

Brainstorming for Writing Extended Metaphor Poems

Let's get warmed up:

A metaphor compares an object, idea or feeling, or person to something else, without using the word "like"; for example,

My bedroom is a pig-pen.
Her laughter is music to my ears.
My friend is a walking party.

You are used to seeing simple metaphors in parts of poems. An extended metaphor poem uses one metaphor for the entire poem; (see examples).

Now you try one:

1. Decide what or whom you want to compare.
2. With the qualities of that person or thing in mind, decide what you want to compare that person or thing to.
3. Brainstorm words that come to mind about that thing
4. Think about what qualities they share.
5. Put it into a poem!

Examples of Extended Metaphor Poems

The Toaster

A silver-scaled Dragon with jaws flaming red
Sits at my elbow and toasts my bread.
I hand him fat slices, and then, one by one,
He hands them back when he sees they are done.

- William Jay Smith

Steam Shovel

The dinosaurs are not all dead.
I saw one raise its iron head,
To watch me walking down the road
Beyond our house today.
Its jaws were dripping with a load
Of earth and grass that it had cropped.
It must have heard me where I stopped,
Snorted white steam my way,
And stretched its long neck out to see,
And chewed, and grinned quite amiably.

- Charles Malam

Perhaps some of us, like the poet Beatrice Janosco, have imagined that our garden hose is really a serpent drinking from the garden tap.

The Garden Hose

In the grey evening
I see a long green serpent
With its tail in the dahlias

It lies In loops across the grass
And drinks softly at the faucet.
I can hear it swallow.

- Beatrice Janosco

Subway

Every day I step into a coffin with strangers.
Nailing hurriedly my own coffin.
I go toward the city to be buried alive.

- Etsuro Saxamoto

Subway - Metaphor questions

- a) Why is the poet's comparison of the subway to a coffin appropriate?
- b) What other words continue the poet's coffin image?