

Figurative Language

Consider:

Turning towards the hearth, where the two logs had fallen apart, and sent forth only a red uncertain glimmer, he seated himself on his fireside chair, and was stooping to push his logs together, when, to his blurred vision, it seemed as if there were gold on the floor in front of the hearth. Gold!—his own gold—brought back to him as mysteriously as it had been taken away! He felt his heart begin to beat violently, and for a few moments he was unable to stretch out his hand and grasp the restored treasure. The heap of gold seemed to glow and get larger beneath his agitated gaze. He leaned forward at last, and stretched forth his hand; but instead of the hard coin with the familiar resisting outline, his fingers encountered soft warm curls. In utter amazement, Silas fell on his knees and bent his head low to examine the marvel: it was a sleeping child—a round, fair thing, with soft yellow rings all over its head.

George Eliot, *Silas Marner*

Discuss:

1. *Silas Marner* is a novel about redemption through love. Silas Marner, the protagonist of the novel, is falsely accused of a theft; and he is cast out by his community. Despondent and alone, he becomes a miser, hoarding gold as his only pleasure. As the novel progresses, his gold is stolen and Marner falls deeper into despair. This passage captures a pivotal moment in the novel, when a child enters his life and transforms it. Identify the central metaphor in the passage and its literal and figurative terms.
2. How does the use of a metaphor add to the intensity and meaning of the passage?

Apply:

Here is a list of things that you may or may not value. With a partner, write a metaphor for the entries on the list. Your metaphors should give fresh insight into the worth (or lack of worth) you place on each entry.

- a pet you had as a child
- your phone
- time with your friends
- travel to new places
- a time you accomplished something you didn't think you could accomplish