



Essential Words: LTAB Online 2020

Lesson plans and writing prompts for teens



Identifying & Creating Metaphor

by Wafaa Mustafa

DURATION: 1.5 hours
GRADE LEVEL: Middle & High School
WRITING LEVEL: Experienced
FOCUS: metaphor, origin stories

EXAMPLE TEXT

[Thinking Like a Split Melon](#)

by Jamaal May

Check in | 15 minutes

When do you feel most creative or most inspired?

OVERVIEW | What about our consciousness allows us to compare the fullness of the moon to the fullness of a pregnant belly, or a tree to a person? Where does metaphor begin?

Resource Building | 15 minutes

EXERCISE | Do you ever interpret your dreams? **Make a list of images in them that symbolize or represent something else.** If you cannot remember a dream, write about an image from a dream and what it could mean (Example: falling, losing teeth, an open door, etc.)

Close Reading | 20 minutes

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

- What is the poem saying about broken things?
- How is it different from the way we may typically think about broken things?
- Why does the poem reference time and age in terms of lost journal scribbles? What did your 6th grade self write in the margins of notebooks?
- What is the poet saying about our five senses and their creative capacity?
- Does the body know metaphors before the brain does? (Example: **Snakes** are symbols we use to represent evil. Is it because we see how they **slither** to move, and so they might be thought of as **sneaky**?)

Writing Prompt | 20 minutes

Where does metaphor begin? Personify the metaphor and give it an origin story.

OR You find an old journal or notebook with poems written by your younger self. **Write that old journal entry from the perspective of your younger self.**



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Thinking Like a Split Melon

by Jamaal May

In a sixth grader's notebook
only two lines are written:

*I go outside. I look at the stars.
Then I'm sad because of death and stuff—*

At a funeral when I was her age, I punched
dots into the program with a bow
compass then held it to the light

to trace paths I drew between holes.
Those constellations. The paths
drawn between neurons. Their firing

is how I think.

She adds in pencil

*the castle of the mind is full
of hundreds of bright specters—*

and I wonder what's going on in her head
and mine. *What sky did we fall from?*

sounds like an appropriate question,
when I think about it

but it's too much to ask a child, right?

..

Outside, I ask a steel sculpture
ascending from the depths
of museum grass if I am
contextualized by its immensity.

The bending blades of grass
told me it's not appropriate
to ascribe words—

which become ideas,



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and soon become my ideas—

to them, as they've done nothing wrong.

The wind says
nothing
we can't figure out on our own,

I said, but no one was talking to me.

••

A melon falls from a bag,
a platoon of ants pours in
and out of its gash,

and I wonder if it takes being broken
open and emptied
to be filled with something new.

Didn't a poet say cracks are how light gets in everything?

I'm probably mixing that up.

But this is how I think. Give me a box,
and I'll fill it with dirt
or fill it with water
or fill it with both

and trouble that mire
with whatever stick I happen to find.

[Thinking Like A Split Melon by Jamaal May, The Collagist](#)