

METAPHORICAL REPRESENTATION OF KNOWLEDGE STRUCTURES IN LITERARY TEXTS

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Abstract: In literature, metaphors serve as cognitive frameworks that interpret abstract concepts into concrete, understandable ideas. This article based on Conceptual Metaphor Theory, examines how metaphors function as philosophical, emotional, and cultural frameworks in works such as “The Great Gatsby” (the green light) and “Macbeth” (life as a "brief candle"). The study emphasizes the function of intertextual patterns (like gardens and journeys) and narrative-shaping metaphors (like cyclical time in García Márquez) in encoding meaning and directing interpretation. Ultimately, the article highlights that metaphorical representations in literature serve as powerful tools for communicating knowledge, shaping thought, and offering insights into the human experience.

Keywords: knowledge structures, CMT, metaphor, literature, intertextuality, interpret, concept, poetry, narrative, framework, cognitive mechanism, symbolism.

Metaphors are not merely stylistic devices, they play a crucial role in shaping how we conceptualize and understand complex ideas, emotions, and experiences. The use of metaphors to communicate complex ideas and concepts is known as metaphorical representation of knowledge structures in literary works. In literature, metaphors often serve as cognitive tools that structure knowledge and convey abstract concepts in more tangible, relatable terms. Knowledge structures are frameworks that help individuals organize and interpret information. According to Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT) developed by George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, CMT posits that metaphors are not just linguistic expressions but fundamental cognitive mechanisms. They argue that metaphors structure our understanding of abstract concepts by mapping them onto more concrete, physical experiences. For example, the metaphor "Time is money" reflects how we conceptualize time as a valuable resource that can be spent, saved, or wasted.[1, 128p.]

In literary texts, conceptual metaphors often underpin the narrative, themes, and character development. They can reveal underlying themes and enhance readers' understanding of characters' motivations and conflicts. For instance, in Shakespeare's “Macbeth”, life is metaphorically represented as a "brief candle," conveying the transient and fragile nature of human existence.

Macbeth, Act 5, Scene 5

She should have died hereafter;
There would have been a time for such a word.
Tomorrow, and tomorrow, and tomorrow,
Creeps in this petty pace from day to day
To the last syllable of recorded time,
And all our yesterdays have lighted fools
The way to dusty death. Out, out, brief candle!

Life's but a walking shadow, a poor player
That struts and frets his hour upon the stage
And then is heard no more. It is a tale
Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury,
Signifying nothing.

"Out, out, brief candle!": This line directly compares life to a "brief candle," emphasizing its fleeting and fragile nature. The candle's light is easily extinguished, just as life can end suddenly and without warning.

"Life's but a walking shadow": Macbeth further elaborates on the metaphor, describing life as insubstantial and meaningless, like a shadow or an actor's performance on stage.

"A tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing": This line underscores Macbeth's sense of nihilism, suggesting that life is chaotic, meaningless, and ultimately devoid of purpose.

This part is an effective demonstration of Shakespeare's use of metaphor to delve into deep philosophical issues regarding life, death, and the human condition.

Moreover, in Shakespeare's "Hamlet," the concept of the "world as a stage" highlights the performative nature of life and the roles we play.

All the world's a stage, and all the men and women merely players. They have their exits and their entrances, and one man in his time plays many parts...[1,784p]

There are two types of metaphors in literature:

Conceptual Metaphors: These are overarching ideas, such as viewing life as a journey, which influence the way we think and communicate.

Implied Metaphors: These are subtler and suggest comparisons without directly stating them.

Metaphors in literature often serve as frameworks for organizing knowledge. They allow authors to convey complex ideas by drawing parallels between familiar and unfamiliar domains. For example, in Emily Dickinson's poetry, nature is frequently used as a metaphor for human emotions and existential questions, creating a bridge between the physical world and inner experiences.[1,200p.]

These metaphorical structures can also reflect cultural, historical, or philosophical knowledge. For instance, the metaphor of the "journey" is often used to represent life or personal growth, as seen in works like "The Pilgrim's Progress" by John Bunyan⁸ or "The Odyssey" by Homer.[2,337-354 p.]

Literary texts often build on existing metaphorical traditions, creating intertextual networks of meaning. For example, the metaphor of the "garden" has been used across cultures and epochs to represent paradise, innocence, or fertility, for example, The Garden of Eden in the Bible, the garden in "The Secret Garden" by Frances Hodgson Burnett.

These intertextual metaphors create a shared knowledge structure that readers can recognize and interpret within a broader cultural context.

Metaphors in literature often reflect and shape the worldview of a particular time or culture. For example, in Romantic poetry, nature is frequently used as a metaphor for the sublime, reflecting the Romantic emphasis on emotion, imagination, and the transcendent. In contrast, modernist literature often employs fragmented or disjointed metaphors to reflect the disillusionment and complexity of the modern world, as seen in T.S. Eliot's "The Waste Land". [3,180p.] Metaphors are particularly effective in conveying emotional and subjective experiences. For example, in Sylvia Plath's poetry, metaphors of confinement and suffocation, for instance, "bell jar" are used to express the experience of depression and mental illness. By mapping emotional states onto physical sensations or objects, metaphors make abstract feelings more accessible and relatable to readers.

In many literary texts, metaphors evolve into symbols, carrying deeper layers of meaning. For example, the "green light" in F. Scott Fitzgerald's "The Great Gatsby" serves as both a metaphor for Gatsby's aspirations and a symbol of the elusive American Dream.

"The green light" in "The Great Gatsby" is one of the most famous and symbolic motifs in American literature. It represents Gatsby's hopes, dreams, and the elusive nature of the American Dream. The green light appears in Chapter 1 and again in the final passage of the novel (Chapter 9), framing Gatsby's tragic pursuit of Daisy and the past.

"Gatsby believed in the green light, the orgastic future that year by year recedes before us. It eluded us then, but that's no matter—tomorrow we will run faster, stretch out our arms farther.... And one fine morning— So we beat on, boats against the current, borne back ceaselessly into the past." [3,400p] This is the novel's closing passage, reinforcing the green light as a metaphor for unattainable dreams.

These symbolic metaphors often encapsulate broader themes and philosophical questions, enriching the text's interpretive possibilities.

Metaphors can also shape the overall structure of a literary work. For example, in Gabriel García Márquez's "One Hundred Years of Solitude", the metaphor of cyclical time structures the narrative, reflecting the novel's themes of history, memory, and repetition. [3, 400p]

Similarly, in allegorical texts like "Animal Farm" by George Orwell, the entire narrative functions as an extended metaphor for political systems and human behavior. [3,150p]

Other examples in literature:

Dante's "Divine Comedy": The journey through Hell, Purgatory, and Heaven serves as a metaphor for the soul's journey toward God, structured around medieval Christian cosmology.

Toni Morrison's "Beloved": The ghost of Beloved serves as a metaphor for the lingering trauma of slavery and the struggle for memory and identity. [4, 340p.]

In conclusion, metaphorical representations in literary texts are powerful tools for structuring and conveying knowledge. They allow authors to explore abstract concepts, emotions, and philosophical questions in ways that resonate deeply with

readers. By drawing on cognitive, cultural, and intertextual resources, metaphors enrich the interpretive possibilities of literature and provide insights into the human experience. Metaphors enrich texts, encouraging deeper analysis and multiple interpretations. They engage the reader's imagination, making knowledge structures more vivid and memorable. Studying metaphorical representations in literature reveals how authors communicate complex ideas and shape readers' understanding of the world.

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