



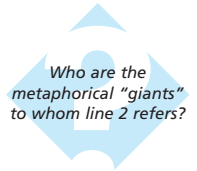
Who are the metaphorical “giants” to whom line 2 refers?

A. The line refers to the Romans as “giants,” because of the splendor of the city they built long ago.



What literary technique is evident in the speaker’s saying that “a hundred generations of people have passed by” since the master-builders of the city died?

A. This is an example of **hyperbole**. When this poem was composed, no more than 500 years had elapsed since the departure of the Romans. Therefore, it is not possible that as “a hundred generations” could have “passed by” during that time. The statement is meant to indicate that *many* generations have passed, and is not to be taken literally.



Who are the metaphorical “giants” to whom line 2 refers?

What literary technique is evident in the speaker’s saying that “a hundred generations of people have passed by” since the master-builders of the city died?

The Ruin

Author Unknown

FOCUS: ELEGIAC POETRY

The city buildings fell apart, the works
Of giants crumble. Tumbled are the towers
Ruined the roofs, and broken the barred gate,
Frost in the plaster, all the ceilings gape,
Torn and collapsed and eaten up by age. 5
And grit* holds in its grip, the hard embrace
Of earth, the dead-departed master-builders,
Until a hundred generations now
Of people have passed by. Often this wall
Stained red and grey with lichen* has stood by 10
Surviving storms while kingdoms rose and fell.
And now the high curved wall itself has fallen.
The heart inspired, incited to swift action.
Resolute masons,* skilled in rounded building
Wondrously linked the framework with iron bonds. 15
The public halls were bright, with lofty gables,
Bath-houses many; great the cheerful noise,
And many mead-halls filled with human pleasures.

A CLOSER LOOK

Another Roman achievement is mentioned here: the building of **bath-houses**, affording the citizens of Roman Britain facilities for hygiene far surpassing anything available later on during the Middle Ages.

HELPFUL DEFINITIONS

grit — dirt; here, the earth in which the builders of the city are buried.
lichen — a fungus-like plant that grows in greenish, crust-like patches on rocks and trees.
masons — those who build with stone or brick.

1 Students should be aware of the use of hyperbole in line 8.

Till mighty fate brought change upon it all.
 Slaughter was widespread, pestilence was rife, 20
 And death took all those valiant men away.
 The martial halls became deserted places,
 The cities crumbled, its repairers fell,
 Its armies to the earth. And so these halls
 Are empty, and this red curved roof now sheds 25
 Its tiles, decay has brought it to the ground,
 Smashed it to piles of rubble, where long since
 A host of heroes, glorious, gold-adorned,
 Gleaming in splendour, proud and flushed with wine,
 Shone in their armour, gazed on gems and treasure, 30
 On silver, riches, wealth and jewellery,
 On this bright city with its wide domains.
 Stone buildings stood, and the hot streams cast forth
 Wide sprays of water, which a wall enclosed
 In its bright compass, where convenient 35
 Stood hot baths ready for them at the centre.

Since the Romans were not "slaughtered" in Britain, to what may the text be referring in lines 20-21?

Another Roman achievement is mentioned here: the "wide domains" are the fine roads that the Romans built while in Britain.

Since the Romans were not "slaughtered" in Britain, to what may the text be referring in lines 20-21?
A. The text seems to be referring to the fate of the thousands who died of the plague and other pestilential diseases.

A CLOSER LOOK

Roman buildings, typically constructed of **stone**, endured for generations; ruins of some of them still dot the English countryside today. Anglo-Saxons, by contrast, built their structures of less durable materials — even the gold-embellished mead hall built by King Hrothgar in *Beowulf* (see page 15) was made of wood reinforced by iron, and was therefore vulnerable to fire.

Hot streams poured forth over the clear grey stone,
 To the round pool and down into the baths.



LITERARY CRITIQUE

1. What interesting information about Roman architecture is offered in this poem?
2. One of the ways a poet establishes the tone of his work is through diction, or the particular words he uses. Many words in "The Ruin" have sorrowful connotations, or associations, that contribute to the overall elegiac tone of the work. List at least five of these words.

LITERARY CRITIQUE

1. Interesting elements of Roman architecture include: **a.** the use of rounded and curved architecture; **b.** the use of tiles for the roofs; **c.** gables were part of the buildings; **d.** many of the buildings were designed to be bathhouses.
2. Some of the words that contribute to the elegiac tone of "The Ruin" are: *fall apart, crumbled, slaughter, pestilence, empty, decay, smashed.* (continues on following page)