



INDIAN SCHOOL AL WADI AL KABIR

Class: 8	Department: ENGLISH	Date of submission: January -2021
Worksheet No:	Topic: Caged Bird (study notes)	Note:

Setting of the poem

The caged bird is a symbol of the plight of Black American people. Its song is a reference to how slaves in the 19th century came together at Congo Square to sing as a way of remembering their heritage. The bars of rage on the caged bird's cage is supposed to represent the bird's blinding anger at being locked up.

Figures of Speech

The poet has used several poetic devices in the poem.

(i) Metaphor:

The poet uses metaphor (an indirect comparison) when she compares wind to water. The words 'downstream' and 'current' make us think of the tides in a sea or ocean.

*"... and floats downstream
till the current ends"*

Again, she uses metaphors in the use of two birds — "free bird" and "caged bird".

(ii) Alliteration:

Alliteration (repetition of consonant sounds at the beginning of nearby words) is used in places like —

*"...can seldom see through (repetition of 's' sound)
and the fat worms waiting on a dawn bright lawn
his shadow shouts on a nightmare screams"*

(iii) Personification:

The poet personifies (applies human characteristics) the two birds when she says —

'dips his wing', 'dares to claim the sky', 'name the sky his own', 'opens his throat to sing', 'sings of freedom' etc.

Theme

The poem describes the opposing experiences between two birds: one bird can live in nature as it pleases, while a different caged bird suffers in captivity. Due to its profound

suffering, the caged bird sings, both to cope with its circumstances and to express its own longing for freedom.

- (a) **Oppression and the African-American Experience** : In the poem, extended metaphor can be seen as portraying the experience of being a member of the African American community. As an extended metaphor used to convey the pain of the oppression experienced by the African American community throughout (and before) the history of the United States, aspects of the poem can be read as directly related to that African - American experience.
- (b) **Freedom vs. Captivity** : The poem “Caged Bird” compares and contrasts the experience of a free bird with that of a bird held in captivity. While part of this contrast is meant to convey the injustice forced upon the captive bird, the comparison also allows the poem to explore how a free being thinks and acts, and to argue that freedom is a natural state for living beings.