

# Using popular songs to teach similes

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Singer and actress Ariana Grande performing at a concert at the Meadowlands in East Rutherford, New Jersey, in 2014. Photo by: Scott Roth/AP Photo by: Scott Roth/AP

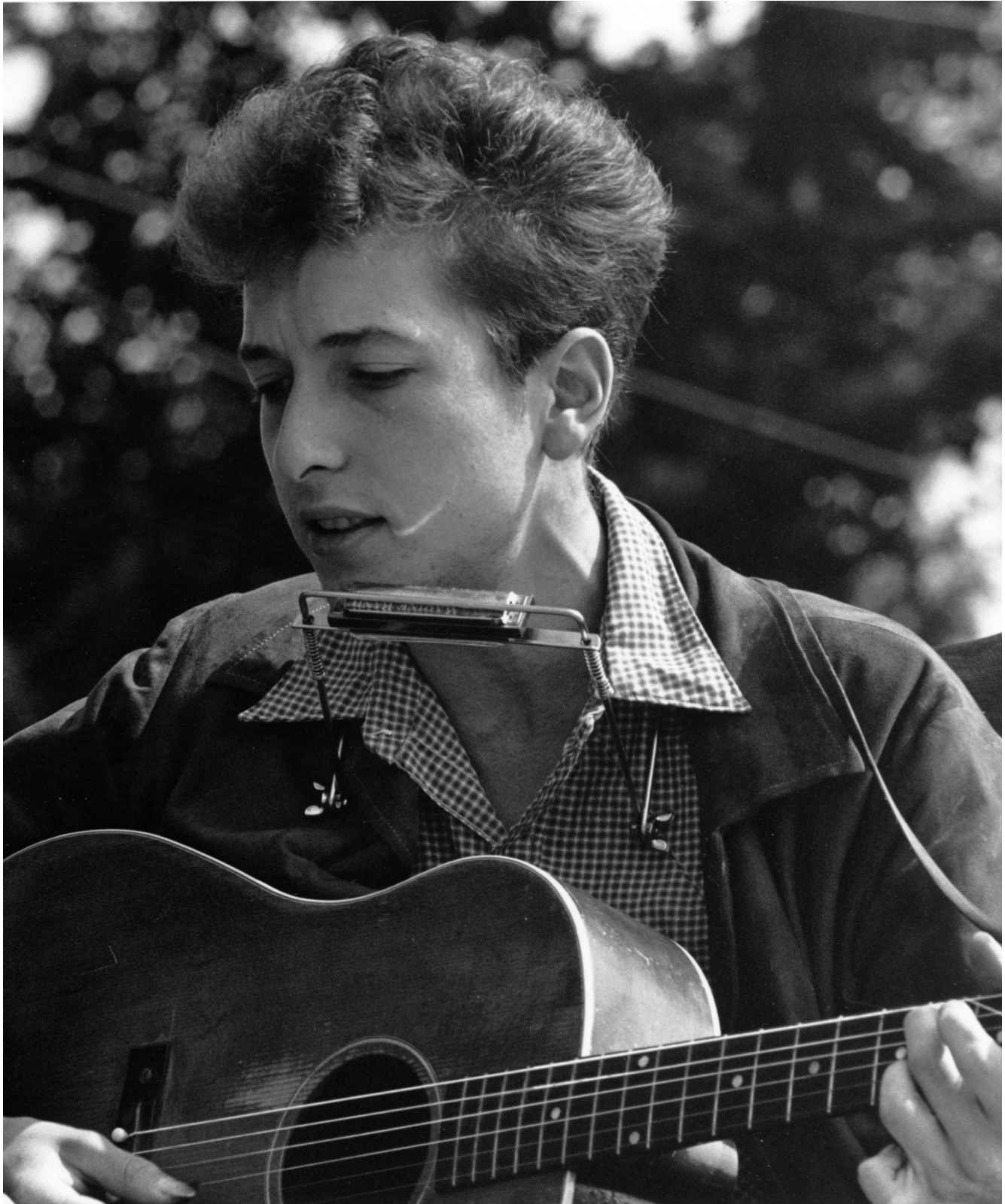
A simile makes a direct comparison between two things. It uses the words "like" or "as." The comparison reveals a new meaning.

For example, the rock group Foreigner wrote a song called "Cold as Ice." The lyrics include a simile:

*You're as cold as ice*

*You're willing to sacrifice our love*

In this example, the lyrics are not talking about the weather. Instead, they compare a woman to ice to show her emotions. Many songs can be used to teach about similes.



A simile is in the title of a 1965 song by Bob Dylan, "Like a Rolling Stone." The song is about a woman who used to be rich but is now poor:

*How does it feel*

*To be without a home*

*Like a complete unknown*

*Like a rolling stone?*

The song's title may be the most famous simile in all of pop and rock music.

More songs with the word "like" used as a simile in a title include:



*Like a Prayer* - Madonna

*Man! I Feel Like a Woman!* - Shania Twain

*Smells Like Teen Spirit* - Nirvana

*Like a Hurricane* - Neil Young

Elton John wrote a song about Marilyn Monroe called "Candle in the Wind." The song compares a life to a candle throughout the song:

*And it seems to me you lived your life*

*Like a candle in the wind*

*Never knowing who to cling to*

*When the rain set in*

The song was re-crafted into a slightly different tune, "Goodbye England's Rose." John performed it at the 1997 funeral of Princess Diana. This was 24 years after the original version. The fact that the lyrics stayed similar shows how a well-crafted simile can last a long time.

A simile is different from another figure of speech called a metaphor. Similes use the words "like" and "as." They make direct comparisons. Metaphors make indirect comparisons.

Both metaphors and similes are very common in music. Here are some songs that have similes.

## 1. "Believer" By Imagine Dragons



This song compares physical pain to a choking rain of ashes.

The group's lead singer, Dan Reynolds, explained that the song "is about overcoming emotional and physical pain." He had suffered a serious form of arthritis that was very painful.

*I was choking in the crowd*

*Living my brain up in the cloud*

*Falling like ashes to the ground*

## 2. "Stitches" By Shawn Mendes



Shawn Mendes explained that in the music video for this song he is getting beaten up by something you can't see. The lyrics use the comparison word "like":

*Just like a moth drawn to a flame*

*Oh, you lured me in, I couldn't sense the pain*

The video shows that the beating was all part of his imagination. It's a creative comparison between physical hurt and emotional pain.

## 3. "Dangerous Woman" By Ariana Grande

This R&B song is about empowerment. Grande explained that it's about how people give men credit for women's success. She does not accept this.

Here is where she uses a simile:

*Somethin' 'bout you makes me feel like a dangerous woman*

*Somethin' 'bout, somethin' 'bout, somethin' 'bout you*

Grande said she is "much better at making songs than telling people things."

#### **4. "Just Like Fire" By Pink**

Pink is known for her in-your-face lyrics. "Just Like Fire" is an empowering song. It is about Pink's own value as a person and as an artist.





Lyrics using the comparison keyword "like":

*Just like fire, burning out the way  
If I can light the world up for just one day  
Watch this madness, colorful charade  
No one can be just like me any way  
Just like magic, I'll be flying free  
I'mma disappear when they come for me*

The song also uses the idea of light. It hints at how important it is to Pink to bring light to the world through music.

## 5. "Ex's & Oh's" By Elle King



This song is about King's past relationships.

Lyrics that use the comparison work "like" are:

*Exes and the oh, oh, oh's they haunt me  
Like ghosts they want me to make 'em all  
They won't let go*

King started writing the song as a joke. But King's record company, RCA, decided it would be the hit single.