

## **COLOUR SIMILES IN THE DESCRIPTION OF A MAN**

The linguistic problem of using colour similes for the description of a person's appearance is characterized by its complexity because of its versatile character, though the scientific interest in it still exists up till now. The purpose of this scientific article is to investigate the usage of color similes for the description of a character's appearance and revealing typical associations with them. The given research is based on the texts of English literature selected from the British National Corpus, lexicographic sources such as 'The Dictionary of Similes' and 'Free Online Dictionary by Farlex'.

The topicality of this scientific article lies in the fact that an attempt to reveal the characteristic features of main characters' appearance by using colour similes is made, the effectiveness of their usage to describe their appearance as well as inner world of a character is proved, typical associations with colours are revealed.

Let's begin the description of a man's appearance with the colour of hair as it's in the centre of readers' attention. Shiny black hair is usually compared to a crow's or thrush's wing or feather (*black as a raven's wing (feather)/locks black as a raven/a crow*). Blond(e) hair is associated with hay, straw, ripe wheat or corn (*hair yellow as hay/thatch/like ripe wheat (corn)*). There are cases when the colour of hair is associated with the color of some celestial bodies – the Moon (*hair yellow as a full moon*) or the sun (*the girl's black curly hair shone like an eclipsed sun*). Red hair is compared to the color of sand in the rays of the rising or setting sun (*hair [red] ... gleaming like the sand streaked with sunset*), rust (*her hair grew in dry red curls, dark red like rust*), flames (*the red hair swirling like the flames of a fire*), etc. The chestnut color of hair is often associated with a nutshell (*hair brown as a pecan shell*). A number of authors resort to comparisons with cream (*hair white as whipped cream*), polished antique silver (*hair shone like well-polished old silver*) or white silk (*his hair was white as bleached silk*) while comparing silvery hair of the elderly.

The most common dominant in a portrait description is a man's eyes, particularly the focus is on their color, since eyes are considered to be the reflection of a person's soul. The color of eyes is mainly associated with: a) minerals and precious stones, namely, emerald (*eyes as green as emerald*); b) charcoal or anthracite (*eyes black as coals/as anthracite*); c) green meadows (*with eyes as green as the meadows*); d) marine depth (*eyes dark green as the ocean depths/blue sea*); e) the cloudless sky and heavenly bodies (*his eyes were like the deep boundless heaven/ eyes as brightly blue as a clear (the bluest) summer sky*); f) species of flora or fauna (*eyes blue as forget-me-nots*); g) darkness (*eyes like a starless winter night - clear, black, bleak*); h) time period (*eyes as black as midnight*); i) fruit and vegetables (*eyes were coloured light green like grapes*), etc.

Pencilled eyebrows are usually associated with a pair of swallows that is moving upwards (*black eyebrows going up like a pair of swallows*), centipedes or leeches that lay down to rest (*eyebrows looking like a big iron-grey caterpillar lying along the edge of a cliff*). Thick black eyelashes may be associated with a crow's or raven's feathers (*lashes as thick and dark as raven feathers*), brushes for painting (*lashes dark as paintbrushes*).

Brown or black is used by various authors to describe old gnarled and blackened from hard work hands (*hands were black as potatoes dug from the ground*) while white is used to describe delicate and plump hands of a child or young person (*hands as white as a cotton wool*). The red color dominates while describing the redness of hands, either from cold or covered with blood (*hands as red as blood pudding*).

Tender rosy lips are compared to buds or rose petals, red lilies or ripe cherries (*lips red as two buds*). Heavily painted lips are associated with hell, hangover or rotten fruit (*lips red as hell*). In order to describe bloodless lips authors resort to white that is associated with chalk, linen, sheets (*lips as white as lips of the slain*).

White teeth are associated with pearls, ivory (*teeth as white as (Cleopatra's) pearl*), flower petals (*teeth white as the petals of a daisy*), etc.

A man's face can be snow-white (*as white as new-fallen snow*); milky white (*white as milk*); pale (*his face and hands were as white as chalk*); sinless (*white as a bridal veil*); ghastly-pale (*as white (pale) as death and far more ghastly*); bloodless (*pale as a princess after a date with Dracula*); unhealthy (*as white as a sheet sick to the teeth*); tanned (*as brown as a local*); red from: a) embarrassment (*she went as red as a beetroot*); b) shame (*flushing red like some overgrown schoolboy*); red with rage (*his father's face was as red as if it had been turned inside out*); blue with cold, lack of oxygen (*he had turned blue as if he had been short of oxygen*), etc.

From the given research we can conclude that names of color in the structure of similes are often used by authors to describe a man's appearance. It is not only precise, vivid and unique description, but with the help of colour similes the authors also provide some additional information, highlight the artistic and expressive details of a portrait description, which in its turn helps a reader to create a coherent picture of the inner world of a character.

#### **A List of References**

1. British National Corpus [Electronic Resource]. – Mode of access: <http://www.natcorp.ox.ac.uk>
2. Free Online Dictionary [Electronic Resource]. – Mode of access: <http://www.thefreedictionary.com/>