

# Meet MS. METAPHOR...

...able to create vivid images  
with a single phrase!

A metaphor is a way  
of describing something by  
calling it something else. Metaphors  
describe without using the words  
*like*, *as*, or *than*.

Her notebook is  
a treasure chest  
of ideas.

Her eyes are  
luminous stars.

Her smile is  
a gleaming string  
of pearls.

Her pencils  
are lightning bolts  
carving words  
in the sky.

Her brain is  
a super-fast  
computer.

Her imagination  
is a vast and  
endless ocean.



SCHOLASTIC

# Meet Ms. Metaphor . . .

## Getting Started

An effective metaphor makes a connection between two things that, on the surface, seem to have nothing in common but that actually share one or more unique qualities. Understanding and creating metaphors can help students look at all sorts of things with a fresh eye and use words in vivid ways.

Ask students in what ways superheroes are like books. Jot their responses on the chalkboard. Then use their answers to demonstrate how metaphors can be created by finding similarities between items as different as these. For example, a superhero might describe herself like so: *I am a book—full of imagination, adventures, and unexpected twists and turns.* Ask students to explain in their own words what makes this a metaphor, as well as how it differs from similes. (The superhero calls herself a book, without using *like*, *as*, or *than* to make the comparison.)

## Fleshing out a Metaphor

Distribute a copy of page 25 to each student. Discuss the metaphors—and what each one says about the superhero—as a group. Then, challenge students to select one metaphor from the chart and expand it into a poem or prose paragraph from Ms. Metaphor’s perspective. As with the book/superhero example given above, have students start their pieces with the words “I am” or “My [eyes/brain/smile, etc.] is/are . . .”

## Let’s Get Literary

Distribute to each student a copy of page 27, and read it as a group. Ask students to explain in their own words what Shakespeare’s metaphor is here. (In it, Shakespeare is saying that life is like a play: the world is the stage and human beings are the actors.) When you feel students understand the way this metaphor works, organize students into groups and assign each to a different poem or picture book containing one or more metaphors. Challenge students, working as a group, to identify at least one metaphor, and explain it to the class. (Some picture books that work well for this activity include Jane Yolen’s *Owl Moon*, Rick Walton’s *Cars at Play*, Leo Leonni’s *Frederick*; and Libby Hathorn’s *The Wonder Thing*.)

## Unlikely Connections

Point out to students that certain expressions in our language started out as metaphors—using names that were borrowed from other things. Write these phrases on the chalkboard to give students the idea: *eye of a needle*, *face of a cliff*, *hands of a clock*, and *branch of a river*. Obviously, needles don’t really have eyes, just as clocks don’t have hands, and cliffs don’t have faces. Still, these items got their names because when people needed to identify them, they found a way to compare them with something else they could relate to. Once students understand how these phrases too, are a type of metaphor, distribute page 28. Challenge students to find a new name for each item described.

**Answers:** Page 28: Students’ answers will vary. For reference, however, the part of a microphone into which one speaks is technically called its *head*; the metal ring between a pencil’s eraser and the part with the lead is a *ferrule*; the metal hook at the end of a tape measure is known as the *end hook*, or *true zero*; the part of a microscope that one looks through is the *eyepiece*; the narrow part of an hourglass is called the *waist*; and the thin wire in a light bulb that helps it produce light is the *filament*.

# “ALL THE WORLD’S A STAGE”

## A Shakespearean Metaphor

All the world’s a stage,  
And all the men and women merely players;  
They have their exits and their entrances;  
And one man in his time plays many parts,  
His acts being seven ages. At first the infant,  
Mewling and puking in the nurse’s arms.  
And then the whining schoolboy, with his satchel  
And shining morning face, creeping like a snail  
Unwilling to go to school . . .

(From William Shakespeare’s *As You Like It*, Act 2 Scene 7)

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

# The Rename Game

Can a clock applaud with its hands? Of course not! But still the hands of a clock got their name because someone saw that this part of a clock looked a lot like hands! Now see if you can come up with a metaphorical name for each item shown here and briefly explain.

**1.** The part of a microphone into which you speak or sing might be called the microphone's \_\_\_\_\_ . Why? \_\_\_\_\_

**2.** The metal ring on a pencil between its eraser and the part holding the lead might be called the pencil \_\_\_\_\_ . Why? \_\_\_\_\_

**3.** The metal hook at the end of a tape measure might be called its \_\_\_\_\_ .  
Why? \_\_\_\_\_

**4.** The part of a microscope that you look through might be called \_\_\_\_\_ .  
Why? \_\_\_\_\_

**5.** The narrow part of a sandglass or hourglass might be called its \_\_\_\_\_ .  
Why? \_\_\_\_\_

**6.** The thin wire in a light bulb that helps it produce light might be called \_\_\_\_\_ .  
Why? \_\_\_\_\_