

Extended Metaphor

Extended Metaphor Definition

The term “extended [metaphor](#)” refers to a [comparison](#) between two unlike things that continues throughout a series of sentences in a paragraph, or lines in a poem. It is often comprised of more than one sentence, and sometimes consists of a full paragraph.

Extended Metaphor Examples in Prose

Example #1: *Seize the Night* (By Dean Koontz)

“Bobby Holloway says my imagination is a three-hundred-ring circus. Currently I was in ring two hundred and ninety-nine, with elephants dancing and clowns cart wheeling and tigers leaping through rings of fire. The time had come to step back, leave the main tent, go buy some popcorn and a Coke, bliss out, cool down.”

(Dean Koontz, *Seize the Night*. Bantam, 1999)

Here, it can be seen that the “circus” has been compared to the author’s “imagination.”

Example #2: *The Yiddish Policeman’s Union* (By Michael Chabon)

“It never takes longer than a few minutes, when they get together, for everyone to revert to the state of nature, like a party marooned by a shipwreck. That’s what a family is. Also the storm at sea, the ship, and the unknown shore. And the hats and the

whiskey stills that you make out of bamboo and coconuts. And the fire that you light to keep away the beasts.”

(Michael Chabon, *The Yiddish Policeman’s Union*. Harper, 2007)

In the excerpt quoted above, the writer has compared “family” with a “shipwreck.”

Example #3: *Life on the Mississippi* (By Mark Twain)

“One day [Mr. Bixby] turned on me suddenly with this settler — ‘What is the shape of Walnut Bend?’”

“He might as well have asked me my grandmother’s opinion of protoplasm. I reflected respectfully, and then said I didn’t know it had any particular shape. My gun powdery chief went off with a bang, of course, and then went on loading and firing until he was out of adjectives.”

“I had learned long ago that he only carried just so many rounds of ammunition, and was sure to subside into a very placable and even remorseful old smooth-bore as soon as they were all gone.”

(Mark Twain, *Life on the Mississippi*. Webster, 1883)

Here, it can be seen that the writer makes use of metaphors like “gun powdery,” “firing,” and “ammunition” to describe the “anger” of Mr. Bixby.

Example #4: *As You Like It* (By William Shakespeare)

“All the world’s a stage, and all the men and women merely players;

They have their exits and their entrances; And one man in his time plays many parts.”

Shakespeare has remarkably compared “earth” to a “stage” in the excerpt

Example #5: *Romeo and Juliet* (By William Shakespeare)

“But soft! What light through yonder window breaks?
It is the East, and Juliet is the sun!
Arise, fair sun, and kill the envious moon,
Who is already sick and pale with grief.”

Here again, Shakespeare has made use of extended metaphor by comparing “Juliet” with the “sun.”

Example of Extended Metaphor in Poetry

Example #6: *Hope is the Thing with Feathers* (By Emily Dickinson)

“Hope is the thing with feathers
That perches in the soul,
And sings the tune – without the words,
And never stops at all,

“And sweetest in the gale is heard;
And sore must be the storm
That could abash the little bird
That kept so many warm.

“I’ve heard it in the chilliest land,
And on the strangest sea;
Yet, never, in extremity,
It asked a crumb of me.”

In the poem given above, Emily Dickinson has remarkably made use of the tool of extended metaphor by comparing “hope” with the “little bird.”

Example of Extended Metaphor in Hip-Hop

“But if you was LeBron James then I’d be Dwyane Wade
We both graduated at the same time from the same grade

But that champion ring was one thing you never could grasp,
I was slightly rated lower had to fight to gain exposure
and that might've made me slower
but now I have taken over
And I'm down in Miami's Heat,
living my boyhood dreams
And for you to do what I've done,
you'd have to join MY team!"

(By Iron Solomon)

In the extract quoted above, Iron Solomon makes a comparison between
"LeBron James" and "Dwyane Wade."

Short Examples of Extended Metaphor

Life is like eating a grapefruit. First, one breaks its skin; then one takes a few bites to get used to its taste, and finally one starts enjoying its flavor.

The dark is an unknown and scary black blanket, a place of nightmares. It is a deep hole where light cannot reach, and where horror resides.

Their heart is icy, blood frosty, its ventricles rich with icicles; and their words have turned into ice cubes that can chill iced tea.

Life is a book, lying on a tabletop, its pages outspread like a thousand wings of a bird.

I elegantly bloom in July,

Clad in a delicate silk,

I am a fringed lily.

Poetry is melody to mind,

It flows and rhymes,

It comforts and triggers the thought.

The world is a stage,

where everyone is a player,

and then the curtain falls.

The human brain is a computer. It has programs that allow thinking, acting, and making decisions.

He is a bright star, shining all the time, and helping and guiding everyone.

Maria's eyes are fireflies, sparkling, speaking, and expressing many things.

They are pointing guns at the people, who are bullets of their desires.

You are an eagle,
Soaring higher than the seagull.
The café is a forest,
Where wild animals scramble for food.
Painting is an untamed animal,
That a painter is free to show his/her feelings.
My room is a dreamland,
With fluffy pillows its clouds
And Chirping birds its angels.

Extended Metaphor Examples in Literature

Example #1: *The Road Not Taken* (By Robert Frost)

“Two roads diverged in a yellow wood ...
I took the one less traveled by,
And that has made all the difference.”

In this poem, Frost compares life experiences and journeys to roads that a person travels. By using extended metaphor, he explicates that a harder path gives greater rewards in life.

Example #2: *Mother to Son* (By Langston Hughes)

“Well, son, I’ll tell you:
Life for me ain’t been no crystal stair ...

I’ve still climbin’,
And life for me ain’t been no crystal stair.”

Hughes makes a comparison between life and a crystal stair throughout this poem. A mother in the poem is detailing her struggles and experiences by explaining her staircase is tainted by “splinters” and is “bare.” Despite this, she keeps “climbing,” which further heightens the staircase metaphor, as a vehicle to get better or higher. Her struggles give inspiration as well as advice to her son.

“Marriage is not
a house or even a tent

“it is before that, and colder: ...

“this far
we are learning to make fire.”

Atwood has used extended metaphor of a habitation to explain marriage. She believes marriage is not a stable shelter, like a “house or even a tent.” She rather describes it as an unstable “edge” of the forest or desert. The poem is a description of a couple “learning to make fire,” while trying to survive “painfully.” This extended metaphor implies that, though marriage is tough, it makes a person learn new things.

Functions of Extended Metaphor

Extended metaphor provides the writer with an opportunity to make a larger comparison between two things or notions. The device of extended metaphor is usually employed in [prose](#) and poetry to project a specific impression regarding things or notions in the reader’s mind. Further, the tool serves to project the comparison intensely in the reader’s mind, than is the case when simple metaphors or similes are used.