**Extended Metaphor**

**Definition:** An extended metaphor is a comparison that is continued in a piece of literature for more than a single reference. It might be contained in a few lines, stanzas, or an entire poem. An author uses an extended metaphor to build a larger comparison between two things. Extended metaphors are often used to teach a moral lesson to the reader.

**Teenager Definition:** Comparing two things in a number of ways in a poem

Examples:

**Mother to Son by Langston Hughes**

Langston Hughes compares life to a crystal stair in his poem, Mother to Son.

*Well, son, I’ll tell you:*
*Life for me ain’t been no crystal stair.*
*It’s had tacks in it,*
*And splinters,*
*And boards torn up, And places with no carpet on the floor –*  
*Bare.*
*But all the time*
*I’se been a-climbin’ on,*
*And reachin’ landin’s,*
*And turnin’ corners,*
*And sometimes goin’ in the dark*
*Where there ain’t been no light.*
*So boy, don’t you turn back.*
*Don’t you set down on the steps*
*‘Cause you finds it’s kinder hard.*
*Don’t you fall now –*
*For I’se still goin’, honey,*
*I’se still climbin’,*
*And life for me ain’t been no crystal stair.*
Explanation:
In this extended metaphor the narrator details how life is NOT like a crystal stair and uses imagery that is very opposite of crystal to create a message. The mother is detailing her experiences and struggles by describing her staircase as being tainted by “splinters” with “boards torn up” and “bare.” However, she has been and is still “climbing” which elevates the metaphor of the staircase as a means to get somewhere higher or better. By detailing her struggles to her son, she is imparting advice as well as inspiration.

Practice: Select one of the three poems below and write a paragraph explaining how the poet uses an extended metaphor to build a larger comparison and teach a moral lesson.

The Road Not Taken by Robert Frost

Two roads diverged in a yellow wood,
And sorry I could not travel both
And be one traveler, long I stood
And looked down one as far as I could
To where it bent in the undergrowth;

Then took the other, as just as fair,
And having perhaps the better claim

Because it was grassy and wanted wear,
Though as for that the passing there
Had worn them really about the same,

And both that morning equally lay
In leaves no step had trodden black.
Oh, I kept the first for another day!
Yet knowing how way leads on to way
I doubted if I should ever come back.

I shall be telling this with a sigh
Somewhere ages and ages hence:
Two roads diverged in a wood, and I,
I took the one less traveled by,
And that has made all the difference.
Identity by Julio Noboa Polanco

Let them be as flowers,
always watered, fed, guarded, admired,
but harnessed to a pot of dirt.
I’d rather be a tall, ugly weed,
clinging on cliffs, like an eagle
wind-waver ing above high, jagged rocks.
To have broken through the surface of stone,
to live, to feel exposed to the madness
of the vast, eternal sky.
To be swayed by the breezes of the ancient sea,
carrying my soul, my seed, beyond the mountains of time
or into the abyss of the bizarre.
I’d rather be unseen, and if
then shunned by everyone
than to be a pleasant-smelling flower,
growing in clusters in the fertile valley,
where they’re praised, handled, and plucked
by greedy, human hands.
I’d rather smell of musty, green stench
than of sweet, fragrant lilac.
If I could stand alone, strong and free,
I’d rather be a tall, ugly weed.
Depression

By: Joi Tribble

I hold you and caress you
for the glittering serpent you are.

I kiss you as you bite me,
spreading your sweet poison.

I love you as you choke me
and destroy all I am.

And as your sharp fangs sink deeper into my soul,
I cling to you tighter for you have become dearer than life itself.

Your sparkling eyes entrance me with promises
of companionship

Yet all you offer is a draught of loneliness.

Still, I cannot break away from you.

I drain my cup of isolation and beg for me.

And you offer me more as you wrap yourself tighter;

I become numb to your poison as I drink my misery.

And I cling to you, my devilish friend,

For you are all I have left.