



## Imagery

### What is Imagery?

In literature, imagery refers to words that trigger the reader to recall images, or mental pictures, that engage one of the five senses: sight, sound, taste, smell, and touch. Imagery is one of the strongest literary techniques because it connects to the personal experiences, or memories, of the reader.

### Showing vs. Telling

Images don't tell the reader something; they show the reader by using concrete details.

*Ex. of Telling:* "It was wretched weather in town."

*Ex. of Showing:* "Gusts of wind and blasts of rain swept through the town."

### Two Common Types of Images:

- **Literal.** A literal image represents a literal object or sensation. Its meaning is obvious and realistic and needs no interpretation. It is what it says it is. Literal images are common in both prose and poetry.
- **Figurative.** A figurative image means more than what it says it is. It suggests certain meanings that must be interpreted. There are two major ways by which a writer creates a figurative image:

1. **Simile** - a figurative image which relies on "like" or "as" to compare two things which are unlike. It is an expressed analogy.

*Ex.* "He acts *like* a pig at the dinner table."

2. **Metaphor** - a figurative image which identifies one thing with another without the use of "like" or "as." It is an implied analogy.

*Ex.* "He *is* a pig at the dinner table."

### Strategies for Organizing an Essay on Imagery:

There are several ways to organize your essay on imagery. You can discuss:

- **Images suggesting ideas and/or moods.** What ideas or moods are evoked by the images?
- **Types of images.** Is there a predominance of a particular type of image?
- **Patterns of images.** Is there a pattern of similar or consistent images?

**When Writing about Imagery, Ask the Following Questions:**

- What types of images prevail in the work?
- How vivid are the images?
- What explanation is needed for the images?
- What effect do the images have on you? How do you respond to them?
- How well are the images integrated in the work?
- Within a group of images, do the images pertain to one location rather than another?  
For example, country vs. city or indoors vs. outdoors.

**Remember:**

Imagery enhances character, setting, meaning, and theme in literature. Sensory imagery adds emotional power to writing because it connects with personal experiences of the reader.