

simile, n.

Pronunciation /ˈsɪmɪli/

Forms Also β. 16 **similie**, 16–18 **simily**.

Etymology < Latin *simile*, neuter of *similis* like. With the form *simily* (plural *-ies*), compare *query* for *quere*, *quære*.

1.

a. A comparison of one thing with another, esp. as an ornament in poetry or rhetoric.

α.

1393 Langland *Piers Plowman* C. xx. 160 By this *simile*..ich seo an euvidence, That ho so synegeþ in þe *seynt espirit* asoilled worth he neuere.

1589 R. Greene *Menaphon* sig. F, Samela had learnd..to anotamize wit, and speake none but Similes.

1589 R. Greene *Menaphon* sig. K4^v, Stufft with pretie Similes and farre fetcht Metaphores.

1602 J. Marston *Hist. Antonio & Mellida* i. sig. B4^v, No Simile Is pretious, choyce, or elegant enough.

1646 Sir T. Browne *Pseudodoxia Epidemica* (1686) i. ix. 26 Playing much upon the simile or illustrative argumentation.

1712 J. Addison *Spectator* No 303 ¶20 Milton..never quits his Simile till it rises to some very great Idea, which [etc.].

1728 Pope *Dunciad* i. 54 There motley Images her fancy strike, Figures ill-pair'd, and Similes unlike.

1781 Johnson *Pope* in *Pref. Wks. Eng. Poets* VII. 285 A simile, to be perfect, must both illustrate and ennoble the subject.

1825 E. Bulwer-Lytton *Falkland* 8, I could wish..that this simile were in all things correct.

1858 J. Doran *Hist. Court Fools* 167 Some of his similes are drawn from his profession.

1873 C. M. Davies *Unorthodox London* (ed. 2) 72, That was aptly illustrated by the simile of the infant that can only cry.

β.

1616 Shakespeare *As you like It* (1623) ii. i. 45 Did he not moralize this spectacle?.. O yes, into a thousand similies.

1636 W. Davenant *Platonick Lovers* ii. i. sig.C4, An excellent Similie for a Painter, That would draw a good face.

1695 J. Edwards *Disc. conc. Old & New-Test.* III. ix. 386 The same Simily is made use of in Terence.

1760 L. Sterne *Life Tristram Shandy* II. ii. 11 Even my similies,..my illustrations, my metaphors, are erudite.

1824 W. S. Landor *Imaginary Conversat.* I. xv. 275 The simily is imperfect because the fact is untrue.

1846 T. Wright *Ess. Middle Ages* I. i. 13 [In] Anglo-Saxon poetry..Similies..are rare.

b. Without article.

1682 Duke of Buckingham *Ess. Poetry* They sigh in simile and die in Rhyme.

c1700 M. Prior *Locke & Montaigne* in *Dialogues of Dead* Simile is the very Algebra of Discourse.

1707 M. Prior *Simile* 4 'Tis but by way of Simile.

1864 J. R. Lowell *Fireside Trav.* 165 How would he have run him up and down the gamut of simile!

†2.

a. Likeness, resemblance; similarity. Obs.

1604 R. Cawdrey *Table Alphabet.* *Similie*,..likenes, or resemblance.

1613 J. Davies *Muses Teares* in *Wks.* (Grosart) I. 5/1 The Simile twixt God and Man is such, That God is said to be immortall Man.

1692 T. Tryon [*Good House-wife*](#) (ed. 2) xiv. 103 What likeness or correspondence is there between Cloves, Mace,..and..Herbs or Flesh?
Verily there is no simile between them.

†b. The likeness of a thing. *Obs.*—¹

1743 W. Ellis [*London & Country Brewer*](#) (ed. 2) II. 151 Everything delighteth to produce its own Simile.

Compounds

Comb.

simile-maker n.

1676 W. Wycherley [Plain-dealer](#) ii. i, I cou'd not..sit to a vain young Simile-maker, tho' he flatter'd me.

simile-monger n.

1868 A. Helps [Realmah](#) (1876) viii. 178 That sort of confusion is indulged in by all simile-mongers.

Derivatives

'simile v. (*trans.*) to express by a simile.

1727 P. Longueville [Hermit](#) 219 Having similed every different Part, he proceeds in the Representation thereof.

1972 G. Jones [Kings, Beasts, & Heroes](#) ii. i. 75 We are told the colour of her hair and hands, her flesh and bosom, but she stays cool to view as..a wax doll. A clean doll, admittedly... And one most nobly similiated.