*English Instructional Plan – Writing is a Journey: Writing and Evaluating Metaphors to Increase Student Understanding (accompanies the 2021 SOL presentation of the same name)*

**Primary Strand:** 11.6 (Writing)

**Integrated Strand/s: 11.2 (Multimodal); 11.3 (Reading)**

**Essential Understanding:**

* understand that self-reflection is a part of the writing process
* understand the ways in which figurative language, particularly extended metaphor, can articulate connotation and denotation in layered, nuanced ways
* understand that the relationship between visual images and images formed through descriptive language is not always a one-to-one correlation
* understand their personal feelings about a specific writing project

**Essential Knowledge, Skills, and Processes:**

* identify and analyze the connotation of specific words they use
* explain their feelings about writing through extended metaphor
* discuss the role of reflective writing in academic writing

**Primary SOL:** 11.6a Apply components of a recursive writing process for multiple purposes to create a focused, organized, and coherent piece of writing to address a specific audience and purpose.

**Reinforced (Related Standard) SOL:** 11.2a and b Create media messages with a specific point of view; Analyze the impact of selected media formats on meaning.

11.3c Discriminate between connotative and denotative meanings and interpret the connotation.

**Academic Background/Language:**

* Extended metaphor
* Connotation and Denotation

## Materials

* A copy of “Ten Ways to Think About Writing: Metaphoric Musings for College Writing Students” by E. Shelley Reid or another short essay about writing identity and process (<https://wac.colostate.edu/docs/books/writingspaces2/reid--ten-ways-to-think.pdf>)
* A student-selected copy of a current or recent writing assignment that they want to reflect on
* Different colored highlighters, markers, or pens for student annotations
* An exemplar of a metaphor about a piece of writing (either the one included here, or something the teacher creates for their own work)
* Old magazines for collaging, paper, scissors, and/or other art-making supplies

## Student/Teacher Actions: What should students be doing? What should teachers be doing?

* For this classroom exploration, before asking students to write their own metaphors, it may be helpful to begin with a general discussion about writing. Ask students to consider the following kinds of questions: how do you feel about your writing? What does your writing process look like? Are there things you want to change about your writing process?
* To anchor this reflective exercise with elements of close reading, you can share an article or chapter on writing identity and process with students. One I like to use is “Ten Ways to Think About Writing: Metaphoric Musings for College Writing Students” by E. Shelley Reid, available as part of an open-access text book for composition courses: (https://wac.colostate.edu/docs/books/writingspaces2/reid--ten-ways-to-think.pdf )
* After students read, annotate, and discuss the article you’ve selected, or simply discuss their own feelings about writing, have them pull up one of their own current or recent writing assignment for closer exploration.
* You might choose from the following prompts, or use all of them to spark discussion and brainstorming. Ask students:
  + If your essay were an animal, what would it be?
  + If your essay were a place, where would it be?
  + If your essay were a kind of food, what would it be?
  + If your essay were a time of day, when would it be?
* Ask students to write the first thing that comes into their mind, offering the structure, “If my essay were an animal, it would be …..because…..”. Encourage students to treat this as a freewriting activity, where the stakes are low or nonexistent. the exercise may feel awkward and silly at first. If you can, write along with your students and see what your own lists tell you!
* After time spent playfully brainstorming and writing, give students the chance to extend their metaphors. Invite them to choose one of the four prompts above to develop with more detail. Students usually need at least fifteen minutes to develop their metaphoric notes into a full paragraph, and you can expand the activity to whatever length works best in your classroom. Adding in time to bounce ideas with partners or small group discussion can be helpful, too.
* Once students have written an extended metaphor, have them analyze their own metaphors. They might highlight words that make them feel positive in one color, words that make them feel negative in another, and then do some reflective freewriting about why this word feels good or bad, or they might read the metaphor aloud to each other and talk about the process of reflecting this way. Invite them to look closely at their own text and begin to parse the connotation and the denotation from the words they have used to describe their writing.

**Assessment (Diagnostic, Formative, Summative)**

* Student can submit their metaphors and art for formative assessment.
* After students have written and submitted their metaphors, consider a series of questions to guide you as you explore their comparisons:
  + How does this student consider their own learning in relation to others? (presence of teacher, peer, in metaphor?)
  + What does this metaphor reveal about the student’s goals for the future?
  + What emotions are present, either explicitly or implicitly, in this student’s response?
  + What do these responses mean for classroom practice?

**Writing Connections:**

* Using metaphors to think differently about student writing can help students articulate complex and nuanced emotions related to writing, which in turn can help students deepen their relationship to academic writing.
* Metaphors can facilitate reflective writing, as well as providing students with an additional tool for revision.

**Extensions and Connections (for all students)**

* A really fun way to incorporate multimodal composing practices into metaphor, and to give your students a chance to “see” their connections in a different way is to leave space for an artistic exploration after students have written and closely read their own metaphors.
* You might ask students to collage a picture of the metaphor, or perhaps use their phones to capture single snapshots or videos that illustrate their metaphor, or maybe even ask students to make art based on someone else’s metaphor and then invite a discussion between the author and the artist about what each chose to emphasize and what layers of nuance this practice invited. Experiment with ways to help your students spiral even deeper into metaphor.

**Strategies for Differentiation**

* Create an anchor chart with the metaphor prompts to display in the classroom throughout these learning activities as a visual cue for students.
* Before writing, students can discuss the questions in small groups or pairs to help English Language Learners comprehend these abstract tasks verbally before starting to write.
* In all of these activities, students may work independently or in pairs or small groups.
* The teacher can model each of these reflective metaphors by verbalizing their own thinking process through a think aloud, or soliciting collaborative responses from the full class.
* The artistic extension can use hands-on resources or virtual resources, depending on the needs of students.

*Note: The following pages are intended for classroom use for students as a visual aid to learning.*