VOCABULARY DEVELOPMENT

VERBAL ANALOGIES

At its most basic, an analogy is a comparison of two things to show their similarities. Sometimes the things being compared are quite similar, but other times they could be very different. Nevertheless, an analogy explains one thing in terms of another to highlight the ways in which they are alike.

Examples of Analogies in Speech and Writing

Many analogies are so useful that they are part of everyday speech. These are often known as figures of speech or idioms. Each analogy below makes a comparison between two things:

• Finding a good man is like finding a needle in a haystack: As Dusty Springfield knows, finding a small needle in a pile of hay takes a long time, so the task at hand is likely to be hard and tedious.

• That's as useful as rearranging deck chairs on the Titanic: It looks like you're doing something helpful but really it will make no difference in the end.

• Explaining a joke is like dissecting a frog. You understand it better but the frog dies in the process: E.B White's famous analogy shows that sometimes it's better not to know too much.

• That movie was a roller coaster ride of emotions: While you're not flying through the air, the twists, turns and surprises of a movie plot can leave you feeling like you've been through quite an experience.

• Life is like a box of chocolates – you never know what you're gonna get: An often-used analogy from Forrest Gump shows that life has many choices and surprises, just like a box of chocolates.

Writers use many forms of analogies in their work to make a comparison that is memorable and helps the reader better understand their point. Consider these examples of analogies from famous writers and public figures:

Examples of Word Analogies

You will find word analogies, or verbal analogies, used in standardized tests and sometimes in job interviews where you must show the relationship between two objects or concepts using logic and reasoning. These analogies are set up in a standard format. For example:

tree: leaf :: flower : petal This analogy is read aloud as:

Tree is to leaf as flower is to petal.

This analogy highlights the relationship between the whole (a tree and a flower) and its parts (a leaf and a petal). On tests of logic, one portion of the analogy is left blank and students are left to choose an answer that makes sense to complete the comparison. For example:

dog : puppy :: cat :

To solve the analogy, you must first determine the relationship between dog and puppy. Once you realize that a puppy is a baby dog, you can find the corresponding relationship for a cat. A baby cat is a kitten, so the completed analogy is

Dog : puppy :: cat : kitten

Though there is no limit to the possibilities when it comes to word analogies, here are some examples to familiarize yourself with the concept:

- hammer : nail :: comb : hair

- white : black :: up : down

- mansion: shack :: yacht : dinghy

- short : light :: long : heavy

- bees : hive :: bears : den

- speak : sing :: walk : dance

- chef : food :: sculptor : stone

- like : love :: dislike : hate