IMAGERY

Imagery may be defined as description which appeals to one or more of the senses: taste, touch, sight, smell, and sound. The purpose of imagery is to call up with words an experience which you remember or with which you can identify. This image makes an experience more vivid by alerting our senses in response to the image. Imagery, sometimes called sensory language, has connotation, which brings to mind an experience involving one or more of these senses. For example, most of us could identify with a passage that speaks of "eating roasted marshmallows with the outside crunchy and the inside creamy, melt-in-your-mouth sweet." Oh, yes, and we associate those times of roasting marshmallows around the campfire with good times, maybe our childhood. And that is connotation.

You have mastered detail, diction, and figurative language (hopefully) and can now recognize and analyze them. So what do imagery and these other rhetorical devices have in common? Actually, they are often used in combination, which can be confusing. For example, detail and diction may occur within figurative language, and figurative language may occur within imagery, and imagery may even occur within figurative language. Isn't that confusing? Yes, it surely is. So how do you differentiate among these? Sometimes there is no doubt in recognizing detail, diction, figurative language, and imagery. But when the doubt exists, you need to consider the list of figures of speech in order to determine whether or not you have figurative language. Actually, the prompt can be helpful; if it asks you to find "figurative language," then look for that. If the prompt asks for "imagery," then look for that. If it asks for both, remember that one may occur within the other. Then you might say, "The author uses a metaphor (or other figurative language) to create imagery."

Remember the sentences that are examples of different elements? We have looked at the Basic Sentence, the Detail sentence, the Diction sentence, and the Figurative Language sentence. As a reminder, this is what each does:

DETAIL is the use of facts
DICTION is specific and appropriate word choice, dialect, slang, etc.
FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE is the use of metaphors, similes, personification, hyperbole, etc.

Now we are also looking at Imagery, and this is what it does:
IMAGERY is the use of words and/or phrases which have sensory appeal

See the example sentences that follow:

BASIC SENTENCE: Robbie reached for the basketball.

DETAIL: Robbie reached for the ball, successfully took possession, pulled it to his

chest, looked at the basket, then aimed, threw, and watched it drop through the rim to score the winning point.

DICTION: Desperate to win, Robbie lunged for the ball.

FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE: Thinking like a winner (simile), Robbie's controlled frenzy (oxymoron) enabled him to reach for the ball, jump gracefully as a gazelle (simile) as he threw it toward the basket, and – unfortunately—heard it smack (onomatopoeia) against the backboard and rebound into the arms of an opponent.

IMAGERY: Robbie felt the round, nubby ball (touch) as his hands curled around the worn leather (sight, touch) hugged (touch) it protectively (sight) to his chest, then lobbed (sight)it toward the basket.

In what kind of writing do you often find imagery and figurative language? There is much of both in poetry and prose, although poetry is often the writing format in which imagery is found because poetry, which is more concise than prose, lends itself to the use of specific, connotative words.

Let's take a look at imagery and connotation. What do you relate to each of your senses?

> ***There is sound: Your brother and sister are in the living room, screeching at one another. And you remember holding your hands over your ears so you didn't have to hear, because screeching grates on your nerves as well as assaults your ears.**
>
> ***And then there is smell: What about that warm, buttery smell of popcorn as you enter the lobby of the movie? Most of us will always associate that smell with a movie theater.**
>
> ***Of course, there is taste: Who remembers tasting that creamy, gooey cookie dough before it was baked and then the hot, melt-in-your-mouth cookies just as they came out of the oven?**
>
> ***Then there is touch. And who remembers the feel of the sun on your face the first time you hit the beach in summer? It feels warm and soothing as it caresses your skin.**
>
> ***Last there is sight. The ocean seems brilliant blue and endless, merging with the azure sky, making you feel insignificant and a very small part of the world.**

And that is IMAGERY.

ASSIGNMENT 13: GROUP PRACTICE

Read the following sentences and underline imagery in each. Name the sense to which each example of imagery appeals: sight, smell, sound, taste, touch. We have done the first example for you.

EXAMPLE
The cat crouched stealthily, fixing her sight on the unaware bird. Her movements were smooth and liquid, the look on her face intent. Suddenly, her form blurred as she pounced. Her satisfaction was evident as she haughtily strolled past me, her prey clenched in her teeth. sense: sight

1. Straining at his mother's hand, the child squealed in fear, entreating her not to leave him at day care again.

2. My favorite time is at dusk, when the sun eases down, painting the sky with brilliant hues of red and yellow, slowly at first, then abruptly disappears, turning day into night.

3. The baby's skin was soft as velvet, his hair only a faint down covering, and he smelled that sweet baby smell that belongs only to infants.

4. The wind caressed my skin, and I could hear the leaves crackling beneath my feet as I climbed the hillside path.

5. The temperature and humidity were stifling, and I could feel the perspiration trickling down my back as I fantasized about flying off a mountain, my skis swishing across the brilliant white snow as I perfectly completed my jump.

6. Why is it that ordinary food tastes so great when you're camping? I love a hot dog, roasted till the skin sizzles over the fire, and the s'mores are perfect when the crispy graham cracker surrounds the creamy, melting chocolate and a gooey marshmallow.

GROUP ASSIGNMENT 14: IMAGERY IN NON-FICTION

PROMPT
Read the passages and underline/highlight the imagery. Name the sense or senses to which each image appeals.

1. *Speech in Praise of George Washington* by Mark Twain

"...Washington, standing upon the world's utmost summit, eternally visible, eternally clothed in light, a serene, inspiring, heartening example and admonition, is an influence which raises the level of character in all receptive men and peoples, alien and domestic; and the term of its gracious work is not measurable by fleeting generations, but only by the lingering march of the centuries."

SENSE(S):

2. *Hell* by James Joyce

"The horror of this strait and dark prison is increased by its awful stench. All the filth of the world, all the offal and scum of the world, we are told shall run there as to a vast reeking sewer....The brimstone...fills all hell with its intolerable stench....Imagine some foul and putrid corpse that has lain rotting and decomposing in the grave, a jellylike mass of liquid corruption."

SENSE(S):

3. Autobiographical narrative by Gary Soto

"But even that didn't stop me from clawing a chunk from the pie tin and pushing it into the cavern of my mouth. The slop was sweet and gold-colored in the afternoon. I laid more pieces on my tongue, wet finger dripping pieces, until I was finished....I wiped my sticky fingers on the grass and rolled my tongue over the corners of my mouth. A burp perfumed the air."

SENSE(S):

4. "Every Christmas now the floor around her is carpeted with red and green wrapping paper." by Richard Rodriguez

SENSE(S):

5. *The Coffee Plantation* by Isak Dinesen

"There are times of great beauty on a coffee-farm. When the plantation flowered in the beginning of the rains, it was a radiant sight, like a cloud of chalk, in the mist and the drizzling rain, over six hundred acres of land. The coffee-blossom has a delicate slightly bitter scent, like the blackthorn blossom. When the field reddened with the ripe berries, all the women and the children, whom they call the Totos, were called out to pick the coffee off the trees, together with the men; then the wagons and carts brought it down to the factory near the river. Our machinery was never quite what it should have been, but we had planned and built the factory ourselves and thought highly of it. Once the whole factory burned down and had to be built up again. The big coffee-dryer turned and turned, rumbling the coffee in its iron belly with a sound like pebbles that are washed about on the sea-shore. Sometimes the coffee would be dry, and ready to take out of the dryer, in the middle of the night. That was a picturesque moment, with many hurricane lamps in the huge dark room of the factory, that was hung everywhere with cobwebs and coffee-husks, and with eager glowing dark faces, in the light of the lamps, round the dryer; the factory, you felt, hung in the great African night like a bright jewel in an Ethiope's ear. Later on the coffee was hulled, graded and sorted, by hand, and packed in sacks sewn up with a saddler's needle."

SENSE(S)

INDIVIDUAL ASSIGNMENT 15: IMAGERY IN NON-FICTION

Read the passages and underline/highlight the imagery. Name the sense or senses to which each example image appeals.

1. *The Chinese Novel* by Pearl Buck

"The essential mind of China is still that mind... .which in its folk imagination believes anything. It creates ships of gold with masts of silver and white cities by the sea."

SENSE(S):

2. *Once More to the Lake* by E. B. White

"One afternoon while we were there at that lake a thunderstorm came up. It was like the revival of an old melodrama that I had seen long ago with childish awe. The second-act climax of the drama of the electrical disturbance over a lake in America had not changed in any important respect....The whole thing was so familiar, the first feeling of oppression and heat and a general air around camp of not wanting to go very far away. In midafternoon (it was all the same) a curious darkening of the sky, and a lull in everything that had made life tick; and then the way the boats suddenly swung the other way at their moorings with the coming of a breeze out of the new quarter, and the premonitory rumble. Then the kettle drum, then the snare, then the bass drum and cymbals, then crackling light against the dark, and the gods grinning and licking their chops in the hills. Afterward the calm, the rain steadily rustling in the calm lake, the return of light and hope and spirits, and the campers running out in joy and relief to go swimming in the rain, their bright cries perpetuating the deathless joke about how they were getting simply drenched, and the children screaming with delight at the new sensation of bathing in the rain, and the joke about getting drenched linking the generations in a strong indestructible chain."

SENSE(S)

3. *Crack and the Box* by Pete Hamill

"One sad rainy morning last winter, I talked to a woman who was addicted to crack cocaine. She was twenty-two, stiletto-thin, with eyes as old as tombs."

SENSE(S):

4. *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* by Maya Angelou

"Just as the elder opened his mouth, pink tongue waving, and said, 'Great God Mount Nebo, ' Sister Monroe hit him on the back of the head with her purse. Twice. Before he could bring his lips together, his teeth fell, no, actually his teeth jumped, out of his mouth. The grinning uppers and lowers lay by my right shoe looking empty.... I could have stretched out a foot and kicked them under the bench or behind the collection table.

"I looked at Reverend Thomas desperately. If he appeared just a little sad or embarrassed, I could feel sorry for him and wouldn't be able to laugh....But Reverend Thomas...pulled out an extra-large white handkerchief and spread it over his nasty little teeth. Putting them in his pocket, he gummed, 'Naked I came into the world, and naked I shall go out.'

"Bailey's laugh had worked its way up through his body and was escaping through his nose in short hoarse snorts. I didn't try any longer to hold back the laugh, I just opened my mouth and released sound. I heard the first titter jump up in the air over my head....Each time we [Bailey and Maya] looked at each other we howled louder than before."

SENSE(S):

5. This excerpt was written by a woman named Mrs. Keckley who experienced first hand the aftermath of the assassination of President Lincoln.

"Shortly after entering the room on Saturday morning, Mrs. Welles excused herself, as she said she must go to her own family, and I was left alone with Mrs. Lincoln

"She was nearly exhausted with grief, and when she became a little quiet, I asked and received permission to go into the Guests' Room, where the body of the President lay in state. When I crossed the threshold of the room I could not help recalling the day on which I had seen little Willie lying in his coffin where the body of his father now lay. I remembered how the President had wept over the pale beautiful face of his gifted boy, and now the President himself was dead. The last time I saw him he spoke kindly to me, but alas! The lips would never move again. The light had faded from his eyes, and when the light went out the soul went with it. What a noble soul was his—noble in all the noble attributes of God! Never did I enter the solemn chamber of death with such palpitating heart and trembling footsteps as I entered it that day. No common mortal had died. The Moses of my people had fallen in the hour of his triumph. Fame had woven her choicest chaplet* which should not fade, for God had studded it with the glory of the eternal stars."

***head covering**

SENSE(S):

GROUP OR INDIVIDUAL ASSIGNMENT 17: ANALYZING IMAGERY

Carefully read the following account of an experience by George Orwell, and identify the figurative language he uses. Using the paragraph format which follows, discuss Orwell's use of imagery to recreate this vivid experience for the reader. Be sure to mention the senses to which the imagery appeals.

Shooting an Elephant by George Orwell

"When I pulled the trigger I did not hear the bang or feel the kick -- one never does when a shot goes home -- but I heard the devilish roar of glee that went up from the crowd. In that instant, in too short a time, one would have thought, even for the bullet to get there, a mysterious, terrible change had come over the elephant. He neither stirred nor fell, but every line of his body had altered. He looked suddenly stricken, shrunken, immensely old, as though the frightful impact of the bullet had paralyzed without knocking him down. At last, after what seemed a long time -- it might have been five seconds, I dare say -- he sagged flabbily to his knees. His mouth slobbered. An enormous senility seemed to have settled upon him. One could have imagined him thousands of years old. I fired again into the same spot. At the second shot he did not collapse but climbed with desperate slowness to his feet and stood weakly upright, with legs sagging and head drooping. I fired a third time. That was the shot that did it for him. You could see the agony of it jolt his whole body and knock the last remnant of strength from his legs. But in falling he seemed for a moment to rise, for as his hind legs collapsed beneath him he seemed to tower upward like a huge rock toppling, his trunk reaching skywards like a tree...."

Identify two examples of onomatopoeia and one paradox in this passage:

Onomatopoeia:_____

paradox:_____

ASSIGNMENT 18: WRITING ABOUT IMAGERY

PROMPT
Read the following passage and identify two tones that the author uses. Then discuss the author's use of imagery and figurative language to develop those tones.

The Solace of Open Spaces **by Gretel Ehrlich**

"It's May and I've just awakened from a nap, curled against sagebrush the way my dog taught me to sleep -- sheltered from the wind. A front is pulling the huge sky over me, and from the dark a hailstone has hit me on the head. I'm trailing a band of two thousand sheep across a stretch of Wyoming badlands, a fifty-mile trip that takes five days because sheep shade up in hot sun and won't budge until it's cool. Bunched together now, and excited into a run by the storm, they drift across dry land, tumbling into draws like water, and surge out again onto the rugged, choppy plateaus that are the building blocks of this state.

"Winter lasts six months here. Prevailing winds spill snowdrifts to the east, and new storms from the northwest replenish them. This white bulk is sometimes dizzying, even nauseating, to look at. At twenty, thirty, and forty degrees below zero, not only does your car not work, but neither do your mind and body. The landscape hardens into a dungeon of space. During the winter, while I was riding to find a new calf, my jeans froze to the saddle, and in the silence that such cold creates I felt like the first person on earth, or the last.

"Today the sun is out -- only a few clouds billowing. In the east, where the sheep have started off without me, the benchland tilts up in a series of eroded red-earthed mesas, planed flat on top by a million years of water; behind them, a bold line of muscular scarps rears up ten thousand feet to become the Big Horn Mountains. A tidal pattern is engraved into the ground, as if left by the sea that once covered this state. Canyons curve down like galaxies to meet the oncoming rush of flat land.

"Spring weather is capricious and mean. It snows, then blisters with heat. There have been tornadoes. They lay their elephant trunks out in the sage until they find houses, then slurp everything up and leave. I've noticed that melting snowbanks hiss and rot, viperous, then drip into calm pools where ducklings hatch and livestock, being trailed to summer range, drink. With the ice cover gone, rivers churn a milkshake brown, taking culverts and small bridges with them. Water in such an arid place (the average annual rainfall where I live is less than eight inches) is like blood. It festoons drab land with green veins; a line of cottonwoods following a stream; a strip of alfalfa and, on ditch banks, wild asparagus growing."