Similes

What are they?

A simile asks us to imagine one thing as **looking or being like** another. They often use the words **'like'** or **'as'** or **'than'** to make the link.

We use similes in everyday language:

- as proud as a peacock
- as sick as a parrot
- as light as a feather

Poets also use them:

- 'Her lips were red, her looks were free,
  Her locks were yellow **as** gold:
  Her skin was **as** white **as** leprosy.'
  Samuel Taylor Coleridge

- 'Let us go then, you and I,
  When the evening is spread out against the sky
  Like a patient etherised upon a table;'
  T.S.Eliot

- 'Youth **like** summer morn
  Age **like** winter weather.'
  William Shakespeare

- 'There is sweet music here that softer falls
  Than petals from blown roses on the grass.'
  Alfred Lord Tennyson

- 'Think of the storm roaming the sky uneasily
  like a dog looking for a place to sleep in,
  listen to it growling.'
  Elizabeth Bishop

Think of your own simile here…

Similes have been around for a long, long time.

Here is an example from Geoffrey Chaucer (1343-1400), who wrote 'The Canterbury Tales' in the late 14th Century.

She had a yard that was enclosed about
By a stockade and a dry ditch without,
In which she kept a cock called Chanticleer.
In all the land for crowing he'd no peer;
His voice was jollier than the organ blowing
In church on Sundays, he was great at crowing.
His comb was redder than fine coral, tall
And battlemented like a castle wall,
His bill was black and shone as bright as jet,
Like azure were his legs and they were set
On azure toes with nails of lily white,
Like burnished gold his feathers, flaming bright.

from 'The Canterbury Tales' (the Nun's Priest's Tale)
by Geoffrey Chaucer (transliterated into modern English by Nevill Coghill)

How many similes can you find here?

What kind of picture do they all add up to (i.e. what character/ quality of animal is being described here?)?

Do these similes aid your imagination at all? How?