

"a black man talks of reaping": figure of speech, irony and characterization assi...

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A Black Man Talks of Reaping Figure of Speech In Arna Bontemps' poem, "A Black Man Talks of Reaping", he uses many figures of speech like metaphor, personification, overstatement and synecdoche. Metaphor is the tool Bontemps uses in his poem. For instance, "Wind or fowl" (line 3) metaphorically refers to white race who are every where and can take the profit of African American race away like a wind blows grains away or like a bird intends to steal seeds of a farmer by pecking them away. Therefore, "the grain" (line 3) represents the speaker's benefit that he gets from his hard work and effort, as the same as the word "reaping" in line 7.

The "seed" (line 6) means his hard work to improve black people's life. He dedicates so much like he scatters seed throughout the land with the hope of its bountiful output: the better life of the blacks. This has a similar meaning to the word "orchard" (line 9) in the last stanza. "Bitter fruits" (line 12) refers to what his children get from those seed he has planted: worthless outcome the future generation gets as a result of his dedicating work. It is the rancor like what he has got for all his life.

As a whole poem, he compares the plantation of black slaves to their bitterness they face due to the white people. There are other kinds of figures of speech. For example, a personification in line 3: "That wind or fowl would take the grain away". "From Canada to Mexico" in line 6 is an overstatement showing how much dedication he has for his work to improve the African American life. And in line 7, Bontemps uses "the hand" as a synecdoche to represent not only the speaker but also all black slaves in America who experience the bitterness of being taken advantage by white race despite their hard work.

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Irony The irony in this poem is a situational irony describing the unbalance between the effort the African American people have made and the gain that they get back. Bontemps compares the bitterness of black people's life to the planting that no matter how hard they plant, they lose their profit to the white people who actually do nothing but have the best things. Characterize the poem This poem was written presumably not based on the direct experience of the poet as Arna Bontemps had not work in agriculture field but academics.

By calling back the experience of hard work of the speaker who has cultivate the crops for his children but has been cheated by other people, this poem on the surface seems to be only a description of unfair actions . However, beneath the surface, the cultivation scene in this poem is used metaphorically to criticize inequality in the society as white people are treating the black as the inferior to their race. In other word, this poem serves as a social comment.