

PIE CORBETT WRITING GAMES

The Simile Game

Look at the list of common similes below and ask the children to explain to their partner the story behind the simile. Try inventing new similes and listing them. Collect the best from scanning poems and novels. Make class lists. Discuss why a simile works - is it just a visual similarity? Create a simile alphabet in pairs or small groups within a few minutes.

- *As brave as a lion*
- *Like a cat on a hot tin roof*
- *As cunning as a fox*
- *As deaf as a post*
- *As dry as dust*
- *As happy as Larry*
- *As hungry as a wolf*
- *As innocent as a lamb*
- *As mad as a hatter*
- *As patient as Job*
- *As poor as a church mouse*
- *As proud as a peacock*
- *As scarce as hen's teeth*
- *As silly as a goose*
- *As slippery as an eel*
- *As slow as a tortoise*
- *As sly as a fox*
- *As stubborn as a mule*
- *As thin as a toothpick*
- *As timid as a rabbit*
- *As tricky as a box of monkeys*
- *As welcome as a skunk at a lawn party*
- *As wise as Solomon*

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In the City of Rome

We used to play this old game in the back of the car on long journeys. It is ideal for building descriptions of settings. Think of a place and identify one thing that you can see (a park bench). Then say, 'in the city of Rome is a park bench'.

The next person has to repeat what you have said and add in something else, e.g. 'In the city of Rome is a park bench and under the bench is a sleeping dog.' A list of prepositions helps.

Pass the line on, with each child adding something else they can see or hear. Try playing the game in groups and pairs until the children can visualise and describe a scene in their own mind.

Instead of 'in the city of Rome', play the game using the setting in their story, e.g. 'in the haunted house'. Show children how to sketch the scene and annotate, adding in similes. Then practise turning the scenes into mini paragraphs.

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The Writing Box

Keep a 'writing box' in the classroom. Each week put in a new object that the children have to write about. They can take any angle that they wish. Steven, 7 yrs, wrote this short piece about an old watch that I popped in:

The silver watch

The back is smooth and round. It has hinges to open it. It has a gold wheel that spins round. It has springs. The spring beats out and in like a heart. It has a silver plate with patterns. The patterns are curls. The best part I like is the gold colour inside. The time is quarter past six. That is all I know of the silver watch.

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For Sale

With that class we fell into the habit of selling things. I think the idea came when one day someone put up a 'for sale' notice in the staff room - trying to sell off some disruptive year 6 pupil!

In my class we tried writing notices to sell off pesky younger brothers and then we moved on to selling historical artefacts such as 'Pyramid for sale - genuine offer!'

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Dream Jars

In Gulliver's Travels there is a good description of what he has in his pockets.

This idea led into making lists of the contents of Mrs Thatcher's (the ex-Prime-minister) handbag and I seem to recall that one witty lad wrote a list of what was found in Emu's beak - Michael Parkinson's finger! Other stories often lend themselves to writing ideas.

The BFG can be used to create Dream Jars. You could write about the contents or how to use the contents.

*In the red nightmare jar
Is a drop of blood from the sword that killed
St Thomas,
Is a drop of paint from the letterbox in King's
Lane,
Is a traffic light's eye from the High Street,
Is a red card from the referee's collection.*

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Invented Insects

As a child I had a much prized copy of the *Observer's Book of Birds*. One year when I was working in a village school, I decided we would invent flies and create the *Observer's Book of Invented Flies*! We looked at several bird entries to get the gist of how to write our fly entries, drew invented flies and then wrote about them:

Red-backed Fly

So named because of the red stripes on its back. Flies between April and June. Eggs are seven and found underneath cars. Young found in sewers. It has scent glands on its head that give a pungent smell when alarmed.

Nancy, 9 yrs

The large-winged bird-eating fly.

This fly is the largest specimen of the bird-eating flies. The male has a small sting at the bottom of his abdomen which enables him to poison the bird. They lay over a thousand young but only about five survive. Their legs are so powerful that they can carry a fully-grown eagle. They live in small areas of the mountains.

William, 9 yrs

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Dragon's menu

Dragons are always popular with primary age children. The book *Eragon* by Christopher Paolini is a cracking good read.

Each child could make their own dragon passport. An alphabet for a dragon's menu might also be fun:

A is for an angler's boot.

B is for a bull's horns.

C is for a car's back seat.

D is for dirty dish cloths...

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Excuses

Excuses are always needed. When I was a child I was endlessly late and homework was a mystery to me! Make a list of excuses - the more exaggerated the better. Here are some year 4s in full flight...

This morning I was late for school because there was a knock on my door and I opened it to find that the local farmer had just dumped a lorry load of horse manure on my doorstep. I had to dig myself a route to the front gate.

This morning my head teacher was late for school because his Lotus Elan was jammed at the lights when star performers from Sir Serendipity's Travelling Flea Circus had escaped. They had to be hunted down and recaptured before the traffic could move...

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A Nuisance of Nouns

Ask the children to explain the collective nouns in the alphabet below and then create their own alphabet - this might best be done in small teams, dividing the alphabet up between them.

*An abandonment of orphans
A ballet dance of swans
A crush of rhinoceroses
A dose of doctors
An elephant of enormities
A fidget of school children
A glacier of fridges
A hover of hawks
An inquisition of judges
A Jonah of shipwrecks
A knuckle of robbers
A lottery of dice
A misery of bullets
A number of mathematicians
An outrage of stars
A prayer of nuns
A quake of cowards
A roundabout of arguments
A swelter of duvets
A tangle of tricksters
An upset of horoscopes
A vein of goldfinch
A wonder of stars
An xray of soothsayers
A zeal of enthusiasts*