Have you ever explained something by saying, “It’s just like . . .”? If so, you were making a comparison, or **analogy**, to help someone understand an unfamiliar thing or idea. Similarly, have you ever gone to a new or odd place and heard someone say, “We’re not in Kansas anymore”? That was an **allusion**—a reference to an event or character in a literary work. In this case, the words are borrowed from Dorothy in *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*.

Allusions and analogies are just two examples of how writers carefully choose words to express their ideas. An author’s word choice can create vivid mental images that directly affect your understanding of a text’s meaning.

**Look at one student’s response to a history assignment. What does the student’s word choice, including the use of analogy and allusion, tell you about the pioneers’ journey?**

> Imagine yourself as an American pioneer, leaving behind everything you know. You set out in a horse-drawn wagon, traveling westward across miles of treeless land. The wagons in front of you trudge forward in a straight line, like exhausted hikers climbing an endless mountain path. Though you are not alone, your wagon seems to be no more than a dot on the plains, as small and lone as Odysseus’s ship on the vast, dark sea.

Underline the allusion and the analogy in the text above. Then read the chart below to see how word choice affects the text’s meaning.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Word Choice</th>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Impact on Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“like exhausted hikers climbing an endless mountain path”</td>
<td>analogy</td>
<td>helps readers visualize the line of wagons and connects to the idea of going on a long, slow journey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Odysseus’s ship on the vast, dark sea”</td>
<td>allusion</td>
<td>compares the pioneers’ journey to Odysseus’s 10-year journey homeward in the ancient Greek epic, <em>The Odyssey</em>; elevates it to “epic” proportions</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Think about how this text would have been different if the author had just written that the wagons were moving slowly or that the journey was long and lonely. How would the change in word choice affect your mental image of the paragraph? When authors add analogies and allusions to a text, they encourage readers to make connections to broader or more familiar ideas. Making these connections gives the text new, richer layers of meaning.
Read the first two paragraphs of a biography of Amelia Earhart.

Amelia Earhart: First in Flight  
by Adele Lin

As a young girl, Amelia Earhart kept a scrapbook of articles about women known for great accomplishments in fields otherwise dominated by men, such as film directing, law, and mechanical engineering. Was this what propelled her to excel later, or was it simply an early sign that she was born to excel? Though Earhart’s fascination with air navigation did not begin until she was in her early twenties, she pursued her course as ardently as Olympic athletes pursue their goals.

Her list of “firsts” is long and impressive. In 1928, she was the first woman to fly across the Atlantic, though she did not pilot that flight. Then, in 1932, she became the first woman to fly solo across the Atlantic. As a result, she was the first woman to receive a Distinguished Flying Cross—a medal of honor—from Congress. Three years later, she became the first person to fly solo across the Pacific. Such firsts laid the foundation for her ultimate challenge—to fly around the world.

Explore how to answer this question: “Select one word and one phrase from this biography. What is the impact of both the word and the phrase on the biography’s meaning and tone?”

Smart authors choose their words and phrases carefully. They want such words and phrases to have specific effects on their readers—to get their readers to think and feel a certain way.

The chart below shows an analysis of the impact of the word excel on the text. Analyze the analogy in the second row by determining its impact on the text’s meaning and tone.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Word Choice</th>
<th>Impact on Meaning</th>
<th>Impact on Tone</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“excel”</td>
<td>leads readers to expect that Earhart did more than just achieve her goals; she went far beyond anyone’s expectations</td>
<td>excel has positive connotations; the author seems to admire Earhart</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“as ardently as Olympic athletes pursue their goals”</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

With a partner, discuss how the meaning or tone of the text would be different if the author had said that Earhart was obsessed with flying.
Continue reading about Amelia Earhart. Use the Close Reading and the Hint to help you answer the question.

(continued from page 104)

Earhart's first attempt at circling the globe not only failed, but failed disastrously. Yet three months later, in June 1937, she and her navigator risked a second attempt in a freshly rebuilt plane. The flight's events are well documented based on refueling stops and radio communications. But in the last leg of the trip, Earhart had to fly 2,500 miles over the Pacific and then locate and land on a tiny island to refuel. Clouds made accurate navigation difficult. Then, after radio contact ceased at 8:45 a.m. on July 2, information about the plane's whereabouts became mere guesswork. As in the story of Icarus, the mythical figure who plunged into the ocean when his wax wings melted, Earhart's greatest challenge became her final flight.

**Circle the correct answer.**

How does the allusion to Icarus support the author's tone?

A. It makes it clear that Earhart, like Icarus, fell to her death.
B. It emphasizes Earhart’s failure in spite of her ambition.
C. It stresses that the author views Earhart’s fate as a mystery.
D. It shows that the author sees Earhart as a kind of legend.

**Show Your Thinking**

Explain why your choice is the best explanation of how the Icarus allusion affects the text’s tone.

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

With a partner, discuss the author’s choice of words, such as *disastrously*. Compared to the first part of the passage, does this signal a change in or continuation of the author’s attitude toward Earhart?
Part 4: Guided Practice

Read the historical account. Use the Study Buddy and the Close Reading to guide your reading.

I know authors choose words carefully. I’m going to look for words that seem striking, especially words that create strong images or make comparisons. I’ll think carefully about the impact those words have on the account’s meaning and tone.

The Trans-Pacific Passage
Toward the Gold Fields  
by Carl L. Herndon

1. The rush of hopeful young men across the North American continent in 1849 is a well-documented phenomenon in American history. Pursuing their dreams of discovering gold, these so-called Forty-Niners charged into the gold fields of California, ballooning the population in unprecedented ways. The pre-gold-rush population of California—still just a territory—was 14,000. Historians generally agree that two years later, the population had reached 100,000. Just two years after that, it had more than doubled again. Each man no doubt hoped, or erroneously assumed, that he would have the Midas touch, and that everything he laid a finger on would turn to gold.

2. It wasn’t just young Americans who participated in this flood of prospectors. Through a thriving trade relationship with the United States, the Chinese heard news of the gold discovery. Economic difficulties in China and some political unrest made the possibility of travel and opportunity quite appealing. By 1851, 25,000 Chinese immigrants had paid passage to California.

3. Ocean travel in 1850 was a hardship for anyone, but for working-class passengers, the conditions on a crowded ship were almost unthinkable. One account, based on an American ship captain’s first-hand notes, relates that “The poor people were herded in the hold of the ship like a flock of sheep, with no sanitation. . . .” The passengers were allowed on deck in small groups, but only when the weather was fair. Otherwise, they spent much of the voyage penned in the utter darkness of the hold. We can only guess at the mortality rate of these Chinese immigrants who, like their American counterparts, were traveling thousands of miles, lured by the promise of gold.

Circle the allusion that the author makes in paragraph 1. What does this text reference help you understand about the men who traveled to California?

Draw a box around the analogy in paragraph 3. What two things are being compared?

1 Midas is a character in a Greek myth who is granted the “golden touch.” Whatever he touches turns to gold, including food.
Use the Hints on this page to help you answer the questions.

1. Reread the second sentence in paragraph 1. What effect do the word choices have on the meaning and tone of this paragraph?
   - A. The phrase *charged into* has negative connotations and suggests that the Forty-Niners were reckless and angry.
   - B. The terms *charged* and *ballooning* convey the idea of sudden and dramatic movement or growth.
   - C. The use of *ballooning* gives the idea that the growth was somehow fragile and prone to “break” suddenly or easily.
   - D. The word *unprecedented* conveys the author’s attitude that this event is not well understood.

2. What impact does the allusion to Midas have on the meaning and tone of paragraph 1?
   - A. The allusion implies that the author believes the men foolishly pinned their hopes on made-up stories.
   - B. The allusion indicates that the men were unprepared for the hard work and brute labor involved in finding gold.
   - C. The allusion makes it clear that each man was guaranteed to end up richer and more profitable than he ever dreamed he would be.
   - D. The allusion gives the paragraph a bittersweet feeling. The men hoped to become rich, but tragedy was a possibility as well.

3. Examine the analogy in paragraph three. Explain how the analogy helps you understand the conditions people traveled in, as well as how it supports the author’s tone. Use at least two details in your response.

   ________________________________
   ________________________________
   ________________________________
   ________________________________
   ________________________________
   ________________________________
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   ________________________________

Hints

Which words give readers a better understanding of this episode’s significance?

*Everything* Midas touched turned to gold. That could be both good and bad. Which answer best expresses this idea?

What image does the analogy create? What does it suggest about author’s attitude?
Read the historical account. Then answer the questions that follow.

**Dust Bowl Migrants**

*by Charles Ramirez*

1. The catastrophe that devastated the Great Plains in the 1930s and 1940s was the result of human error and natural disaster. Decades of wheat farming and cattle grazing had destroyed the prairie grasses, high winds stripped away the topsoil, and farming became difficult or impossible. During this period, nature seemed to run wild. The region suffered the effects of storms, droughts, and earthquakes. Ruinous dust storms swept the land, and homes and farms were all but buried in thick dirt.

2. As for the human side of the situation, Americans were struggling through the Great Depression. Many banks had failed, and millions of people found themselves enduring poverty. Farmers sometimes lost their land or had to move away to make a living. These people became migrants, loading up their cars or trucks and fleeing Oklahoma, Texas, and Arizona for California, having heard that there were crops to be picked and cash money to be made.

3. People had been relocating to the West long before the Dust Bowl winds raged like wild beasts. Oklahoma-born Florence Thompson migrated to California four years before the Depression began. As a young mother, she picked cotton to support her family. She and the children lived in a “Hoover camp,” a makeshift camp named after President Hoover. It was in Bakersfield, an area that was to become a magnet for people desperate to escape the arid prairies of Oklahoma and Arkansas. In a published interview, Thompson describes how all the children in the migrant camp flocked around when she made dinner for her own family.

4. Florence Thompson’s experiences in the 1920s were not so different from those of the migrants who journeyed to California in the 1930s. They came in droves, eager to find the good life that had escaped them back home. Mild in climate and good for growing, California appeared to be the Promised Land. Unfortunately, there was not enough work for all the migrants. Many of the smaller farms had been taken over by giant corporations. Those who found work were often disappointed: workers were offered flimsy shacks to rent, which they paid for out of their low wages. In addition, local people did not always welcome the newcomers, and sometimes violence erupted.

5. Dust Bowl survivors recount stories of hardship, frustration, and inner strength. Talmage Lee Collins came from rural Arkansas, where the drought had turned farmland into a desert. A young, able man during the Depression, Collins found it impossible to raise crops and support a family, although he spent years fighting winds and trying:

   “I’d plant the seed. You’d plant it down in the furrow where it’d be leveled over like you’d taken a bulldozer and bulldozed it... You’re fighting a losing battle. I think you take that attitude. I know I worked hard from the time we was married in 1931 until 1935. Then we sold the house and I’d traded around and gotten three or four cows and a few pigs. Everybody traded first one thing and then another. There wasn’t that much money to be had. In 1935 my wife and I chopped cotton for a guy after we got our own crop worked out. We chopped cotton and he didn’t have any money to pay us. He paid us in apples. He had an apple orchard there. We’d take the apples and we’d cook them up and can them.”
In 1935, Collins and his young family migrated to California in search of work. Collins found a job managing citrus groves, and his employer gave him the use of a house. It was not a way to get rich, but it was a way to survive the lean years of the Depression. Talmage Collins was one of the fortunate ones. It is impossible to document how many others abandoned their homes only to wander from place to place in search of employment. If all of the stories were strung together, they would form a chain as long as the highway on which the Dust Bowl migrants traveled.

The migrations that occurred during the Dust Bowl period forever impacted the population of California as thousands of migrants remained in the state, putting down roots and eventually building wooden houses to replace the flimsy tarpaper shacks. By the time World War II occurred, the economy of the United States was recovering, and the hard years of the Depression came to an end. Dust Bowl memories, however, are recorded in images and words so we will never forget this daunting period of history.

Reread this sentence from paragraph 3.

People had been relocating to the West long before the Dust Bowl winds raged like wild beasts.

What does the author’s word choice suggest about the Dust Bowl winds?

A The winds were uncontrollable.
B The winds were extremely loud.
C The winds were an exciting presence.
D The winds were a new phenomenon.

The word *arid*, which appears in paragraph 3, can mean “having too little rainfall to support the growing of crops.” Which sentence from the passage best helps the reader understand the meaning of the word *arid*?

A “The region suffered the effects of storms, droughts, and earthquakes.”
B “Ruinous dust storms swept the land, and homes and farms were all but buried in thick dirt.”
C “Farmers sometimes lost their land or had to move away to make a living.”
D “Talmage Lee Collins came from rural Arkansas, where the drought had turned farmland into a desert.”
3. Reread these sentences from paragraph 6.

   I’d plant the seed. You’d plant it down in the furrow where it’d be leveled over like you’d taken a bulldozer and bulldozed it. . . .”

   How does the analogy contribute to the meaning of the article?
   
   A. It describes the difficulty of leveling a field.
   B. It suggests the great force of the dust storms.
   C. It describes the problems of inexperienced farmers.
   D. It explains the careful preparation of the prairie soil.

4. Read this sentence from the passage.

   If all of the stories were strung together, they would form a chain as long as the highway on which the Dust Bowl migrants traveled.

   How does the figurative language in this sentence contribute to the meaning of the passage?
   
   A. It indicates that the migrants always remained connected to the places they had left.
   B. It explains how storytelling helped create a strong bond among traveling migrants.
   C. It describes the once steady stream of migrants seen traveling the nation’s highways.
   D. It suggests the great number of migrants who each survived a difficult time.

5. The author uses the phrase “the Promised Land” to describe how California appeared to Dust Bowl migrants. Explain what this phrase reveals about the problems and hopes of the migrants. Use at least one detail from the text to support your response.