

**Metaphor** and **simile** are special ways of writing, describing things (often abstract ideas) more powerfully by referring to other (often concrete) things.

### What is a simile?

In a **simile** the connection is made using a word such as 'like' or 'as'. For example, *The athlete ran like a greyhound*, and *Her eyes are as blue as the morning sky*.

### What is a metaphor?

**Metaphors** are more indirect. A metaphor allows you to associate something that you are describing with something well-known. For example, expressions such as, *I can't swallow that suggestion*, *That argument smells fishy* and *Could we chew over these ideas together?* are all based on the metaphor 'ideas are food'.

### Mixed metaphors

When two different metaphors are used in the same expression we call them **mixed metaphors**, and consider them to be clumsy, for example, *They were talking behind my back right under my nose*.

### Overused metaphors

Sometimes, metaphors are used so frequently that people no longer consider them forceful, for example, *She is a pillar of the community* is used so often that the metaphor 'people are buildings' is not really noticeable any more.

### Some more examples

In the following lines from Robert Burns's poem *Tam O'Shanter*, both a simile and a metaphor appear:

**Gathering her brows like gathering storm**, [simile]

**Nursing her wrath to keep it warm**. [metaphor: 'anger is a child']