

# Lesson Skill: Figurative language — identifying onomatopoeia

---

**Strand** Reading — Vocabulary

**SOL** 5.4

## Materials

- Copies of Notes on Onomatopoeia worksheet (attached)
- Copies of the poems “Onomatopoeia” and “Weather” by Eve Merriam (Internet search)

## Lesson

1. Ask each student to pick any object in the room and describe it to a partner without identifying it. The partner must guess what it is from the description. After students have finished, lead a class discussion, asking questions such as: “Was it easy or challenging to guess the object? What made it challenging? What made it easy?”
2. Explain that the use of highly descriptive language makes it possible for the reader to picture objects vividly in his/her mind. Explain that authors, and especially poets, often use onomatopoeia to paint a clear picture of something in the reader’s mind. Define *onomatopoeia* as “the use of a word whose sound suggests its meaning,” and ask students to write the definition on their Notes on Onomatopoeia worksheet. Lead students in creating a list of onomatopoeic words that they already know (e.g., *buzz*, *boom*, *hiss*), and have them write these words on the worksheet.
3. Display the poems such as “Onomatopoeia” and “Weather” by Eve Merriam. Have one or two students read each poem aloud, or have small groups of students read them aloud in unison. You may want to conclude the readings with your own reading to demonstrate good reading techniques (pacing, rhythm, enunciation, emphasis, melody). Have students identify the onomatopoeic words in each poem. Underline them in the displayed text, and have students add them to their list of words on the worksheet.
4. Ask students to sketch a picture that each poem creates in their mind, thinking especially about the onomatopoeic words as they draw
5. Lead a class discussion about how using onomatopoeia helps create images in the reader’s mind. Ask students how using onomatopoeia compares to describing objects with more literal language. Ask students to compare the way they described the object at the beginning of the lesson to the way of describing something by using onomatopoeia. Ask: “Which way leads to a more precise or technically exact picture in the reader’s mind? Which way leads to a more vivid, fascinating picture in the reader’s mind? Why would a writer choose to use onomatopoeia?” Have students answer questions four and five on the worksheet.

## Strategies for Differentiation

- Use graphic novels, comic strips, and video clips to provide examples of onomatopoeia.
- Have students interpret onomatopoeia in graphic novels, and comic strips.

- Sound dictation cards—Hold up enlarged cards with onomatopoeia examples; have students sound out the words.

# Notes on Onomatopoeia

Answer the following questions to better understand onomatopoeia and how writers use it.

1. What is the definition of *onomatopoeia*?

---

2. What are some examples of onomatopoeic words?

---

---

---

---

---

4. How do the onomatopoeic words help create a picture in your mind as you read the poem?

---

5. How can this be a useful writing technique?

---

6. Write three to five sentences using onomatopoeia to describe a common object.

---

---

---

---

---