

Mixed Metaphors!

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Example: She upset the apple cart while we were ironing out the details.

This example uses two metaphors. The comparison of the person's actions to a fallen apple cart means the person is causing chaos and trouble. The second metaphor compares the ironing of clothes with the group's finishing of the details of a plan. The basic meaning of the sentence makes sense: one person has messed up the almost completed plan of the group. The two metaphors make it confusing. An apple cart has no logical connection to ironing clothes.

Below are sentences that contain a mixed metaphor. Identify the metaphors being used in each sentence, explain the basic meaning, and how the sentence is a mixed metaphor.

1) The football player was a tower of strength, running across the field like a gazelle.

2) The house on the hill was a beacon to visitors, gracefully ruling over the neighborhood.

3) The manager was a busy bee with a lot on his plate.

4) Life is a roller coaster, filled with unexpected battles.

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Actual student's answer will vary. Answers should include the following ideas:

- 1) The football player was a tower of strength, running across the field like a gazelle.

The football player was strong and ran fast. Compares the football player to a tower and his running ability to a gazelle. A tower cannot run at all, much less like a gazelle.

- 2) The house on the hill was a beacon to visitors, gracefully ruling over the neighborhood.

Visitors wanted to visit the house, which was the most elegant in the neighborhood. Compares the house to a lighthouse (or other attention-getting item) and a monarch. A lighthouse is not a monarch.

- 3) The manager was a busy bee with a lot on his plate.

The manager is busy with a lot of tasks to do. Compares the manager with a bee and someone who has a lot of food or items on a plate. A bee does not have a plate.

- 4) Life is a roller coaster, filled with unexpected battles.

Life has ups, downs and turns, with unexpected troubles. Compares life to a roller coaster and a war. A roller coaster and a war are unrelated.