Using Metaphors to Express Complex Ideas

Some writers are great at taking abstract ideas and making them easy for their readers to grasp. The famous playwright William Shakespeare was brilliant at portraying complex ideas using metaphor.

Directions: Read Shakespeare’s famous passages below. On the lines, write two or three sentences in your own words to describe what each metaphor means. HINT: One passage contains multiple metaphors!

1. To be, or not to be; that is the question: whether ‘tis nobler in the mind to suffer the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune, or to take arms against a sea of troubles, and, by opposing, end them. (Hamlet)

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2. All the world’s a stage, and all the men and women merely players. They have their exits and their entrances, and one man in his time plays many parts, his acts being seven ages. (As You Like It)

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3. Out, out, brief candle! Life's but a walking shadow, a poor player that struts and frets his hour upon the stage and then is heard no more: it is a tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing. (Macbeth)

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