Synectics is a system which introduces strategies for teaching writing, creativity, and thinking. This approach uses metaphors and analogies to guide students through new ways of viewing their world. With synectics, students possess the tools to look at themselves and their surroundings in creative and imaginative ways.

The Greek word synectics means the joining together of different ideas. William Gordon developed a three-phase strategy to teach the use of metaphor.

1. Direct analogy—simple comparison
2. Personal analogy—being the thing
3. Symbolic analogy—compressed conflict

A direct or simple analogy compares two objects or ideas. How is a teacher like a wolf? A personal analogy involves identification with the functions and feelings of an animal or object. Students try to imagine that they are the thing, resulting in both an emotional and a kinesthetic experience. How would it feel to be a pet goldfish in a child's room? The final phase of the model is the symbolic analogy or compressed conflict.

A symbolic analogy is a two-word description with conflicting or opposing words, a paradox. Very simply, the words fight each other. With nervous anticipation the bride prepared for the wedding. The three phases of the synectics model give students an opportunity to see the familiar in new, creative ways. Through the use of analogies students make new connections between the familiar (known knowledge) and the strange (new learning).

Inventors, scientists, artists, and engineers have recognized the role of the metaphor to see the world in new ways. For many years business has used the synectics approach for finding ideas and explaining these new ideas. Now, innovative teachers can use the synectics model to foster thinking in the classroom.
The following suggestions apply to the student pages for Everyday Synectics and Synectics and the Life Sciences. “Direct Analogy Parts 1, 2, and 3” ask students to compare two objects or ideas. It is advisable to work through the exercises orally before assigning the student pages. Students must feel at ease in making the analogies. This can be accomplished by emphasizing that there are no right or wrong answers. Encourage students to think of unusual or innovative comparisons, with the emphasis on the students’ rationale for their analogies.

“Direct Analogy Part 4” forces students to make choices and give reasons for their decisions.

“Direct Analogy Part 5” provides students with a graphic representation of the analogies. Give students the beginning word. They think of two things the original word suggests to them. Next, students take the middle two words and think of one thing the items bring to mind. Finally, students make a comparison using the first and last words.

“Personal Analogy Part 1” gives students a vehicle with which to think about themselves in new and unique ways.

“Personal Analogy Part 2” introduces students to phase two of synectics, personal analogy. Students write a paragraph or page from the point of view of the animal or object. To help students identify with the feelings and emotions of the animal, have them close their eyes. Ask students to see themselves as the animal. Where are they? Are there other animals around? What is happening? How do they feel as the animal? Students are also to imagine how their animal muscles are feeling. Tell students to open their eyes and write about their visualization. By using the visualization technique, students experience the feelings and emotions before writing.

Next, the teacher could guide the class through a similar visualization from the point of view of the object. Where are you? Who owns you? How do you feel about your occurrences? How do your object muscles feel with the various happenings?
“Symbolic Analogy” presents the third and final stage of the model, compressed conflict or symbolic analogy. Students try to think of two words that are in conflict. They are paradoxes. This stage is difficult for many students and should be done together as a whole class or in pairs. Some examples are thunderous silence, calm rage, and hot ice.

The synectics pages can be used as a total unit or several pages at a time can be used throughout the school year. Older students will enjoy the challenge of synectics.
In each of the two boxes below, put as many similar words from the list as you can and state how those words are similar. They don’t necessarily have to be synonyms. They just have to have some kind of similarities. (e.g. “benevolent” means good so a word like “optimistic” is similar)

1. 

How are these words similar?


2. 

How are these words similar?


3. Find two pairs of words that are antonyms. (e.g. objective and sentimental)
Show one instance of *dialogue* that adds to the Tone.

Site an *action or a situation* that adds to the Tone.

List two *adjectives* used that add to the Tone.

Site one *sentence or phrase* used by the author that adds to the Tone.