

MAD ABOUT METAPHORS

Here is a poem packed full of metaphors, in which one object, action or event is compared to another without the use of the words 'like' or 'as'.

Night Boat From Thebes

when the sun is a sigh across the back
of a slumbering beast
shadow night limps with a bent-stick moon
slowly from the east
hovering river kings crowd the air hungry
to spear unwitting fish
a rabble of mosquitoes jostle to feast on
its human dish
the pharaoh awaits the knot of our hands
and shoulders of brother slaves
to start his blind journey to the house of
his father - our eyes must be caves
for we are on Earth to nurse his sail and
cradle his oar
our very breath belongs to he who needs
it no more
but another sapling is ready to grow in the
sand and draw tears from the sky
and dance to the tune of the slave's lullaby



Now underline the metaphors, then answer the questions on the next page.

1. Who is the narrator?

The slave.

2. What time of day is it when the narrator is speaking?

Sunset.

3. What is the **slumbering beast**?

The Earth.

4. A crescent moon is in the sky. How do you know?

It is described as a 'bent-stick' moon.

5. What are the **hovering river kings**?

Kingfishers.

6. The words **rabble** and **jostle** are used to describe the mosquitoes. Why are these words appropriate?

There are a lot of them competing to bite the human beings present.

7. Although slaves play an important part, they are not permitted to watch. How do you know?

The narrator says: "Our eyes must be caves."

8. What two words tell us the slaves' work must be done as silently and respectfully as possible?

nurse cradle

9. Who or what is **another sapling ... ready to grow in the sand**?

The next in line to the throne.

10. What are **tears from the sky**?

Rain