

Hopkins's poem "Spring" and Pound's "In a Station of the Metro," along with other poems that you may wish to include. What similarities and differences do you find in subject matter, treatment, arrangement, and general idea? On the basis of your comparison, what relationships do you perceive between poetic and painterly technique

Creative Writing Assignment

- Write a poem describing one of these:
 - Athletes who have just completed an exhausting run.
 - Children getting out of school for the day.
 - Your recollection of having been lost as a child.
 - A cat that always sits down right on your schoolwork.
 - A particularly good meal you had recently.
 - The best concert you ever attended.
 - Driving to work or school on a rainy or snowy day.

Write an analysis of the images you selected for your poem, and explain your choices. What details stand out in your mind? What do you recall best—sight, smell, sound, action? What is the relationship between your images and the ideas you express in your poem?

Library Assignment

- Use the retrieval system in your library or go online to research the topic of imagery in Shakespeare (see *imagery or style and imagery*). How many titles do you find? Over how many years have these works been published? Take out one of the books or articles, and write a brief report on your findings. What topics are discussed? What types of imagery are introduced? What relationship does the author make between imagery and content?

Chapter 15

Figures of Speech, or Metaphorical Language: A Source of Depth and Range in Poetry

Figures of speech, metaphorical language, figurative language, figurative devices, and rhetorical figures are terms describing organized patterns of comparison that deepen, broaden, extend, illuminate, and emphasize meaning. First and foremost, the use of figures of speech is a major characteristic by which great literature provides us with fresh and original ways of thinking, feeling, and understanding. Although figurative language is sometimes called "ornate," as though it were unnecessarily decorative, it is not uncommon in conversational speech, and it is essential in literary thought and expression. Unlike the writing of the social and "hard" sciences, imaginative literature is not direct and unambiguous, offering exact correspondences of words and things. Yes, literature presents specific and accurate descriptions and explanations, but it also moves in areas of implication and suggestiveness through the use of figurative language, which enables writers to amplify their ideas while still employing relatively small numbers of words. Such language is therefore a *sine qua non* in imaginative literature, particularly poetry, where it compresses thought; deepens understanding, and shapes response.

The two most important figures of speech, and the most easily recognized, are metaphors and similes. There are also many other metaphorical figures, some of which are paradox, anaphora, apostrophe, personification, synecdoche and metonymy, pun (or paronomasia), synesthesia, overstatement, and understatement. All these figures are modes of comparison, and they may be expressed in single words, phrases, clauses, or entire structures.

Metaphors and Similes: The Major Figures of Speech

A Metaphor Shows That Something Unknown Is Identical to Something Known

A metaphor (a "carrying out a change") equates known objects or actions with something that is unknown or to be explained (e.g., "Your words are music to my ears." "You are the sunshine of my life," "My life is a squirrel cage"). The equation of the metaphor not only explains and illuminates the thing—let us choose Judith Minty's concept of marital inseparability in "Conjoined"—but also offers distinctive and original and often startling ways of seeing it and thinking about it. Thus Minty draws her metaphor of a married couple from the joining of two onions

under one onion skin. Here the metaphor is unique and surprising, and yet on examination it is right and natural, and also somewhat comic.

Metaphors are inseparable from language. In a heavy storm, for example, trees may be said to *bow* constantly as the wind blows against them. *Bow* is a metaphor because the word usually refers to performers' bending forward to acknowledge the applause of an audience and to indicate their gratitude for the audience's approval. The metaphor therefore asks us to equate our knowledge of theater life (something known) to a weather occurrence (something to be explained). A comparable reference to theater life creates one of the best-known metaphors to appear in Shakespeare's plays: "All the world's a stage, / And all the men and women merely players." Here, Shakespeare's character Jacques (JAY-queez) from Act 2, scene 7, of *As You Like It*, identifies human life exactly with stage life. In other words, the things said and done by stage actors are also said and done by living people in real life. It is important to recognize that Shakespeare's metaphor does not state that the world is *like* a stage but that it literally *is* a stage.

A Simile Shows That Something Unknown Is Similar to Something Known

A simile (a "showing of likeness or resemblance") illustrates the similarity or comparability of the known to something unknown or to be explained. Whereas a metaphor merges identities, a simile focuses on resemblances (e.g., "Your words are like music to me," "you are like sunshine in my life," "I feel like a squirrel in a cage"). Similes are distinguishable from metaphors because they are introduced by "like" with nouns and "as" (also "as if" and "as though") with clauses. If Minny had written that a married couple is *like* "The onion in my cupboard," her comparison would have been a simile.

Let us consider one of the best-known similes in poetry, from "A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning" by the Renaissance poet John Donne. This is a dramatic poem spoken by a lover about to go on a trip. His loved one is sorrowful, and he attempts to console her by claiming that even when he is gone, he will remain with her in spirit. The following stanza contains the famous simile embodying this idea.

Our two souls therefore, which are one,
Though I must go, endure not yet
A breach,^{break, separation}° but an expansion
Like gold to airy thinness beat.

The simile compares the souls of the speaker and his loved one to gold, a metal both valuable and malleable. By the simile, the speaker asserts that the impending departure will not be a separation but rather a thinning out, so that the relationship of the lovers will remain constant and fervent, even as the distance between them increases. Because the comparison is introduced by *like*, the emphasis of the figurative language is on the *similarity* of the lovers' love to gold (which is always gold, even when it is thinned out by the goldsmith's hammer), not on the *identification* of the two.

Characteristics of Metaphorical Language

In language, the words **image** and **imagery** define words that stimulate the imagination and recall memories (images) of sights, sounds, tastes, smells, sensations of touch, and motions (see Chapter 14). Metaphors and similes go beyond literal imagery to introduce perceptions and comparisons that can be unusual, unpredictable, and surprising, as in Donne's simile comparing the lovers' relationship to gold. The comparison emphasizes the bond between the two lovers; the reference to gold shows how valuable the bond is; the unusual and original comparison is one of the elements that make the poem striking and memorable.

To see metaphorical language in further operation, let us take a commonly described condition—happiness. In everyday speech, we might use the sentence "She was happy" to state that a particular character was experiencing joy and excitement. The sentence is of course accurate, but it is not interesting. A more vivid way of saying the same thing is to use an image of action, such as "She jumped for joy." But another and better way of communicating joy is the following simile: "She felt as if she had just won the lottery." Because readers easily understand the disbelief, excitement, exhilaration, and delight that such an event would bring, they also understand—and feel—the character's happiness. It is the simile that evokes this perception and enables each reader to personalize the experience, for no simple description could help a reader comprehend the same degree of emotion.

As a parallel poetic example, let us look at John Keats's sonnet "On First Looking into Chapman's Homer," which Keats wrote soon after reading the translation of Homer's great epics *The Iliad* and *The Odyssey* by the Renaissance poet George Chapman. Keats, one of the greatest of all poets himself, describes his enthusiasm about Chapman's successful and exciting work.

JOHN KEATS (1795–1821)

On First Looking into Chapman's Homer (1816)

Much have I travell'd in the realms of gold,^{the world of great art}
And many goodly states and kingdoms seen:
Round many western islands° have I been
Which bards in fealty to Apollo° hold.
Oft of one wide expanse° had I been told
That deep-brow'd Homer ruled as his demesne°;
Yet did I never breathe its pure serene°
Till I heard Chapman speak out loud and bold:
Then felt I like some watcher of the skies
When a new planet swims into his ken°;



Keats, estate

George Chapman (c. 1560–1634) published his translations of Homer's *Iliad* in 1612 and *Odyssey* in 1614–15. 4. *bards* . . . Apollo: writers who are sworn subjects of Apollo, the Greek god of light, music, poetry, prophecy, and the sun. 7. *serene*: a clear expanse of air; also grandeur, clarity; rulers were also sometimes called "serene majesty."

Or like stout Cortez^o when with eagle eyes
He star'd at the Pacific—and all his men
Look'd at each other with a wild surmise—
Silent, upon a peak in Darien.

conjecture, suggestion

^o11. Cortez: Hernando Cortez (1485–1547), a Spanish general and the conqueror of Mexico. Keats confuses him with Vasco de Balboa (c. 1475–1519), the first European to see the Pacific Ocean (in 1510) from Darien, an early name for the Isthmus of Panama.

As a first step in understanding the power of metaphorical language, we can briefly paraphrase the sonnet's content.

I have enjoyed much art and read much poetry, and I have been told that Homer is the best writer of all. However, I did not appreciate his works until I first read them in Chapman's clear and forceful translation. This discovery was exciting and awe-inspiring.

If all Keats had written had been a paragraph like this one, we would pay little attention to it, for it conveys no excitement or wonder. But the last six lines of the sonnet contain two memorable similes ("like some watcher of the skies" and "like stout Cortez") that stand out and demand a special effort of imagination. To appreciate these similes fully, we need to imagine what it would be like to be an astronomer as he or she discovers a previously unknown planet, and what it would have been like to be one of the first European explorers to see the Pacific Ocean. As we imagine ourselves in these roles, we get a sense of the amazement, excitement, exhilaration, and joy that would accompany such discoveries. With that experience comes the realization that the world is far bigger and more astonishing than we had ever dreamed. Metaphorical language, therefore, makes strong demands on our creative imaginations. It bears repeating that as we develop our own mental pictures under the stimulation of metaphors and similes, we also develop appropriately associated attitudes and feelings. Let us consider once more how Keats's metaphor "realms of gold" invites us both to imagine brilliant and shining kingdoms and also to join Keats in valuing and loving not just poetry but all literature. The metaphorical "realms of gold" act upon our minds—liberating our imaginations, directing our understanding, and evoking our feelings. In such a way, reading and responding to the works of writers like Keats produces both mental and emotional experiences that were previously hidden to us. Poets constantly give us something new, and they increase our power to think and know. They enlarge us

VEHICLE AND TENOR

To describe the relationship between a writer's ideas and the metaphors and similes chosen to objectify them, two useful terms have been coined by I. A. Richards (in *The Philosophy of Rhetoric* [1929]). First is the **vehicle**, or the specific words of the metaphor or simile. Second is the **tenor**, which is the totality of ideas and attitudes not only of the literary speaker but also of the author.

For example, the tenor of Donne's simile in "A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning" is the inseparable love and unbreakable connection of the two lovers; the vehicle is the hammering of gold "to airy thinness." Similarly, the tenor of the similes in the sestet of Keats's sonnet "On First Looking into Chapman's Homer" is awe and wonder; the vehicle is the description of astronomical and geographical discovery.

Other Figures of Speech

A Paradox Uses an Apparent Error or Contradiction to Reveal Truth

A paradox is "a thought beyond a thought," a figurative device through which something apparently wrong or contradictory is shown to be truthful and non-contradictory. The phrase "I, a child, very old" in Whitman's "Facing West from California's Shores" is a paradox. The obvious contradiction is that no one can be old and young at the same time, but this contradiction can be reconciled if we realize that even as people get older they still retain many of the qualities of children (such as enthusiasm and hope). Thus Whitman's contradiction is not contradictory (is this clause a paradox?) and the speaker may genuinely be "a child, very old." The second line of Sir Thomas Wyatt's sonnet "I Find No Peace" embodies two paradoxes. One opposes fear with hope, the other fire with ice: "I fear and hope, I burn and freeze like ice." These paradoxes reflect the contradictory states of people in love—wanting love ("hope," "burn"), but also being uncertain and unsure about the relationship ("fear," "freeze"). The paradoxes thus highlight the truth that love is a complex and often unsettling emotion.

Anaphora Provides Weight and Emphasis Through Repetition

Anaphora ("to carry again or repeat") is the repetition of the same word or phrase throughout a work or a section of a work in order to lend weight and emphasis. An example occurs in Blake's "The Tyger" (this chapter), when the interrogative word *what* is used five times to emphasize the mystery of evil (italics added).

What the hammer? *what* the chain?
In *what* furnace was thy brain?
What the anvil? *what* dread grasp
Dare its deadly terrors clasp?

Anaphora is the most obvious feature of Muriel Rukeyser's "Looking at Each Other," where the word *yes* begins each of the poem's twenty-five lines.

Apostrophe Creates the Drama of a Speaker Addressing an Audience

In an **apostrophe** (a “turning away,” or redirection of attention) a speaker addresses a real or imagined listener who is not present. It is like a public speech, with readers as audience, and it therefore makes a poem dramatic. An apostrophe enables the speaker to develop ideas that might arise naturally on a public occasion, as in Wordsworth’s sonnet “London, 1802,” which is addressed to the long dead English poet Milton. In the following sonnet by Keats, “Bright Star,” the speaker addresses a distant and inanimate star, yet through apostrophe he speaks as though the star has human understanding and divine power.

JOHN KEATS (1795–1822)

Bright Star (1838; 1819)

Bright star! would I were steadfast as thou art—
Not in lone splendor hung aloft the night,
And watching, with eternal lids apart,
Like Nature’s patient, sleepless eremite,^o
Of pure ablution round earth’s human shores,
Or gazing on the new soft-fallen mask
Of snow upon the mountains and the moors;
No—yet still steadfast, still unchangeable,
Pillow’d upon my fair love’s ripening breast,
To feel forever its soft fall and swell,
Awake forever in a sweet unrest,
Still, still to hear her tender-taken breath,
And so live ever—or else swoon to death.

hermit, a holy person

QUESTIONS

1. With what topic is the speaker concerned in this sonnet? How does he compare himself with the distant star?
2. What qualities does the speaker attribute specifically to the star? What role does he seem to assign to it? In light of this role, and the qualities needed to serve in it, how might the star be compared to a divine and benign presence?
3. In light of the emphasis on the words *forever* and *ever* in lines 11–14, how appropriate is the choice of the star as the subject of the apostrophe in the poem?

In this sonnet the speaker addresses the star as though it is a person or god, an object of adoration, and the poem is therefore like a petitionary prayer. The star is idealized with qualities that the speaker wishes to establish in himself—namely, steadfastness, eternal watchfulness, and fidelity. The point of the apostrophe is thus to dramatize the speaker’s yearning and to stress the permanence of space and eternity as contrasted with earthly impermanence.

Personification Is the Attribution of Human Traits to Abstractions or to Nonhuman Objects

A close neighbor of apostrophe is **personification**, another dramatic figurative device through which poets explore relationships to environment, ideals, and inner lives. In “Bright Star,” as we have just seen, Keats personifies the star addressed by the speaker. Shakespeare’s speaker in Sonnet 146, “Poor Soul, the Center of My Sinful Earth” (Chapter 22) personifies his own soul as he speaks of earthly and heavenly concerns. Other important uses of personification are seen in Shelley’s “Ode to the West Wind” (Chapter 17) and also in Keats’s “To Autumn” (this chapter) and “Ode on a Grecian Urn” (Chapter 22).

Synecdoche and Metonymy Transfer Meanings by Parts and Associations

These figures are close in purpose and effect. **Synecdoche** (“taking one thing out of another”) is a device in which a part stands for the whole or a whole for a part, like the expression “all hands aboard,” which describes the whole of a ship’s crew by their hands, that part of them that performs work. **Metonymy** (a “transfer of name”) substitutes one thing for another with which it is closely identified, as when “Hollywood” is used to mean the movie industry, or when “the White House” signifies the policies and activities of the American president. The purpose of both figures of speech is the creation of new insights and ideas, just as with metaphors and similes.

Synecdoche is seen in Keats’s “To Autumn,” where the gourd and hazel shells, which are single instances of ripe produce, stand for the entire autumnal harvest. In Wordsworth’s “London, 1802,” the phrase “thy heart” (line 13) is a synecdoche in which a part—the heart—refers to the complete person. Metonymy is seen again in Keats’s “To Autumn,” when the “granary floor” (line 14), the place where grain is stored, bears the transferred meaning of the entire autumnal harvest.

Pun, or Paronomasia, Shows That Words with Similar or Identical Sounds Have Different Meanings

A pun (“a point or a puncture”) or **paronomasia** (“something alongside a name”) is wordplay stemming from the fact that words with different meanings have surprisingly similar or even identical sounds and that some individual words have surprisingly differing and even contradictory meanings. Because puns are sometimes considered outrageous and often require a little bit of thinking, people may groan when they hear them (even while they enjoy them). Also, because many puns seem to play only with sound, they have not always enjoyed critical acclaim. Good puns can always be relished because they work with sounds to reveal ideas. John Gay, for example, creates clever puns in the following song, sung chorally by the gang of thieves in *The Beggar’s Opera* (1728), a play that, incidentally, marked the beginning of the modern musical comedy tradition.

JOHN GAY (1685–1732)**Let Us Take the Road** (1728)

Let us take the road.
Hark! I hear the sound of coaches!
The hour of attack approaches,
To your arms, brave boys, and load.
See the ball I hold!^o
Let the chemists' toil like asses,
Our fire their fire surpasses,^o
And turns all our lead to gold.

(Including up a ball!)
alchemists

Our [gun]fire is better than their [lead] fire.

QUESTIONS

1. What traits are shown by the singers of this poem? Why do they not seem frightening despite their admission that they are holdup men, thugs?
2. Describe the puns in the poem. What kind of knowledge is needed to explain them fully? How many puns are there? How are they connected? Why do the puns seem both witty and outrageous?

Here “fire,” “lead,” and “gold” are puns. Lead was the “base” or “low” metal that the medieval alchemists (“chemists”) tried to transform into ingots of gold, using the heat from their fires. The puns develop because the gang of cutthroats singing the song is about to go out to rob travelers at gunpoint. Hence their bullets are their lead, which they plan to transform into the gold coins they steal. Their fire is not the fire of alchemists, but rather pistol fire. Through these puns, Gay’s villains charm us by their wit and delight in their villainy, even though in real life they would scare us to death and make us run away in fear.

Synesthesia Demonstrates the Oneness or Unity of Feelings

In *synesthesia* (the “bringing together of feelings”) a poet describes a feeling or perception with words that usually refer to different or even opposite feelings or perceptions. Keats uses *synesthesia* extensively, as, for example, in the “Ode to a Nightingale” (Chapter 18), where a plot of ground is “melodious,” a draught of wine tastes of “Dance, and Provençal song, and sunburnt mirth,” and beaded bubbles are “winking at the brim” of a wine glass.

Overstatement and Understatement Are Means of Creating Emphasis

Two important devices creating emphasis are *overstatement* (or *hyperbole*), and *understatement*. *Overstatement*, also called the *overreacher*, is exaggeration for effect. In “London, 1802,” for example, Wordsworth declares that England “is a fen/Of stagnant waters.” That is, the country and its people collectively make up a stinking, polluted marsh, a muddy dump. What Wordsworth establishes by this *overstatement* is his judgment that England in 1802 was so morally and politically rotten that it needed a writer like Milton to unite the people around noble ideas.

In contrast with *overstatement*, *understatement* is the deliberate underplaying or undervaluing of a thing. One of the most famous poetic understatements is in Marvell’s “To His Coy Mistress” (Chapter 19).

The grave’s a fine and private place,
But none, I think, do there embrace.

Here Marvell, through *understatement*, wittily and grimly emphasizes the eternity of death by contrasting the motionless privacy of the grave with the active privacy of a trysting place.

Poems for Study

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JACK AGÜEROS (b. 1934)**Sonnet for You, Familiar Famine** (1996)

Nobody’s waiting for any apocalypse to meet you, Famine!

We know you. There isn’t a corner of our round world
Where you don’t politely accompany someone to bed each

night. In some families, you're the only one sitting at the table when the dinner bell tolls. "He's not so bad," say people who have plenty and easily tolerate you. They argue that small portions are good for us, and are just what we deserve. There's an activist side to you, famine. You've been known to bring down governments, yet you never get any credit for your political reforms.

Don't make the mistake I used to make of thinking fat people are immune to famine. Famine has this other ugly side. Famine knows that the more you eat the more you long. That side bears his other frightening name, Emptiness.

QUESTIONS

1. What figure of speech does the poet use in this poem? What situation does the poem address?
2. What is the purpose of using this figure for the poem rather than a more direct analysis of the causes and effects of hunger?
3. What powers does the speaker attribute to Famine? How correct is his assessment of these powers?

WILLIAM BLAKE (1757–1827)

For a portrait, see Chapter 12, page 682.

The Tyger^o (1794)

Tyger! Tyger! burning bright
In the forests of the night,
What immortal hand or eye
Could frame thy fearful symmetry?

- 5 In what distant deeps or skies
Burnt the fire of thine eyes?
On what wings dare he aspire?
What the hand, dare seize the fire?
- 10 And what shoulder, & what art,
Could twist the sinews of thy heart?
And when thy heart began to beat,
What dread hand? & what dread feet?

What the hammer? what the chain?
In what furnace was thy brain?
What the anvil? what dread grasp
Dare its deadly terrors clasp?

^o"Tyger": refers not only to a tiger but also to any large, wild, ferocious cat.

When the stars threw down their spears,
And water'd heaven with their tears,
Did he smile his work to see?
Did he who made the Lamb make thee?

Tyger! Tyger! burning bright
In the forests of the night,
What immortal hand or eye
Dare frame thy fearful symmetry?

QUESTIONS

1. What do the associations of the image of "burning" suggest? Why is the burning done at night rather than day? What does night suggest?
2. Describe the kinesthetic images of lines 5–20. What ideas is Blake's speaker representing by these images? What attributes does the speaker suggest may belong to the blacksmith-type initiator of these actions?
3. Line 20 presents the kinesthetic image of a creator. What is implied about the mixture of good and evil in the world? What answer does the poem offer? Why does Blake phrase this line as a question rather than an assertion?
4. The sixth stanza repeats the first stanza with only one change of imagery of action. Contrast these stanzas, stressing the difference between "could" (line 4) and "dare" (24).

ROBERT BURNS (1759–1796)

For a portrait, see Chapter 12, page 683.

A Red, Red Rose (1796)

O my Luve's like a red, red rose,
That's newly sprung in June:
O my Luve's like the melody
That's sweetly play'd in tune.

As fair art thou, my bonnie lass,
So deep in luve am I;
And I will luve thee still, my Dear,
Till a^o the seas gang^o dry.

Till a^o the seas gang dry, my Dear,
And the rocks melt wi^o the sun:
And I will luve thee still, my Dear,
While the sands o^o life shall run.

And fare thee weel, my only Luve!
And fare thee weel, awhile!
And I will come again, my Luve,
Tho' it were ten thousand mile!

all; go

with 10

of

15

QUESTIONS

1. In light of the character and background of the speaker, do the two opening similes seem common or unusual? If they are just ordinary, does that fact diminish their value? How and why?
2. Describe the shift of listener envisioned after the first stanza. How are the last three stanzas related to the first?
3. Consider the metaphors concerning time and travel. How do the metaphors assist you in comprehending the speaker's character?

JOHN DONNE (1572–1631)

For a portrait, see Chapter 12, page 687.

A Valediction^o: Forbidding Mourning (1633)

As virtuous men pass mildly away,
And whisper to their souls to go,
Whilst some of their sad friends do say
The breath goes now, and some say, No;
So let us melt, and make no noise,
No tear-floods, nor sigh-tempests move,
'Twere profanation of our joys
To tell the laity^o our love.

Moving of th'earth^o brings harm and fears,
Men reckon what it did and meant;
But trepidation^o of the spheres,
Though greater far, is innocent.

Dull sublunary lovers' love
(Whose soul is sense^o) cannot admit
Absence, because it doth remove
Those things which elemented it.

But we by a love so much refined
That our selves know not what it is,
Inter-assured of the mind,
Care less, eyes, lips, and hands to miss.

Our two souls therefore, which are one,
Though I must go, endure not yet
A breach, but an expansion
Like gold to airy thinness beat.^o

^oValediction: the saying of farewell, or goodbye. 7, 8 profanation . . . laity: as though the lovers are priests, if love whose love is a mystery. 11 trepidation: Before Sir Isaac Newton explained the precession of the equinoxes, it was assumed that the positions of heavenly bodies should be constant and perfectly circular. The clearly observable irregularities (caused by the slow wobbling of the earth's axis) were explained by the concept of precession, or a trembling or oscillation that occurred in the outermost of the spheres surrounding the earth. 14 soul is sense: love whose attraction is totally physical. 24 gold to airy thinness beat: a reference to the malleability of gold.

If they be two, they are two so
As stiff twin compasses^o are two;
Thy soul, the fixt foot, makes no show
To move, but doth, if th'other do.

And though it in the center sit,
Yet when the other far doth roam,
It leans and harkens after it,
And grows erect, as that comes home.

Such wilt thou be to me, who must
Like th'other foot, obliquely run;
Thy firmness draws my circle just,^o
And makes me end where I begun.

^oCompass: a compass used for drawing circles. 35 just: perfectly round.

QUESTIONS

1. What is the situation envisioned as the occasion for the poem? Who is talking to whom? What is their relationship?
2. What is the intention of the first two stanzas? What is the effect of the phrases "tear-floods" and "sigh-tempests"?
3. Describe the effect of the opening simile about men on their deathbeds.
4. What is the metaphor of the third stanza (lines 9–12)? In what sense might the "trepidation of the spheres" be less harmful than the parting of the lovers?
5. In lines 13–20 there is a comparison making the love of the speaker and his sweetheart superior to the love of average lovers. What is the basis for the speaker's claim?
6. What is the comparison begun by the word "refined" in line 17 and continued by the simile in line 24?

ABBIE HUSTON EVANS (1881–1983)**The Iceberg Seven-Eighths Under (1961)**

Under the sky at night, stunned by our guesses,
We know, incredibly much and incredibly little,
Wrapped in the envelope of gossamer air,
A clinging mote whirled round in a blizzard of stars,
A chair-cloud of great suns that has not settled,
By the barn's black shoulder where the gibbous moon
Hangs low, no other light making a glimmer
In the dark country, hearing the breathing of cattle—
I do not need that anyone should tell me
Most real goes secret, sunken, nigh-submerged:
Yet does it dazzle with its least part showing,
Like the iceberg seven-eighths under.

QUESTIONS

1. How does the simile of the “iceberg seven-eighths under” explain the “Most real” that “goes secret”? In what way is this simile, together with line 11, an extension of the idea in line 2?
2. What metaphors does the poet use to describe the earth and the people (“We”) on it?
3. Explain the contrast between the metaphors of night and darkness (lines 1, 6, 8) and the use of the word “dazzle” in line 11. How does the poem express awe about the visible universe?

THOMAS HARDY (1840–1928)

For a photo, see Chapter 11, page 656.


The Convergence of the Twain (1912)

Lines on the Loss of the “Titanic”^o

I

In a solitude of the sea
Deep from human vanity,
And the Pride of Life that planned her, stilly couches she.

II

Steel chambers, late the pyres
Of her salamandrine fires,^o
Cold Currents third,^o and turn to rhythmic tidal lyres.

III

Over the mirrors meant
To glass the opulent
The sea-worm crawls—grotesque, slimed, dumb, indifferent.

IV

Jewels in joy designed
To ravish the sensuous mind
Lie lightless, all their sparkles bleared and black and blind.

10

^oThe *Titanic*: The largest passenger ship in existence at the time, and considered unsinkable, was sunk after a collision with an iceberg on its maiden voyage in April 1912. The loss was particularly notable because some of the passengers were among the world's social elite, and 1,500 people died because there were not enough lifeboats for everyone. In 1985 the wreck of the ship was discovered on the ocean floor at a depth of 13,000 feet, and some of the ship's artifacts were recovered. The loss of the *Titanic* has become legendary. 4-5 *Steel chambers* . . . *salamandrine fires*: The idea here is that the “steel chambers” of the ship's furnace were built to resist the high heat of the coal fires, much like the salamander of ancient myth, which was reputedly capable of living through fire.

V

Dim moon-eyed fishes near
Gaze at the gilded gear
And query: “What does this vaingloriousness down here?”

VI

Well: while was fashioning
This creature of cleaving wing,
The Immanent Will that stirs and urges everything

VII

Prepared a sinister mate
For her—so gaily great—
A Shape of Ice, for the time far and dissociate.

VIII

And as the smart ship grew
In stature, grace, and hue,
In shadowy silent distance grew the Iceberg too.

IX

Alien they seemed to be:
No mortal eye could see
The intimate welding of their later history.

X

Or sign that they were bent
By paths coincident
On being anon twin halves of one august event.

XI

Till the Spinner of the Years
Said “Now!” And each one hears,
And consummation comes, and jars two hemispheres.

QUESTIONS

1. What human attributes does Hardy ascribe to the *Titanic*? What pronoun does he regularly use in reference to the ship? What is the name of this figure of speech?
2. What are the meanings of “vanity” (line 2), “Pride of Life” (line 3), and “vaingloriousness” (line 15) in relation to the speaker’s judgment of the meaning of the *Titanic*?
3. Why does Hardy introduce the phrases “Spinner of the Years” (line 31) and “Immanent Will” (line 18)?
4. What is the idea of calling the iceberg the “sinister mate” of the *Titanic* (line 19)? What irony results from this phrase, and from the word “consummation” in the last line of the poem?

15

20

25

30

JOY HARJO (b. 1951)

For a photo, see Chapter 11, page 657.

 **Remember** (1983)

Remember the sky that you were born under,
 know each of the star's stories.
 Remember the moon, know who she is. I met her
 in a bar once in Iowa City.
 Remember the sun's birth at dawn, that is the
 strongest point of time. Remember sundown
 and the giving away to night.
 Remember your birth, how your mother struggled
 to give you form and breath. You are evidence of
 her life, and her mother's, and hers.
 Remember your father. He is your life, also.
 Remember the earth whose skin you are:
 red earth, black earth, yellow earth, white earth
 brown earth, we are earth.
 Remember the plants, trees, animal life who all have their
 tribes, their families, their histories, too. Talk to them,
 listen to them. They are alive poems.
 Remember the wind. Remember her voice. She knows the
 origin of this universe. I heard her singing Kiowa war
 dance songs at the corner of Fourth and Central once.
 Remember that you are all people and that all people
 are you.
 Remember that you are this universe and that this
 universe is you.
 Remember that all in motion, is growing, is you.
 Remember that language comes from this.
 Remember the dance that language is, that life is.
 Remember.

QUESTIONS

1. How many times is the word "remember" repeated in this poem? What is the name of this figure of speech? What is the effect of the repetitions?
2. Who is the speaker, and who is the listener? What is the apparent purpose of stating all the things that the listener is being asked to remember? What is the implication of the word "remember," inasmuch as many of the things designated for remembrance happened before the listener was alive or was old enough to have a memory?
3. What is meant by "the earth whose skin you are" in line 12? Explain the paradox of "you are all people and . . . all people / are you" in lines 21–22.

 **JOHN KEATS** (1795–1821)

For a portrait, see this chapter, page 789.

 **To Autumn** (1820)

Season of mists and mellow fruitfulness!
 Close bosom-friend of the maturing sun;
 Conspiring with him to load and bless
 With fruit the vines that round the thatch-eaves run;
 To bend with apples the mossed cottage-trees,
 And fill all fruit with ripeness to the core;
 To swell the gourd, and plump the hazel shells
 With a sweet kernel; to set budding more,
 And still more, later flowers for the bees,
 Until they think warm days will never cease,
 For Summer has o'erbrimmed their clammy cells.

 Who hath not seen thee oft amid thy store?
 Sometimes whoever seeks abroad may find
 Thee sitting careless on a granary floor,
 Thy hair soft-lifted by the winnowing wind,
 Or on a half-reaped furrow sound asleep,
 Drowsed with the fume of poppies, while thy hook
 Sparses the next swath and all its twined flowers;
 And sometimes like a gleaner thou dost keep
 Steady thy laden head across a brook;
 Or by a cider-press, with patient look,
 Thou watchest the last oozings hours by hours.

 Where are the songs of Spring? Ay, where are they?
 Think not of them, thou hast thy music too,—
 While barred clouds bloom the soft-dying day,
 And touch the stubble-plains with rosy hue;
 Then in a wailful choir the small gnats mourn
 Among the river-sallows, borne aloft
 Or sinking as the light wind lives or dies;
 And full-grown lambs loud bleat from hilly bourn;
 Hedge-crickets sing; and now with treble soft
 The red-breast whistles from a garden-croft;
 And gathering swallows twitter in the skies.

QUESTIONS

1. How is personification used in the first stanza? How does it change in the second? What is the effect of such personification?
2. How does Keats structure the poem to accord with his apostrophe to autumn? That is, in what ways can the stanzas be distinguished by the type of discourse addressed to the season?
3. Analyze Keats's metonymy in the first stanza and synecdoche in the second. What effects does he achieve with these devices?
4. How, through the use of images, does Keats develop his idea that autumn is a season of "mellow fruitfulness"?

MAURICE KENNY (b. 1929) **Legacy** (1984)

my face is grass
 color of April rain;
 arms, legs are the limbs
 of birch, cedar;
 5 my thoughts are winds
 which blow;
 pictures in my mind
 are the climb uphill
 to dream in the sun;
 10 hawk feathers, and quills
 of porcupine running
 the edge of the stream
 which reflects stories
 of my many mornings
 15 and the dark faces of night
 mingled with victories
 of dawn and tomorrow;
 corn of the fields and squash . . .
 the daughters of my mother
 20 who collect honey
 and all the fruits;
 meadow and sky are the end of my day
 the stretch of my night
 yet the birth of my dust;
 25 my winc is the breath of a fawn
 the cry of the cub
 the trot of the wolf
 whose print covers
 the tracks of my feet;
 30 my word, my word,
 loaned
 legacy, the obligation I hand
 to the blood of my flesh
 the sirew of the loins
 35 to hold to the sun
 and the noon
 which direct the river
 that carries my song
 and the beat of the drum
 40 to the fires of the village
 which endures.

QUESTIONS

- Describe some of the paradoxes that Kenny explores in this poem. What do the paradoxes contribute to the speaker's explanation of his identity?

- How can it be said that "meadow and sky are the end of my day / the stretch of my night / yet the birth of my dust" in lines 22–24?
- What is the speaker's legacy? How does it differ from what is usually thought of as a legacy?
- Describe the content of the use of phrases and clauses beginning with "which" in this poem. What is the name of this repetitive usage? What is the effect in this poem?

JANE KENYON (1947–1995) **Let Evening Come** (1990)

Let the light of late afternoon
 shine through chinks in the barn, moving
 up the bales as the sun moves down.
 Let the cricket take up chafing
 as a woman takes up her needles
 and her yarn. Let evening come.
 Let dew collect on the hoe abandoned
 in long grass. Let the stars appear
 and the moon disclose her silver horn.
 Let the fox go back to its sandy den.
 Let the wind die down. Let the shed
 go black inside. Let evening come.
 To the bottle in the ditch, to the scoop
 in the oats, to air in the lung
 let evening come.
 Let it come as it will, and don't
 be afraid. God does not leave us
 comfortless, so let evening come.

QUESTIONS

- This poem features the repetition of phrases beginning with the word *let*. What is this pattern called? How many such phrases does the poem contain? How does the pattern furnish strength to the poem?
- What sorts of activities does the speaker associate with day? With night? How are these activities connected?
- Describe the shift of topic in the last stanza. Does this shift occur logically or illogically from the earlier topic material of the poem? How does the final stanza seem to be an ordinary and necessary part of the activities described in the first five stanzas?

Matthew 28:10
 John 14:18

HENRY KING (1592–1669)**Sic Vita**° (1657)

Like to the falling of a star,
 Or as the flights of eagles are,
 Or like the fresh spring's gaudy hue,
 Or silver drops of morning dew,
 Or like a wind that chafes the flood,
 Or bubbles which on water stood:
 Even such is man, whose borrowed light
 Is straight called in, and paid to night.
 The wind blows out, the bubble dies;
 The spring entombed in autumn lies;
 The dew dries up, the star is shot;
 The flight is past, and man forgot.

°*Sic Vita*: Such is life (Latin).

QUESTIONS

1. How many similes do you find in lines 1–6? Describe the range of references; that is, from what sources are the similes derived? What do all these similes (and references) have in common?
2. Explain the two metaphors in lines 7–8. (One is brought out by the words “borrowed,” “called in,” and “paid,” the other by “light” and “night.”)
3. Explain the continuation in lines 9–12 of the similes in 1–6. Do you think that these last four lines are essential, or might the poem have been successfully concluded with line 8? Explain.
4. What point does this poem make about humanity? In what ways do the similes in the poem help explore these ideas and bring them to life?

ROBERT LOWELL (1917–1977)

Skunk Hour (1959)
For Elizabeth Bishop°

Nautlius Island's° hermit
 heiress still lives through winter in her Spartan cottage;
 her sheep still graze above the sea.
 Her son's a bishop. Her farmer
 is first selectman in our village;
 she's in her dotage.

Thirsting for
 the hierarchic privacy
 of Queen Victoria's century;

°*For Elizabeth Bishop*: Bishop and Lowell were friends. “Skunk Hour” is modeled on Bishop’s “The Armadillo,” full in manuscript in 1958, published in 1965), which she dedicated to Lowell. He, reciprocally, dedicated “Skunk Hour” to her. 1. *Nautlius Island's*: Lowell had a summer house on Nautlius Island, Maine.

she buys up all
 the eysores facing her shore,
 and lets them fall.

The season's ill—
 we've lost our summer millionaire,
 who seemed to leap from an L. L. Bean
 catalogue. His nine-knot yawl
 was auctioned off to lobstermen.
 A red fox stain covers Blue Hill.°

And now our fairy
 decorator brightens his shop for fall;
 his fishnet's filled with orange cork,
 orange, his cobbler's bench and awl;
 there is no money in his work,
 he'd rather marry.

One dark night,
 my Tudor° Ford climbed the hill's skull;
 I watched for love-cars. Lights turned down,
 they lay together, hull to hull,
 where the graveyard shelves on the town. . . .
 My mind's not right.

A car radio bleats,
 “Love, O careless Love. . . .” I hear
 my ill-spirit sob in each blood cell,
 as if my hand were at its throat. . . .
 I myself am hell,
 nobody's here—

only skunks, that search
 in the moonlight for a bite to eat.
 They march on their soles up Main Street:
 white stripes, moonstruck eyes/ red fire
 under the chalk-dry and spar spire
 of the Unitarian Church.

I stand on top
 of our back steps and breathe the rich air—
 a mother skunk with her column of kittens swills the garbage pail.
 She jabs her wedge-head in a cup
 of sour cream, drops her ostrich tail,
 and will not scare.

°*Blue Hill*: a small town near Bangor, Maine. 26 *Tudor*: a pun referring to a Two-Door Ford and to the Tudor ruling family in England, which was followed by the Stuart family in 1603. Queen Elizabeth was the last of the Tudor monarchs. See her poem “On Monsieur's Departure” in this chapter. 32 *careless Love*: a traditional folk and blues song. Love, O careless love, / You fly to my head like wine, / You've ruined the life of many a poor girl, / And you nearly wrecked this life of mine.” Singers like Bessie Smith, Pete Seeger, and Elvis Presley recorded this song, which many othersingers have freely adapted. 35 *I myself am hell*: quoted from Milton's *Paradise Lost*, 4.75.

QUESTIONS

1. What is the significance, if any, of the activities described by the speaker in lines 1–36? Are these ordinary or unusual activities? Why does the speaker state that he went looking for “love cars”? What is the importance of the speaker’s noting that the lovers’ lane is near the local graveyard?
2. In lines 30–36 the speaker makes observations about his mental condition. How does this section correspond to the idea of “confessional” poetry? (See Chapter 21, p. 0000.) Why does the speaker say “My mind’s not right” in line 30 and “nobody’s here” in line 36? Why does he quote John Milton’s Satan by saying “I myself am hell” in line 35?
3. What is the poem’s dominant tense? Why does Lowell use past tenses in the third and sixth stanzas?
4. Describe the meaning of the mother skunk and “column of kittens” in the last two stanzas. Why is it significant that the mother skunk “will not scare”? In what way may the mother skunk and her family be considered metaphorically?

JUDITH MINTY (b. 1937)**Conjoined** (1981)*a marriage poem*

The onion in my cupboard, a monster, actually two joined under one transparent skin: each half-round, then flat and deformed where it pressed and grew against the other.

5 An accident, like the two-headed calf rooted in one body, fighting to suck at its mother’s teats; or like those other freaks, Chang and Eng,⁹⁷ twins joined at the chest by skin and muscle, doomed to live, even make love, together for sixty years.

10 Do you feel the skin that binds us together as we move, heavy in this house? To sever the muscle could free one, but might: kill the other. Ah, but men don’t slice onions in the kitchen, seldom see what is invisible. We cannot escape each other.

⁹⁷ Chang and Eng: born in 1811, the original and most famous Siamese twins. Although they were never separated, they nevertheless fathered twenty-two children. They died in 1874.

QUESTIONS

1. What are the two things—the “us” and “we” of lines 10 and 11—that are conjoined? Since this is “a marriage poem,” might they be the man and the woman? Why might they also be considered as the body and soul of the speaker, or the desire to be married and subordinated, on the one hand, and to be free and in control of destiny, on the other?
2. Explore the metaphor of the onion and the similes of the two-headed calf and the Siamese twins. Why do you think the poet introduces the words “monster,” “accident,”

and “freaks” into these figures in lines 1, 5, and 7? In what sense do you believe that these words are applicable to the nature and plight of women?

3. Is it true that *all* “men / don’t slice onions in the kitchen, seldom see / what is invisible” (lines 13–15)? Explain.
4. The first stanza of this three-stanza poem contains four lines; the second contains five lines; and the third contains six. What reason, if any, can you give for why the poet added a line to each of the stanzas?

PABLO NERUDA (1904–1972)

For a photo, see Chapter 14, page 772.

If You Forget Me (1952; 1963)

Translation by Donald S. Walsh

I want you to know
one thing.

You know how this is:
if I look

at the crystal moon, at the red branch
of the slow autumn at my window,
if I touch

near the fire
the impalpable ash
or the wrinkled body of the log,
everything carries me to you,
as if everything that exists,
aromas, light, metals,
were little boats
that sail

toward those isles of yours that wait for me.

Well, now,

if little by little you stop loving me
I shall stop loving you little by little.

If suddenly

you forget me

do not look for me,

for I shall already have forgotten you.

If you think it long and mad,

the wind of banners

that passes through my life,

and you decide

to leave me at the shore

of the heart where I have roots,
remember

that on that day,
at that hour,
I shall lift my arms
and my roots will set off
to seek another land.

35

But
if each day,
each hour,
you feel that you are destined for me
with implacable sweetness,
if each day a flower
climbs up to your lips to seek me,
ah my love, ah my own,
in me all that fire is repeated,
in me nothing is extinguished or forgotten,
my love feeds on your love, beloved,
and as long as you live it will be in your arms
without leaving mine.

40

45

QUESTIONS

1. What similes and metaphors do you discover in this poem? Explain the paradox in the last stanza.
2. What is the nature of the love the speaker expresses? How strongly and firmly does the speaker express his love? To what degree does he state that his love must be reciprocated to continue to exist?
3. Describe the development of the speaker's thought. Why does he introduce the metaphor that he might possibly lift up his roots "to seek another land"?

MARY OLIVER (b. 1935)

Showing the Birds^o (2008)

Look, children, here is the shy,
flightless dodo; the many-colored
pigeon named the passenger, the
great auk, the Eskimo curlew, the
woodpecker called the Lord God Bird,
the . . .

Come children, hurry—there are so many
more wonderful things to show you in
the museum's dark drawers.

5

^oBirds: Five extinct species of birds among those that were once abundant on earth are named in this poem from the Dodo, which became extinct in the seventeenth century, to the Ivory Billed Woodpecker (the "Lord God Bird"), which has not been reliably sighted since the 1980s. Although at one time Passenger Pigeons and Eskimo Curlews numbered many millions, they were declared extinct long before the end of the twentieth century.

QUESTIONS

1. What is the dramatic situation of this poem? Who is talking to whom? Where is the action of the poem taking place?
2. Describe the effects of anaphora (repetitions) in lines 1 and 7 ("Look, children" and "Come children," and in lines 1 through 6 (the pattern beginning "the . . .").
3. Consider the irony of the last two lines. Should "wonderful things" be found only in the "dark drawers" of the museum? What is the poem's implied idea about where wonderful things, instead, should be found?

MARGE PIERCY (b. 1934)

A Work of Artifice (1973)

The bonsai tree
in the attractive pot
could have grown eighty feet tall
on the side of a mountain
till split by lightning.
But a gardener
carefully pruned it.
It is nine inches high.
Every day as he
whittles back the branches
the gardener croons,
It is your nature
to be small and cozy,
domestic and weak;
how lucky, little tree,
to have a pot to grow in.
With living creatures
one must begin very early
to dwarf their growth:
the bound feet,
the crippled brain,
the hair in curlers,
the hands you
love to touch.

5

10

15

20



QUESTIONS

1. What is a bonsai tree? In what ways is it an apt metaphor for women? The tree "could have grown eighty feet tall." What would be the comparable growth and development of a woman?
2. What do you make of the gardener's song (lines 12–16)? If the bonsai tree were able to respond, would it accept the gardener's consolation? What conclusions about women's lives are implied by the metaphor of the tree?
3. How does the poem shift at line 17? To what extent do the next images (lines 20–24) embody women's lives? How are the images metaphorical?

MURIEL RUKESYER (1913–1980)**Looking at Each Other** (1978)

- 5 Yes, we were looking at each other
 Yes, we knew each other very well
 Yes, we had made love with each other many times
 Yes, we had heard music together
 Yes, we had gone to the sea together
 Yes, we had cooked and eaten together
 Yes, we had laughed often day and night
 Yes, we fought violence and knew violence
 Yes, we hated the inner and outer oppression
 Yes, that day we were looking at each other
 Yes, we saw the sunlight pouring down
 Yes, the corner of the table was between us
 Yes, bread and flowers were on the table
 Yes, our eyes saw each other's eyes
 Yes, our mouths saw each other's mouth
 Yes, our breasts saw each other's breasts
 Yes, our bodies entire saw each other
 Yes, it was beginning in each
 Yes, it threw waves across our lives
 Yes, the pulses were becoming very strong
 Yes, the beating became very delicate
 Yes, the calling the arousal
 Yes, the arriving the coming
 Yes, there it was for both entire
 Yes, we were looking at each other

QUESTIONS

1. What is the dramatic situation of the poem? What sort of listener is the speaker addressing?
2. Describe the rhetorical device at work here. How many different words are being repeated?
3. What is the effect of the repetitions? What is their relationship to the emotions and experiences that the speaker is describing?

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE (1564–1616)

For a portrait, see Chapter 24, page 1354. The following two sonnets are by Shakespeare.

Sonnet 18: Shall I Compare Thee to a Summer's Day? (1609)

Shall I compare thee to a summer's day?
 Thou art more lovely and more temperate:



Rough winds do shake the darling^o buds of May,
 And summer's lease hath all too short a date:
 Sometime too hot the eye of heaven^o shines
 And often is his^o gold complexion dimmed;
 And every fair from fair sometime declines,
 By chance, or nature's changing course, untrimm'd;
 But thy eternal summer shall not fade,
 Nor lose possession of that fair thou owest;^o
 Nor shall Death brag thou wander'st in his shade,^o
 When in eternal lines to time thou growest:
 So long as men can breathe, or eyes can see,
 So long lives this, and this gives life to thee.

¹ *ill thine*. . . *shade*: you are wandering in Death's darkness.

QUESTIONS

1. What is the dramatic situation of the poem? Who is speaking to whom?
2. What do the metaphors in lines 1–8 assert? Why does the speaker emphasize life's brevity?
3. Describe the shift in topic beginning in line 9. How do these lines both deny and echo the subject of lines 1–8?
4. What relationship do the last two lines have to the rest of the poem? What is the meaning of "this" (line 14)? What sort of immortality does Shakespeare exalt in the sonnet?

Sonnet 30: When to the Sessions of Sweet Silent Thought (1609)

When to the sessions^o of sweet silent thought
 I summon^o up remembrance of things past,
 I sigh the lack of many a thing I sought,
 And with old woes new wail my dear time's waste:^o
 Then can I drown an eye (un-used to flow)
 For precious friends hid in death's dateless^o night,
 And weep afresh love's long since canceled^o woe,
 And moan th'expense^o of many a vanished sight.
 Then can I grieve at grievances foregone,
 And heavily^o from woe to woe tell^o o'er
 The sad account of fore-bemoan'd moan,
 Which I new pay, as if not paid before.
 But if the while I think on thee (dear friend)
 All losses are restored, and sorrows end.

¹ *summon*: to issue a summons to appear at a legal hearing. 4 *old woes*. . . *waste*: revive old sorrows about lost opportunities and express sorrow for them again.

QUESTIONS

1. Explain the metaphor of "sessions" and "summon" in lines 1–2. Where are the "sessions" being held? What is a "summons" for remembrance?

dear, cherished
 the sun
 its

owns, possess 10

holding of court

5

endless
 paid in full
 cost, loss

sadly; count 10

2. What is the metaphor brought out by the word “canceled” in line 7? In what sense might a “woe” of love be canceled? Explain the metaphor of “expense” in line 8.
3. What type of transaction does Shakespeare refer to in the metaphor of lines 9–12? What understanding does the metaphor provide about the sadness and regret that a person feels about past mistakes and sorrows?
4. What role does the speaker assign to the “dear friend” of line 13 in relation to the metaphors of the poem?

ELIZABETH TUDOR, QUEEN ELIZABETH I (1533–1603)

On Monsieur's Departure (c. 1560; 1964)

I grieve° and dare not show my discontent,
 I love and yet am forced to seem to hate,
 I do, yet dare not say I ever meant,
 I seem stark mute but inwardly do prate.°
 I am and not, I freeze and yet am burned,
 Since from myself another self I turned.

My care° is like my shadow in the sun,
 Follows me flying, flies when I pursue it,
 Stands and lies by me, doth what I have done.
 His too familiar care° doth make me rue it.
 No means I find to rid him from my breast,
 Till by the end of things it be suppress.

Some gentler passion slide into my mind,
 For I am soft and made of melting snow;
 Or be more cruel, love, and so be kind.
 Let me or float or sink, be high or low.
 Or let me live with some more sweet content.
 Or die and so forget what love ere meant.

QUESTIONS

1. What is the significance of “Monsieur's Departure”? How does this detail prompt the patterns of thought in the poem?
2. Explain the speaker's use of antithesis in the poem to explain her ambivalent situation. How seriously should we take the ideas in lines 12 and 18? Assuming that this is a deeply personal and private lyric, why, granted the speaker's royal status, does she express such contradictory feelings?
3. What is the meaning of the shadow simile in lines 7–10? How well does this comparison reveal her situation?
4. What is explained by the paradoxes in lines 5 and 15?

MONA VAN DUYN (1921–2004)

Earth Tremors Felt in Missouri (1964)

The quake last night was nothing personal,
 you told me this morning. I think one always wonders,

unless, of course, something is visible: tremors
 that take us, private and willy-nilly, are usual.
 But the earth said last night that what I feel,
 you feel, what secretly moves you, moves me.
 One small, sensuous catastrophe
 makes inkings letters, spelled in a worldly tremble.

The earth, with others on it, turns in its course
 as we turn toward each other, less than ourselves, gross,
 mindless, more than we were. Pebbles, we swell
 to planets, nearing the universal roll,
 in our conceit even comprehending the sun,
 whose bright ordeal leaves cool men woebegone.

QUESTIONS

1. In what ways is this poem intensely personal, a “confessional” poem? How does the poem develop materials that might be considered less personal and more public?
2. Why does the speaker equate herself and her listener with the earth? Granted that this metaphor is apt, what is then meant by “earth tremors,” “quake last night,” “Pebbles, we swell/to planets,” and “comprehending the sun”?
3. What feelings are brought out in the last line through the words “ordeal” and “woebegone”?
4. Compare the use of the earth/person metaphor as it is used in this poem and in Donne's “The Good Morrow” (Chapter 22).

DEBORAH WARREN (b. 1946)

Clay and Flame (1999)

Nature . . . has mixed us of clay and flame, of brain and mind.°

—William James

Up from the mineral mud and ore,
 from mildew and bacterium and mold
 and thalphyte° and spore
 to fungus, rust and diatom;
 from moss and fern and flowering seed
 to coral, fluke and worm and snail and centipede
 and from flatworm and snail and centipede
 to fish to swamp, until we come
 to mouse, to monkey—to the brain

°William James, *Principles of Psychology*, Ch. VI: “Nature in her unfathomable designs has mixed us of clay and flume, of brain and mind, that the two things hang indubitably together and determine each other's being, but how or why, no mortal may ever know.” 3 thalphyte: undifferentiated plantlike organisms including lichens, fungi, and algae.

10 that grew in tandem with the thumb:
To tell exactly how we came
from clay is easy. But explain
the place inside the cranium
where all that clay turns into flame.

QUESTIONS

1. Explain the structure of the first ten lines of this fourteen-line sonnet in terms of the repetitions of the pattern of anaphora based on the prepositions “from” and “to.”
2. How “easy” is it, as the speaker suggests, to explain how “we came/from clay”? By contrast, explain why the speaker offers a challenge to readers to explain how the “clay turns into flame.” What is to be understood by “clay” and “flame” here?

WALT WHITMAN (1819–1892)

Facing West from California's Shores (1860)

Facing west from California's shores,
Inquiring, tireless, seeking what is yet unfound,
I, a child, very old, over waves, towards the house of maternity,^o
the land of migrations, look afar,
Look off the shores of my Western sea, the circle almost circled;
For starting westward from Hindustan,^o from the vales of Kashmir,
From Asia, from the north, from the God, the sage, and the hero,
From the south, from the flowery peninsulas^o and the spice islands,^o
Long having wandered since, round the earth having wandered
Now I face home again, very pleased and joyous.
(But where is what I started for so long ago?
And why is it yet unfound?)

^o3 house of maternity: Asia, then considered the cradle of human civilization. 5 Hindustan: India. 7 flowery peninsulas: south India, south Burma, and the Malay peninsula. 7 spice islands: the Molucca Islands of Indonesia.

QUESTIONS

1. What major paradox, or apparently contradictory situation, is described in this poem? How does the poet bring out this paradox? What has the speaker been seeking? Where has he looked for it?
2. Describe the meaning of the phrases “a child, very old”; “where is what I started for”; “the circle almost circled.” In what ways are these phrases paradoxical?
3. Why does the speaker twice use the word “unfound” (lines 2, 11)? How might the word be considered a theme of the poem?

WILLIAM WORDSWORTH (1770–1850)

For a portrait, see Chapter 12, page 700.

London, 1802 (1802; 1807)

Milton! thou should'st be living at this hour:
England hath need of thee: she is a fen^o
Of stagnant waters: altar, sword, and pen,
Fireside, the heroic wealth of hall and bower,
Have forfeited their ancient English dower^o
Of inward happiness. We are selfish men;
Oh! raise us up, return to us again,
And give us manners,^o virtue, freedom, power.
Thy soul was like a star, and dwelt apart:
Thou hadst a voice whose sound was like the sea:
Pure as the naked heavens; majestic, free,
So didst thou travel on life's common way,
In cheerful godliness; and yet thy heart
The lowliest duties on herself did lay.

^omanners: customs, moral codes of social and political conduct.

QUESTIONS

1. What is the effect of Wordsworth's apostrophe to Milton? What elements of Milton's career as a writer does Wordsworth emphasize?
2. In lines 3 and 4, the device of metonymy is used. How does Wordsworth judge the respective institutions represented by the details?
3. Consider the use of overstatement, or hyperbole, from lines 2–6. What effect does Wordsworth achieve by using the device as extensively as he does here?
4. What effect does Wordsworth make through his use of overstatement in his praise of Milton in lines 9–14? What does he mean by the metonymic references to “soul” (line 9) and “heart” (line 13)?

SIR THOMAS WYATT (1503–1542)

I Find No Peace (1557)

I find no peace, and all my war is done,
I fear and hope, I burn and freeze like ice;
I fly above the wind yet can I not arise;
And naught I have and all the world I season.
That looeth nor locketh holdeth me in prison,^o
And holdeth me not, yet I can scape^o nowise;
Nor leeth me live nor die at my devise,^o
And yet of death it giveth none occasion.
Without eyes^o I see, and without tongue I plain,^o
I desire to perish, and yet I ask health;
I love another, and thus I hate myself;

^o1 fear . . . prison: that is, “that which neither lets me go nor contains me holds me in prison.” At the time of Wyatt, *th* was used for the third person singular present tense. 9 plain: express desires about love.

bay, marsh

widow's inheritance

10

5

escape
choice

eyes

10

I feed me in sorrow, and laugh in all my pain.
Likewise displeaseth me both death and life^o
And my delight is causer of this strife.

^o13 *Likewise* . . . *life*: literally, “it is displeasing to me, in the same way, both death and life.” That is, “both death and life are equally distasteful to me.”

QUESTIONS

1. What situation is the speaker reflecting upon? What metaphors and similes express his feelings? How successful are these figures?
2. How many paradoxes are in the poem? What is their cumulative effect? What is the topic of the paradoxes in lines 1–4? In lines 5–8? Why does the speaker declare that hating himself is a consequence of loving another? Why is it ironic that his “delight” is the “causer of this strife”?
3. To what extent do you think the paradoxes express the feelings of a person in love, particularly because in the sixteenth century free and unchaperoned meetings of lovers were not easily arranged?

WRITING TOPICS ABOUT FIGURES OF SPEECH

Begin by determining the use, line by line, of metaphors, similes, or other rhetorical figures. Obviously, similes are the easiest figures to recognize because they introduce comparisons with the words *like* or *as*. Metaphors can be recognized because the topics are discussed not as themselves but as other topics. If the poems speak of falling leaves or law courts but the subjects involve memory or increasing age, you are looking at metaphors. Similarly, if the poet is addressing an absent person or a natural object, or if you find clear double meanings in words, you may have apostrophe, personification, or puns.

Questions for Discovering Ideas

- What figures of speech does the work contain? Where do they occur?
- Under what circumstances? How extensive are they?
- How do you recognize them? Are they signaled by a single word or phrase, such as “desert places” in Frost’s “Desert Places” (Chapter 18), or are they more extensively detailed, as in Shakespeare’s Sonnet 30, “When to the Sessions of Sweet Silent Thought”?
- How vivid are the figures? How obvious? How unusual? What kind of effort is needed to understand them in context?
- Structurally, how are the figures developed? How do they rise out of the situation envisioned in the poem? To what degree are the figures integrated into the poem’s development of ideas? How do they relate to other aspects of the poem?
- Is one type of figure used in a particular section while another type predominates in another section? Why?

- If you have discovered a number of figures, what relationships can you find among them (such as the judicial and financial connections in Shakespeare’s “When to the Sessions of Sweet Silent Thought”)?
- How do the figures of speech broaden, deepen, or otherwise assist in making the ideas in the poem forceful?
- In general, how appropriate and meaningful are the figures of speech in the poem? What effect do the figures have on the poem’s tone, and on your understanding and appreciation of the poem?

Strategies for Organizing Ideas

For this essay, you might choose one of two types of compositions. One is a full-length essay. The other, because some rhetorical figures may occupy only a small part of the poem, is a single paragraph. Let us consider the single paragraph first.

1. *A paragraph.* For a single paragraph you need only one topic, such as the hyperbole used in the opening of Wordsworth’s sonnet “London, 1802.” The goal is to deal with the single figure and its relationship to the poem’s main idea. Thus the essay should describe the figure and discuss its meaning and implications. It is important to begin with a comprehensive topic sentence, such as one that explains the cleverness of the puns in Gay’s “Let Us Take the Road,” or the use of paradox in Wyatt’s “I Find No Peace.”

2. *A full-length essay.* One type of essay might examine just one figure, if the figure is pervasive enough in the poem to justify a full treatment. Most often, the poet’s use of metaphors and similes is suitable for extensive discussion. A second type of essay might explore the meaning and effect of two or more figures, with the various parts of the body of the essay being taken up with each figure. The unity of this second kind of essay is achieved by linking a series of two or three different rhetorical devices to a single idea or emotion.

In the introduction, relate the quality of the figures to the general nature of the work. Thus, metaphors and similes of suffering might be appropriate to a religious, redemptive work, while those of sunshine, cheer, and flowers might be right for a romantic one. If there is any discrepancy between the metaphorical language and the topic, you could consider that contrast as a possible central idea, for it would clearly indicate the writer’s ironic perspective. Suppose that the topic of the poem is love, but the figures put you in mind of darkness and cold: What might the poet be saying about the quality of love? You should also try to justify any claims that you make about the figures. For example, one of the similes in Coleridge’s “Kubla Khan” (Chapter 14) compares the sounds of a “mighty fountain” to the breathing of the earth in “fast thick pants.” How is this simile to be taken? As a reference to the animality of the earth? As a suggestion that the fountain, and the earth, are dangerous? Or simply as a comparison suggesting immense, forceful noise? How do you explain your answer or answers? Your introduction is the place to establish ideas and justifications of this sort.

The following approaches for discussing rhetorical figures are not mutually exclusive, and you may combine them as you wish. Most likely, your essay will bring in most of the following classifications.

1. *Interpret the meaning and effect of the figures.* Here you explain how the figures enable you to make an interpretation. In the second stanza of "A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning," for example, the following metaphor introduces church hierarchy and religious mystery to explain lovers and their love.

"I were profanation of our joys
To tell the laity our love.

Here Donne emphasizes the mystical relationship of two lovers, drawing the metaphor from the religious tradition whereby any popular explanation of religious mysteries is considered a desecration. A directly explanatory approach such as this requires that metaphors, similes, or other figures be expanded and interpreted, including the explanation of necessary references and allusions.

2. *Analyze the frames of reference and their appropriateness to the subject matter.* Here you classify and locate the sources and types of the references and determine the appropriateness of these to the poem's subject matter. Ask questions similar to those you might ask in a study of imagery: Does the writer refer extensively to nature, science, warfare, politics, business, reading (e.g., Shakespeare's metaphor equating personal reverie with courtroom proceedings)? Does the metaphor seem appropriate? How? Why?

3. *Focus on the interests and sensibilities of the poet.* In a way this approach is like strategy 2, but the emphasis here is on what the selectivity of the writer might show about his or her vision and interests. You might begin by listing the figures in the poem and then determining the sources, just as you would do in discussing the sources of images generally. But then you should raise questions like the following: Does the writer use figures derived from one sense rather than another (i.e., sight; hearing; taste; smell; touch)? Does he or she record color, brightness, shadow, shape, depth, height, number, size, slowness, speed, emptiness, fullness, richness, drabness? Has the writer relied on the associations of figures of sense? Do metaphors and similes referring to green plants and trees, to red roses, or to rich fabrics, for example, suggest that life is full and beautiful, or do references to touch suggest amorous warmth? This approach is designed to help you draw conclusions about the author's taste or sensibility.

4. *Examine the effect of one figure on the other figures and ideas of the poem.* The assumption of this approach is that each literary work is unified and organically whole, so that each part is closely related and inseparable from everything else. Usually it is best to pick a figure that occurs at the beginning of the poem and then determine how this figure influences your perception of the rest of the poem. Your aim is to consider the relationship of part to parts and part to whole. The beginning of Donne's "A Valediction:

Forbidding Mourning," for example, contains a simile comparing the parting of the speaker and his listener to the quiet dying of "virtuous men." What is the effect of this comparison upon the poem? To help you with questions like this, you might substitute a totally different detail, such as, here, the violent death of a condemned criminal, or the slaughter of a domestic animal, rather than the deaths of "virtuous men." Such suppositions, which would clearly be out of place, may help you understand and then explain the poet's figures of speech.

In your conclusion, summarize your main points, describe your general impressions, try to describe the impact of the figures, indicate your personal responses, or show what might further be done along the lines you have been developing. If you know other works by the same writer, or other works by other writers who use comparable or contrasting figures, you might explain the relationship of the other work or works to your present analysis.

Illustrative Student Paragraph

Wordsworth's Use of Overstatement in "London, 1802"¹⁰

Through overstatement in "London, 1802," Wordsworth emphasizes his tribute to Milton as a master of idealistic thought.¹¹ The speaker's claim that England is "a fen/Of stagnant waters" (lines 2-3) is overstated, as is the implication that people ("We") in England have no "manners, virtue, freedom, power" (6, 8). With the overstatements, however, Wordsworth implies that the nation's well-being depends on the constant flow of creative thoughts by persons of great ideas. Because Milton was clearly the greatest of these, in the view of Wordsworth's speaker, the overstatements stress the need for leadership. Milton is the model, and the overstated criticism lays the foundation in the real political and moral world for the rebirth of another Milton. Thus, through overstatement, Wordsworth emphasizes Milton's importance and in this way pays tribute to him.

¹⁰This poem appears on page 817.

¹¹Central idea.

Commentary on the Paragraph

This paragraph deals with a single rhetorical figure, in this case Wordsworth's overstatements in "London, 1802." Although most often the figure of speech will be fairly obvious, as this one in "London, 1802" is, prominence is not a requirement. In addition, there is no need to write an excessively long paragraph. The goal here is not to describe all the details of Wordsworth's overstatement but to show how the figure affects his tribute to Milton. For this reason the paragraph illustrates clear and direct support of the major point.

Illustrative Student Essay

Although underlined sentences are not recommended by MLA style, they are used in this illustrative essay as teaching tools to emphasize the central idea, thesis sentence, and topic sentences.

Carter 1

David Carter
Professor Hernandez
English 123
17 December 2010

A Study of Shakespeare's Metaphors in Sonnet 30:

"When to the Sessions of Sweet Silent Thought"^o

[1] In this sonnet Shakespeare's speaker stresses the sadness and regret of remembered experience, but he states that a person with these feelings may be cheered by the thought of a friend. His metaphors, cleverly used, create new and fresh ways of seeing personal life in this perspective. * He presents metaphors drawn from the public and business world of law courts, money, and banking or money-handling. †

[2] The courtroom metaphor of the first four lines shows that memories of past experience are constantly present and influential. Like a judge commanding defendants to appear in court, the speaker "summon[s]" his

^oThis poem appears on page 813.

* Central idea.

† Thesis sentence.

Carter 2

memory of "things past" to appear on trial before him. This metaphor suggests that people are their own judges and that their ideals and morals are like laws by which they measure themselves. The speaker finds himself guilty of wasting his time in the past. Removing himself, however, from the strict punishment that a real judge might require, he does not condemn himself for his "dear time's waste," but instead laments it (4). The metaphor is thus used to indicate that a person's consciousness is made up just as much of self-doubt and reproach as by more positive qualities.

[3] With the closely related reference of money in the next group of four lines, Shakespeare shows that living is a lifelong investment and is greatly valuable for this reason. According to the money metaphor, living requires the spending of emotions and commitment to others. When friends move away and loved ones die, it is as though a fortune has been lost. Thus, the speaker's dead friends are "precious" because he invested time and love in them, and the "sights" that have "vanished" from his eyes make him "moan" because he went to great "expense" for them (8).

[4] Like the money metaphor, the metaphor of banking or money-handling in the next four lines emphasizes that memory is a bank in which life's experiences are deposited. The full emotions surrounding experience are recorded there, and may be withdrawn in moments of "sweet silent thought" just as a depositor may withdraw money. Thus the speaker states that he counts out the sad parts of his experience—his woe—just as a merchant or banker counts money: "And heavily from woe to woe tell o'er" (10). Because strong emotions still accompany his memories of past mistakes, the metaphor extends to borrowing and the payment of interest. The speaker thus says that he pays again with "new" woe the accounts that he had already paid with old woe. The metaphor suggests that the past is so much a part of the present that a person never stops feeling pain and regret.

[5] The legal, financial, and money-handling metaphors combine in the last two lines to show how a healthy present life may overcome past regrets. The "dear friend" being addressed in these lines has the resources (financial) to settle

Carter 3

all the emotional judgments that the speaker as a self-judge has made against himself (legal). It is as though the friend is a rich patron who rescues him from emotional bankruptcy (legal and financial) and the possible doom resulting from the potential sentence of emotional misery and depression (legal).

- [6] In these metaphors, therefore, Shakespeare's references are drawn from everyday public and business actions, but his use of them is creative and brilliant. In particular, the idea of line 8 ("And moan th' expense of many a vanished sight") stresses that people spend much emotional energy in preserving their friendships. Without such personal commitment, one cannot have precious friends and loved ones. In keeping with this metaphor of money and investment, one could measure life not in months or years, but in the spending of emotion and involvement in personal relationships. Shakespeare, by inviting readers to explore the values brought out by his metaphors, gives new insights into the nature and value of life.

Carter 4

Work Cited

- Shakespeare, William. "Sonnet 30: When to the Sessions of Sweet Silent Thought." *Literature: An Introduction to Reading and Writing*. Ed. Edgar V. Roberts and Robert Zweig. 10th ed. New York: Pearson Longman, 2012. 813. Print.

Commentary on the Essay

This essay treats the three classes of metaphors that Shakespeare introduces in Sonnet 30. It thus illustrates the second strategy described on page 820. But the aim of the discussion is not to explore the extent and nature of the comparison between the metaphors and the personal situations described in the sonnet. Instead, the object is to explain how the metaphors develop Shakespeare's meaning. This essay therefore also illustrates the first strategy described on page 820.

In addition to providing a brief description of the sonnet, the introduction brings out the central idea and the thesis sentence. Paragraph 2 deals with the meaning of Shakespeare's courtroom metaphor. His money metaphor is explained

in paragraph 3. Paragraph 4 considers the banking or money-handling figure. Paragraph 5 shows how Shakespeare's last two lines bring together the three strands of metaphor. The conclusion comments generally on the creativity of Shakespeare's metaphors, and it also amplifies the way in which the money metaphor leads toward an increased understanding of life.

Throughout the essay, transitions are brought about by the linking words in the topic sentences. In paragraph 3, for example, the words "closely related" and "next group" move the reader from paragraph 2 to the new content. In paragraph 4, the words effecting the transition are "like the money metaphor" and "the next four lines." The opening sentence of paragraph 5 refers collectively to the subjects of paragraphs 2, 3, and 4, thereby focusing them on the new topic of paragraph 5.

Writing Topics About Figures of Speech in Poetry

Writing Paragraphs

1. Consider one metaphor or simile from a poem in this chapter. Write a paragraph in which you answer the following questions. How effective is this metaphor or simile? How does the metaphor or simile help you to better understand the poem?

Writing Essays

1. Study the simile of the "stiff twin compasses" in Donne's "A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning." Using such a compass or a drawing of one, write an essay that demonstrates the accuracy, or lack of it, of Donne's descriptions. What light does the simile shed on the relationship of two lovers? How does it emphasize any or all of these aspects of love: closeness, immediacy, extent, importance, duration, intensity?
2. Consider some of the metaphors and similes in various poems in which you are interested. Write an essay that answers the following questions. How effective are the figures you select? (Examples: a rose [Burns], an iceberg [Evans], the sunken *Titanic* [Hardy], the summer's day [Shakespeare].) What insights do the figures provide within the contexts of their respective poems? How appropriate are they? Might they be expanded more fully, and if they were, what would be the effect?
3. Consider some of the other rhetorical figures in the poems of this chapter. Write an essay describing the importance of figures of speech in creating emphasis and in extending and deepening the ideas of poetry. Here are some possible topics, all on poems in this chapter.
 - a. Paradox in Wyatt's "I Find No Peace" or Whitman's "Facing West from California's Shores."
 - b. Paradox and apparent contradiction in Kenny's "Legacy."
 - c. Metaphor in Minty's "Conjoined" or Piercy's "A Work of Artifice."
 - d. Metaphor and simile in Evans's "The Iceberg Seven-Eighths Under" or in Hardy's "The Convergence of the Twain."

- e. Anaphora in Rukeyser's "Looking at Each Other," Harjo's "Remember," Kenyon's "Let Evening Come," Oliver's "Showing the Birds," or Warren's "Clay and Flame."
- f. A comparison of contrasts and paradoxes in Queen Elizabeth's "On Monsieur's Departure" and Wyatt's "I Find No Peace."
- g. Similes in King's "Sic Vita" or Donne's "A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning," personification in the poems by Wordsworth, Keats, or Agüeros, metonymy in Keats's "To Autumn."

Creative Writing Assignment

1. Write a poem in which you create a governing metaphor or simile. Examples: "My girlfriend/boyfriend is like (a) an opening flower, (b) a difficult book, (c) an insoluble mathematical problem, (d) a bill that cannot be paid, (e) a slow-moving chess game." "Teaching a person how to do a particular job is like (a) shoveling heavy snow, (b) climbing a mountain during a landslide, (c) having someone force you underwater when you're gasping for breath." When you finish, describe the relationship between your comparison and the development and structure of your poem.

Library Assignment

1. In your library's reference section, find the third edition of J. A. Cuddon's *A Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Theory* (1991) or some other dictionary of literary terms that you find under "List of literary terms" on Google. Study the entries for *metaphysical* and *conceit*, and write a brief report on these sections. You might attempt to answer questions like these: What is meant by the word *conceit*? What are some of the kinds of conceit the reference work discusses? What is a metaphysical conceit? Who are some of the writers considered metaphysical? In the "metaphysical" entry, of what importance is John Donne?

Chapter 16

Tone: The Creation of Attitude in Poetry

Tone, a concept derived from the phrase *tone of voice*, describes the shaping of attitudes in poetry (see also Chapter 6, on tone and style in fiction). Each poet's choice of words governs the reader's responses, as do the participants and situations in the poem. In addition, the poet shapes responses through denotation and connotation, seriousness or humor, irony, metaphors, similes, understatement, overstatement, and other figures of speech (see Chapter 15). Of major importance is the poem's speaker. How much self-awareness does the speaker show? What is his or her background? What relationship does the speaker establish with listeners and readers? What does the speaker assume about the readers and about their knowledge? How do these assumptions affect the ideas and the diction?

To compare poetic tone with artistic tone, see the reproduction of Fernand Léger's painting *The City* (p. 1–8). A viewer's response to the painting depends on the relationships of the various shapes to Léger's arrangement and color. The signs, stairs, pole, and human figures in the painting are all common in modern cities. By cutting them up or leaving them partially hidden, Léger creates an atmosphere suggesting that contemporary urban life is truncated, sinister, and even threatening.

The same control applies to poetic expression. The sentences must be just long enough to achieve the poet's intended effect—no shorter and no longer. In a conversational style there should be few if any formal words, just as in a formal style there should be no slang, no rollicking rhythms, and no frivolous rhymes—that is, unless the poet deliberately wants readers to be startled or shocked. In all the features that contribute to a poem's tone, the poet's consistency of intention is primary. Any unintentional deviations will cause the poem to sink and the poet to fail.

Tone, Choice, and Response

Remember that a major objective of poets is to stimulate, enrich, and inspire readers. Poets may begin their poems with a brief idea, a vague feeling, or a fleeting impression. Then, in the light of their developing design, they *choose* what to say—the form of their material and the words and phrases to express their ideas. The poem "Theme for English B" by Langston Hughes illustrates this process in almost outline form (see Chapter 21, p. 1112). Hughes's speaker lays out many interests that he shares with his intended reader, his English teacher, for the poem is imagined to be a response to a classroom assignment. In this way Hughes encourages all readers to accept his ideas of human equality.

In the long run, readers might not accept all the ideas in any poem, but the successful poem gains agreement—at least for a time—because the poet's control

