

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Ms. Kamrass

English 10 – Poetry Unit

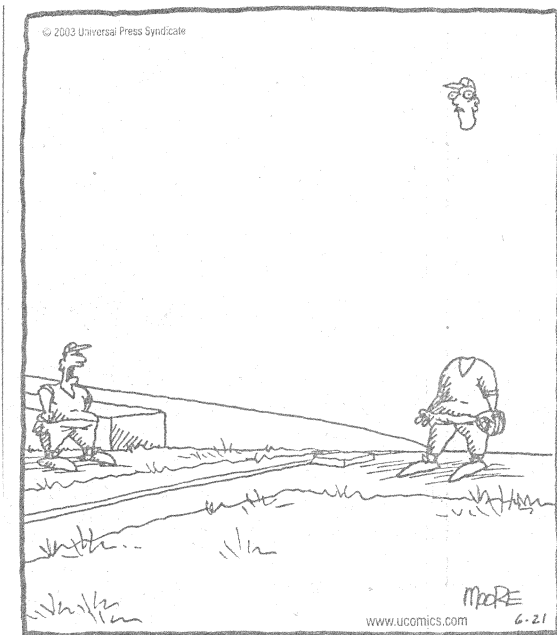
Literal vs. Figurative

Most often, when people speak, they want their listeners to take their meanings literally. However, in life and literature, people often rely on figurative words and phrases to convey their meanings. Below are several examples of comic strips and a poem to help you clarify what is literal and what is figurative.

**Activity #1:** Circle the literal phrase and mark it “literal.” Do the same for the figurative phrase.



**Activity #2:** The comic below relies on a figurative phrase and illustration for its punch line. Write the literal meaning of phrase nearby.



“Wilson! Get your head back in the game!”

**Activity #3:** Write another figurative phrase that you’ve heard and/or used casually. Write what it literally means as well.

**Directions:** Read and mark what is literal and figurative. If you know the specific term for the figurative language, write it. Finally, as with most texts, the last part is the most important—you cannot relay theme unless you grasp it, and understanding the figurative language in these lines is essential.

### **Ex-Basketball Player**

By John Updike

Pearl Avenue runs past the high-school lot,  
Bends with the trolley tracks, and stops, cut off  
Before it has a chance to go two blocks,  
At Colonel McComsky Plaza. Berth's Garage  
Is on the corner facing west, and there, (5)  
Most days, you'll find Flick Webb, who helps Berth out.

Flick stands tall among the idiot pumps—  
Five on a side, the old bubble-head style,  
Their rubber elbows hanging loose and low.  
One's nostrils are two S's, and his eyes (10)  
An E and O. And one is squat, without  
A head at all—more of a football type.

Once Flick played for the high-school team, the Wizards.  
He was good: in fact, the best. In '46  
He bucketed three hundred ninety points, (15)  
A county record still. The ball loved Flick.  
I saw him rack up thirty-eight or forty  
In one home game. His hands were like wild birds.

He never learned a trade, he just sells gas,  
Checks oil, and changes flats. Once in a while, (20)  
As a gag, he dribbles an inner tube,  
But most of us remember anyway.  
His hands are fine and nervous on the lug wrench.  
It makes no difference to the lug wrench, though.

Off work, he hangs around Mae's Luncheonette. (25)  
Grease-gray and kind of coiled, he plays pinball,  
Smokes those thin cigars, nurses lemon phosphates.  
Flick seldom says a word to Mae, just nods  
Beyond her face toward bright applauding tiers  
Of Necco Wafers, Nibs, and Juju Beads. (30)

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