

metaphor, n.

Pronunciation: Brit. /'mɛtəfə/ , /'mɛtəfɔ:/ , U.S. /'mɛdə,fɔ(ə)r/

Forms:

α. IME **methaphor**, 15 **metafor**, 15–16 **metaphore**, 15– **metaphor**.

β. 15 **metaphoraes** (plural), 15–16 **metaphora**.

[\(Show Less\)](#)

Etymology: < Middle French *metaphore* (c1275 in Old French as *metafore* ; French *métaphore*) and its etymon classical Latin *metaphora* < ancient Greek *μεταφορά* < *μετα-* [meta- prefix](#) + *φορά* carrying (< the *o* -grade of the stem of *φέρειν* to bear, carry: see [bear v.¹](#)), after *μεταφέρειν* to transfer. Compare Italian *metafora* (a1375), Spanish *metáfora* (1st half of the 15th cent.), Portuguese *metáfora* (15th cent.). The β forms are after classical Latin *metaphora*.

1. A figure of speech in which a name or descriptive word or phrase is transferred to an object or action different from, but analogous to, that to which it is literally applicable; an instance of this, a metaphorical expression. Cf. [metonymy n.](#), [simile n.](#)

α.

α1500 (►c1477) T. Norton [Ordinal of Alchemy](#) (BL Add.) (1975) 63 (*MED*), Thei made theire bokis to many men ful derk, In poyses, parabols, & in methaphoris alle-so, which to scolers causith peyne and wo.

1533 King Henry VIII in Wotton [Lett.](#) (1654) Suppl. 8 And rather then men would note a lye when they know what is meant, they will sooner by allegory or metaphor draw the word to the truth.

1555 E. Bonner [Certaine Homelyes](#) 71* Chryste alwayes in hys speakyngye dyd vse fygures, metaphores and tropes.

1563 W. Baldwin et al. [Myrrour for Magistrates](#) (new ed.) Collingbourne xxxvii, These metafors I vse with other more.

1600 S. Nicholson [Acolastus his After-witte](#) 861 Mens words are Metaphors, it makes no matter.

- 1646 Sir T. Browne [*Pseudodoxia Epidemica*](#) v. ix. 247 An horn is the hieroglyphick of authority, power, & dignity, and in this Metaphor is often used in Scripture.
- 1691 J. Hartcliffe [*Treat. Virtues*](#) 339 Men will embrace Metaphors and Allegories, fancies and forms of Speech, instead of the Substance of true and real Righteousness.
- 1712 J. Addison [*Spectator*](#) No 289 ¶8 Those beautiful Metaphors in Scripture, where Life is termed a Pilgrimage.
- 1756 J. Warton [*Ess. on Pope*](#) I. iii. 176 No author ever adorned a scientific treatise with so many beautiful metaphors.
- 1783 H. Blair [*Lect. Rhetoric*](#) I. xv. 313 If the resemblance..be long dwelt upon, and carried into all its minute circumstances we make an allegory instead of a metaphor... This is called straining a Metaphor.
- 1841 R. C. Trench [*Parables*](#) (1877) i. 9 The allegory stands to the metaphor,..in the same relation that the parable does to the..simile.
- 1876 J. B. Mozley [*Serm. preached Univ. of Oxf.*](#) xvi. 301 The metaphor of the poet is perfectly true in fact, for life *is* a stage.
- 1929 I. A. Richards [*Pract. Criticism*](#) iii. i. 187 A poet..may, by metaphor and otherwise, present objects for thought which are logically quite irrelevant.
- 1952 R. A. Knox [*Hidden Stream*](#) iv. 33 It is a metaphor if you describe Oxford as a hive of industry, or some of its inhabitants as drones.
- 1992 J. Peters & J. Nichol [*Tornado Down*](#) viii. 64 ‘Peeling the Onion’ was the metaphor some people in the military used to describe..the stripping away of the successive layers of the Iraqi defences.
- β.
- α1529 J. Skelton *Speke Parrot* in [*Poet. Wks.*](#) (1843) II. 10 In this processe Parrot nothing hath surmysed, No matter pretendyd, nor nothyng enterprysed, But that metaphora, allegoria with all, Shall be his protectyon, his pauys, and his wall.
- 1550 R. Sherry [*Treat. Schemes & Tropes*](#) sig. Ciiii^v, Metaphora..a worde translated from the thyng that it properlye signifieth.
- 1592 A. Day *2nd Pt. Eng. Secretorie* sig. M3^v, in [*Eng. Secretorie*](#) (rev. ed.) *Metaphora*, which is when a word from the proper or right signification is transferred to another neere vnto the meaning.
- 1605 J. Sylvester tr. G. de S. Du Bartas [*Deuine Weekes & Wks.*](#) ii. ii. 423 Better then Greeke with her..Fit Epithetes, and fine Metaphoraes.
- 1650 Earl of Monmouth tr. J. F. Senault [*Man become Guilty*](#) 175 The Metaphora, which is so frequent with them,..is it not an imposture?

2. Something regarded as representative or suggestive of something else, esp. as a material emblem of an abstract quality, condition, notion, etc.; a symbol, a token. Freq. with *for*, *of*.

1836 R. W. Emerson [*Nature*](#) iv. 41 Parts of speech are metaphors because the whole of nature is a metaphor of the human mind.

1864 W. Arnot [*Parables Our Lord*](#) iv. 119 The serpent, as a metaphor, was in practice as completely thirled to the indication of evil, as leaven had been.

1881 H. James [*Washington Square*](#) xxxii. 241 If your leg is a metaphor for young Townsend, I can assure you he has never been crushed... He is alive and perfectly intact.

1909 J. London in [*Sat. Evening Post*](#) 22 May 3/1 North of the Slot were the theaters, hotels, and shopping district... South of the Slot were the factories, slums,..and the abodes of the working class. The Slot was the metaphor that expressed the class cleavage of Society.

1962 [*Times*](#) 20 Dec. 11/1 The great joy of a novelist is that..he can create his own metaphor of the universe.

1984 H. Jacobson [*Peeping Tom*](#) (1985) i. iv. 113 The central metaphor for Tess's confusions is the threshing-machine.

1997 J. Seabrook [*Deeper*](#) viii. 253 The desktop metaphor shifted to the hypertext metaphor, in which work was not filed in stand-alone folders but linked across networks to other pages.

Compounds

Objective.

metaphor-making n.

1889 St. G. Mivart [*Origin Human Reason*](#) 273 This power of metaphor-making.

1992 [*Eng. Today*](#) July 58/2 They show how awareness of metaphor-making can lead to new insights and understandings and help students develop hypotheses and wage arguments.

metaphor-monger n.

1670 J. Eachard [*Grounds Contempt of Clergy*](#) 46 These indiscreet and horrid Metaphor-mongers.

1870 [*Atlantic Monthly*](#) Aug. 197/1 He goes over the whole universe to gather images of bigness for your delectation, doing a larger business in mountains, earthquakes, and firmaments than any other metaphor-monger of the