Poetry With Metaphors

People have used metaphors since the birth of mankind. Metaphors are a way to get around censorship as well as to help us see truths that we may not be able to face if they were stated plainly. It is a way to accentuate beauty as well as pain through this medium of the unstated comparison. When you are reading an appropriate metaphor you are immediately drawn between the truth of the comparison that is being alluded to. The ability to understand metaphoric language opens the key to poetry of tremendous beauty.

Consider: What is the extended metaphor here? What are all of the different points of connection?

Memory

BY [LAWSON FUSAO INADA](https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems-and-poets/poets/detail/lawson-inada)

Memory is an old Mexican woman

sweeping her yard with a broom.

She has grown even smaller now,

residing at that vanishing point

decades after one dies,

but at some times, given

the right conditions—

an ordinary dream, or practically

anything in particular—

she absolutely looms,

assuming the stature

she had in the neighborhood.

This was the Great Valley,

and we had swept in

to do the grooming.

We were on the move, tending

what was essentially

someone else's garden.

Memory's yard was all that

in miniature, in microcosm:

rivers for irrigation,

certain plants, certain trees

ascertained by season.

Without formal acknowledgment,

she was most certainly

the head of a community, American.

Memory had been there forever.

We settled in around her;

we brought the electricity

of blues and baptized gospel,

ancient adaptations of icons,

spices, teas, fireworks, trestles,

newly acquired techniques

of conflict and healing, common

concepts of collective survival. . .

Memory was there all the while.

Her house, her shed, her skin,

were all the same— weathered—

and she didn't do anything, especially,

except hum as she moved;

Memory, in essence, was unmemorable.

Yet, ask any of us who have long since left,

who have all but forgotten that adulterated place

paved over and parceled out by the powers that be,

and what we remember, without even choosing to,

is an old woman humming, sweeping, smoothing her yard: Memory.

A Broken Family Tree

By Lori McBride, Published on February 2006

I am one of many  
Small branches of a broken tree,  
Always looking to the ones above  
For guidance, strength and security.  
One little branch trying  
To keep the others from breaking away.  
Who will fall?  
And who will stay?  
Now I stand alone,  
Looking at the earth through the rain,  
And I see the broken branches I knew  
Scattered about me in pain.  
There are those who have taken an ax  
To the root of our very foundation  
And who have passed this destruction  
Down to every new generation.  
If I could take that ax,  
I would toss it deep into the sea,  
Never to return again  
To harm the generations that follow me.  
I am one of many,  
But alone I will go  
And plant the new seeds  
Where a beautiful tree will grow.

When writing metaphors, it is important that you choose things that you can articulate the similarities, without badgering them. The more points of connection between two ideas, the stronger the metaphor, AS LONG AS they are all make sense, at least on some level.

For each of the video poems, write down the metaphor and at least 2-3 ways the two things that are being compared are similar.

[Taylor Mali—“Why Falling in Love is Like Owning a Dog”](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8LcYt7qZhOs&index=76&list=PLYJDMCz0UyGi71WJNPw8JllY9USHO_hF9)

[Brenna Twohy—“Anxiety: A Ghost Story”](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5Rj3mxA_wZA)

Your turn:

* Write two metaphors or similes that have at least 3 things in common.

Metaphor/Simile 1: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ is like \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

because a.

and b.

and c.

Metaphor/Simile 2: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ is like \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

because a.

and b.

and c.