

How does metaphor obscure or inform our understanding of suffering, pain, disease or illness?

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Metaphors are a fundamental mechanism through which we understand the world around us, especially in the face of complexity. The use of metaphor in the medical field is pervasive. According to *The Atlantic*, one [study](#) from 2010 “found that physicians use metaphors in almost two-thirds of their conversations with patients who have serious illnesses. Physicians who used more metaphors were seen as better communicators. Patients reported less trouble understanding them, and felt as though their doctor made sure they understood their conditions” (“[The Trouble with Medicine’s Metaphors](#)”).

But metaphor does more than help us understand; it shapes our perception. Consider the common use of militaristic language in medicine. Cancer is the *enemy*, an *invader* that doctor and patient must *battle*, *fight*, *overcome*, *destroy*, *annihilate* and/or *eradicate*. Does this adversarial language help patients and doctors? The outcomes are victory or defeat, should we call terminal patients and their doctors *losers*? Are they *defeated* by their disease? Are patients managing chronic conditions *POW’s*?

For this essay, you will focus on two **concrete** examples of metaphor: one each from two of the following: a topic section text, a source found in the CCNY library, or one that you have heard, read, or seen somewhere else. Describe them exactly. For each metaphor, define the two things being compared (metaphor is a comparison of two things). What properties are transferred from the first entity (usually the more concrete) to the second (usually the more abstract)? Then widen your scope, discuss how each metaphor shapes our understanding of pain, suffering, disease or illness

When composing a comparative essay, be aware of:

- **Grounds for comparison:** The rationale behind your choice. Why are you comparing the two things? In this case, the comparison would be whether the metaphor obscures or informs our understanding.
- **Thesis statement:** Thesis in a comparative essay depends on how the two things you've chosen to compare actually relate to one another. You must mention both metaphors and define their relationship in the thesis statement.

It’s always a good idea to consult writing centers for advice on composition. The best resource available to you is the CCNY Writing Center; however, there are a lot of great online resources as well. Check out the [Harvard College Writing Center](#) for general information. Here’s their [quick guide](#) to composing an effective comparative essay.

Format: The essay should appear traditional

Please use MLA format [in text citations](#) (one for each source) and include a [list of works cited](#). You are encouraged to add interactivity to the text by using hyperlinks. You can link to articles that you quote in the essay, and/or interviews, videos, images, and/or audio files directly related to your analysis. Interactive elements within the text are an excellent way to assemble and save sources related to your writing so that you can revisit them for other projects. Your essay must contain complete parenthetical citations and a works cited list.

700-900 words

DUE DATES:

September 28th by midday: find two sources, take screen shot of sources

September 29th by midday: write an outline or proposal for your Metaphor Paper

October 5th by midday write a rough draft of your Metaphor Paper, share in your Accountability Group and with me

October 7th by midday respond to the members of your Accountability Group

October 21st final draft due by 11:59 pm