity provides poetry from authors such as Emily Dickinson, William Blake, and Langston Hughes who represent poetry from various perspectives in various periods of history. This activity provides for student-centered learning because it's the students who blog their thinking as they respond to several questions from each poem, and they discover the meaning of personification through this activity. Using a blog provides cooperative learning. Students and teachers take more time for reflection and discussion, allowing for a heightened learning experience. Blogs create a sense of community. They allow a student to create and publish work for review. Students edit and modify their work, demonstrating student learning over time.

MODULE 4 – Write Original Poetry Using Personification

Learning Objective #4 – students will:

- Apply their knowledge of figurative language by using a graphic organizer to create personification using random phrases and by writing original poems, with 95% accuracy as required by rubric.

By using random phrases:

- Students will use a graphic organizer such as Inspiration to create their own personification using random phrases;
- They will then use the graphic organizer to help them prepare and write an original poem of their own they can create in Microsoft Word. Students will be given nouns and verbs to arrange in the graphic organizer – they don't need to make sense. They will use four of these to create their poems.

Assessment Criteria:

Students will be assessed in the use of their graphic organizer, and how it connects to the original poem they generate. Students will be given the option to write various styles of poetry and given a rubric to follow. Students will be expected to achieve at least 95% accuracy.

Assessment Tool:

The first assessment tool used in this activity is a graphic organizer, such as one found in Inspiration. Inspiration is a user friendly tool, especially for young children. They readily adapt to its versatility. It is designed as a tool for K-12 learners, so this tool is perfect for fourth grade use.

The other tool students will create their poems in is Microsoft Word. Word provides the word processing options students will require to complete and post this project.

There are many **advantages** to using Inspiration. I have seen many young students use the program efficiently. They enjoy all the various options Inspiration has to offer. In addition, it is a safe tool to use with young learners as it is geared for K-12 learners. Inspiration offers the option to create concept maps, web and idea maps. If you purchase Inspiration 9, students also have the option to use Presentation Manager which allows them to create a slide presentation from their maps. The program also offers lesson plans for teachers to browse through and use. The Map View feature in Inspiration allows students to create and think in mind maps. This method of learning promotes a better understanding of relationships and connections among idea. Inspiration is also compatible with Macintosh and Windows formats (<http://www.inspiration.com/node/1942>).

Unfortunately, the program is not free although they do offer a free trial version for 30 days. Another **challenge** in using this program, is that for first time users, it can be daunting. As an adult learner I struggled with the program. To provide the best possible learning experience for the fourth grade students, I would create a video showing some of the features students might use to create their project. Also, the program has no drawing tool options (Nelson, O'Connor, 2010, Cons section, para. 4).

Plagiarism

The issue of plagiarism will be addressed with the use of a rubric. As the instructor, I will know student writing skills by now, and should be able to determine if poem is authentic or not. Also, because students will be connecting their poems by using personification phrases written in Inspiration, it will be readily easy to know if students wrote original compositions. If I'm very concerned, I might have students complete work in turnitin.com, for editing and review, and then post it to a Word document.

Authenticity, Diversity, Student-Centered Learning Environment

Creating a concept map, or mind map, or using any organizational tool, is an experience that students will continue to use throughout their lifetime. We are always trying to find better ways to organize ourselves. This makes this activity authentic. In addition, it meets the needs of diverse learners because not only do students have the opportunity to create the map, and be assessed on it, but they will also use that map to generate their own, original poem using personification phrases. By randomly placing words together, the phrases become rather unusual which lend themselves to creative poetry. This activity is student-centered. Students select the

words they put into phrases, students write the phrases in their graphic organizers, and students write the poems. If I had the opportunity to continue this lesson, I would also ask students to peer review each other in pairs.

As a result of this activity, I have learned a great deal about the various tools available to young learners in an online environment. I have also learned that safety is my primary concern when teaching young children to be responsible using an online environment. There were many other tools from which I would have liked to have chosen, unfortunately, they were for an older population. Someday I hope to see more options available to young learners, as the trend in online learning continues to grow.



Name: _____

Teacher: BHJ

Date : _____

Title of Work: _____

	Criteria				Points
	1	2	3	4	
Share origins of all 4 idioms.	Share origins of 1-0 idioms.	Share origins of 2-1 idioms.	Share origins of 3-2 idioms.	Share origins of all 4 idioms.	—
Explain how the idiom's origins relate to the metaphorical meaning of the phrase.	Meaning of 1-0 idioms.	Meaning of 2-1 idioms.	Meaning of 3-2 idioms.	Meaning of all 4 idioms.	—
Use the idiom in a complete sentence that makes sense.	Uses 1-0 idioms in a sentence.	Uses 2-1 idioms in a sentence.	Uses 3-2 idioms in a sentence.	Uses all 4 idioms in a sentence.	—
Accurate spelling and grammar.	No more than 10-8 mistakes in spelling and grammar.	No more than 7-5 mistakes in spelling and grammar.	No more than 4-3 mistakes in spelling and grammar.	No more than 2-0 mistakes in spelling and grammar.	—
Plagiarism - be sure to summarize and use your own words.	Uses 5-4 words that are not your own.	Uses 4-3 words that are not your own.	Uses 3-2 words that are not your own.	Uses 2-0 words that are not your own.	—
				Total---->	—

Teacher Comments:

REFERENCES

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