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Lesson Five

FOCUS: Figurative Language

Writers commonly use stylistic devices that require a leap of faith by the reader. Such tools allow readers to visualize events, whether through an unexpected image, an idea, or an observation. The most common literary devices are image, simile, and metaphor. Use these terms to identify the novel's figurative language to expand the meaning of the novel.

Image: a vivid representation or description.

Simile: a comparison between two things using “like” or “as.”

Metaphor: a comparison in which one thing is figuratively transformed so as to reveal its essence.

Discussion Activities

Divide the class into groups. Assign each group a selection of chapters (1-4, 5-8, or 9-12), asking them to identify figurative language used in those chapters. They should specifically identify images, similes, and metaphors. In those chapters, how does the figurative language assist in telling the story? Have groups present their findings to the class.

Once you have collected some evidence from the novel reflect on whether some of the figures should be taken literally. What clues help a reader know when the author uses words figuratively? Can you find these clues in the novel?

Writing Exercise

Find an image in the text. Expand the image by turning it into a simile. For example, Lee expands an ordinary image with a simile: “she did give Jem a hot biscuit-and-butter...it tasted like cotton” (p. 103).

Have students write a few paragraphs telling a story about an important childhood event. In their story, students should use image, simile, and metaphor at least twice. Can they see how developing figurative language in a story contributes to the artistry of the novel?

Homework

Read Chapters 13-15 (pp. 127-155). What might Mrs. Dubose symbolize? Aunt Alexandra believes the “Finch Family” captures or symbolizes certain values. What does she think this family symbolizes? How does Scout fit into this image?