WHY METAPHORS & ANALOGIES?

➤ Using the right words and phrases in your speeches and presentations can help you make a bigger impact and be remembered.

➤ It makes the speech more memorable and relatable.

➤ Similes, metaphors and analogies are three figures of speech that you can use to inform, influence and inspire your audiences.
METAPHORS IN SPEECHES

➤ A metaphor compares one thing to another, but asserts that one thing is actually another. Examples:

➤ All the world’s a stage, and all the men and women merely players. – William Shakespeare

➤ From Stettin in the Baltic to Trieste in the Adriatic, an iron curtain has descended across the Continent. – Sir Winston Churchill

➤ The torch has been passed to a new generation of Americans. – John F Kennedy

➤ With this faith we will be able to transform the jangling discords of a nation into the beautiful symphony of brotherhood. – Martin Luther King

➤ Nationalism is both a vital medicine and a dangerous drug. – Geoffrey Blainey
REAL EXAMPLES

➤ The term iron curtain is an example of how powerful metaphors can be for creating an image in the mind of listeners.

➤ Churchill was not the first person to use the term. But after he used it in a speech he delivered in 1946, it became a popular term for describing the closed societies of the Soviet Union and the satellite nations that were under its influence after World War II.
REAL SPEECHES

➤ Martin Luther King’s I Have a Dream speech—Dr King used over 20 metaphors to create pictures of the ideas he was conveying. A few include:

➤ a great beacon light of hope
➤ flames of withering injustice
➤ joyous daybreak
➤ long night of their captivity
➤ manacles of segregation
➤ chains of discrimination
➤ lonely island of poverty
➤ vast ocean of material prosperity.

➤ Given the effectiveness of metaphors in the world’s greatest speeches, the question is not whether to use them, but how to create effective metaphors and use them in your speeches and presentations.
ANALOGIES IN SPEECHES

➤ An analogy is an extended metaphor or long simile.

➤ Graduation speech analogy:

➤ In graduating today, you have reached the pinnacle of your experience at Melbourne Vocational College. But this is only the beginning. There are much bigger goals and dreams ahead of you.

➤ It’s like climbing a mountain. As you climb, you often can’t see the top. Just when you think you’ve reached the pinnacle, you look up and realize that it’s only a plateau and the peak is still way off in the distance. These distant peaks are the dreams and goals that life has in store for you. They are out there, but they must be worked for.
Analogy: The Dog Analogy

The dog was feisty and wanted to play with guests when they visited but falsely believed that the chair was too heavy to be able to move. From a young age the dog was tied to a post outside after being given baths and assumed that it would not be able to move when its leash was tied to any other object.

Waitley draws an analogy from the story by comparing it to people’s mindsets:

Unfortunately, too many of us are like Spike. We find ourselves in a situation in which we assume we’re helpless, and we give up. Some past experience tells us we can’t move ahead, and we give up without even trying. Sometimes only a five-pound weight is holding us back, but as far as we’re concerned, it weighs 500 tons, and we can’t do anything but sit down, like Spike, and work our way into a state of depression (from “How to Sharpen Your Imagination” in Insight by Nightingale Conant, No 107, 1991).
Analogies can be helpful when explaining complex ideas or technical processes.

When writing for an executive with an Australian IT company, a writer may use the following analogy to explain a challenging project. With millions of users depending on the continuous operation of the network while an update was being made, there was no room for error as the company representative explained:

Updating the telecommunications software was like changing an engine on a 767 jet at 37,000 feet. We were changing one of the engines and needed to ensure that the plane kept running and didn’t fly around in circles or crash.
NEIL DEGRASSE TYSON CLIP

Cosmic Calendar Analogy
CONSIDER THIS . . .

➤ Similes, metaphors and analogies can be a powerful tool but be careful when using them in speeches.

➤ Some metaphors have been used so many times that they are “worn out”.

➤ George Orwell stressed this point in his essay “Politics in the English Language” when he wrote, “Never use a metaphor, simile, or other figure of speech which you are used to seeing in print.”
BEWARE OF BAD METAPHORS

➤ In addition, metaphors can fall flat or miss the point. In 2003, The Washington Post ran a contest to see who could create the worst analogies. A few of the choice ones included:

➤ Even in his last years, grandpappy had a mind like a steel trap, only one that had been left out so long, it had rusted shut.

➤ She had a deep, throaty, genuine laugh, like that sound a dog makes just before it throws up.

➤ He was deeply in love. When she spoke, he thought he heard bells, as if she were a garbage truck backing up.

➤ The ballerina rose gracefully en pointe and extended one slender leg behind her, like a dog at a fire hydrant.

➤ Yes, these were specifically created to be bad, but they are good reminders to be careful when creating similes, metaphors and analogies.
THE CHALLENGE OF USING SIMILES, METAPHORS AND ANALOGIES

➤ One drawback is that it takes time, effort and creativity to come up with similes, metaphors and analogies for speeches.

➤ Give yourself enough time and apply your creativity, you can create these figures of speech to give memorable speeches and presentations that inform, influence and inspire your audiences.

➤ Get feedback! It’s important to get reactions from an authentic audience to see how portions of the speech work in real life.