

# How to Work With Metaphors

## What is a metaphor?

“Something tangible that represents something conceptual” Another way of saying this is that “It is something/ object that actually exists that takes the place of an idea or a larger version of that thing.”

The purpose of a metaphor is to allow the author to comment about the larger idea by what they make the object do or by what is done to the object in the story. This means that as a reader, we can analyze a metaphor and replace it in the story with the concept and argue that the details of the metaphor can be applied to our understanding of the metaphor.

## How does one find a metaphor?

Because a story is about an idea more than the object that only stands in for that idea, a reader will notice that the metaphor/object stands out more than it should from the story. This will mean that it seems to get more attention than it normally would, or seems out of place in the context of the plot.

This standing out allows the reader to then attempt to find other concepts in the story that may be similar.

## How do you figure out what a metaphor represents?

**Rule #1:** Figuring out what a metaphor represents is nothing more than an educated guess. You cannot know for certain that what you figure out is true, all you can do is know that a connection that has multiple similarities between the object and concept is more likely to be true than a connection that only shares one or two similarities.

**Process:** Look for details about how the object is treated, how the object acts, the history of the object, or how characters in the story feel/think about the object. Once you have done this, you will look for ideas or larger groups that have similar things that apply to them. Once you have multiple similarities, you can replace the metaphor/object in the story with the concept/larger group that it represents and see if it makes sense in that context. If it does, you have a good educated guess.

## How to figure out what the metaphor teaches about the concept/object it represents?

An author acts upon a metaphor the way that they want the reader to understand the story is acting upon the concept. If a metaphor is seen negatively, then you can understand that the concept is seen negatively. If a metaphor acts in a violent way, you can understand that the concept is something that the author wants you to think acts in a violent way.