

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Period: \_\_\_\_\_

### Metaphor/Simile Discussion Prompt

**Instructions:** We'll be looking at some poetry and prose that makes interesting use of figurative language, specifically looking at metaphors (and perhaps some similes). You will need to be prepared to discuss the poetry based on what types of nouns the poet used to create their metaphors. At the end, you need to be able to justify an intelligent opinion about the following essential question:

**What order of nouns is used to create the most intriguing metaphors in poetry and writing?** There are four options below based on the two types of nouns I want you to think about as we discuss.

- **Concrete noun:** a noun WITH physical form, usually a noun that can be experienced by all five senses, but mostly touch. If you can touch it, it's probably concrete—like cement.
- **Abstract noun:** a noun WITHOUT physical form, usually things like an idea or concept (freedom), a quality (thoughtfulness), an emotion (anger) or a state of being (relaxation).

There are four order options, and I've provided short poetry examples of each to enhance your understanding:

|  |   |
|--|---|
| <p>1. <i>Abstract</i> noun compared to <i>Concrete</i> noun</p> <p><u>Fame</u></p> <p><b>Fame is a bee.</b><br/>It has a song -<br/>It has a sting -<br/>Ah, too, it has a wing.</p> <p>(Emily Dickinson)</p>  | <p>2. <i>Abstract</i> noun compared to <i>Abstract</i> noun</p> <p><b>Love is a Madness</b></p> <p>Love is a madness, love is a fevered dream,<br/>A white soul lost in a field of scarlet flowers—<br/>Love is a search for the lost, the ever vanishing gleam<br/>Of wings, desires and sorrows and haunted hours...</p> <p>(Edgar Lee Masters)</p> |
| <p>3. <i>Concrete</i> noun compared to <i>Abstract</i> noun</p> <p><u>Leaves of Grass</u> (from the preface)</p> <p>...And your very <b>flesh</b> shall be a great <b>poem</b><br/>and have the richest fluency not only in its<br/>words but in the silent lines of its lips and face<br/>and between the lashes of your eyes<br/>and in every motion and joint of your body...</p> <p>(Walt Whitman)</p> | <p>4. <i>Concrete</i> noun compared to <i>Concrete</i> noun</p> <p><u>The Garden Hose</u></p> <p>In the gray evening<br/>I see a long green <b>serpent</b><br/>With its tail in the dahlias.<br/>It lies in loops across the grass<br/>And drinks softly at the faucet.<br/>I can hear it swallow.</p> <p>(Beatrice Janosco)</p>                      |

As we discuss poets' use of metaphors and these nouns over the next few lessons, and as we discover them in our writing later this year, we will come back to this discussion prompt. The most important thing you need to do for me, oh student of reading and writing, is be able to justify your opinion by citing examples and sharing metaphors that you have created while writing in this class.

The essential question—once again—is here for you to think about:

**What order of nouns is used to create the most intriguing metaphors in poetry and writing?**

### What type of metaphor/comparison is made in this poem?

concrete noun → compared to concrete noun

concrete noun → compared to abstract noun

abstract noun → compared to concrete noun

abstract noun → compared to abstract noun

### Hope is the thing with Feathers

by Emily Dickinson

Hope is the thing with feathers  
That perches in the soul,  
And sings the tune without the words,  
And never stops at all,

And sweetest in the gale is heard;  
And sore must be the storm  
That could abash the little bird  
That kept so many warm.

I've heard it in the chilliest land  
And on the strangest sea;  
Yet, never, in extremity,  
It asked a crumb of me.



### Interpret & Analyze:

**What's the tone of the poem? What is the message/attitude about *hope*?**

**What message about *hope* do you believe the author wanted to leave you with?**

### Create:

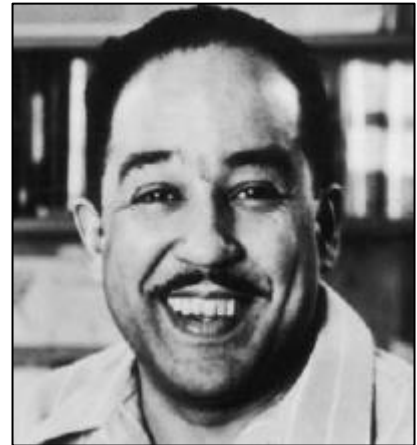
**Work with a partner to come up with two different metaphors about hope. Up for a challenge? Can you create a metaphor that uses a different type of noun (abstract or concrete) on the "receiving end" of the comparison with hope?**

| What type of metaphor/comparison is made in this poem? |   |
|--|---|
| concrete noun → compared to concrete noun              | concrete noun → compared to abstract noun |
| abstract noun → compared to concrete noun              | abstract noun → compared to abstract noun |

## Mother to Son

by Langston Hughes

Well, son, I'll tell you:  
 Life for me ain't been no crystal stair.  
 It's had tacks in it,  
 And splinters,  
 And boards torn up,  
 And places with no carpet on the floor—  
 Bare.  
 But all the time  
 I've been a-climbin' on,  
 And reachin' landin's,  
 And turnin' corners,  
 And sometimes goin' in the dark  
 Where there ain't been no light.  
 So boy, don't you turn back.  
 Don't you set down on the steps  
 'Cause you finds it's kinder hard.  
 Don't you fall now—  
 For I've still goin', honey,  
 I've still climbin',  
 And life for me ain't been no crystal stair.



| Interpret & Analyze:   |
|--|
| What's the tone of the poem? What is the message/attitude about <i>life</i> ?      |
| What message about <i>life</i> do you believe the author wanted to leave you with? |

| Create:   |
|---|
| Work with a partner to come up with two different metaphors about life. Up for a challenge? Can you create a metaphor that uses a different type of noun (abstract or concrete) on the “receiving end” of the comparison with hope? |
| What special name for a metaphor should we invent where you use the word <i>not</i> in the comparison, like the poet did here?  |

| What type of metaphor/comparison is made in this poem? |   |
|--|---|
| concrete noun → compared to concrete noun              | concrete noun → compared to abstract noun |
| abstract noun → compared to concrete noun              | abstract noun → compared to abstract noun |

## Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening

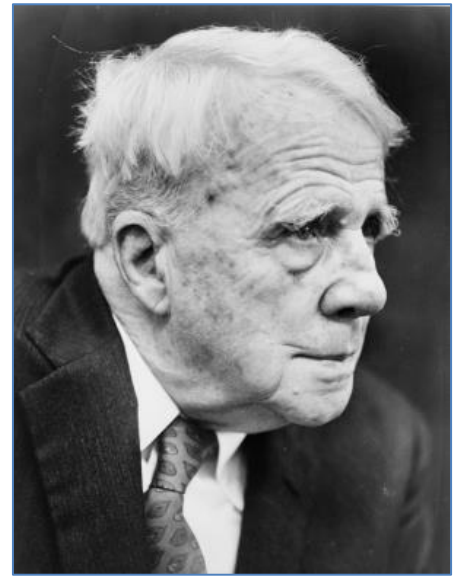
By Robert Frost

Whose woods these are I think I know.  
 His house is in the village though;  
 He will not see me stopping here  
 To watch his woods fill up with snow.

My little horse must think it queer  
 To stop without a farmhouse near  
 Between the woods and frozen lake  
 The darkest evening of the year.

He gives his harness bells a shake  
 To ask if there is some mistake.  
 The only other sound's the sweep  
 Of easy wind and downy flake.

The woods are lovely, dark and deep,  
 But I have promises to keep,  
 And miles to go before I sleep,  
 And miles to go before I sleep.



| Interpret & Analyze:   |
|--|
| <b>There are many interpretations about what the woods actually represent in this poem? Can you come up with a well-worded interpretation that would impress your teacher?</b> |
| <b>What message about <i>life</i> do you believe the author wanted to leave you with?</b>  |

| Create:  |
|--|
| <b>Death or old age can make for interesting metaphors. Choose one of those two abstractions and create a completely original metaphor to share with your classmates. Don't be obvious with your metaphor. Be interesting.</b> |

### What type of metaphor/comparison is made in this poem?

concrete noun → compared to concrete noun

concrete noun → compared to abstract noun

abstract noun → compared to concrete noun

abstract noun → compared to abstract noun

## Roger Heston

by Edgar Lee Masters

Oh many times did Ernest Hyde and I  
Argue about the freedom of the will.  
My favorite metaphor was Prickett's cow  
Roped out to grass, and free you know as far  
As the length of the rope.  
One day while arguing so, watching the cow  
Pull at the rope to get beyond the circle  
Which she had eaten bare,  
Out came the stake, and tossing up her head,  
She ran for us.  
"What's that, free-will or what?" said Ernest, running.  
I fell just as she gored me to my death.



### Interpret & Analyze:

**Is this poem more about freedom or free-will? What *tone* about either topic does the poet want to leave you with?**

**Do you think the author is trying to be more funny or horrible with this story?**

### Create:

**There are very few poems that end with the speaker learning one last lesson before he/she meets his end? What would be another appropriate metaphorical lesson one might learn in the last minute of his or her life? Don't be dark...try to be profound and—perhaps—ironical.**

| What type of metaphor/comparison is made in this poem? |   |
|--|---|
| concrete noun → compared to concrete noun              | concrete noun → compared to abstract noun |
| abstract noun → compared to concrete noun              | abstract noun → compared to abstract noun |

## Metaphors

by Sylvia Plath

I'm a riddle in nine syllables,  
 An elephant, a ponderous house,  
 A melon strolling on two tendrils.  
 O red fruit, ivory, fine timbers!  
 This loaf's big with its yeasty rising.  
 Money's new-minted in this fat purse.  
 I'm a means, a stage, a cow in calf.  
 I've eaten a bag of green apples,  
 Boarded the train there's no getting off.



| Interpret & Analyze:   |
|--|
| <b>The poem is honestly a riddle. What is this metaphorical poem actually about? Read the clues carefully.</b>                         |
| <b>Once you know the answer to the riddle, re-read the poem two more times. What is the poet's tone about the topic of her riddle?</b> |

| Create:  |
|--|
| <b>"I'm a riddle in thirteen syllables." Can you and a partner write the first few lines of a poem wherein you create a metaphor for all those years you have to attend public school? Kindergarten through twelfth grade?</b> |

# Spelling

by Margaret Atwood

My daughter plays on the floor  
with plastic letters,  
red, blue & hard yellow,  
learning how to spell,  
spelling,  
how to make spells.

\*

I wonder how many women  
denied themselves daughters,  
closed themselves in rooms,  
drew the curtains  
so they could mainline words.

\*

A child is not a poem,  
a poem is not a child.

There is no either / or.

However.

\*

I return to the story  
of the woman caught in the war  
& in labour, her thighs tied  
together by the enemy  
so she could not give birth.

Ancestress: the burning witch,  
her mouth covered by leather  
to strangle words.

A word after a word  
after a word is power.

\*

At the point where language falls away  
from the hot bones, at the point  
where the rock breaks open and darkness  
flows out of it like blood, at  
the melting point of granite  
when the bones know  
they are hollow & the word  
splits & doubles & speaks  
the truth & the body  
itself becomes a mouth.

This is a metaphor.

\*

How do you learn to spell?  
Blood, sky & the sun,  
your own name first,  
your first naming, your first name,  
your first word.

## What type of metaphor/comparison is made in this poem?

concrete noun →  
compared to concrete  
noun

concrete noun →  
compared to abstract  
noun

abstract noun →  
compared to concrete  
noun

abstract noun →  
compared to abstract  
noun



## Interpret & Analyze:

**This poem contains many possible metaphors. How many can you discover as you read her use of language (hint!) carefully?**

**Attempt to interpret the last three lines in the first stanza. Do the same for the last three lines of the final stanza. Is she just having fun with language, or is her message anything but fun?**

## Create:

**Is "language" an abstract or concrete noun? What are four different original metaphors for language you think might launch four unique ideas for poems?**