

## "Wish You Were Here" by Pink Floyd (1975)

So, so you think you can tell Heaven from Hell, blue skies from pain.

Can you tell a green field from a cold steel rail?

A smile from a veil?

Do you think you can tell?

Did they get you to trade your heroes for ghosts?

Hot ashes for trees?

Hot air for a cool breeze?

Cold comfort for change?

Did you exchange a walk on part in the war for a lead role in a cage?

How I wish, how I wish you were here.

We're just two lost souls swimming in a fish bowl, year after year,

Running over the same old ground.

What have we found?

The same old fears.

Wish you were here.

### **Syntax:**

The writer uses a lot of rhetorical questions "Did you...?" / "Did they...?" / Do you...?" / "What have we found?" / "Can you tell...?".

Many of the lines end in question marks: "Hot ashes for trees?"

### **Diction:**

The author includes pairings of contrasting images: comfort-change, ashes-trees, hot air-cool breeze, smile-veil, green field-cold steel, Heaven-Hell. However, there's a longing for this person who can't tell the difference between good and bad, as stated in the title and later in the song, "I wish you were here."

### **Figurative language:**

The author makes a number of comparisons that are not meant to be taken literally. “We’re just two lost souls swimming in a fish bowl, year after year...” / “Did you exchange a walk on part in the war for a lead role in a cage?”

**Prompt: How does the author’s use of diction, syntax, and figurative language contribute to the meaning of song?**

The author’s repeated use of rhetorical questions implies a criticism of the choices of another person or group. For instance, the song begins with, “So you think you can tell Heaven from Hell...?” This implies the author is questioning the perception of another person, that this other person is unable to differentiate between something good and something bad. This relationship between good and bad is carried over in the author’s diction. The songwriter pairs opposing words and phrases like hot ashes or trees, comfort or change. However, the author also seems to wish to be near this person who can’t tell good things from bad things. Perhaps the person is too innocent to understand good from bad and that’s why author wishes them to be near, or it could be that some tragedy has befallen this other person because they could not determine good from and the author is sad because of it. Indeed, there are a great many things left for the audience to interpret from the figurative language. The author states that he and at least one other person he’s with are “two lost souls swimming in a fish bowl, year after year, running over the same old ground.” The figurative language gives the impression of being trapped in an endless cycle, never discovering anything new or good because they lack this third person for whom the song is written.

<u>CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.9-10.4</u>			
Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in the text, including figurative and connotative meanings;			
Exemplary	Meets Standard	Approaching Standard	Insufficient
The response provides a thorough and insightful analysis of how the author’s use of diction, syntax, and figurative language contribute to the overall meaning of the work.	The response provides a basic analysis of how the author’s use of diction, syntax, and figurative language contribute to the overall meaning of the work.	The response provides a basic analysis of how the author’s use of language contributes to the overall meaning of the work. The response includes examples to serve as textual evidence.	The response fails to provide a basic analysis of how the author’s use of language contributes to the overall meaning of the work.
The response includes multiple, well-chosen examples to serve as textual evidence.	The response includes multiple examples to serve as textual evidence.	The response includes examples to serve as textual evidence.	The response does not include textual evidence, or textual evidence does not support the analysis.