

Descriptive Words and Figures of Speech

Scene #	Description	Narration
1	The following images are showing as the narrator speaks: long orange flowers in a garden, a sparrow standing by leaves on the ground, a boy smiling, a deer standing in a meadow with lightning in the sky, A river with a horse running alongside it, A beach with waves hitting the shore, a flame from a fire, combined with an image of an ox and a dandelion.	<p>[LIGHTHEARTED MUSIC] Authors and poets paint pictures with words. "Look! Look! The spring has come. O feel the gentle air, that wanders thro' the boughs to burst the thick buds everywhere! The birds are glad to see the high unclouded sun. Winter is fled away, they sing, the gay time is begun."</p> <p>The word pictures that poets paint help us to know beautiful thoughts and feelings. These thoughts and feelings are often created by observing the world very carefully. How very closely Elizabeth Coatsworth must have looked at things to write this poem.</p> <p>"Swift things are beautiful-- swallows and deer, and lightning falls bright-veined and clear, rivers and meteors, wind in the wheat, the strong-withered horse, the runner's sure feet. And slow things are beautiful-- the closing of day, the pause of the wave that curves downward to spray, the ember that crumbles, the opening flower, and the ox that moves on in the quiet of power."</p>
2	Lightning is in the sky as the words describing it appear at the bottom of the image.	Ms. Coatsworth not only observed swift and slow things very carefully, she chose her descriptive words very carefully. Instead of saying the lightning is pretty, she describes it with the phrase "bright-veined and clear."
3	An image of wheat blowing in the wind has the words describing it shown at the bottom of the image.	Instead of saying the wind is swift, Ms. Coatsworth paints a picture of the wind by describing something it moves-- "wind in the wheat."
4	An image of the horse running along the river has the words describing it shown at the bottom of the image.	By using the descriptive words "strong-withered" and "the runner's sure feet," we feel the strength and swiftness of the horse.
5	An image of a beach with waves hitting the shore shows the words describing it at the bottom of the image.	Ms. Coatsworth is also careful in describing the movement of beautiful slow things. The poet has seen that a wave seems to slow a little before it breaks, so she uses these descriptive words-- "the pause of the wave that curves downward to spray."

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6	An image of an ember in a fire has the sentence describing it at the bottom of the image.	Instead of saying the ember burns slowly, she says "the ember that crumbles." These words create moods and images. In the first verse—of beauty and swiftness. In the second verse—of beauty and slow movement.
7	An image shows a combination of a beach, a cart being pulled by a white horse and shadows of trees over the land. An image of a clock on a brick wall is showing.	Another poet, James Reeves, was also moved by the beauty of slow things. "Slowly the tide creeps up the sand, slowly the shadows cross the land. Slowly the cart-horse pulls his mile, slowly the old man mounts the stile. Slowly the hands move round the clock, slowly the dew dries on the dock. Slow is the snail—but slowest of all the green moss spreads on the old brick wall."
8	The poem that was read aloud appears on the screen as the narrator talks about it.	James Reeves gives us the feeling of slowness by repeating the word slowly, by using word pictures that indicate slowness such as "the tide creeps." And also by selecting slow subjects, such as snails.
9	Images of fall, pumpkins and leaves are showing.	Sometimes poets use exciting word pictures to describe impressions of a particular color, such as red, green, yellow, and so forth. One person wrote, "Orange is an autumn leaf resting on the soft earth. Orange is the fish flashing in the pond. Orange is my laughing Jack-o'-lantern." Describing your impressions about one or two different colors is something you might enjoy also.
10	A turtle is in a pond covered partially by green leaves.	Exciting word pictures can be created by comparing one thing to another. You may have heard someone say, he's as slow as a turtle. Comparisons such as these are called figures of speech.
11	A ship is floating on the sea. A side by side image of a shell floating in water is being shown next to it.	Author Scott O'Dell begins his book <i>Island of the Blue Dolphins</i> with these sentences-- "I remember the day the Aleut ship came to our island. At first it seemed like a small shell afloat on the sea." The author painted a picture of the scene. But he painted his picture with words by comparing the small boat to a shell.
12	A huge ship is docked.	Would you need a different figure of speech to describe a huge ocean liner? It would not look like a shell. What would you compare it to?

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		<p>It looks like a floating hotel drifting on the ocean.</p> <p>When we use comparisons or figures of speech, as they're called, we are making a richer picture for our readers.</p>
13	A snail is on the sidewalk. A side by side of an image of a clown and an umbrella appear.	<p>When Hilda Conkling was 10 years old, she wrote about a snail.</p> <p>"I saw a snail come down the garden walk. He wagged his head this way, that way, like a clown in a circus. I have always said he carries his house on his back. Today in the rain I saw that it was his umbrella!"</p> <p>Ms. Conkling made her description by comparing things. A snail wagging his head to a clown. And a snail to an umbrella.</p>
14	A snail is nestled into green leaves. After the poem is read the poem is shown on the screen.	<p>James Reeves also wrote about a snail. See if you can recognize the three figures of speech he uses. "At sunset, when the night-dews fall, out of the ivy on the wall with horns outstretched and pointed tail comes the gray and noiseless snail.</p> <p>On ivy stems she clammers down, carrying her house of brown. Safe in the dark, no greedy eye can her tender body spy, while she herself, a hungry thief, searches out the freshest leaf. She travels on as best she can like a toppling caravan."</p> <p>Are the underlined words figures of speech? Yes, they are.</p>
15	An image of a yellow dandelion is showing in the grass.	<p>In her poem, Dandelion, Hilda Conkling adds something special to this ordinary weed by using comparisons.</p> <p>"O little soldier with the golden helmet, what are you guarding on my lawn? You with your green gun and your yellow beard, why do you stand so stiff? There is only the grass to fight!"</p>
16	An image of tall grass is showing.	Let's listen to some figures of speech children have written.

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		Grass looks like thousands of little green elves all running the same way.
17	Fluffy clouds are in the sky.	The wind is like the yeast in bread, it makes clouds fluffy white not red.
18	Snow is on the ground.	Can you think of a comparison which describes this snowy winter scene? One person wrote— The white snow covers the dirty earth like a lovely white blanket.
19	A painting of a wave is showing.	This famous picture is by the Japanese artist Hokusai. Observe it carefully. The picture is called The Great Wave Off Kanagawa. What figures of speech may be written to describe the wave? The edge of the wave looks like a lacy handkerchief. The wave looks like fingers grabbing towards the shore.
20	Various images are being shown: birds at a beach, a boy touching water in a pond and a tree in a forest.	[LIGHTHEARTED MUSIC] Part of the joy of being a human being is expressing your ideas about things you see and feel. Using descriptive words and figures of speech will help you express ideas more clearly and more beautifully. Now you are invited to join some activities using figures of speech and descriptive words. First, let's look at what there is to do. This shows the last verse of The Eagle, a famous poem by Alfred Lord Tennyson. The directions are-- say or write at least one descriptive phrase. Say or write the one figure of speech. This section shows some incomplete figures of speech. The directions are-- say or write the correct letter from the right side that best completes the first three figures of speech. Use your own idea to complete numbers 4 and 5.

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		<p>Now you may wish to create a poem or short paragraph about something you have observed. Usually it is better to describe little details about a very specific thing, such as how a particular cloud looks. The lacy pattern of a leaf. Or the way a cat washes himself after dinner.</p> <p>Another idea is to describe your thoughts about a particular color. One person wrote, gray is the fog creeping over the mountains. Gray is the sidewalk where I roller skate. Gray is my uncle's mustache. What are your impressions of red, of yellow, and other colors?</p> <p>If you are not working from a prepared worksheet, you may wish to make your paper look like this. Then you need to write only the answers.</p>
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