

## Metaphor

Metaphor is an implied comparison identifying the two things compared with each other.

*Note:* A metaphor is a different grammatical construct from the simile. The simile deliberately and obviously says to the listener, “I am comparing X to Y, and telling you that they are alike” (“crazy like a fox”; “Life is a cabaret”). A metaphor is not a simile with the “like” or “as” missing. A metaphor uses imagery or language from one idea and inserts it into the other idea...from which the listener must infer the comparison.

Examples:

The ship plows the seas  
A volley of oaths  
a marble brow  
sifting the evidence  
the long arm of the law  
time flies  
she is my rock  
I am the light

### Metaphor v. simile

Simile is explicit; metaphor is implied.

Simile states the comparison; metaphor assumes a similarity between the two things being compared.

Metaphor creates a new entity which has characteristics of both objects being compared.

Examples:

Simile: a brow as smooth/white/stony as a piece of marble

Metaphor: a marble brow

Simile: oaths flung like a volley of arrows

Metaphor: a volley of oaths

Simile: My father is as steady as a ship

Metaphor: My father navigates this family through the tempests of our lives

## Examples of Metaphors in Lyrics

### By the Light of the Silvery Moon

*(Edward Madden)*

Place park, scene dark,  
Silv’ry moon is shining through the trees.  
Cast two. me, you,  
Sound of kisses floating on the breeze.  
Act one begun  
Dialogue, “Where would you like to spoon?”  
My cue with you,  
Underneath the silv’ry moon.

By the light  
Of the silvery moon,  
I want to spoon,  
To my honey I’ll croon  
Love’s tune  
Honeymoon.  
Keep a-shining in June.  
Your silv’ry beams  
Will bring love’s dreams,  
We’ll be cuddling soon,  
By the silvery moon.

Act two, scene new,  
Roses blooming all around the place.  
Cast three, you, me,  
Preacher with a solemn-looking face.  
Choir sings, bell rings.  
Preacher: “You are wed forevermore!”  
Act two, all through,  
Ev’ry night the same encore.

### Stormy Weather

*(Ted Kochler)*

Don’t know why  
There’s no sun up in the sky,  
Stormy weather,  
Since my man and I ain’t together,  
Keeps rainin’ all the time.  
Life is bare,  
Gloom and mis’ry everywhere,  
Stormy weather,

Just can't get my poor self together.  
I'm weary all the time,  
The time,  
So weary all the time.  
When he went away  
The blues walked in and met me.  
If he stays away  
Old rockin' chair will get me.  
All I do is pray  
The Lord above will let me  
Walk in the sun once more.  
Can't go on,  
Ev'rything I had is gone,  
Stormy weather,  
Since my man and I ain't together.  
Keeps rainin' all the time,  
Keeps rainin' all the time.  
I walk around, heavy-hearted and sad.  
Night comes around and I'm still feelin' bad.  
Rain pourin' down, blindin' ev'ry hope I had.  
This pitterin' patterin'  
Beatin' an' splatterin'  
Drives me mad.  
Love, love, love, love,  
This misery is just too much for me.  
Can't go on.  
Ev'rything I had is gone,  
Stormy weather,  
Since my man and I ain't together,  
Keeps rainin' all the time,  
Keeps rainin' all the time.

Heat Wave  
(Irving Berlin)

We're having a heat wave,  
A tropical heat wave.  
The temperature's rising --  
It isn't surprising --  
She certainly can  
Can-can.  
She started the heat wave  
By letting her seat wave,  
And in such a way that  
The customers say that  
She certainly can  
Can-can.  
Gee!  
Her anatomy

Made the mercury  
Jump to ninety-three.  
Yes sir!  
We're having a heat wave,  
A tropical heat wave.  
The way that she moves that  
Thermometer proves that  
She certainly can  
Can-can.

Turn on the Heat  
(Buddy DeSylva)

Turn on the heat!  
Start in to strut!  
Wiggle and wobble  
And warm up the hut!  
Oh! Oh! It's thirty below!  
Turn on the heat,  
Fifty degrees,  
Get hot for Papa  
Or Papa will freeze!  
Oh! Oh! Start melting the snow!  
If you are good,  
My little radiator,  
It's understood  
You'll get a gumdrop later!  
Turn on the heat!  
Pour in the oil!  
Start in to bubble  
And come to a boil.  
You put the burn on for Papa  
And turn on the heat!

Summer Me, Winter Me  
(Alan and Marilyn Bergman)

Summer me, Winter me  
And with your kisses morning me,  
Evening me,  
And as the world slips far away, star away,  
Forever me with love!  
Wonder me, wander me, then by a fire  
Pleasure me, peaceful me,  
And in the silence quietly whisper me,  
Forever me with love!  
And every day I'll gentle you, tender you,  
And oh, the way I'll velvet you, clover you,

I'll wrap you up and ribbon you,  
Rainbow you,  
And shower you with shine!  
Suddenly, magic'ly,  
We found each other,  
There we were, here we are.  
I plan to let you happy me,  
Summer me, Winter me,  
Always be mine!

### Overdoing It

A little metaphor goes a long way, particularly when a literal image is involved. If you extend the metaphor too far, or use it too often, you run the risk of being comic, intentionally or otherwise.

#### You're the Foam on My Latte (S. Guy, *The Big Deal*)

You're the foam on my latte  
You're my chocolate sprinkle top.  
I hope to you that I'm not a....  
Drip in my own coffee shop?

You're the cap o' my 'ccino.  
You're my daily double cup.  
All I hope is I'll be no  
Mug that you simply take up.

You're my finest brand espresso,  
You're the flavor of my week.  
So listen while I confess  
Oh! Come hear the java jive,  
Hear it speak!

*Hey, Cora, why don't we get ourselves café au laid?  
Let's have ourselves a little brew ha ha. Listen to me  
now, I'm talkin' Sweet and Low.*

You're my hot mocha grande  
To you I'm not just another Joe  
Soon we'll both be beyond a  
"Thanks!  
We will have ours to go."

#### My Smorgasbord of Love (Phil Olsen, *Don't Hug Me*)

You're my hard dish delight  
My buffet from above  
My snak bar desire  
My smorgasbord of love  
And I can't get enough of your tater tot eyes  
Your cauliflower ears  
Your lips taste like moon pies.  
You're my artichoke heart  
My chocolate cream dove  
My you-peel-'em shrimp  
My smorgasbord of love.

And when I'm close to you, my pickle-herring lady  
With your has brown nose  
And your kisses like gravy  
I ask myself how lucky can I be?

You're my hamhock surprise  
My loos meat glove  
My pork lean treasure  
My smorgasbord of love.

And I can't get enough of your casserole hair  
Your meatball cheeks  
Your cantaloupes down there.  
You're my beef tip  
My Sloppy Joe dream  
My corn dog passion  
My bowl of vanilla ice cream (with sprinkles).

And if you leave me,  
This much I know is true  
My love will taste like a bowling shoe  
For I will starve myself  
Just to be with you.  
My love, my bread of life  
My smorgasbord of love.

#### The Word of Your Body (Steven Slater, *Spring Awakening*)

O, I'm gonna be wounded,  
O, I'm gonna be your wound.  
O, I'm gonna bruise you.  
O, you're gonna be my bruise.

## Mixed Metaphors

Within a single lyric, utilize a consistent metaphor scheme. When your images are *literal* (as opposed to metaphoric), try to draw the images in a single lyric from the same realm of images. For example, if you are using images having to do with the sky and clouds, don't then also speak of things which are indoors (such as fireplaces or refrigerators). Here are some examples of mixed metaphors, followed by examples of consistent imagery.

### I've Got Your Number

(Carolyn Leigh)

I've got your number,  
 I know you inside out.  
 You ain't no Eagle Scout,  
 You're all at sea!  
 Oh yes, you'll brag a lot,  
 Wave your own flag a lot,  
 But you're unsure a lot,  
 You're a lot like me.  
 Oh, I've got your number  
 And what you're looking for.  
 And what you're looking for  
 Just suits me fine!  
 We'll break the rules a lot,  
 We'll be damn' fools a lot,  
 But then why should we not  
 How could we not  
 Combine  
 When I've got your number  
 And I've got the glow you've got,  
 I've got your number  
 And, baby,  
 You know you've got mine!

### Hey, Look Me Over

(Carolyn Leigh)

Hey, look me over,  
 Lend me an ear,  
 Fresh out of clover,

Mortgaged up to here.  
 But don't pass the plate, folks,  
 Don't pass the cup;  
 I figure whenever you're down and out,  
 The only way is up.  
 And I'll be like a rosebud,  
 High on the vine;  
 Don't thumb your nose, bud,  
 Take a tip from mine.  
 I'm a little short of elbow room,  
 But let me get me some,  
 And look out, world, here I come.

### The Best is Yet to Come

(Carolyn Leigh)

Out of the tree of life  
 I just picked me a plum.  
 You came along and ev-  
 'Rything's startin' to hum.  
 Still, it's a real good bet  
 The best is yet to come.  
 The best is yet to come  
 And, babe, won't it be fine?  
 You think you've seen the sun,  
 But you ain't seen it shine.  
 Wait till the warm-up's underway,  
 Wait till our lips have met,  
 Wait till you see that sunshine day,  
 You ain't seen nothin' yet!  
 The best is yet to come  
 And, babe, won't it be fine?  
 The best is yet to come,  
 Come the day you're mine.

I'm gonna teach you to fly,  
 We've only tasted the wind.  
 We're gonna drain the cup dry,  
 Wait till your charms are ripe  
 For these arms to surround.  
 You think you've flown before,  
 But you ain't left the ground.

The Rules of the Road  
(Carolyn Leigh)

So these are the ropes,  
The tricks of the trade,  
The rules of the road.  
You're one of the dopes  
For whom they were made,  
The rules of the road.  
You follow that kiss  
And recklessly miss  
A bend of the road.  
Then suddenly this:  
The end of the road.

So love is a hoax.  
A glittering string  
Of little white lies.  
But these are the jokes,  
And what if they bring  
The tears to your eyes?  
Well, love often shows  
A funny return,  
The brighter it glows,  
The longer you burn,

And Lord only knows  
Love has little concern  
For the fools of the road!  
But that's how it goes,  
You live and you learn  
The rules of the road!

You Fascinate Me So  
(Carolyn Leigh)

I have a feeling that beneath the little halo on your  
head  
There lies a thought or two the devil might be  
int'rested to know.  
You're like the finish of a novel that I'll fin'ly have to  
take to bed,  
You fascinate me so!  
I feel like Christopher Columbus when I'm near  
enough to contemplate  
The sweet geography descending from your eyebrow  
to your toe.  
The possibilities are more than I can possibly  
enumerate,  
That's why you fascinate me so.  
So sermonize and preach to me.

Make your sanctimonious little speech to me,  
But oh, my darling, you'll forgive my inability to  
concentrate.  
I think I'm dealing with a powder keg that's just about  
to blow.  
Will the end result deflate me, or will you annihilate  
me?  
You fascinate me so!  
You aggravate me, you irritate me,  
You fascinate me so!

### Consistency of Imagery in Lyrics

On the Good Ship Lollipop  
(Sidney Clare)

On the good ship Lollipop  
It's a sweet trip to a candy shop  
Where bon-bons play  
On the sunny beach of Peppermint Bay.  
Lemonade stands ev'rywhere,  
Crackerjack bands fill the air,  
And there you are  
Happy landing on a chocolate bar.  
See the sugar bowl do a Tootsie Roll  
With the big bad Devil's food cake.  
If you eat too much, ooh, ooh,  
You'll awake with a tummy ache.  
On the good ship Lollipop  
It's a night trip, into bed you hop  
With this command:  
"All aboard for Candy Land."

from Pretty Little Picture  
(Stephen Sondheim, *Forum*)

Feel the roll of the playful waves!  
See the sails as they swell!  
Hear the whips on the galley slaves!  
Pretty little picture?  
Well,  
Let it carry your cares away,  
Out of sight, out of mind.  
Past the buoy, and through the bay,  
Soon there's nothing but sea and spray.  
Night descends and the moon's aglow,  
Your arms entwined,  
You steal below,  
And far behind  
At the edge of day,  
The bong of the bell of the buoy in the bay,  
And the boat and the boy and the bride are away!

All I Need is the Girl  
(Stephen Sondheim)

Once my clothes were shabby.  
Tailors called me "cabbie."  
So I took a vow.  
Said, "This bum'll  
Be Beau Brummell."  
Now I'm smooth and snappy.  
Now my tailor's happy.  
I'm the cat's meow!  
My wardrobe is a wow!  
Paris silk,  
Harris tweed.  
There's only one thing I need:  
Got my tweed pressed,  
Got my best vest,  
All I need now is the girl!  
Got my striped tie,  
Got my hopes high,  
Got the time and the place and I got rhythm,  
No all I need's the girl to go with 'em.  
If she'll  
Just appear, we'll  
Take this big town for a whirl.  
And if she'll say, "My darling, I'm yours,"  
I'll throw away my striped tie  
And my best pressed tweed.  
All I really need  
Is the girl!

The Ballad of The Shape of Things  
(Sheldon Harnick)

Completely round is the perfect pearl  
The oyster manufactures.  
Completely round is the steering wheel  
That leads to compound fractures.  
Completely round is the golden fruit  
That hangs in the orange tree.  
Yes, the circle shape is quite renounced,  
And sad to say, it can be found  
In the dirty low-down runaround  
My true love gave to me,  
Yes, my true love gave to me.

Completely square is the velvet box  
He said my ring would be in.  
Completely square is the envelope  
He wrote farewell to me in.  
Completely square is the handkerchief  
I flourish constantly,  
As it dries my eyes of the tears I've shed,  
And blows my nose 'til it turns bright red,  
For a perfect square is my true love's head.  
He will not marry me,  
No he will not marry me.

Rectangular is the hotel door  
My true love tried to sneak through.  
Rectangular is the transom  
Over which I had to peek through.  
Rectangular is the hotel room  
I entered angrily.  
Now, rectangular is the wooden box  
Where lies my love 'neath the grazing flocks.  
They said he died of the chicken pox.  
In part I must agree:  
One chick too many had he.

Triangular is the piece of pie  
I eat to ease my sorrow.  
Triangular is the hatchet blade  
I plan to hide tomorrow.  
Triangular the relationship  
That now has ceased to be,  
And the self-same shape is a garment thin,  
That fastens on with a safety pin  
to a prize I had no wish to win;  
It's a lasting memory  
That my true love gave to me.

Before the Parade Passes By  
(Jerry Herman)

Before the parade passes by,  
I'm gonna go and taste Saturday's high life;  
Before the parade passes by,  
I'm gonna get some life back into my life.  
I'm ready to move out in front.  
I've had enough of just passing by life;  
With the rest of them,  
With the best of them,  
I can hold my head up high,  
For I've got a goal again,  
I've got a drive again,  
I'm gonna feel my heart comin' alive again,  
Before the parade passes by.  
Look at the crowd up ahead,  
Listen and hear that brass harmony growing:  
Look at that crowd up ahead,  
Pardon me if my old spirit is showing.  
All of those lights over there  
Seem to be telling me where I'm going:  
When the whistles blow  
And the cymbals crash  
And the sparklers light the sky,  
I'm gonna raise the roof,  
I'm gonna carry on.  
Gimme an old trombone, gimme an old baton,  
Before the parade passes by.

My Ship  
(Ira Gershwin)

My ship has sails that are made of silk.  
My decks are trimmed with gold.  
And of jam and spice  
There's a paradise  
In the hold.  
My ship's aglow with a million pearls,  
And rubies fill each bin.  
The sun sits high  
In a sapphire sky  
Why my ship comes in.  
I can wait the years  
Till it appears.  
One fine day one Spring.  
But the pearls and such,  
They won't mean much  
If there's missing just one thing:  
I do not care if that day arrives,

That dream need never be  
If the ship I sing  
Doesn't also bring  
My own true love to me.  
If the ship I sing  
Doesn't also bring  
My own true love to me.

Winner Takes All  
(Holly Near)

Well I vowed I'd never be  
The kind of wife with apron strings  
That kept you home and out of a weeknight game  
But you played a cheatin hand  
Thinkin I'd stand by my man  
Well a card game and a woman just ain't the same

So lay your heart on the table  
All the love that you can raise  
You can bet I'm up to here with your underhanded  
ways  
But I see that you've been bluffin  
And it's my turn to call  
Oh freedom's my fortune,  
You lose.  
Winner takes all

You said that I'm your security  
That I gave you the strength to be  
The kind of man that a woman like me could hold  
But now I'm startin to find  
Honey you've been laggin behind  
The time has come for me to either call or fold

Oh lay your heart on the table  
All the love that you can raise  
You can bet I'm up to here with your underhanded  
ways  
But I see that you've been bluffin  
And it's my turn to call  
Oh freedom's my fortune,  
You lose. This winner takes all.