

## GED Language Arts Reading Poetry: Figurative Language

### Lesson 13

Selections: "Dream Deferred" by Langston Hughes  
"Martin Luther King Jr. by Gwendolyn Brooks

#### OBJECTIVES FOR THE STUDENT

- Understand the importance of figurative language in poetry.
- Recognize and interpret metaphors, including implicit metaphors.
- Distinguish between similes and metaphors.
- Understand the literary terms rhetorical question and quatrain.

#### Dream Deferred

Langston Hughes

What happens to a dream deferred?

Does it dry up

like a raisin in the sun?

Or fester like a sore--

5 And then run?

Does it stink like rotten meat?

Or crust and sugar over--

like a syrupy sweet?

Maybe it just sags

10 like a heavy load.

*Or does it explode?*

## **Martin Luther King Jr.**

Gwendolyn Brooks

A man went forth with gifts.

He was a prose poem.<sup>1</sup>

He was a tragic grace.

He was a warm music.

5 He tried to heal the vivid volcanoes.

His ashes are  
reading the world.

His Dream still wishes to anoint  
the barricades of faith and or control.

10 His word still burns the center of the sun,  
above the thousands and the  
hundred thousands.

The word was Justice. It was spoken.

So it shall be spoken.

15 So it shall be don.

**1. prose poem:** a brief, intense passage that is printed as a prose in complete lines but contains elements of poetry such as rhythm, rhyme, figures of speech, alliteration, and vivid images.

## Critical Thinking

1. Langston Hughes uses the literary technique of the rhetorical question to involve the reader in the poem. Demonstrate that you understand the term *rhetorical question* by defining it. Then find the rhetorical questions asked in the poem.

### **rhetorical question:**

2. Hughes also uses similes to make an impression upon the mind of the reader. Define the term simile and list the five similes in the poem to understand the poet's quandary of never realizing a dream.

### **simile:**

3. Gwendolyn Brooks uses metaphor to draw the character of Martin Luther King for her audience. Both metaphor and simile are figurative language. How does a metaphor differ from a simile?

4. Identify the metaphors in lines 3 and 4 of the poem. Discuss what each metaphor suggests about Martin Luther King.

5. Find three other metaphors that are *implicit metaphors*, or metaphors suggested by context. For each example, note the image the metaphor suggests.

## REVIEWING THE SELECTIONS

Choose the one best answer for each of the following questions.

1. According to the poem "Martin Luther King Jr.," King's ideas
  - a. are no longer heard today.
  - b. were more like poetry than prose.
  - c. caused volcanoes to erupt.
  - d. continue to be important.
  
2. In "Martin Luther King Jr." justice
  - a. is something that people talk about but never get.
  - b. was spoken of by Martin Luther King Jr., and will be achieved in the future.
  - c. will never be more than a dream.
  - d. It will make a person ambitious.
  
3. In "Dream Deferred" what does the narrator suggest will happen to an unfulfilled dream?
  - a. It will become explosive.
  - b. It will disappear.
  - c. It will help feed a person's soul.
  - d. It will make a person ambitious.
  
4. The poem "Martin Luther King Jr." implies that King

- a. had completed what he set out to do in life.
  - b. made efforts that were largely unsuccessful.
  - c. began something that is still being carried on.
  - d. should have been more careful.
4. In Langston Hughes's poem, the lines "Maybe it just sags / like a heavy load" suggest that a dream deferred
- a. will always fall short of reality.
  - b. becomes a heavy weight.
  - c. is an easy burden to shoulder.
  - d. is not easy for a weak person to carry.
5. One of Langston Hughes's purposes in writing "Dream Deferred" was probably to
- a. issue a warning.
  - b. write a song.
  - c. entertain the reader.
  - d. help people understand their dreams.

## GED Language Arts Reading

### Poetry: Figurative Language

#### Lesson 13 (Key)

##### Critical Thinking

Student's answers should contain the basic elements of the following. Answers will particularly vary when the question is "what does an image suggest?"

1. rhetorical questions - questions asked for dramatic effect with no answer expected.
  - a. What happens to a dream deferred? b. Does it dry up like a raisin in the sun?
  - c. Or fester like a sore and then run? d. Does it stink like rotten meat?
  - e. Or crust and sugar over--like a syrupy sweet?
2. simile - a direct comparison between two unlike things that are connected by the words *like*, *as*, or *resembles*, or the verbs *appears* or *seems*. Examples: "dry up *like* a raisin in the sun," "fester *like* a sore," "stink *like* rotten meat," "sugar over *like* a syrupy sweet," "sags *like* a heavy load."
3. A metaphor is an implied comparison between two unlike or dissimilar, things. It does not use the words *like*, *as*, or *resembles* as does the simile.
4. The metaphors are "a tragic grace" and "a warm music." "Tragic grace" perhaps implies nobility or a kind of serene confidence that destined the man to a sorrowful end. "Warm music" suggests that King was human--warm, responsive, enriching and fulfilling.

5. The verb "heal" in line 5 evokes an image of a restorer, one who offers hope to the desperate. The "vivid volcanoes" in that same line suggest explosive people and situations caused by fighting and hatred. "His ashes are reading the world" is an image of King dead but in the afterlife still hoping for peace among people. "His Dream still wishes to anoint the barricade of faith and of control" suggests King's message of "free at last" still sounds among his followers. "His word still burns the center of the sun" associates King with God and the message of hope he brought to the downtrodden.

**Reviewing Selections**

1. **d** 2. **b** 3. **a** 4. **c** 5. **b** 6. **a**