

Figurative Language: Similes, Metaphors, and Word Meaning

Name: _____

Date: _____

Score: _____ / 10



Quick Review

Writers use figurative language — similes ("like" / "as"), metaphors (saying one thing IS another), and personification (giving human traits to things) — to create pictures and feelings. To find the meaning, look at what the writer is comparing and at the words around it.

PART 1 — READ

Read the passage. Then answer the questions.

Cousin of the Wind (a poem in five stanzas)

I. My grandmother says the autumn wind / is a cousin of ours, half-wild, half-kind, / who shows up late on a Sunday night / with sand in his pockets and stories to tell.

II. He pushes the kitchen door open like a friend / who has known the latch since he was small, / and the curtains, suddenly nervous as guests, / step back from the windowsill against the wall.

III. He shouts in the chimney the way uncles shout — / not at anyone, just to feel the room. / The plates on the high shelf hold their breath. / The kettle blinks twice and then goes back to its work.

IV. My grandmother sets a cup at his place / though no one is in the empty chair. / The wind is a guest who eats only stories. / The kettle hums; the night leans in to hear.

V. By morning, the cousin has gone. / Only a single yellow leaf on the kitchen tile / says, "I was here, and I will be back, / and tell your grandmother thank you for the tea."

PART 2 — PRACTICE

Use the poem to answer each question. Each item asks about meaning *IN THE POEM*, not in everyday speech.

1. Read these lines from stanza I: "My grandmother says the autumn wind / is a cousin of ours, half-wild, half-kind..." These lines are an example of —
 - A. a simile, because the wind is being compared to a cousin using "like."
 - B. alliteration, because of the repeated "c" sounds.
 - C. rhyme, because "wind" and "cousin" sound similar.
 - D. a metaphor, because the wind is being called a cousin.



2. What does the metaphor "a cousin of ours, half-wild, half-kind" MOST NEARLY suggest about the autumn wind?
- A. The wind is dangerous and should be locked outside the house.
 - B. The wind feels familiar to the family but also unpredictable.
 - C. The wind only visits this family because they are related to it.
 - D. The wind is a real person the grandmother used to know.
3. Read this line from stanza II: "the curtains, suddenly nervous as guests, / step back from the windowsill..." The phrase "nervous as guests" is an example of —
- A. a simile, because it compares the curtains to guests using "as."
 - B. a metaphor, because the curtains have become guests.
 - C. personification only, with no comparison word.
 - D. alliteration, because of the repeated "n" sound.
4. Read stanza III: "The plates on the high shelf hold their breath. / The kettle blinks twice and then goes back to its work." The poet uses these lines MAINLY to —
- A. explain that the plates and kettle are old and worn out.
 - B. warn the reader that an earthquake is starting in the kitchen.
 - C. give the kitchen objects human reactions so the room feels alive and tense.
 - D. show that the grandmother does not take care of her dishes.
5. In stanza III the poet writes, "He shouts in the chimney the way uncles shout — / not at anyone, just to feel the room." The word "shouts" MOST NEARLY refers to —
- A. the grandmother yelling at the wind to leave the house.
 - B. the wind making a loud, rumbling sound inside the chimney.
 - C. an actual uncle who has come to visit on Sunday night.
 - D. the children in the house being told to be quiet.
6. Read these lines from stanza IV: "The wind is a guest who eats only stories. / The kettle hums; the night leans in to hear." What do these lines MOST CLEARLY show about the family's view of the wind?
- A. The wind is a thief who steals from the family.
 - B. The wind is a stranger who frightens everyone in the house.
 - C. The family thinks the wind ruins the kettle and the plates each night.
 - D. The family sees the wind as part of their evening, almost like a welcome listener.
7. Read these lines from stanza V: "Only a single yellow leaf on the kitchen tile / says, 'I was here, and I will be back...'" The poet uses the leaf to —
- A. show that the family forgot to clean the floor before bed.
 - B. act as a small "signature" the wind leaves behind, like a note from the cousin.
 - C. warn that the wind has damaged the roof during the night.
 - D. explain that autumn has finally ended in the village.



8. What is the BEST description of the OVERALL tone of the poem?

- A. scary and warning
- B. angry and bitter
- C. warm and slightly playful
- D. sad and lonely

9. Find ONE example of personification in stanza II, III, or IV. Copy the line, then explain in one sentence what human action or feeling is given to a non-human thing.

10. What does the poet MOST likely mean by calling the wind "a guest who eats only stories" in stanza IV? Use ONE other detail from the poem to support your answer.



Answer Keys

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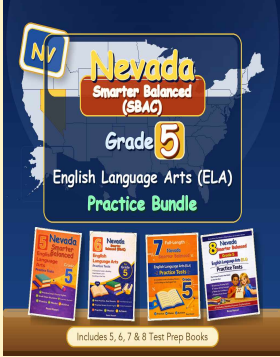
| Explanations | |
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| 1. D | Saying X IS Y (with no "like" or "as") is a metaphor. A is wrong because the lines do not use "like" or "as"; B confuses sound features with figurative meaning; C is wrong because "wind" and "cousin" do not rhyme. |
| 2. B | "Cousin" = familiar; "half-wild, half-kind" = unpredictable but not mean — together that is a friendly mood. A misses "half-kind" (no danger); C takes the metaphor literally; D treats the wind as a real human, which is the literal trap of personification. |
| 3. A | "Nervous as guests" uses "as" to compare → simile. B misses the comparison word; C is partly true (the curtains do get human traits) but the line ALSO uses an explicit "as" comparison, so the better, more specific label is simile; D is a sound feature, not the meaning move. |
| 4. C | Holding-their-breath plates and a blinking kettle are personification used to make the room react to the wind. A invents age; B reads the line literally as danger; D adds judgment the poem does not give. |
| 5. B | "He" in this stanza is the wind (cousin metaphor from stanza I). The wind "shouts" in the chimney — the wind makes a loud, rumbling sound. A invents the grandmother yelling, which the poem never shows; C takes the simile literally — there is no real uncle; D invents children not in the poem. |
| 6. D | Setting a cup, calling the wind a guest, the night leaning in to hear — all welcoming, peaceful images. A invents stealing; B contradicts "sets a cup at his place"; C invents damage the poem never shows. |
| 7. B | Tying back to the cousin metaphor — a leaf as a "thank you" note — fits the whole poem's frame. A is too literal and ignores the talking-leaf line; C invents damage; D contradicts the cycle the poem suggests ("I will be back"). |
| 8. C | Cousin, kettle blinking, night leaning in, leaf saying thank you — friendly imagery with a smile. A misses the welcoming details; B is wrong (the wind is half-KIND); D is wrong (the empty chair has a cup set for it — that is welcoming, not lonely). |
| 9. | Answer: Acceptable examples (any one): "the curtains... step back from the windowsill against the wall" (curtains given the human action of stepping back in fear); "The plates on the high shelf hold their breath" (plates given a human reaction to tension); "The kettle blinks twice" (kettle given a human eye action); "the night leans in to hear" (night given the human action of leaning). Strong explanation names the non-human thing AND the human trait. NOT acceptable: "the wind is a cousin" (that is the metaphor in stanza I, not personification in II-IV); a quote with no explanation. Find a NON-human thing (like a curtain, plate, kettle, or the night) doing something only PEOPLE can do. |



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| 10. | Answer: Strong answer: the poet means the wind is welcomed like family BUT does not need food or a chair the way a person does — what it "takes" is the family's stories, mood, and attention. Supporting details (any one): the grandmother sets a cup at the empty chair; the night leans in to hear; the wind shouts in the chimney just "to feel the room"; the leaf leaves a thank-you note. NOT acceptable: literal answers that say the wind eats actual food; answers with no second detail; answers that say the family is afraid (the line is welcoming). Compare what a normal guest takes (food) with what this guest takes (something else from the family). |
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