

Lesson 14

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Making Sense of Figurative Language

1. What does it mean to be up with the chickens?

2. Where do you think this expression came from?

“Up with the chickens” is an old, common expression. It means “to be awake very early in the morning.” The origins of some figurative expressions, such as this one, are fairly easy to figure out. People who live on farms tend to wake up early—with the farm animals that wake up at sunrise.

Most writers try to avoid old, common expressions. Instead, they try to create new, fresh ones. They expect the reader to figure out the meaning. The reader will need to make sense of the entire expression, not just read the words in a literal way.

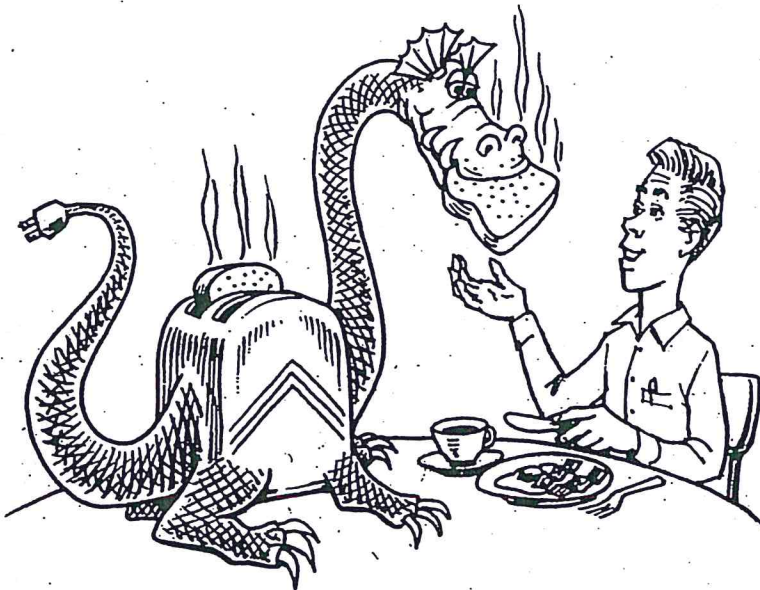
Exercise A

Read the title and poem below.

THE TOASTER

by William Jay Smith

A silver-scaled Dragon with jaws flaming red
Sits at my elbow and toasts my bread.
I hand him fat slices, and then, one by one,
He hands them back when he sees they are done.



1. What two things are being compared in the poem?

2. What are the "jaws flaming red," literally?

3. When the slices are done, what happens, literally?

4. Why is a toaster compared to a dragon?

Why did this poet compare a toaster to a dragon? Think about toasters for a minute. Don't they often have a shiny, silver color? When the toaster is on, don't the openings turn red?

Now think about pictures of dragons that you have seen. Aren't they often pictured with silver scales? Aren't dragons often shown breathing fire?

When you come across a figurative word or phrase that doesn't make literal sense, look at the context in which it is used. Then figure out what the expression could mean that would make sense in that context.

Most figurative expressions involve comparisons. But not all comparisons are figurative. If the things being compared are very much alike, the comparison can probably be understood literally as in the sentence below.

Liz plays soccer like her brother does.

The things compared above—the way Liz plays and the way her brother plays—are very similar. They are both people who play soccer with a similar style. The comparison is meant to be understood in a literal way.

Exercise B

Each sentence below contains figurative language. After each sentence, there are three phrases or sentences that translate the figurative language into literal language.

Choose the phrase that gives the best literal meaning for the italicized figurative expression. Circle the letter of your choice.

- Dave doesn't just grow plants—he *mothers them*.
 - grows them in a nursery
 - treats them the way a mother treats her children
 - treats them harshly
- Bonita can help you in almost any subject; she *is a pocket calculator, a dictionary, and an encyclopedia all rolled into one*.
 - is good in math and English and knows many facts
 - owns reference books and other aids for every subject
 - carries with her anything she may need for schoolwork

3. Daniel doesn't study a textbook thoroughly; instead, *he dips into a chapter here or nibbles at a few pages there*, and enjoys himself.
 - a. studies the parts he likes
 - b. eats a lot while he's studying
 - c. has little appetite for studying
4. The new budget provides more money for the golf and swim teams and for the band, but it leaves the tennis team *out in the cold*.
 - a. on the outdoor courts, even in the winter
 - b. without warm-up suits
 - c. without the necessary support to continue
5. Answering Ms. Helm's questions is *like testifying against yourself*.
 - a. tricky because she often asks questions about government and law
 - b. dangerous, because whatever you say, it may hurt you
 - c. dangerous, because she doesn't like students who fail her tests

Exercise C

Figurative language is often used in poetry. The following poem is about a cat. The qualities of the cat are expressed in figurative comparisons. Read the poem and think about the figurative language. Then, answer the questions that follow.

from **THE DEATH OF A CAT**
by Louis MacNeice

To begin with he was a beautiful object:
Blue crisp fur with a white collar,
Paws of white velvet, springs of steel,
A Pharaoh's profile, a Krishna's grace,
Tail like a question mark . . .

1. What color were the cat's paws?

2. Were the cat's paws literally velvet? In your own words, describe how the paws felt.

3. The cat has "springs of steel." What does this tell you about the cat?

4. What do the comparisons to a Pharaoh and to Krishna suggest?

Lesson 27

Reflexive and Intensive Pronouns

A reflexive pronoun reflects the action of the verb back to the subject. An intensive pronoun adds intensity to the noun or pronoun just named.

Reflexive and intensive pronouns end in *-self* or *-selves*. Study the chart below showing the forms of these pronouns.

Person	Singular	Plural
1st person:	myself	ourselves
2nd person:	yourself	yourselves
3rd person:	herself, himself, itself	themselves

Reflexive pronouns serve as reflectors, as their name suggests. They reflect back to the subject. Read these examples.

The children taught **themselves** Italian.

I forced **myself** to sit still.

Sometimes we use a pronoun ending in *-self* or *-selves* to intensify, or emphasize, the noun or pronoun it refers to. This pronoun is called an **intensive pronoun**. Look at these examples.

Did you lift that **yourself**?

The President **himself** will address the meeting.

Remember these facts about reflexive and intensive pronouns.

- There are only eight correct reflexive and intensive pronouns. Never use incorrect forms like *hisself*, *ourself*, or *theirselves*.
- Reflexive and intensive pronouns should not be used in place of personal pronouns.

Henry went with John and **me**. (Not: John and myself)

Lois and **he** were early. (Not: Lois and himself)

Exercise A

Write **R** above each reflexive pronoun and **I** above each intensive pronoun in the sentences below.

Example: Have you ever seen yourself on television?

R

Answer: Have you ever seen yourself on television?

1. In media class, the teacher had us videotape ourselves.
2. She herself gave each one of us an event to pantomime.

3. Some people can apparently discover themselves through mime.
4. Several in the group had seen themselves on TV before.
5. Jerry had never watched himself on TV.
6. The teacher told Jerry he would do fine if he would be himself.
7. Jerry himself did not share in her confidence.
8. We then prepared ourselves for the taping.
9. Some students allowed themselves several days to practice.
10. The students themselves were eager to begin.
11. I myself practiced for one week.
12. Many of us did not act like ourselves, but like other pupils.
13. You often find yourself amused when someone imitates you.

Exercise B

Circle the correct pronoun form in each sentence.

Example: Ted (hisself, himself) painted the picture.

Answer: himself

1. Has Larry ever had a portrait of (himself, hissself) painted?
2. Our family enjoyed the portrait of (ourself, ourselves).
3. Some people like to do portraits of (themselves, theirselves).
4. Ted and (I, myself), for example, painted self-portraits last year.
5. We (ourselves, ourselves) thought we did well.
6. Some famous artists have painted (theirself, themselves).
7. Van Gogh painted several portraits of (hissself, himself).
8. Some artists have drawn caricatures of (theirselves, themselves).
9. A new artist painted Ted and (me, myself).
10. Ted and (he, himself) are good friends now.
11. They (theirselves, themselves) are going to put on a show.

Lesson 28

Indefinite Pronouns

An indefinite pronoun may or may not have an antecedent. Some indefinite pronouns are singular, and others are plural.

The word *indefinite* means "vague, not sure or certain." A pronoun that may refer to a noun but does not indicate a definite person or thing is called an **indefinite pronoun**. Notice the pronouns in dark type in the sentences below.

Of the two hundred filmmakers, **few** have seen the new movie.

Years ago **someone** suggested making a movie about outer space.

In the first sentence, the indefinite pronoun *few* refers to its antecedent *filmmakers*, but it does not tell how many filmmakers have seen the new movie. In the second sentence, there is no antecedent for the indefinite pronoun *someone*.

Indefinite pronouns can be singular or plural. Some of the most commonly used indefinite pronouns are shown in the chart below.

Indefinite Pronouns			
	Singular		Plural
another	either	one	both
anybody	everyone	somebody	few
anyone	neither	someone	many
each	no one	something	several
			others

Indefinite pronouns can be troublesome because people tend to think of most of them as plural forms. As the chart suggests, though, many of them are singular and take singular verbs. Some pronouns—*all*, *any*, *most*, *none*, and *some*—can be either singular or plural, depending on how they are used.

Exercise A

Underline the indefinite pronouns in each sentence below.

Example: I hope everyone will compete.

Answer: I hope everyone will compete.

1. Anyone can attend the event.
2. How could anybody miss it?
3. Someone might forget.
4. No one announced the place.
5. Many knew that.

6. Several asked about it.
7. Something should be done.
8. Neither knows about it.
9. Others have already heard.
10. Each will know soon.

Exercise B

Underline each indefinite pronoun once and its antecedent twice.

Example: These cameras are expensive, but others are cheap.

Answer: These cameras are expensive, but others are cheap.

1. Tourists were in town. Many visited the World Trade Center.
2. Tourists went to the top of the building. Several took photos.
3. The twins didn't take photos because both forgot the film.
4. My brothers wouldn't go. All are afraid of heights.
5. My sisters like the view, and each has seen it before.

Exercise C

Underline the indefinite pronoun in each sentence below, and write **S** if it is singular or **P** if it is plural.

Example: Everyone has responsibilities.

Answer: Everyone has responsibilities. **S**

1. Everyone knows about doing chores. _____
2. Each has agreed on a job. _____
3. Few would neglect carrying their own loads. _____
4. Several think their time is limited. _____
5. Others believe their schedules are not full. _____
6. Anybody forgets duties at times. _____
7. Either is able to do the tasks well. _____
8. Neither was pleased with the schedule. _____
9. Many are confident of their own abilities. _____
10. I hope someone will volunteer. _____

Vocabulary Practice 10: Word Roots

Word Roots: -vid-, -vis-, -vit-

Word roots form the basic part of the word and give the word its primary meaning. Prefixes and suffixes add specific meanings to roots. If you know the meaning of a root, you can often figure out the meaning of a whole word.

Example: The word roots *-vid-* and *-vis-* mean "see." Adding the suffix *-ion* to the root *-vis-* makes *vision*, meaning "the act of seeing" or "something seen." The word root *-vit-* (sometimes spelled with *-viv-*) means "life."

A. Choose the word that best completes each sentence below. Write the word in the blank.

convivial	improvise	revision	revive	viable
video	visionary	visor	visual	vital

1. We did not see the movie in the theater; instead, we saw the _____.
2. The artist seemed to see into the future. She was regarded as a _____.
3. Cassy is a musical person. She also has many _____ skills.
4. After you write your draft, wait at least one day before doing any _____.
5. The _____ helps shield the sun from the driver's eyes.
6. Everyone had a great time; the party was _____.
7. Although he tried, the marine biologist could not _____ the beached whale.
8. The puppy was born early, but it was _____.
9. Sleep is _____ for health; a person will die without it.
10. If you don't have a speech ready, you may need to _____.

B. Write the word from Part A in the correct column of the chart below.

Meaning Related to Seeing	Meaning Related to Life
1.	7.
2.	8.
3.	9.
4.	10.
5.	
6.	