How does figurative language establish mood, character, or setting?

Evaluate these two responses: What does the response on the left "do" that the response on the right does not? Identify at least 5 things.

A man is many things when he is hungry; not the least of these are reckless, wild, and powerful. Charles Dickens illustrates this power in *A Tale of Two Cities* in his description of the battle of St. Antoine. Dickens' employment of figurative language, which includes both metaphor and similes, characterizes the poor men of St. Antoine as transforming from an expectant, unruly crowd to an overpowering army of the disenfranchised. Initially, Dickens uses a metaphor to characterize the people of St. Antoine as a "vast dusky mass of scarecrows heaving to and fro," armed and awaiting instructions. As stuffed men, they have no purpose until called to action, yet they are strong in number across the fields. Dickens goes on to describe the men clutching at their weapons with a simile, comparing their grasping arms to "shriveled branched of trees in a winter wind," suggesting the starvation and deprivation they have experienced. They are so emaciated and weakened from their poverty that their limbs lack substance. This does not, however, prevent them from grasping their weapons and preparing to fight. Dickens finalizes his description of the men of St. Antoine with a simile that suggests the power of their charge. Comparing them to a "whirlwind of boiling waters," he describes them circling around Defarge's wineshop where "every human drop in the cauldron had a tendency to be sucked toward the vortex" of the fight. Dickens, through the comparison of the crowd to a tornado or other similarly destructive act of God, creates a sense of the inevitability of the battle. The men, regardless of their weak limbs, have united as one and seek only to destroy those in their path. At this point, the people are no longer stuffed men; instead they are a powerful force, "a living sea, wave on wave, depth on depth, [overflowing] the city to that point," intent on the destruction of the people who have kept them poor and miserable for so long. Through his comparisons, Dickens makes it clear that they cannot be stopped any more than one might stop a hurricane or the tide of the ocean.

In *A Tale of Two Cities*, Charles Dickens uses figurative language throughout the story to convey certain moods and ideas. One example of figurative language used in the novel is a simile. Before the battle, Dickens describes "a forest of naked arms struggled in the air like shriveled branches in trees in a winter wind." In this quote, the author compares the arms of the mass of people to dead tree branches in cold wind. Similarly, when Dickens says, "As a whirlwind of boiling waters has a centre point, so all this raging circled round…and every human drop in the cauldron had the tendency to be sucked towards the vortex" uses a metaphor to explain how everyone was involved and the mass of people was like a tornado. Dickens uses these examples of figurative language to create certain moods and ideas for the reader.

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3.

4.

5.

Analyzing Figurative Language

Your Task:
Please read the passage below and write a paragraph explaining how the author uses figurative language to develop the character, setting OR mood of the scene. Write a strong claim, identify the figurative language and find evidence of it in the text, and then interpret it in light of the evidence. Remember to rely on the criteria we established to do your best work.

Context:
In Robert Louis Stevenson's *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, all of London is shocked by a terrible crime. A maid saw everything, and this is her testimony:

> And as she so sat she became aware of an aged and beautiful gentleman with white hair, drawing near along the lane; and advancing to meet him, another and very small gentleman, to whom at first she paid less attention. When they had come within speech (which was just under the maid's eyes) the older man bowed and accosted the other with a very pretty manner of politeness. It did not seem as if the subject of his address were of great importance; indeed, from his pointing, it sometimes appeared as if he were only inquiring his way; but the moon shone on his face as he spoke, and the girl was pleased to watch it, it seemed to breathe such an innocent and old-world kindness of disposition, yet with something high too, as of a well-founded self-content. Presently her eye wandered to the other, and she was surprised to recognise in him a certain Mr. Hyde, who had once visited her master and for whom she had conceived a dislike. He had in his hand a heavy cane, with which he was trifling; but he answered never a word, and seemed to listen with an ill-contained impatience. And then all of a sudden he broke out in a great flame of anger, stamping with his foot, brandishing the cane, and carrying on (as the maid described it) like a madman. The old gentleman took a step back, with the air of one very much surprised and a trifle hurt; and at that Mr. Hyde broke out of all bounds and clubbed him to the earth. And next moment, with ape-like fury, he was trampling his victim under foot and hailing down a storm of blows, under which the bones were audibly shattered and the body jumped upon the roadway. At the horror of these sights and sounds, the maid fainted.

Your Task:
For each of these practice tasks, please read the passage and write a paragraph explaining how the author uses figurative language to develop the character, setting **OR** mood of the scene. Write a strong claim, identify the figurative language and find evidence of it in the text, and then interpret it in light of the evidence.

Practice I:

Context:
In Charles Dickens' *A Christmas Carol*, Ebenezer Scrooge is visited by several ghosts on Christmas Eve. In this scene, the Ghost of Christmas Present shows Scrooge what people in London are doing in preparation for the holiday to come.

For the people who were shoveling away on the house-tops were jovial and full of glee; calling out to one another from the parapets, and now and then exchanging a facetious snowball—better-natured missile far than many a wordy jest—laughing heartily if it went right and not less heartily if it went wrong. The poulterers' shops were still half open, and the fruiterers' were radiant in their glory. There were great, round, pot-bellied baskets of chestnuts, shaped like the waistcoats of jolly old gentlemen, lolling at the doors, and tumbling down the street in their apoplectic opulence. There were ruddy, brown-faced, broad-girthed Spanish Onions, shining in the fatness of their growth like Spanish Friars; and winking from their shelves in wanton slyness at the girls as they went by, and glanced demurely at the hung-up mistletoe. There were pears, and apples, clustered high in blooming pyramids; there were bunches of grapes, made, in the shopkeepers' benevolence, to dangle from conspicuous hooks, that people's mouths might water gratis [free of charge] as they passed; there were piles of filberts [a type of nut], mossy and brown, recalling, in their fragrance, ancient walks among the woods, and pleasant shufflings ankle deep through withered leaves; there were Norfolk Biffins [a type of apple], squab [full-bodied] and swarthy, setting off the yellow of the oranges and lemons, and, in the great compactness of their juicy persons, urgently entreating and beseeching to be carried home in paper bags and eaten after dinner…

Practice II:

Context:
In the following scene from Charles Dickens' novel, *A Christmas Carol*, the final Ghost takes Ebenezer Scrooge on a tour of London that play a role in Scrooge's future (although Scrooge obviously does not know it yet).

Your Task:
Analyze how Dickens uses figurative language to develop the character, setting or mood of the scene, relying on the CEI model of writing that we have practiced.

Quiet and dark, beside him stood the Phantom, with its outstretched hand. When he roused himself from his thoughtful quest, he fancied from the turn of the hand, and its situation in reference to himself that the Unseen Eyes were looking at him keenly. It made him shudder and feel very cold.

They left the busy scene, and went into an obscure part of the town, where Scrooge had never penetrated before, although he recognized its situation, and its bad repute. The ways were foul and narrow; the shops and houses wretched; the people half-naked, drunken, slipshod, ugly. Alleys and archways, like so many cesspools, disgorged their offences of smell, and dirt, and life, upon the straggling streets; and the whole quarter reeked with crime, with filth, and misery.

Far in the den of infamous resort, there was a low-browed, beetling shop, below a pent-house roof, where iron, old rags, bottles, bones, and greasy offal were bought. Upon the floor within, were piled up heaps of rusty keys, nails, chains, hinges, files, scales, weights, and refuse iron of all kinds. Secrets that few would like to scrutinize were bred and hidden in mountains of unseemly rags, masses of corrupted fat, and sepulchers of bones. Sitting in among the wares he dealt in, by a charcoal-stove, made of old bricks, was a gray-haired rascal, nearly seventy years of age; who had screened himself from the cold air without, by a frousy curtaining of miscellaneous tatters, hung upon a line; and smoked his pipe in all the luxury of calm retirement

Practice III.

From *Wuthering Heights*, by Emily Bronte: *In the following passage, Isabella confesses her infatuation with a young man named Heathcliff to Mrs. Linton, Isabella's mother and her friend, Catherine, who also knows him. Both mother and friend warn young Isabella to stay away from him.*

'You are an impertinent little monkey!' exclaimed Mrs. Linton, in surprise. 'But I'll not believe this idiocy! It is impossible that you can covet the admiration of Heathcliff - that you consider him an agreeable person! I hope I have misunderstood you, Isabella?'

'No, you have not,' said the infatuated girl.

'I wouldn't be you for a kingdom, then!' Catherine declared, emphatically: and she seemed to speak sincerely. 'Nelly, help me to convince her of her madness. Tell her what Heathcliff is: an unreclaimed creature, without refinement, without cultivation; an arid wilderness of furze[1] and whinstone[2]. I'd as soon put that little canary[3] into the park on a winter's day, as recommend you to bestow your heart on him! It is deplorable ignorance of his character, child, and nothing else, which makes that dream enter your head. Pray, don't imagine that he conceals depths of benevolence and affection beneath a stern exterior! He's not a rough diamond - a pearl-containing oyster of a rustic: he's a fierce, pitiless, wolfish man. I never say to him, "Let this or that enemy alone, because it would be ungenerous or cruel to harm them;" I say, "Let them alone, because I should hate them to be wronged:" and he'd crush you like a sparrow's egg, Isabella, if he found you a troublesome charge[4]. I know he couldn't love a Linton; and yet he'd be quite capable of marrying your fortune and expectations: avarice is growing with him a besetting sin. There's my picture: and I'm his friend - so much so, that had he thought seriously to catch you, I should, perhaps, have held my tongue, and let you fall into his trap.'

[1] furze: spiny shrub
[2] whinstone: dark rock
[3] there is an actual canary in a cage nearby
[4] charge: burden