**“Letter from Birmingham Jail” – Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. (August, 1963)**

**PURPOSE: To not only appreciate Dr. Martin Luther King as an important figure in civil rights, but to analyze and recognize his rhetorical intellect—how he ingeniously used figurate language and logic to make his arguments.**

**Section Three: Rhetorical Devices: Metaphors, Similes, Repetition, and Rhetorical Questions**

This week we are going to look at how Dr. King uses the following ***rhetorical devices*** in his letter to make his argument (the ***rhetoric*** of his letter).

As a refresher, a ***metaphor*** compare two things that are not alike without using “like” or “as.”

**Absolute Metaphors** - These metaphors compare two things that have no obvious connection, in order to make a striking point. For example, "She is doing a tightrope walk with her grades this semester."

**Dead Metaphors** - Like clichés, these metaphors have lost their punch through over-usage. For example, "You light up my life."

**Extended Metaphors** - These are exactly as they sound. They're lengthy metaphors that are intended to create deep comparisons, as in this classic example from Romeo and Juliet: "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."

**Implied Metaphors** - These metaphors compare two things without using specific terms. For example, "Spending too much time with him is worse than swimming in a sea of sharks."

**Mixed Metaphors** - These metaphors jumble comparisons together, often without any logic. For example, "In the heat of the moment, she turned to ice and danced to the beat of her own drum."

**Root Metaphors** - These metaphors are so rooted in everyday language and assumptions, we hardly even recognize them as metaphors. You could liken them to dead metaphors or clichés, due to their over usage. For example, "Life is a journey."

**---------- PRINT OR SAVE THE ABOVE DEFINITIONS FOR FUTURE REFRENCE ----------**

A ***simile*** compares two things that are not alike using “like” or “as.” For example:

As cute as a kitten As cold as ice

As happy as a clam Cool as a cucumber

As light as a feather Blind as a bat

***Repetition*** is when words or phrases are repeated. Repetition is often used in poetry or song, and it is used to create rhythm and bring attention to an idea. Repetition is also often used in speech as a rhetorical device ***to bring attention to an idea***.

Examples of repetition:

“Nory was a Catholic because her mother was a Catholic, and Nory’s mother was a Catholic because her father was a Catholic, and her father was a Catholic because his mother was a Catholic, or had been.” (Nicholson Baker, *The Everlasting Story of Nory)*

*This sentence brings attention to “Catholic” as an inherited trait rather than a true religious belief. Think: “You get a car, and you get a car, and you get a car!”*

Hatred was spreading everywhere, blood was being spilled everywhere, wars were breaking out everywhere.” (Shusaku Endo, *Deep River*)

*The author clearly wants you to understand that no place is safe.*

“So I said yes to Thomas Clinton and later thought that I had said yes to God and later still realized I had said yes only to Thomas Clinton.” (Ann Patchett, *The Patron Saint of Liars*)

*The author is emphasizing her strong desire to answer in the affirmative.*

***Rhetorical Questions*** are questions that are not intended to be literally answered, but are ***asked in order to make a point.***

This is **NOT** a rhetorical question: Have you ever owned a dog?

This **is** a rhetorical question: "Must I argue the wrongfulness of slavery? Is that a question for republicans? Is it to be settled by the rules of logic and argumentation, as a matter beset with great difficulty, involving a doubtful application of the principle of justice, hard to understand?" (Frederick Douglass, "What to the Slave Is the Fourth of July?" July 5, 1852)

**Your assignment for this week:**

1. Find two metaphors in Dr. King’s letter.

Type out the metaphors (please don’t copy and paste). Don’t forget to cite the page number.

Explain the simile in your own words: what does Dr. King literally mean?

Explain what point Dr. King is trying to make.

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Explain the metaphor in your own words: what does Dr. King literally mean?

Explain the point Dr. King is trying to make.

1. Find two examples of repetition in Dr. King’s letter.

Type out the repetition (please don’t copy and paste). Don’t forget to cite the page number.

State the idea that Dr. King is trying to emphasize.

In your own words, explain why this idea is important to his overall message.

1. Find two examples of rhetorical questions in Dr. King’s letter.

Type out the rhetorical questions (please don’t copy and paste). Don’t forget to cite the page number.

In your own words, explain what point Dr. King is trying to make with his questions.