

Intermediate Reading Course. Section 3: Interpreting the Message

Practice 1. Identify literal and figurative language

Instructions. [Based on what you learned in this lesson](#), determine whether the word or phrase in each of the sentences below uses **literal** or **figurative** language. Some words or phrases could be used figuratively or literally; choose the interpretation that makes more sense.

Example:

How is “sick” used in the sentence below?

Let’s just leave. I’m **sick** of waiting for John.

Answer: Figurative language.

1. How is “the clouds” used in the sentence below?

The clouds turned dark quickly, but the storm never came.

Answer:

2. How is “a river” used in the sentence below?

A river of people moved through the streets celebrating the new year.

Answer:

3. How is “speak louder” used in the sentence below?

Actions **speak louder** than words.

Answer:



4. How is “speak louder” used in the sentence below?

Please **speak louder** so the people in the back of the room can hear you.

Answer:

5. How is “forever” used in the sentence below?

Where have you been? I’ve been waiting here **forever**.

Answer:

6. How is “your mind” used in the sentence below?

As you get older, it is important to keep **your mind** active.

Answer:

7. How is “cloud” used in the sentence below?

There was a **cloud** of uncertainty around how to interpret the results of the experiment because the researchers had never seen anything like them.

Answer:

8. How is “kill” used in the sentence below?

I’m so thirsty I could **kill** for a glass of water right now.

Answer:



9. How is “kill” used in the sentence below?

A mother could **kill** to protect her child.

Answer:

10. How is “millions of years” used in the sentence below?

Some geologic processes can take **millions of years** to occur.

Answer:



Answer Key

1. Literal language
2. Figurative language
3. Figurative language
4. Literal language
5. Figurative language
6. Literal language
7. Figurative language
8. Figurative language (*Though this could be interpreted literally—which would make the speaker a very scary person—, it is very likely being used figuratively.*)
9. Literal language (*This could be interpreted figuratively, too; however, it appears to be literal. The context would resolve the ambiguity.*)
10. Literal language

