"Mother to Son" - Langston Hughes

How does the use of **metaphor** in the poem add to the author's message or overall theme?

In Hughes' poem, metaphors are used to convey the debilitating obstacles that the mother has had to overcome throughout her life. Comparing her struggle to a floor filled with tacks and splinters, or likening her experience as "going in the dark where there ain't been no light" adds further visual to the hardships she's faced. Using these metaphors allows the son and the reader alike to be able to understand the message/theme that Hughes is portraying; when the going gets tough, the tough keep going.

"Kitchenette Building" by Gwendolyn Brooks  
How does the **extended metaphor** in the poem add to the poet’s message or overall theme?   
  
Gwendolyn Brooks' poem, "Kitchenette Building" consists of an extended metaphor that is tightly connected to the overall theme throughout the poem. The poem's overall theme is asking, are people willing to pursue a dream in order to escape their normal reality? One may read this poem and believe that it is simply about onion fumes and garbage in the hall. But, Brooks takes these simple, everyday objects and turns them into deep, meaningful symbols. In this poem *the onion fumes represent the dream* and *the potatoes and garbage represent the current reality* being lived in. Brooks explains in her poem that the onion fumes are competing with the potatoes and garbage. Therefore, the dreams are competing with the reality. The extended metaphor truly connects with the theme when Brooks asks if people are willing to let in those onion fumes or "dreams", but is cut off from further wonderment. At the end of the poem it says, "We wonder. But not well! Not for a minute! Since number five is out of the bathroom now. We think of lukewarm water, hope to get in it." This final stanza answers the theme's question and provides the final metaphor in the poem. The person in the poem stops their train of thought about the "dream" and is dragged back into the "lukewarm" waters of reality. That is where people only see a grey reality, not a colorful, new reality fueled by dreams made possible by opening eyes and seeing the different opportunities.