

Simile

N. Scott Momaday

What did we say to each other
that now we are as the deer
who walk in single file
with heads high
5 with ears forward
with eyes watchful
with hooves always placed on
firm ground
in whose limbs there is latent flight

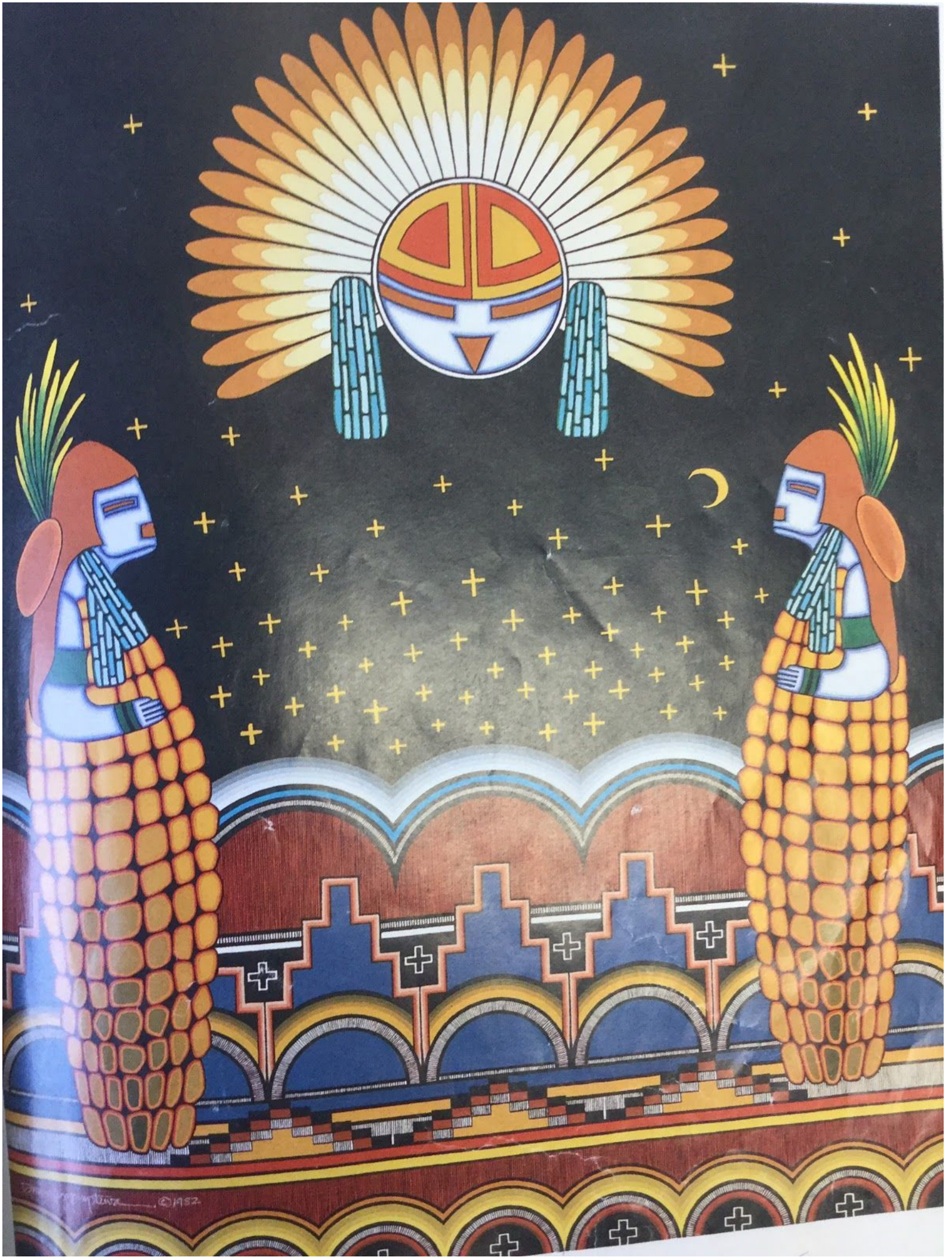
8 latent (lāt'nt): present but not active; potential.

Thinking Through the Literature

1. How would you describe the **mood**, or feeling, of this poem?
2. **ACTIVE READING UNDERSTANDING COMPARISONS** Review the chart that you completed in your **READER'S NOTEBOOK** for this poem. What human emotions and experiences are evoked by comparing the two people to deer?

THINK ABOUT

- the relationship between the speaker and the person being addressed
 - the physical description of the deer
 - what is suggested by the first line of the poem
3. How do you think the **speaker** feels about the future of the relationship he is describing? Explain your opinion.
 4. Is it possible for two people to remain close without sometimes quarreling? Share your opinions with classmates.



Mondrian Dancing (1984–1985),
Susan Rothenberg. Oil on canvas,
78 ¼" × 91". St. Louis (Missouri)
Art Museum. Purchase: Funds given
by the Shoenberg Foundation, Inc.



Moon

Carl
Sandburg

Rondeau

“Love is a door we shall open together.”
So they told each other under the moon
One evening when the smell of leaf mould
And the beginnings of roses and potatoes
5 Came on a wind.

Late in the hours of that evening
They looked long at the moon and called it
A silver button, a copper coin, a bronze wafer,
A plaque of gold, a vanished diadem,
10 A brass hat dripping from deep waters.

“People like us,
us two,
We own the moon.”

3 leaf mould: a mixture of decomposed leaves and other organic material.

9 diadem (dī'ə-dēm'): a crown.

Thinking Through the Literature

- 1. Comprehension Check** What happens in this poem?
- 2. ACTIVE READING UNDERSTANDING COMPARISONS** Refer to the chart you made for this poem in your **READER'S NOTEBOOK**. In this poem, the two people in love compare the moon to six different objects. What do these comparisons suggest about the couple and their relationship?
- 3.** How do you interpret the poem's last three lines, and how do those lines help you to understand the rest of the poem?

WOMAN

Nikki Giovanni

she wanted to be a blade
of grass amid the fields
but he wouldn't agree
to be the dandelion

5 she wanted to be a robin singing
through the leaves
but he refused to be
her tree

10 she spun herself into a web
and looking for a place to rest
turned to him
but he stood straight
declining to be her corner

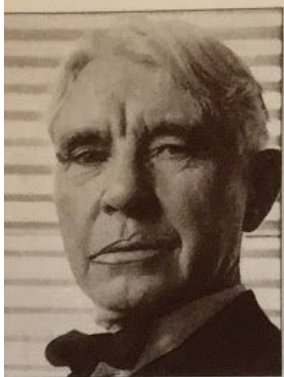
15 she tried to be a book
but he wouldn't read

she turned herself into a bulb
but he wouldn't let her grow

20 she decided to become
a woman
and though he still refused
to be a man
she decided it was all
right



White Breeze (1995),
Jonathan Green.
Oil on canvas, 48" x 60".
Collection of Gilbert
and Elizabeth Ney.



Carl Sandburg

1878–1967

Other Works

Selected Poems of Carl Sandburg
Honey and Salt
The American Songbag
Good Morning, America
Abraham Lincoln

Jack of All Trades Sandburg was born in Galesburg, Illinois, to Swedish parents. He finished grammar school at age 13 and started driving a milk wagon. Over the coming years, he held a long series of jobs, among them harvesting ice, washing dishes, and working for a tinsmith. After serving in the Spanish-American War (April–August 1898), Sandburg attended Lombard College in Galesburg, where he captained the basketball team and edited the college newspaper. After college, he continued from job to job, with stints as a salesman, fireman, pamphleteer, and newspaperman.

Rise to Fame In 1914, Sandburg published a group of poems in *Poetry* magazine, and two years later, his first book of poems, *Chicago Poems*. With those two publications, Sandburg embarked on his path to widespread fame. Over the next 50 years, he wrote poetry, history, biography, and fiction; his biography of Abraham Lincoln is considered one of the great works of the 20th century. Sandburg had a deep, rich voice and traveled widely to read his poetry, sometimes accompanying himself on the guitar.

The Good Life Despite his fame, Sandburg continued to lead a modest life, wanting most “to be out of jail, . . . to eat regular, . . . to get what I write printed, . . . a little love at home, . . . [and] to sing every day.” Sandburg won two Pulitzer Prizes, one in poetry and one in history.

Author Activity

What’s Poetry? In his book *Good Morning, America*, Sandburg provides 38 definitions of poetry. Look them up and discuss them with your class. How do they fit the poems you have read?

Nikki Giovanni

1943–

Other Works

Black Feeling, Black Talk/Black Judgement
Cotton Candy on a Rainy Day
Those Who Ride the Night Winds
Conversations with Nikki Giovanni
Truth Is on Its Way



Young Militant Nikki Giovanni’s maternal grandmother was one of the great inspirations of her life. She was outspoken and proud of her race, and Giovanni grew up to be like her grandmother. In college, she became an activist in the black political movements of the 1960s, and her first volumes of poems combine militant rage with skillful wordplay. These volumes established Giovanni as a leading voice among contemporary African-American poets. In the early 1970s, after the birth of her son Tommy, her work became more introspective, turning from the political to the personal. She began to concentrate and sharpen her powers as a poet, writing of themes such as family love, loneliness, and frustration. Black pride, however, continues to echo throughout her poetry.

Storyteller Another important aspect of Giovanni’s poetry is its sound and rhythm. “I come from a long line of storytellers,” she once said. Her grandfather was a Latin scholar and her mother a lover of literature; both loved telling stories. “I appreciated the quality and the rhythm of the telling of the stories,” Giovanni said. It was important to her to use language in ways that could be spoken aloud. She has made numerous recordings of her poetry.

Author Activity

Spoken Verse Locate a recording of Giovanni reading her own poetry. Listen to the rhythm and accents she gives her poems. Then select one poem and rehearse your own performance of it.

Literary Analysis

FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE

Poets use **figurative language** to convey ideas beyond the literal meanings of the words. When the couple in Sandburg's poem describes the moon as a "vanished diadem," the poet is not telling the reader that there is an actual crown in the sky, but suggesting that the moon is in its waning crescent stage. His use of this image lends the moon an elegance that it would not have, had he described it literally. Figurative language also includes specific **figures of speech**, such as **simile** and **metaphor**. A simile is a stated comparison using the words *like* or *as*: "now we are as the deer." A metaphor is an exaggerated comparison that does not use the words *like* or *as*: "Love is a door we shall open together."

Activity Identify other examples of similes and metaphors or other figurative language in the poems. Then choose one poem and think of new comparisons for an extension of that poem. Try to retain the spirit of the original poem.

FREE VERSE

Poetry that does not contain regular patterns of **rhyme** and **meter** is known as **free verse**. The lines in free verse often flow more naturally than rhymed, metrical lines do. Therefore, they achieve a rhythm more like everyday human speech.

Paired Activity With a partner, take turns reading the three poems aloud. In what ways does each poem resemble everyday speech? Discuss your responses.