

Vocabulary

Grade 3 Unit 1: Classic Tales: The Wind in the Willows



Idioms & Figurative Language

Introduction: Idioms & Figurative Language



An **idiom** is a common expression or phrase that has its own meaning, which is different from the literal meaning of the words in the phrase.

Idioms often use **figurative language**.

To understand the meaning of figurative language, we have to recognize the difference between the *literal* meanings of the words in the phrase and their *figurative* meanings.

The literal meaning of a word is its dictionary definition.

The figurative meaning is implied. It contains ideas, emotions, or connections that differ from the dictionary definition.

Let's look at this example from our unit on classic tales:

Brown, snaky tree roots gleamed below
the surface of the quiet water.

Is the phrase **Brown, snaky tree roots** literal or figurative?
What two things is the author comparing to help us
understand?

The author is comparing **tree roots** to a **snake** to help us understand what the tree roots look like.

By using this figurative language we can imagine:

The tree roots are very long and windy.

Let's Try It Together!



Let's look at this example from the unit:

How black was his despair when he
felt himself sinking again!

Do you think the phrase **How black was his despair** is literal or figurative?

Stay seated if you think **How black was his despair** is a literal phrase.

Stand up if you think **How black was his despair** is a figurative phrase.

Turn to a partner and discuss what two things the author is comparing in this phrase and how this helps us understand how Mole feels when he falls in the river.

How black was his despair

The author is comparing **despair** to the color **black** to help us understand how Mole feels when he falls in the river.

By using this figurative language we can imagine:

Mole had no hope.

Now you try one with a partner. Look at this idiom from the text:

Mole had plenty of spare **time on his hands**.

Do you think the phrase **time on his hands** is literal or figurative? Is Mole actually holding time?

Stand up if you think **time on his hands** is a literal phrase.

Stay seated if you think **time on his hands** is a figurative phrase.

Turn to a partner and discuss what you think the author means by the phrase:

Mole had plenty of spare time on his hands.

Did you remember the steps?

1. Read the phrase.

Mole had plenty of spare **time on his hands**.

2. Decide if the statement is literal or figurative.

figurative

3. Determine the meaning of the idiom.

Mole had a lot of free, or unscheduled, time to do things.

Now try one by yourself!



Look at this example from the text:

The holes in various tree trunks gaped like hideous mouths.

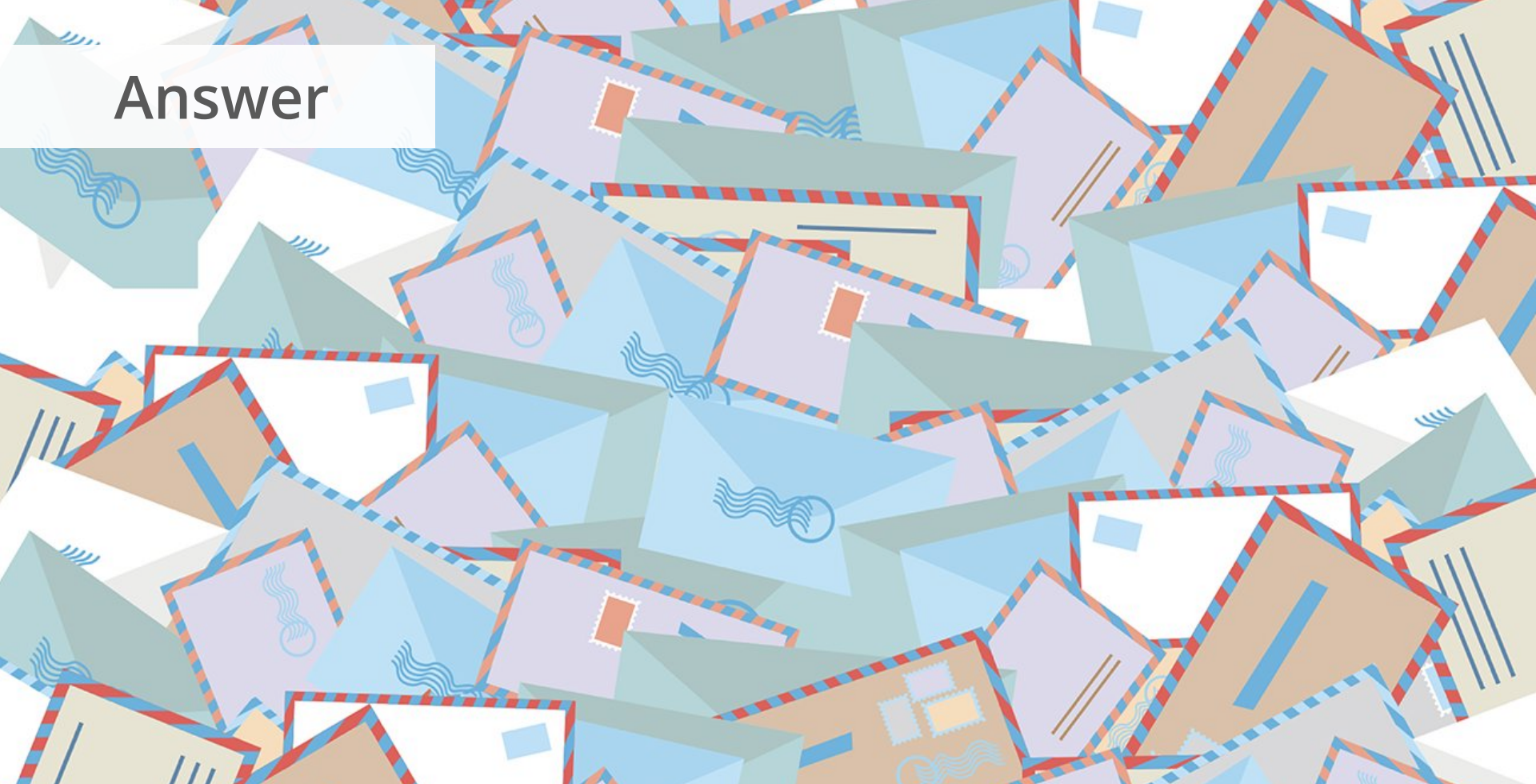
Fill in the blanks:

The author is comparing ____ to ____.

Then, finish this sentence:

By using this figurative language
I can imagine . . .

Answer



1. The author is comparing **the holes in the trees to open mouths.**
2. By using this figurative language I can imagine that the holes in the trees were **big and wide.**