

Layered Meaning

Find the controlling metaphor for your fight, then test it against true, theirs, and restrained before you use it.

Find the Controlling Metaphor

Surface issue

Name the literal issue as most people would state it (e.g. 'the reading program').

This fight is really about ____

Complete the sentence honestly with an image or comparison — not a restatement of the surface issue.

Where you'd place it

One sentence on where in your case you'd use it — ideally once, at the moment of maximum weight.

Test It

Is it TRUE?

Does it illuminate the real stakes, or distort them?

Is it THEIRS?

Would it resonate with the specific audience you need, or only with people who already agree?

Is it RESTRAINED?

Can you use it once, at the right moment, rather than repeating it until it becomes a gimmick?

Optional: Find a Symbol

The small concrete thing

Is there one small, real, picturable object or image that could stand for the whole stake? Name it, and where you'd return to it.

Restraint

Deployed once, or nearly, at the moment of maximum weight

True over clever — it doesn't inflate the stakes beyond what's real

Theirs, not just yours — tested against the audience I need, not just people who already agree

If your metaphor makes the truth more visible, it's craft. If it makes the truth bigger than it is, it's manipulation wearing craft's clothes.

