Metaphor: seeing the light

VOCABULARY PRACTICE
UPPER-INTERMEDIATE | B2

Name: _____ Date: _____

1 Match each precise term with its definition.

1 metaphor ____	**a** a direct comparison implying one thing is another, without using 'like' or 'as'
2 simile ____	**b** a comparison using 'like' or 'as' to highlight a similarity
3 source domain ____	**c** the concrete, familiar domain from which metaphorical language is drawn
4 target domain ____	**d** the abstract concept being described through metaphor
5 mixed metaphor ____	**e** an incongruous combination of two unrelated metaphors within the same expression
6 extended metaphor ____	**f** a single metaphor developed and sustained across multiple sentences or an entire passage
7 dead metaphor ____	**g** a metaphor so common its figurative origin is no longer consciously noticed
8 conceptual metaphor ____	**h** a systematic, underlying correspondence between two conceptual domains that structures thought
9 metaphorical mapping ____	**i** the specific correspondences drawn between elements of the source and target domains
10 figurative language ____	**j** language that uses non-literal devices such as metaphor, simile or personification

2 Choose the word with the most suitable connotation.

1 For a direct comparison without 'like' or 'as': metaphor / simile.

2 For a comparison using 'like' or 'as': simile / metaphor.

3 For the concrete domain metaphorical language draws from: source domain / target domain.

4 For the abstract concept being described: target domain / source domain.

5 For an incongruous combination of unrelated metaphors: a mixed metaphor / a consistent metaphor.

6 For a metaphor sustained across a whole passage: an extended metaphor / a one-off image.

7 For a metaphor so common its origin is unnoticed: a dead metaphor / a vivid, fresh image.

Metaphor: seeing the light

8 For a systematic underlying correspondence structuring thought: a conceptual metaphor / a surface-level comparison.

3 Complete the metaphor-studies collocations with one word.

1 the _____ domain (= the concrete source of the comparison)

2 the _____ domain (= the abstract concept being described)

3 a _____ metaphor (= incongruous combination)

4 an _____ metaphor (= sustained across a passage)

5 a _____ metaphor (= no longer consciously noticed)

6 a _____ metaphor (= a systematic underlying correspondence)

7 a metaphorical _____ (= specific correspondences drawn)

8 _____ language (= non-literal devices generally)

Metaphor: seeing the light

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4 Complete the case notes with words and phrases from the box.

conceptual metaphor | dead metaphor | extended metaphor | figurative language | metaphorical mapping | mixed metaphor | simile | source domain | target domain

Case A: The poem developed a single 1 _____ across every stanza, comparing life to a river from beginning to end.
Case B: 'We need to iron out the wrinkles and then push the boat out' was flagged as a 2 _____, combining two unrelated images awkwardly.
Case C: 'Time is money' illustrates a 3 _____, an underlying correspondence shaping how English speakers conceptualise time through the 4 _____ of money rather than describing an abstract 5 _____ directly.
Case D: The phrase 'the leg of the table' is now a 6 _____, no longer felt as figurative by most speakers.
Case E: The writer used a 7 _____, comparing her fear to 'a shadow following her everywhere', rather than a direct metaphor.
Case F: Analysts traced the precise 8 _____, showing how each element of the source corresponded to an element of the target within this piece of 9 _____.

5 Read the text and answer the questions briefly.

Why some metaphors feel dead and others alive

Linguists studying figurative language distinguish between vivid metaphors that speakers consciously recognise as non-literal and dead metaphors that have become so conventional they no longer register as figurative at all. The phrase 'the leg of the table' once vividly compared furniture to a body, but centuries of routine use have stripped away any conscious awareness of the comparison, leaving only a literal, dictionary sense behind. This process happens gradually and inconsistently, meaning a single language can contain metaphors at every stage of this continuum simultaneously, from freshly coined, strikingly original images to expressions so thoroughly conventionalised that most speakers would be surprised to learn they originated as metaphors at all.

1 What distinction do linguists studying figurative language draw? _____

2 What did the phrase 'the leg of the table' once vividly compare? _____

3 What has centuries of routine use stripped away? _____

4 How does this process happen, according to the text? _____

Metaphor: seeing the light

5 What can a single language contain simultaneously? _____

6 What would most speakers be surprised to learn about some expressions? _____

6 Rewrite each sentence using the word in capitals. Do not change the meaning.

1 She compared her fear to a shadow following her, using 'like'. SIMILE _____

2 The two unrelated images were combined awkwardly in one sentence. MIXED METAPHOR _____

3 The metaphor was sustained across the whole poem. EXTENDED METAPHOR _____

4 The phrase no longer felt figurative to most speakers. DEAD METAPHOR _____

OVER TO YOU

Write a 120-150 word account analysing how a specific metaphor structures the way people think about an abstract concept (time, argument, life), distinguishing observation from linguistic theory.

[ ] Use at least twelve target expressions. [ ] Control connotation carefully. [ ] Avoid unsupported assumptions.

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ANSWER KEY

1 Precise terms

1 a 2 b 3 c 4 d 5 e 6 f 7 g 8 h 9 i 10 j

2 Connotation

1 metaphor 2 simile 3 source domain 4 target domain 5 a mixed metaphor 6 an extended metaphor 7 a dead metaphor 8 a conceptual metaphor

3 Collocations

1 source 2 target 3 mixed 4 extended 5 dead 6 conceptual 7 mapping 8 figurative

4 Case notes

1 extended metaphor 2 mixed metaphor 3 conceptual metaphor 4 source domain 5 target domain
6 dead metaphor 7 simile 8 metaphorical mapping 9 figurative language

5 Reading - suggested answers

1 Between vivid metaphors speakers consciously recognise as non-literal and dead metaphors that no longer register as figurative.
2 Furniture to a body.
3 Any conscious awareness of the comparison.
4 Gradually and inconsistently.
5 Metaphors at every stage of this continuum simultaneously.
6 That the expressions originated as metaphors at all.

6 Rewriting - possible answers

1 She used a simile. 2 It was a mixed metaphor.
3 It was an extended metaphor. 4 It became a dead metaphor.

Over to you

Answers will vary. Check lexical precision, appropriate connotation and separation of fact from inference.