

COLLABORATE & COMPARE

Jaylene *Ell*

POEM

from

AFTER THE HURRICANE

by **Rita Williams-Garcia**

pages 209-217



COMPARE ACROSS GENRES

As you read, notice how both texts tell about young peoples' experiences with the same natural disaster, Hurricane Katrina. Look for ideas in the two texts that are similar or related. After you read both selections, you will collaborate with a small group on a final project.

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ESSENTIAL QUESTION:

What does it take to be a survivor?

NOVEL

from

NINTH WARD

by **Jewell Parker Rhodes**

pages 223-227





from After the Hurricane

QUICK START

Read the title of the poem. What do you predict it will be about?

ANALYZE THE EFFECTS OF STRUCTURE AND METER

A poem's **form**, or **structure**, is the way its words and lines are arranged on a page. Some forms are also defined by poetic devices, such as rhyme, repetition, and rhythm. Many traditional forms of poetry use regular patterns of stressed and unstressed syllables to establish a regular rhythm, or **meter**. Paying attention to a poem's structure and meter can help you determine a poem's meaning, message, and theme.

Free verse is a form of poetry with no regular patterns of line length, rhyme, or rhythm. In free verse, poets use poetic devices such as repetition, word choice, catalogs (lists of related words and ideas), and alliteration (the repetition of consonant sounds at the beginning of words) to create rhythm and express ideas. Although free verse does not have a set structure, you can understand the organization of a free verse poem by analyzing its basic structural elements.

GENRE ELEMENTS: FREE VERSE POETRY

- lacks regular patterns of rhyme, rhythm, or line length
- captures the sounds and rhythms of ordinary speech
- varies line length to call attention to words and ideas
- includes poetic devices— alliteration, figurative language, imagery, and rhythm

STRUCTURAL ELEMENT	DEFINITION
line	any text appearing on one line—a sentence, a phrase, or a single word
line break	the place where a line of poetry ends; may be used to add emphasis to certain words and phrases
stanza	a group of two or more lines that form a unit in a poem to express related ideas—as a paragraph functions in prose

To analyze free verse, pay attention to line breaks and groupings of lines, and note the effects these choices have on the sound and feel of the poem. Ask and answer these questions as you read.

- What ideas are expressed in particular lines and stanzas, and in the entire poem?
- How does the use of free verse support the poem's ideas?
- What rhythms are created by repetition or line lengths?
- How do poetic devices work to create structure and organization?
- How do poetic devices contribute to the poem's message or theme?



GET READY

DESCRIBE AN AUTHOR'S USE OF FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE

Figurative language is language that communicates meanings beyond the literal meanings of words. Authors use figurative language to create effects, to emphasize ideas, and to evoke emotions. Personification, simile, and metaphor are types of figurative language.

Personification is a type of figurative language in which an animal, object, or idea is given human qualities. A **simile** uses the words *like* or *as* to make a comparison between two essentially unlike things. A **metaphor** compares two unlike things without using *like* or *as*. An **extended metaphor** compares two unlike things at length and in several ways.

To identify and analyze figurative language in a poem, ask:

- Does the poet portray animals, objects, or ideas with human characteristics? Why? What is the effect of the personification?
- Does the poet use simile or metaphor to make comparisons? What things are being compared? What message or emotion is the poet trying to convey through the comparison?
- How might the poet's use of figurative language connect to the theme or message of the poem?

NOTICE & NOTE

ANNOTATION MODEL

As you read, note elements of free verse and examples of figurative language. Mark evidence that suggests theme, plus any words that make you pause to think. Here are one reader's notes about "After the Hurricane."

this could be a disaster movie with
 helicopters whipping up sky overhead,
Special Effects brought in to create Lake George
 10 and not the great Mississippi
 meeting Lake Ponchartrain.

The disaster movie metaphor gives me a strong image of the scene. The helicopters and special effects make an extended metaphor. I should look up Lake George. There are 3 references to water. I wonder if they are hints about the theme.

**BACKGROUND**

Rita Williams-Garcia (b. 1957) draws on her own experiences to write about issues that urban teenagers face today. The following poem focuses on one young person's experience with Hurricane Katrina. On August 29, 2005, Hurricane Katrina ripped through the Gulf Coast, causing massive damage along the coast. In the city of New Orleans, thousands of people were left homeless, almost 2,000 people lost their lives, and hundreds more were missing. Years later, parts of the city have still not been rebuilt.



from
**AFTER THE
HURRICANE**

Poem by Rita Williams-Garcia

PREPARE TO COMPARE

As you read, pay attention to the events that take place and how the speaker reacts to them. These observations will help you compare the poem with the selection that follows.

If toilets flushed,
if babies slept,
if faucets ran,
old bodies didn't die in the sun,
5 if none of it were real,
if we weren't in it,
this could be a disaster movie with
helicopters whipping up sky overhead,
Special Effects brought in to create Lake George
10 and not the great Mississippi
meeting Lake Pontchartrain.
Out-of-work waiters would pose as policemen,
locals as extras paid in box lunches.
For set design, dump raw sewage, trash everywhere,
15 news trucks, patrol cars, army tanks, Humvees.

Notice & Note

Use the side margins to notice and note signposts in the text.

ANALYZE THE EFFECTS OF STRUCTURE AND METER

Annotate: Mark the use of repetition in lines 1–6.

Identify Patterns: How does repetition and line length affect the poem's rhythm?



NOTICE & NOTE

If none of it were real,
 if we weren't in it,
 this could be a big-budget disaster flick
 King, Jasper, and I'd rent
 20 after band practice
 like we did last Tuesday watching *Titanic* on Grandmama's
 sofa.
 That Jasper could *laaaugh* at all the actors drowning
 while the band played—*glub, glub, glub*—to the death.

25 But this ain't that. We're waist high in it.
 Camera crews bark, "Big Mike! Get this, over here!"
 "Roll tape."
 "Got that?"
 "Good God!"
 30 "Shut it down."
 This ain't hardly no picture.
 We're not on location.
 We're herded. Domed in,
 feels like for good
 35 unless you caught a bus like Ma
 or Jasper's family (save Jasper).
 I still want to smash a camera,
 break a lens, make them stop shooting.
 But King says, "No, Freddie. Gotta show it."
 40 Who'd believe it without film?"

AGAIN AND AGAIN

Notice & Note: Why is water so significant to the speaker? Mark words used to describe water in lines 41–65.

Infer: What does the repetition of *water* and the way it is described tell you about its importance to the speaker?

Still no running water, no food, no power, no help.
 The world is here but no one's coming.
 The Guard¹ is here with rifles pointed.
 The Red Cross got their tables set up.
 45 Weathermen, anchors,² reporters, meteorologists,
 a fleet of black Homeland SUVs.
 The world is here
 but where is the water? The food? The power?
 The way to Ma or Jasper's people.
 50 They just herd us, split us, film us, guard us.

¹ **The Guard:** the National Guard of the United States, units of reserve soldiers that are controlled by each state. The National Guard responds to both the federal (national) and state governments for a variety of emergencies, both in this country and abroad.

² **anchors** (ˈæŋˈkərs): people who organize and read the news on media newscasts (television, radio, online); they work with a team that includes reporters and camera operators to report the news.



No one said feed us. No one brought water.
The world is here but no one's coming.
Helicopters overhead beat up on our skies.

* * *

Miracle One.

- 55 King noses around the news guys,
runs back to Jasper and me.
"There's water trucks held up on the highway.
Gallons, girl! Water by the gallons.
Fresh drinking water.
60 Clean shower water.
See that, Freddie. The water company loves us.
Somebody thought to send us water."
Even with our trumpets drowned, King's chest swells.
He booms, "Brass Crew, are you with me?
65 Let's get outta here, bring back some water."

- How can I leave TK and Grandmama?
How can I leave, and be happy to leave?
Watch me. Just watch me
high step on outta here
70 for the water I say I'll bring back.
Honest to God, I heard "Brass Crew" and was gone.
I heard *Elbows up,*
natural breath!
That was enough.
75 How can I leave, and be happy to leave?
Easy. As needing to breathe new air.

- King's got a First Trumpet stride. Jasper walks.
I lick the salt off my bare arms,
turn to look back at the people
80 held up by canes, hugging strollers, collapsible
black and newly colored people,
women with shirts for head wraps.
Salt dries my tongue.
I turn my eyes from them and walk.
85 I don't have to tell myself
it's not a school project for Ms. LeBlanc,

DESCRIBE AN AUTHOR'S USE OF FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE

Annotate: In lines 60–65, mark the use of personification.

Interpret: Why did the poet use personification here?

TOUGH QUESTIONS

Notice & Note: What are the questions asked by the speaker in lines 66–76? Mark the repeated questions.

Draw Conclusions: What conflict is revealed by these questions and their answers?

DESCRIBE AN AUTHOR'S USE OF FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE

Annotate: Mark the words making comparisons to "Freddie's Diorama" in lines 85–101.

Evaluate: What is the effect of the speaker saying that all of these images are "not a school project"?



NOTICE & NOTE



ANALYZE THE EFFECTS OF STRUCTURE AND METER

Annotate: Catalogs, or lists of related words, give structure and rhythm to free verse. Mark the catalog in lines 102–114.

Analyze: Identify how the words in the list are related. What effect does this catalog have on the poem's structure and meter? What effect does it have on the poem's meaning?

- “The Colored Peoples of Freddie’s Diorama.”³
 Green pasted just so; around the huts just so.
 The despair just right.
- 90 It’s not my social studies diorama
 depicting “Over There,” across the Atlantic,
 the Pacific. Bodies of water.
 Way, way over there.
 The refugees of the mudslides,
 95 refugees of the tsunami,
 refugees of Rwanda.
 No. It is US. In state. In country.
 Drowned but not separated by
 bodies of water or by spoken language.
- 100 The despair is just right, no translation needed.
 We are not the refugees in my social studies diorama.
 We are 11th graders,
 a broken brass line,
 old homeowners, grandmamas, head chefs, street

³ **diorama** (dī’ə-rām’ə): a three-dimensional scene in which models of people, animals, or other objects are arranged in natural poses against a painted background.



105 performers, a saxophonist mourning the loss of his Selmer
 horn of 43 years and wife of 38 years. We are aunties,
 dry cleaners, cops' daughters, deacons, cement mixers,
 auto mechanics, trombonists without trombones, quartets
 scattered, communion servers, stranded freshmen, old
 110 nuns, X-ray technicians, bread bakers, curators,⁴ diabetics,
 shrimpers,⁵ dishwashers, seamstresses, brides-to-be, new
 daddies, taxi drivers, principals, Cub Scouts crying, car
 dealers, other dealers, hairstylists, too many babies, too
 many of us to count.
 115 Still wearing what we had on when it hit.
 When we fled,
 or were wheeled, piggybacked, airlifted, carried off.
 Citizens herded.
 We are Ms. LeBlanc, social studies teacher, a rag wrapped
 120 around her head,
 And Principal Canelle. He missed that last bus.

* * *

Minor Miracle.
 We walk past the Guard.
 You'd think they'd see us
 125 marching on outta here.
 You'd think they'd stop us. Keep us domed.
 But we're on the march, a broken brass line.
 King, Jasper, and me, Fredericka.
 King needs to lead; I need to leave.
 130 Been following his lead since
 band camp. Junior band. Senior band.
 Box formations, flying diamonds, complicated transitions.
 Jasper sticks close. A horn player, a laugher. Not a talker.
 See anything to laugh about?
 135 Jasper sticks close. Stays quiet. Maybe a nod.

Keeping step I would ask myself,
 Aren't you ashamed? No.
 Of band pride? No.
 You band geek. So.
 140 Aren't you ashamed? No.
 You want to parade? So.
 Raise your trumpet? So.

⁴ **curators** (kyŏŏ-rā'tərz): people who manage and oversee; most often describes those who manage a museum and its collection of art.

⁵ **shrimpers** (shrĭmp'ərz): people who catch shrimp—small edible sea animals with a semihard outer shell.

DESCRIBE AN AUTHOR'S USE OF FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE

Annotate: Mark the language in lines 123–133 that compares the speaker and her friends to part of a school band.

Analyze: How does the speaker use the metaphor of a school band to develop an idea?



NOTICE & NOTE

ANALYZE THE EFFECTS OF STRUCTURE AND METER

Annotate: Read lines 136–161 aloud and mark repeated words and phrases.

Analyze: How do elements of structure and meter—including line breaks, repetition, and rhythm—help convey the speaker's feelings at this point in the poem?

- Aren't you ashamed? No.
To praise Saint Louis?
145 "Oh, when the saints go marching in?"
Aren't you ashamed? No.
Of strutting krewe⁶
On Mardi Gras? The Fourth of July?
These very streets
150 Purple and gold, bop
Stars and Stripes, bop
Aren't you ashamed?
To shake and boogie?
Aren't you ashamed?
155 To enjoy your march,
while Grandmama suffers
and no milk for TK?
Tell the truth. Aren't you ashamed?
No. I'm not ashamed.
160 I step high, elbows up.
Band pride.

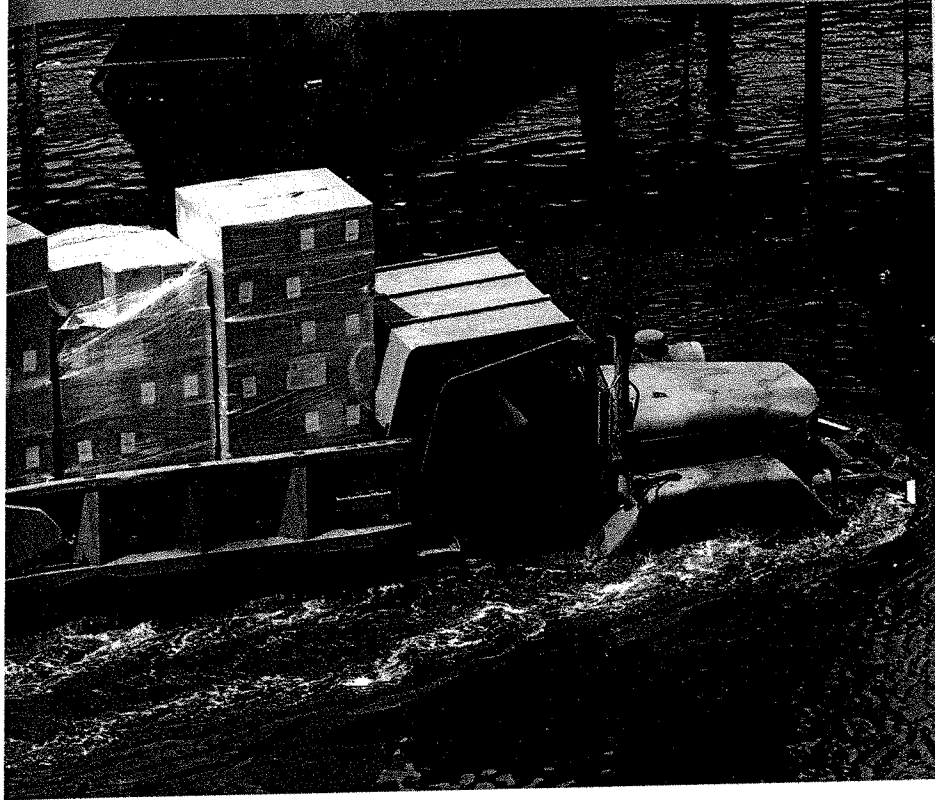
- King asks, "Freddie, what you thinking?"
I say, "I'm not thinking, King."
But I'm dried out on the inside.
165 Hungry talks LOUD, you know.
"Let's try the Beauxmart. The Food Circle. Something."

- King knows better. He doesn't say.
Still, we go and find (no surprise)
the Beauxmart's been hit. Stripped. Smashed.
170 Forget about Food Circle and every corner grocery.
Nothing left but rotten milk,
glass shards.⁷ Loose shopping carts.
Jasper sighs. Grabs a cart.

- Stomach won't shut up.
175 Talking. Knotting. Cramping. I whine,
"Let's go to Doolie's."
Again, King knows better. Still, we go,
almost passed right by. Didn't see it until
Jasper points. King sighs.

⁶ **krewe** (krōō): any of several groups of people who organize and participate in the annual Mardi Gras carnival in New Orleans.

⁷ **shards** (shārdz): small pieces of something that has been broken.



- 180 Check out the D in Doolie's, blown clear off.
 The outside boarded up, chained up, locked.
 Black and red spray-painted:
 LOOTERS WILL BE SHOT.
 I can't believe it.
- 185 Doolie who buys block tickets to home games
 Doolie who sponsors our team bus
 Band instruments, uniforms (all underwater),
 Chicken bucket championships. The band eats half-price.
 My eyes say, *Freddie*, believe the spray paint:
- 190 *Big Sean Doolie will shoot the looters.*
 Yeah. Big Sean Doolie.
 Believe.

- King (First Trumpet) was right,
 he doesn't make me (Second) like I'm second.
- 195 A simple, "Come on, Brass. Let's get this water."
 I follow King. Jasper pushes the cart.
 First, Second, Third. No bop step,
 high step, no feather head shake,
 no shimmy⁸ front, boogie back.
- 200 Just walk.

⁸ shimmy (shĭm 'ē): to do the shimmy, a dance involving rapid shaking of the body.

AHA MOMENT

Notice & Note: What does the speaker realize in lines 184–192? Mark the words that indicate that the speaker's view of her world is changing.

Cite Evidence: What evidence in the stanza shows the speaker has come to realize something? Why is this realization important?



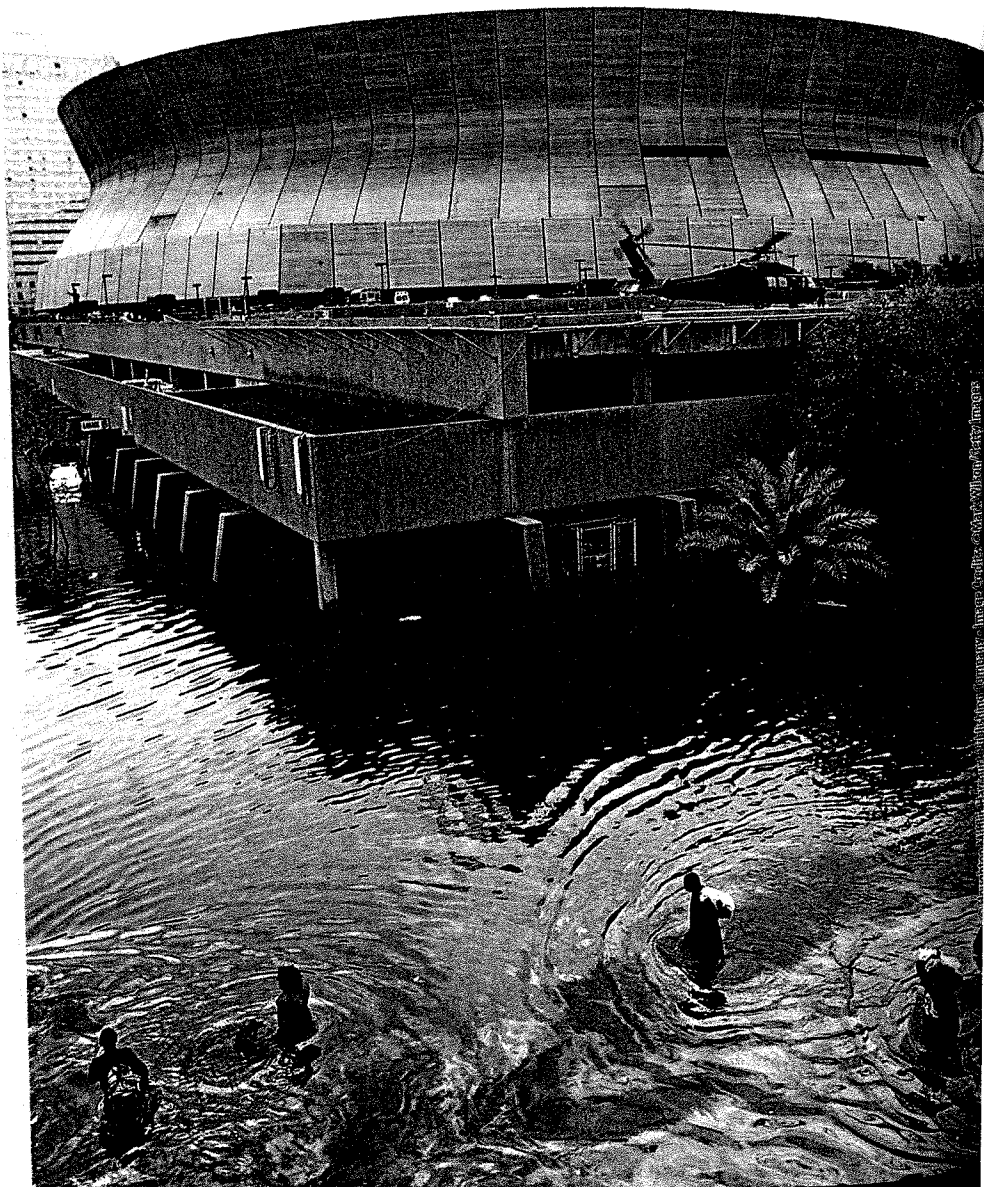
NOTICE & NOTE

ANALYZE THE EFFECTS OF STRUCTURE AND METER

Annotate: In lines 201–208,
mark repeated phrases and
examples of alliteration.

Draw Conclusions: How do
these elements help convey the
speaker's feelings at the end of
the poem?

“Hear that?”
Another helicopter overhead.
Another chopper stirring up the Big Empty.
Wide blades good for nothing but whirling up
205 heavy heat, heavy stink on empty streets
full of ghosts and mosquitoes.
Swat all you want. Look around.
Nothing here but us in Big Empty.





CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING

Answer these questions before moving on to the **Analyze the Text** section on the following page.

- 1 In lines 5–7, the speaker in the poem says *if none of it were real* to —
 - A express that the hurricane never happened, and that it is as fictional as a disaster movie
 - B express a dislike for disaster movies
 - C express that the disaster is very real, but she wishes it was fictional, like a disaster movie
 - D suggest that the story of the hurricane would never make a good disaster movie


- 2 In lines 136–146, the speaker's questions and answers show that —
 - F she is writing a journal entry to remember her experience
 - G she dislikes the experiences she has had in the school band
 - H she will stay inside the shelter because it is the right thing to do
 - J despite her doubts, she is determined to leave the shelter because it is the right thing to do

- 3 Which idea expresses how the speaker feels by the end of the poem?
 - A She feels relieved that the helicopter is there to help them.
 - B She feels dismayed and stranded in the devastation.
 - C She is happy that they will soon find some water.
 - D She has come to love the sound of the helicopters.



RESPOND

ANALYZE THE TEXT

Support your responses with evidence from the text.  NOTEBOOK

- 1. Summarize** How does the poet use figurative language in lines 50–53 to convey meaning or ideas?
- 2. Infer** Identify examples of repetition in lines 66–76. How might the poet’s use of repetition point to a theme in the poem?
- 3. Analyze** Reread lines 155–166 aloud. How do elements of free verse contribute to the pace and rhythm of the poem?
- 4. Draw Conclusions** Identify the examples of figurative language in lines 174–175. What idea might the poet be trying to express by using this figurative language?
- 5. Notice & Note** Identify ways in which water is mentioned throughout the poem. What ideas are conveyed by water images in the poem?

RESEARCH

RESEARCH TIP

Reviewing video clips and news reports that followed the disaster your group selects may help you identify organizations involved in relief efforts.

“After the Hurricane” describes the speaker’s experience following Hurricane Katrina, revealing how a group of students responds to the disaster. The poem’s speaker criticizes some of the responses of others—including the media and aid organizations—to the disaster.

In a small group, choose and research a more recent natural disaster to identify volunteers, professionals, and organizations that responded to that disaster. Generate questions about the responders, such as *What did they do? Who did they help? How effective were they?* Then, conduct research to answer your questions.

RESPONDER	QUESTION	ANSWER

Connect How does the experience of the poem’s speaker compare to any disasters experienced by members of your group, class, or someone you know or have heard about? With your group, discuss ways in which the poem does or does not reflect personal experiences.