

Metaphors of feeling

Introduction

Metaphor is very common in English and other languages. People often think of it as being a typical feature of poetry and literature. But, in fact, many ordinary familiar words and phrases have metaphorical meanings, although we do not usually realize this when we use them.

(Introduction taken from page LA4 of the Second Edition of the *Macmillan English Dictionary*.)

metaphor /'metəfə(r), 'metəfɔ:(r)/ noun ★

1 [C] LITERATURE a word or phrase that means one thing and is used for referring to another thing in order to emphasize their similar qualities: *He uses the metaphor of the family to describe the role of the state.* **1a.** [U] the use of metaphors in literature

2 [C] something that is intended to represent another situation or idea: **+for** *It is easy to see the crumbling building as a metaphor for the society of the time.*

→ SIMILE

▶ Activity 1

Read the sentences below. Which feeling does each sentence refer to? Tick the correct box.

	angry	happy	sad	confused
a He has a fiery temper.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b He's in the depths of despair.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c I don't know if I'm coming or going.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d I feel like a fish out of water.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
e I feel really down about it all.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
f I was over the moon when they told me.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
g It made my blood boil.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
h My heart sank when I saw him.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
i My spirits rose when I got her letter.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
j She's on top of the world.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
k They were having a blazing row.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
l You've got it all back to front.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

▶ Activity 2

Look at the explanations of the four metaphors below. Can you complete the explanations for b, c and d?

a Being angry is like being

hot or on fire.

b Feeling happy and hopeful is like being

c Feeling sad and unhappy is like being

d Being confused is like being

For discussion

- Do you have any similar metaphors in your own language?
- Can you think of any other emotions that use metaphor in this way, either in your own language or in English?