{*classical subjects creatively taught*}

The art of POETRY

Teacher's Edition

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The Art of Poetry Teacher's Edition

Version 1.1

Classical Academic Press
2151 Market Street
Camp Hill, PA 17011

www.ClassicalAcademicPress.com

ISBN: 978-1-60051-042-7

Cover art by
Rob Baddorf

Interior design by
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POEM PERMISSIONS

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INTRODUCTION

There has never been a civilization without poetry. From the beginning of time, people have sought to turn their thoughts, feelings, and stories into memorable speech to share with others. Using language, the poet preserves something precious in the world by allowing us to live next to her, to see what she sees, to enter the experience she has built for us with her words and attention to the moment. Poetry acknowledges something deep within our nature—an urge to name, say, sing, grieve, praise, out of our solitariness, to another person. It makes words into a material thing, hard and solid as a table, dense with significance. It comes from the body and the body is its instrument. It knows our body is as intelligent as our mind, and that the two intelligences are happily married.

From poets we can learn much about what it is to be truly alive. In the poem *The Rhyme of the Ancient Mariner*, Samuel Taylor Coleridge names the state which is worse than death itself, "Life in Death." The name suggests that we are capable of having a heartbeat without being fully alive to the world around us. Human forgetfulness allows fresh beginnings, but it is also an infirmity for which we need to be treated. We need a daily pin-prick of awareness to bring us back to what surrounds us. Poems are one dramatic source of this alertness. From Gerard Manley Hopkins, for instance, I've learned how to mourn and how to exalt, and how close the two lie next to each other. I talk myself out of despair for the ugliness of the industrialized world with his poem *God's Grandeur*:

The world is charged with the grandeur of God.
  It will flame out, like shining from shook foil;
  It gathers to a greatness, like the ooze of oil
Crushed. Why do men then now not reck his rod?
Generations have trod, have trod, have trod;
  And all is seared with trade; bleared, smeared with toil;
  And wears man's smudge and shares man's smell: the soil
Is bare now, nor can foot feel, being shod.

And for all this, nature is never spent;
  There lives the dearest freshness deep down things;
And though the last lights off the black West went
  Oh, morning, at the brown brink eastward, springs–
Because the Holy Ghost over the bent
  World broods with warm breast and with ah! bright wings.

On my dark days, this poem reminds me I am not alone, that Father Hopkins and his precise images and sounds have gone ahead of me and meet me in my own sorrow and disgust. His bright-winged, warm-breasted, holy-ghost bird hovers over me and my imagination. The poem insists that the image of the sun rising at the brink of the darkened world to bring another day is true beyond its scientific explanation, and encourages us to believe that literal and figurative light continues to renew and tend the earth. Hope is given to us not only in the message of the words but in language that exults: the words spring up with their blending of sounds and movement to embody the movement of the sun bursting over the cusp of earth. The speaker,

consoled and warmed, experiences an encircling by the "Holy Ghost," pictured as a bird who closes her wings around the world. The repetition of "b" sounds, "w" sounds, and long "o" sounds in lines thirteen and fourteen, along with the relieved and delighted interjection "ah!," creates the physical expression of solace. We experience the sensation of the movement and sound at the same time that we register the images and consider the ideas. The poet has wrought his experience of hard-won hope in such a way that we can feel, momentarily, his glad assurance. We turn from the poem back to our lives revitalized. This is only one example of the process by which the word renews the world for us. This example holds true whether or not you embrace the religious views of the poet. As a reader you can enter the sensation of transcendence over the trampled world regardless of the poem's theology.

Because they are made by other human beings at a moment of full awareness, and they are spoken from privacy to privacy into the grave of our hearts, poems enliven us. They challenge us to find meaning, they defend the importance of individual lives and allow all sorts of voices to be heard. In addition to speaking to us, poems talk to other poems, and teach us how to read conversationally. Writing is, after all, simply the highest, most intense form of reading; when you write you hone your thoughts and analysis toward precision, you attend to a text closely. All of the poets in this book have had some contact with each other and are, in some way, in dialogue with each other. In reading these poems and thinking about them you are entering a great conversation that has gone on for years and will continue.

Poetry is also a witness to human cruelty. You might think of poems as just words, but during the Russian Revolution poets and writers were killed or threatened with death. Osip Mandelstam, one of those killed, said in a poem, "And for you, I am here, to burn—a black flare, to burn." Nearly a century later, his words are still passed like a torch from reader to reader, illuminating Stalin's unspeakable acts. Throughout time poets and writers have borne witness to history.

What does this have to do with me? you ask. Well, your days are long and crammed with obligation and information and technology. You are at risk for thinking that this is knowledge. Poetic knowledge insists that beauty and truth can't be separated. It reminds us that the rational alone will not take us to full knowledge and that we should be astonished by what is true. J.R.R. Tolkien and C.S. Lewis believed that myth restores reality to its mythic proportions, that we are living a lyric truth, a story where every action has consequence, and that reading a myth or a poem makes us conscious of its enormity anew.

You will find that there are other benefits to studying poems, benefits that accrete like layers of silt in a mountain stream. Poetry fundamentally changes our relationship to language—we can no longer see words as merely serviceable vehicles. Poetry instructs us to look for the structure in any written piece. Poetry teaches us the principles of interpretation, because such questions naturally arise in the discussion of a poem. Poetry reminds us that the metaphor is the basic way of knowing the unknown and that we often describe one thing in terms of another. Poetry gives us images to cherish and to invigorate our daily experience. In April, I remember that T.S. Eliot claimed it is the cruelest month: "breeding / Lilacs out of the dead land, mixing / Memory and desire, stirring / Dull roots with spring rain." I possess Rilke's picture of *The Panther* when I am caged or when I meet someone who is. Language seems to me unimaginably deep, a record of human consciousness. And because I write poems in response to my love of what I see, I know what Adam felt like in the garden of the world naming and naming.

CLOSE READING

A soldier at attention stands erectly with heels together, arms at his side, eyes looking forward, waiting for instructions. A nurse or midwife checks the vital signs of the mother and child. A suitor notices every glance of his beloved. Close reading is learning how to pay attention to a text. This is not particularly difficult but it is hard in our times; it has to be a discipline, a habit of mind. We are busy, we are used to being active, we are addicted to being connected to other people through cell phones, the Internet, iPods, and video games. Close reading is another way to be connected, but it is different from the ways to which we are accustomed and it requires more of us. It requires time. It requires slowing down. It requires commitment. Television, magazines, and most movies don't demand your attention. They are designed to be understood easily and quickly so that you can move on—be entertained but not inconvenienced. In a botanical garden or an aquarium you take time to look at the parts of the flower or fish, you smell it or watch it swim. The same is true for a book of poems. When you read a poem, you must take time and learn to be observant. Like sea diving, there are fathoms of depth. You go to one level for a while, then deeper, then deeper. You discover there is a vast ocean to explore in any piece of art, that continues to deliver something new and unexpected with each encounter.

Being engaged to a person involves committing yourself to that person completely, making a promise to that person. Being engaged with a piece of writing is similar. There is a conversation—sometimes even an ongoing relationship—between you and the book, you and the writer. Your successful summary of a poem's structure and meaning is only a part of what you and that poem can accomplish together. The poem and its reading can't be reduced to a three-point outline or a five-paragraph essay, just as a relationship between friends can't be summarized or contained this way.

To read closely, listen to the sounds and rhythms, look at the patterns which create these, hear the language of the poem intensely, see if you can put yourself into the physical environment that the poet is creating. Start with questions that you might ask yourself about a poem. Discipline yourself to look at the images, to hear the sounds working together, to think about the subject the poet has introduced. Ask yourself if you have read anything else which would comment upon this idea. Link what is in front of you to your experience both in books and in life. Wonder at the difficult parts. Disagree. Close your eyes after you have read it a few times and see which images and words have stuck. Look up words in a dictionary, the ones you don't know but even the ones you do to see if there are nuances you might be missing. See how the rhymed words make suggestions about what the poem is saying. If you are having trouble slowing down, start with memorization and see what happens to your understanding as you commit the words and lines to memory. Try writing formally or informally on the piece in front of you.

One can't read every poem with this depth but one must learn the practice of it over time. T.S. Eliot said that "poetry may make us from time to time a little more aware of the deeper unnamed feelings which form the substratum of our being, to which we rarely penetrate; for our lives are mostly a constant evasion of ourselves." If you should accept this challenge, you will find some clarity and a language which more accurately reflects and sheds light on your experience. William Meredith in his poem *A Major Work* draws a parallel between learning to serve an art form so that we truly "read," "see," "hear" it, and learning to care for another person.

A Major Work

Poems are hard to read
Pictures are hard to see
Music is hard to hear
And people are hard to love.

But whether from brute need
Or divine energy
At last mind eye and ear
And the great sloth heart will move.

There are two lists of four items in this poem—can you identify them? Can you see how the two lists are linked together in a parallel structure? This is the beginning of close reading, but let's go further: why do you think the poet chose the word "move" as the final destination of the poem? Can you identify ways that you personally have experienced "brute need" or "divine energy"? What language in the poem suggests that the poet locates the actual power of poetry not in the poems themselves but in the hard work of reading them? These are the kinds of questions that you will begin to ask and answer as you are drawn more thoroughly into the skill of close reading.

In the chapters that follow, you will be guided through the elements of a poem. You will learn to look at a poem's images, metaphor, words, symbols, sound, rhythm, shape, and tone. You will combine these elements and categorical thinking in a chapter called "Putting It All Together." It wouldn't hurt to begin the book by reading the "Putting It All Together" chapter first, and then starting the elements of the poem. Later, you will examine the formal categories that poems fall under, such as genre, verse form, and shaping forms, and examine some poets who found formal strategies that were a natural part of the lives they lived. The book closes with a section on how to apply these learned skills in your home or school or with your friends. As your reading skills grow, your poetic intelligence and pleasure will grow as well. You are beginning a great work shoulder to shoulder with the writers in this book—wrestling, sifting, puzzling with the collection of words they have set down. May your great sloth heart move toward love.

HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

First Principles

Do not let this book overwhelm you. If all you do is give this book to your students as a resource that you only minimally engage, you have already made a great step. Consider having each student read around to find a poem she would like to read aloud to the class. Start your day this way. If you can't do it daily, do it weekly. Even this small step will begin to cultivate a relationship between the students and poetry that the students are free to pursue independently. Because students will fish for poems to read to the class or to family, they will likely discover other parts of this book's text as well. If some chapters seem particularly difficult given your educational background, consider using these chapters only for the anthology of poems and the activities in them. Poetry is such a natural pleasure to us, so much in harmony with our instinct and experience, we cannot help but be drawn to it, if it is introduced with pleasure. For a simplified plan on how to use this book, see Appendix C.

The Teacher's Edition

Available for purchase is a teacher's edition that "reads" or explains 37 of the book's poems, provides answers for the discussion questions, includes a supplemental poetry time line, a quiz for each chapter and a cumulative book quiz. This is in addition to the student book's "Learning to Read Closely" section, which thoroughly discusses a poem in nearly each chapter. Observing the skill we are meant to acquire is a great aid to learning it. *The Art of Poetry Teacher's Edition* is meant to help provide you, the teacher, with confidence as you lead a discussion. There are often suggestions for the discussion as well.

Three Timetables

This book is meant to fit your curriculum-scheduling needs. It is conceivable that it could be used as an intense **month-long unit,** during which your class would work on a lesson each day and limit the activities at the end of each section. An alternative would be to work on **two sections per month (or two weeks for each section) and spread it out over the school year**. If you'd like a slower pace, consider doing **several chapters a year over the course of several years**. This would be more poetic education than many receive in their high school years, especially if the student enjoys the work and is ignited to search for more poems. Considering the book according to its chapters and significant division—the elements of poetry and the formal tradition of poetry—is a helpful way to think about your use.

Academic Levels

If you are teaching younger students, cull the lessons for key points that you'd like them to receive and ignore more in-depth subject material. "The Elements of Poetry" chapters at the beginning of the book are accessible and basic to all language levels. You could save "The Formal History of Poetry" sections for later, or study those sections only for the content of their poems. You could read the poems aloud, one a day, for the remainder of the book. Have the students pick out images and metaphors or words that strike them. Have them listen for sounds that function according to the descriptions in earlier chapters. In other words, you need not teach your seventh and eighth graders the intricacies of a villanelle in order to use this book, though

there is no reason why they can't learn this. You may introduce students to "The Elements of Poetry" chapters and then move on to "Growing Your Interest," where they can use and apply some of the skills they've learned. Each lesson has activities at the end of the chapter, and the later chapters demonstrate how to establish a writing group and the habits of a writer. These include keeping a poetry notebook, keeping a poetry journal, having a poetry slam, hosting a reading series, and selecting readings and resources. Older students (high school) should do very nicely with the standard approach to the text according to your curriculum needs and the time you have to spend on this activity.

Other Skills

You can also use the book to teach other skills beyond reading poetry. Poetry is a good way to learn to analyze and begin to ask questions about how to interpret. The "Learning to Read Closely" sections in the book are meant to be a guide for working out the complexities of reading. Being educated in metaphoric thinking or analogical thinking (comparing one thing to another) is essential to all thought—knowing how far a comparison can be taken and where the metaphor breaks down, or loses its parallel properties, is important. Learning to write analytically about poems strengthens writing skills. Studying the elements of a poem will reinforce your students' skills in rhetoric and in other literary reading. They will begin to think in terms of figurative language and of *how* a piece of writing means and not simply *what* it means. They will begin to write with language that is fresh and consider imaginative comparisons, even for their more analytical work. Hence, this book dovetails nicely with rhetoric and writing units as well as with literature class. Educating the imagination is an important aspect of studying poems.

Out of the Standard Classroom Use

In addition to the formal classroom, this book will work nicely for an elective class, a homeschooling cooperative group, or for at-home instruction among several students of different ages. It could also work as a poetry circle group in which students participate outside of school and with or without a teacher (perhaps a summer poetry circle). If this is your interest, start with "Growing Your Interest" to see how a workshop functions and how to keep a writer's journal and a favorite poem notebook. Plan a grand finale in which participating students have a poetry slam. Have a special recording session in which students make their own CD of cherished poems, reading them aloud. If your student is particularly musical, have her compose songs using the poems as lyrics, record the songs, and give the CDs away as gifts. There are endless creative possibilities.

Memorization

Another approach to this text is through memorization. Memorized language has long been a part of education. I had a friend whose study of sixteenth-century poetry revolutionized his own writing. When I asked him how he was able to internalize that century's work, he said he had a short attention span and so he started with memorization. (He was an English Ph.D. student.) He'd learn a poem and mull over it. What he learned about the poem was from the inside out, because he knew the lines and joints of the poem intimately. Sound and rhythm, the music of poetry, come alive when you say poems aloud from memory. One approach to this text is to start memorizing its poems and talk about the elements and formal traditions after you've committed portions of it to memory. If you have a hard time getting started, create hand motions to the words to help you remember the language visually. Observe your own best practices for memorizing (perhaps cue your memory through the poem's images, sound, line, or sentence) and observe also how you approach the poem differently when it is something you are memorizing. This is an excellent way to store up a treasure trove for moments when your mind is idle or needs distraction. I have seen young children memorize poems in minutes. It is also a wonderful word gift to recite or write to someone for a special occasion.

Christine Perrin in Your Classroom

If you are interested in having author Christine Perrin lead your school or group in a seminar regarding this book or help you to get started in any of these activities, contact information is available at artofpoetryonline.com or at the offices of Classical Academic Press at 717-730-0711 or toll free at 866-730-0711.

INTRODUCTION TO THE TEACHER

"Read in order to live," Gustave Flaubert said. Literature asks us to come into relationship with it in such a way that we might be changed and instructed in the way in which we conduct our lives. In his poem *Archaic Torso of Apollo*, the poet Rainer Maria Rilke meditates on an old, incomplete statue of the god Apollo. The broken statue, which doesn't even have a head, ignites the imagination of the speaker in the poem. His choice of verbs—"suffused," "gleams," "dazzle," "run," "glisten," "burst," "see," and "change"—seem to make the statue live. As the result of this encounter with the eyeless torso, the viewer leaves, saying, "here there is no place / that does not see you. You must change your life."[1] According to Rilke, this is the claim that art makes upon us. We come to literature not simply to be well educated; we come to live, to be changed, to know.

Interpretation aids this process. However, writing a teacher's guide that provides interpretations of poems is risky. The concern is that you might not mine the poem yourself if the silver is already there for the taking. The digging into the rich resource of the poem itself, not just the nugget of silver or gold that results, is an important part of the pleasure. Please don't use this book to avoid your own intimacy with these precious metals. Build upon these interpretations or even disagree with them. These interpretations are introductions, here to help you make the next level of contact with the poems. We often discover what we believe about a subject from hearing the views of others and then agreeing or disagreeing with those views. How often have you read an article and either adopted its ideas, reformed its ideas, or done some combination of the two? You can use this teacher's edition similarly. But do not sacrifice your own relationship to the poems. In a relationship with a person, the degree to which you attend to that person by learning her labyrinthine ways and thoughts, her favorite kind of cookie, or what she hates to do on a Friday night will make the relationship and its impact on your own person and life significant. Likewise, a piece of literature will only instruct you, delight you, and change you if you come to know it personally. Simply reading it once and quickly painting it with someone else's interpretation will not give you this rich exchange.

Polymath George Steiner, who taught literature in four languages, argues in his book *Real Presences* that the ideal interpreter of literature is the performer and the writer/artist who answers one story with a story or performance or poem of his or her own. This could perhaps take the shape of a Shakespearean dramatic performance, which leaves ample room for interpretation of the text incorporated into gesture, facial expression, blocking, and costume. Other examples of this that Steiner would cite include Tolstoy's *Anna Karenina* as a critical response to George Eliot's *Middlemarch*, or Ralegh's *The Nymph's Reply to the Shepherd* as the answer to Marlowe's *The Passionate Shepherd to His Love*.[2] Since we aren't all capable of such tour-de-force responses, memorization and recitation, reading aloud, and engaging a text with one's own writing and with class discussion are helpful steps in the process of coming into relationship with literature. Sharing stories and poems together as a community gives us shared memories and vocabulary. Many have argued that reading also safeguards our individuality and ability to think outside of what the state or power system tells us to believe. This is the reason that totalitarian governments suppress literature and art (and religion)—they threaten their propaganda, stimulate the imagination, and give people ideas.

Eudora Welty, in her autobiography *One Writer's Beginnings*, describes her initiation into this process as beginning with her childhood attachment to the alphabet. She says, "My love for the alphabet, which endures, grew

[1] Ranier Maria Rilke, "Archaic Torso of Apollo," *Ahead of All Parting: Selected Poetry and Prose of Rainer Maria Rilke*, trans. Stephen Mitchell (New York: Modern Library, 1995), n.p.

[2] George Steiner, *Real Presences* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), 34.

out of reciting it but, before that, out of seeing the letters on the page."[3] She links her later response to the *Book of Kells* with this early primal love: "All the wizardry of letter, initial, and word swept over me a thousand times over, and the illumination, the gold, seemed a part of the word's beauty and holiness that had been there from the start."[4] There is something of the purpose of literary interpretation in Welty's response. As teachers, we can cultivate a sense of the sacredness and beauty of language in its service of reality. We communicate in the way in which we approach texts, when we take time to read aloud and to speak the words with care and communicate meaning by our own emphasis and voice. Literature began as an oral endeavor, and that primary contact with the word, and with each other in the presence of it, clings. Students should be encouraged to read aloud, and discussions should include naming delightful or pleasurable, even ugly or repulsive, words and phrases, musical moments in the text, and metaphors that students (and teachers) will take with them.

Students would profit from interacting with the text in various ways—for instance by writing a list of praiseworthy items before they study Hopkins's *Pied Beauty* (see page 44), so that they are prepped for the wonder, awe, and imaginative reach of his praise items. This will also prepare them to savor the particularity of the poem's strange and delicious language (mostly as it contrasts to their own). They will see the limits to their own lists and the limitlessness of Hopkins's; they will become conscious of the need to search for language that is adequate to describe the experience. Show your students how the writers of the poems they study labored for their work. Journals that Hopkins kept detail the imaginative life he lived with nature and language. He catalogued cloud types, flower openings, leaf changes, and weather in particular language with care and close observation day after day. It would be worth reading several passages to demonstrate the way in which these daily writings (a discipline, a habit) influenced and contributed to his great work.[5]

Unless you, as a teacher, are cherishing the work and serving it to the best of your ability, your students will not value it. You must memorize poems, learn the elements (which you'll find in the first half of this book) that create the poem, collect your own body of favorites, and, chiefly, relate the language and ideas you meet there to your own life. We have a profound need to name our inner and outer lives, to know the meaning beneath our hunger and thirst. Without the language, characters, and circumstances of literature, this endeavor of meaning is impoverished. Show students how this functions in your own life as well as in theirs. I had a student who dismissed a good choice she made, laughing about it as "taking care of herself or whatever" in my presence as we spoke about grave matters in her life. I asked her why she didn't find language that would allow her to make that statement with the gravity it possessed. She agreed that it would be good to do that, and we settled on Frost's language in *Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening*—she had kept a life promise in making the decision we were discussing and she found and used language to bear witness to it.

My son and I remind each other at low moments—especially low ecological moments, such as oil spills—"there lives the dearest freshness deep down things," from Hopkins's *God's Grandeur*. These references are a shorthand for the compressed abundance of the poem, which has called into the present a cornucopia of facts, thought, experience, and feeling that pulls us back from an edge of despondency. It also references a body of work we share with each other, which in and of itself is a pleasure. In your classroom, you are building an anthology together that you will have as a reference and that will widen your class's association with each other. Soon the poems and books

[3] Eudora Welty, *One Writer's Beginnings* (Boston: Harvard University Press, 1984), 9.

[4] Ibid.

[5] You can find some of Hopkins's journal entries in *Gerard Manley Hopkins: The Major Works*, published by Oxford University Press, 1986.

will begin to comment on each other and to speak for you—the best words in the best order. Alberto Manguel describes the process this way: "Reading is cumulative and proceeds by geometrical progression: each new reading builds upon whatever the reader has read before."[6]

Criticism should widen our imagination and make the work of the writer and the writer's imagination more available to us. As students, we take on the role of critic to figure out what we think, to have an opinion, to learn how to support an opinion, to work our way toward clarity and attentiveness, and to add layers to our understanding. C.S. Lewis suggests that "good reading" involves surrender to the work in hand and a process of entering fully into the opinions of others—the masters who have made the work. Lewis says that "in reading great literature I become a thousand men and yet remain myself."[7] It was important to Lewis that the joy of the reading experience be kept primary, and also that the concerns of the work make a demand on the reader. One way to kill the reading experience is to simply use the poem to illustrate literary terms. That isn't to say that we should not bother knowing them, but rather as teachers we must work to experience the full reach of a work. Charles Lamb puts Lewis's idea in his own words, saying that he loved to "lose himself in other men's minds."[8] Reading creates empathy as we adopt the worldview of the writer for the period during which we are reading his work. We also entertain a relationship to experience what is different from the everyday—reading allows us to step outside the social contract and provides "time outside of time," which directs us away from the what and how of daily living toward the why questions. We enter a world with its own meaning structure when we read. (For a good article on this subject, see Sven Birkerts's "States of Reading.")

As a teacher, you want to safeguard your students as readers first. Do what you can to protect and nourish their relationships to books, poems, and characters. I know one teacher of seventh and eighth graders who has a themed party for each book they read, such as a tea party for Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*. Another teacher recommends that you not spend longer than a week talking about a book so as not to make it stale for the students. One friend who was schooled by her father recalls having him ask her engaged, critical, and interested questions about whatever book she was reading while they were in the car. She is about to complete her doctorate in literature and she attributes her basic understanding of how to look at texts to those conversations with her father. She tells me that she dismisses class when she sees prolonged bored expressions on the faces of her college students.

Recently two other teachers and I met with a small twelfth-grade literature class and let the students choose from a cache of poems that we selected on a theme that was relevant to some of the struggles the class was having. They each got to know the poem and wrote a response to it that wove their analysis together with their personal response. We gathered at my house (during class time) to read the poems and the responses aloud and talk about them together. We all left believing in the words, having talked about subjects that mattered greatly to each of us. It is important to not lose the human and personal aspect of looking at literature together. A genuine engagement in literature cannot survive without it.

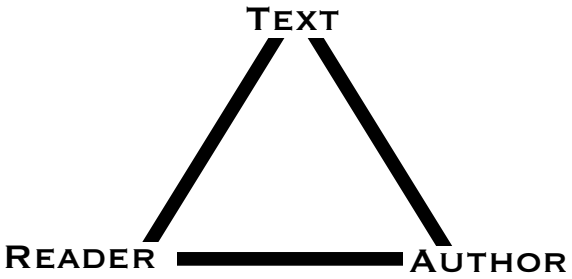
Having said that, here is a brief outline of three different aspects of the reading encounter to consider: 1) the author and her intentions, 2) the text and its living tissue, and 3) the reader and his relationship to the text. The first aspect suggests that the author had ideas that she executed and that we can sleuth with clues from the text. The second aspect emphasizes the idea that the text holds truth and some degree of objectivity that we are unlocking as we acquire tools and learn the categories of literary study and vocabulary. The third aspect suggests that the text becomes a mirror held up to the reader and that his interest in the text is the text's meaning.

[6] Alberto Manguel, *A History of Reading* (New York: Penguin Group Publishing, 1997), 67.

[7] C.S. Lewis, *An Experiment in Criticism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 141.

[8] Sven Birkerts, *Readings* (Saint Paul, MN: Greywolf Press, 1999), 60.

Here's a visual representation of the three aspects that may help you to understand the relationship among them.



Alan Shapiro, in his book *In Praise of the Impure*, notes the importance of sifting and merging the mind of the master and the student into the moral and relational world:

> If all great art is symbolic of a kind of moral plenitude, of conflicting attitudes and impulses explored and worked through toward some ideal clarity, the act of reading is itself a model of ideal human relations, aspiring toward a perfect attentiveness in which emotional possession and intellectual comprehension—what experience conditions us to see and what the text insists we see—inform and alter one another. Reading well, in other words, is symbolic loving.[9]

Here Shapiro argues that reading a book is like learning to listen to another person—we have to work to listen and to understand to the best of our ability based on our own perspective and experience. Notice, in particular, the tension of "what experience conditions us to see and what the text insists we see." When we deal with people, we are always trying to both use and supersede our own understanding and experience in order to comprehend the other person. This is also what happens when we read.

Each approach potentially compliments the other, but none should dominate or swallow the others. Literary theorists tend to go wrong when they exaggerate one aspect of this triangle. For example, most of us would agree that the reader's role in the reading process is essential—we see what we are able to see by dint of our experience, our intelligence, and our practice. Often these factors are applied in the context of a community that shares certain values and therefore is wont to identify them in a text. For Stanley Fish, the pioneer of reader-response theory, a text is a Rorschach blot onto which the reader projects his self-understanding or his culturally determined assumptions. Fish posits that the text contains nothing in itself, but rather the content is supplied by the reader. It is the reader who determines the shape of the text, its form, and its content. This is how Fish can claim that readers write texts. His insight is dramatic.

Try reading *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy with a group of people who do not share the same assumptions about life and you will find that some of them see Christian ideas in the text and some do not. We tend to think the ideas we see are self-evident in a text, but reading in different communities illuminates the fact that ideas are partly there because we identify them as such. However, Tolkien spent several decades writing this story, drawing deeply upon his intimate knowledge of multiple languages, and he suggests all sorts of ideas and even creatures that I have never encountered. It would foolish to suggest that the text itself and the author's intentions are not playing a huge role in educating me and expanding what I know and see. All three aspects—the author, the text, and the reader—are essential in the reading relationship.

[9] Alan Shapiro, *In Praise of the Impure* (Chicago: Northwestern University Press, 1993), 55.

To support the idea that Tolkien used Christian theology in his books one would need ballast from the other reading categories—to go in search of Tolkien's own statement that the work is a fundamentally Christian and Catholic work, that he worked theology into the story unconsciously at first and later, in revision, consciously. You will certainly need the text itself to support the insight that you recognize from your own training and lived life. You may even use texts outside of the one under consideration, such as *Beowulf and the Critics* or *The Silmarillion*. The three approaches exist symbiotically and we ought to work to include each aspect and teach students to do likewise. To pretend that nothing Tolkien said or lived off the page is relevant to the book he wrote is unreasonable, as it would be to believe that simply because he did say it then there is only one way to look at the story. There is a constant sifting of perspectives that goes on as we read.

Hans-Georg Gadamer also saw the relationship between reader and text to be important. He said that what matters in the exchange is not the identity of the "I" reading or the "you" of the text, but the intimacy between them, an intimacy "mediated by strangeness."[10] He believed that poetry (and fiction, though he spoke in terms of poetry) is a dialogue between the writer and the reader and that the distance between the two is not an obstacle, but something inviting, an open field for the reader to enter and move around in. By this view, reading completes the poem and the poem is seen as something in play, at work, and also unfinished, something for the reader to eat and digest. We close ourselves off to the work when we just analyze it and gloss it critically as scholars, or when we insist that there is a single unquestioned meaning. Hence, Gadamer (who lived before Fish) qualifies Fish and identifies an essential part of the reading process—for the literature to matter at all (historically or personally) the reader has to grasp it. If you are teaching literature, you yourself must be living with texts and sharing organically with students this rapport. You must give time for the discussion to move into their own lives, ask questions that prompt them to think about how they have lived with these ideas, images, and encounters in daily life with family, friends, and society.

Recently, as part of our study of Joy Harjo's poem *Perhaps the Word Ends Here* (see page 144), I asked students in seventh grade to talk about what happens at their kitchen table. What followed was an outpouring of table conversation and observations about families and food. Genuine affection and delight found its way into the discussion of the poem. The poem insists that men and women are made at tables, that parents' dreams "put their arms around their children" at tables. One can only wonder how those students returned to the dinner table after remembering their own experiences and merging them with the language of the poem. Likewise, history has shown us how often a book has lain dormant and relatively undiscovered until the right reader in the right time comes along and unlocks its significance.

Another approach to literary texts is guided by authorial intention, which suggests that the author sat down to write with a particular meaning in mind and it is our job and ability to excavate that meaning. There are various aids in this endeavor. Historical information about the poet and the time in which he wrote becomes valuable. For instance, while it isn't essential to know that Milton was blind when he wrote *On His Blindness*, it does enhance and illuminate the reading experience measurably. If the sonnet were simply approached by analyzing the sonnet form, iambic pentameter, and rhyme scheme, something essential would be missed. Here is a man crying out to God in a crisis of vocation, wondering how he can be held to account for his talent when his tools to do his work (his eyes/ his light) have been taken away. The grief of the lament is palpable. He laments not only the work he can't do but his circumstances as well. He arrives at an unexpected answer to his tragic circumstance: "God doth not need /

[10] Hans-Georg Gadamer, *The Relevance of the Beautiful* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 76.

Either man's work or his own gifts, who best / Bear his milde yoak, they serve him best" (see page 120). This is an answer that answers us all—the work of the creature is to bear the yoke we've been given, and the magnificence of God is enough. This poem urges the reader to accept the givens in life that are unchangeable, and to bear them as an obedience of love. Hence the historical and biographical contexts help us to approach an understanding of the author's moment in time and the circumstance that surrounded the writing of the poem.

There are times, however, when the historical approach can distance the student from the text by suggesting that it is so much a part of its original context, which is distant from ours, that a student might lack the sense that he has access to the poem now. In his wonderful book *Why Read?*, professor Mark Edmundson says that the teacher's chief job is to represent a work so as to make it live, to recreate in oneself what a master (the author) has felt, to be the work's advocate, to offer the students the same experience that we have had—to be changed by reading.

The ability to cross-reference other works of the writer exponentially enhances our understanding of a single poem, just as when we know a person and her history and use this to understand what she is saying or doing in a given moment. One problem or exaggeration in this approach lies with the reader who would insist that if the author didn't intend the suggestion it isn't there. We understand that there is an alchemy involved in creating a work of art in which the work exceeds the conscious mind at the time of creation. An analogy might be the reality of the individual that exceeds the résumé or biography that might be written about his life—these simply could not contain the full being, description, or meaning of a person. Nor can a work of art be contained in the intentions of the mind of the creator at the moment of creation. Most writers readily admit their hope that what they write expands beyond the bounds of what their mind was aware of at that moment. This is part of the mystery and transcendence of creative acts—many elements go into the pot to make it, but there is always an *x* factor, an inexplicable coming together and expanding of materials. It is our task to search out what intended meanings there are to be found to the best of our ability. Knowing the body of work of a writer and his biography and the times in which he was writing help with this process of sleuthing intentions.

When you read *Frederick Douglass* by Robert Hayden, knowing the historical framework of Douglass and Hayden helps immensely in understanding Hayden's critique of racism and unrealized but joyful hope and love. Similarly, if you read Robert Frost's work, you are aware that he often had a dark view of the natural world. He saw the potential for nature to kill us—he was not simply a romantic nature poet mooning about the pastoral life. Knowing this helps us to read specific poems, such as *Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening*. It aids us as we consider the threat of the dark and cold in the poem. Whitman was a pantheist, hence when he says in *Song of Myself*, "to die is different from what any one supposed, and luckier" (see pages 186-187), we have a larger context for that statement that does not allow us to read it as a Christian apology for the resurrection. We begin to see the layers involved in the fullest consideration of a piece of literature.

Richard Rorty says that between the intention of the author and the intention of the interpreter who sometimes simply "beats the text into a shape which will serve for his purpose," there is a third possibility. There is an intention of the text. This approach suggests that while we have ideas and an author had ideas while writing, the text itself goes beyond these intentions. It is our job to learn to look carefully to attend its meaning. Part of our job as teachers of literature is to teach students formally how to serve a text. In poetry, this involves understanding the elements of poetry—images, metaphor, and other figures of speech; words, their suggestions, and their definitions (and the invaluable skill of looking things up in the dictionary, including the etymology of a word); sounds, rhythm, and

how to identify them and their impact on the body of the hearer; shape; tone; etc. Students also need to learn the tradition behind poetry—the conventions, how writers have made different shapes and answered different human needs in literature throughout time (the elegy for grieving the dead, for instance).

Knowing a sampling of odes, elegies, and pastoral poems guides you when it comes time to read or write another. These forms, in particular, are shaping forms (as opposed to verse forms with specific prescriptions for line length, stanza break, etc.), which are answerable to the need culturally and personally to celebrate and praise, to lament and mourn. Understanding this as well as the formal choices and evolution of a verse form, such as the sonnet, is certainly part of being able to properly interpret one. This approach focuses on the relationship between content and form—how they answer and reflect each other. As in other categories, this one has historically been exaggerated. Some proponents of the New Criticism literary theory, for instance, insisted that nothing outside of the text mattered and that a strictly formal analysis of content and form would adequately treat the poem. But categorical explanations are limited, too—there were New Critics who argued for balance and perspective and aimed to sift all aspects of the flour of literary analysis in order to bake a smooth-textured cake that is delicious to eat (for more on this read the article "A Critic's Job of Work" by R.P. Blackmur).

As a teacher reading this, you may well feel overwhelmed as you sort through these approaches and wonder how you'll be able to know all this—the history, biography, and body of work of an artist and the elements of a poem or story—well enough to communicate adequately to your students. "Amateur" is an important word here, the lack of which has sent literary study in a Frankensteinian direction. It comes from the Latin for "lover" (*amator*—lover, *amare*—to love). Love covers a multitude of gaps that a scientific approach cannot cover. In today's theory-soaked environment, it is often the critic who becomes available and who obscures the work from clarity, pleasure, and direct contact. While you may not be tempted to treat language as scientifically as some, you are still in danger of approaching a text without reverence, in a way that avoids direct contact. Many of us who have lived our lives with the help of poetry or fiction are still asking ourselves how to teach it in a way that communicates it as a living organism and not a dead fetal pig that we are using for dissection.

You can offer your students an invitation to explore and respond to language and thought that has the capacity to sharpen their own inner lives. Simply putting them into contact with a range of good poems is the starting place. From there, give them the pleasure and insight of comparing the ideas and choices of one poem to another. Literature has always been for the common citizen, not for some rarefied specialist. Creating an atmosphere of consideration, of exploration, of delight is another element over which you have some control. Committing time to read aloud during class is a further giant step. Beyond that, a dictionary and a willingness to not have all the answers but to venture forth anyway will benefit students at any level.

Try to help them to articulate the lyric perception or governing insight that mantles the poem or story. Support this insight with details, let the language and word choice, metaphors, and shape of the poem or story aid this conclusion, but let them as well be wealth in their own right. Ask students how they have fielded some of these images, figures, and insights in their own lives. Draw contrasts or comparisons between student experience and the work's experience. Ask them what would be different about their lives if they believed the poem. Grapple with the metaphor that the work introduces, asking where it starts and at what point the comparison ends. Seek metaphors for your class experience together. Ask students to express experiences and sensations through metaphors that they've discovered or created.

Notice how the shape of the poem functions in relationship to its subject—if it is using a verse form, ask how the poem makes the form its own (which often happens through violating the form, as Dickinson did with the hymn meter). If the poem is creating a form with open verse, ask if a useful scaffold for the poem has been constructed (something the content can be supported by, as Whitman did with open verse). Look for patterns in the language that replicate the shape and forms of experience. Teach your students to dialogue with their literary forbears and to take that conversation (which is the stuff of culture) seriously, to live by it.

When you do not understand something, say so—ask the students to puzzle over it with you, and ask a colleague for insights as well. At the end of the day, if your students have been quickened by your helpful attention to language and felt ideas, they will have room to go in search of more than you could give them. Let us live with literature, come into relationship with the poems and their makers in such a manner that we come away changed, aided, conscious of the choices we have to make, able to live lives more profoundly aware of the currents running beneath our hunger and thirst.

01

IMAGES

{*the elements of poetry*}

An **image** is a **literal** or **concrete** detail that is sensory—a word or phrase that calls on the **senses** of sight, smell, taste, touch, and sound. In poems, these details are made from language and create pictures or sensations. In life we are inundated with images: the smell of bread, the blue in the sky after the sun sinks below the horizon, the feel of sand in your bathing suit, the first taste of black bottom pie. Some of these images carry great importance and emotion; some of them exist without our noticing. All images, no matter how ordinary or unusual, can be used to great effect in a poem.

Think about some of the mental pictures related to your senses that have been lodged in your brain simply because you have been alive for a decade or so. So often our memories are held in images. You can remember the flicker of afternoon light on the creek in front your house, or perhaps singing carols with your sister at the piano, the fish you ate fresh from the stream and fried in butter that time you vacationed in the Adirondacks. Images of all textures abound: figuring out your locker combination for the first time, kicking the soccer ball and smelling the cut grass, hearing the guitar riff in a favorite song. Because we live by collecting images without even trying to, they become especially important and powerful in poetry; they move us and help to bring us to the moment and the place in which the poet is speaking. Hence they become a kind of time travel machine that transports us back into our past or into the present of the speaker of the poem. A poet uses images to construct our experience of a poem because we use the received images of our daily lives to construct our own experience, identity, and culture. Poems aren't summaries or sermons or scientific equations; they are worlds that we enter and

experience for a time, as if we were going to the Renaissance faire where people are dressed in costumes, speak in accents, eat drumsticks, and joust on horses.

When we use images in our writing, we bring those to whom we speak right next to us. Poet Stanley Kunitz says that "the artist in the modern world is probably the only person, with a handful of exceptions, who keeps alive that sense of the sharing of this life with others. When he watches that leaf fall, it's falling for you. Or that sparrow.…" W.B. Yeats has said, "Art bids us touch and taste and hear and see the world, and shrinks from what Blake calls mathematic form, from every abstract form, from all that is of the brain only." He is making the argument that all art, poetry included, depends on the senses, on direct experience, and not just on the mind. Art moves us by appealing to our physical bodies. The art of poetry appeals to our bodies most directly when it uses images to cause us to see, touch, taste, hear, and smell the world with which the speaker of the poem would like to bring us into contact. Abstract language, such as "love," "peace," "despair," and "truth" is of deep interest to a poet, but, according to Yeats, the actual process of making or reading a poem never starts with these. Instead, poetry starts in the body, in the senses, and therefore in images.

Think about how it feels when a friend returns from a wonderful vacation and you eagerly listen for the physical details that reconstruct her experience for you. It is as close as you can come to being there and sharing the experience. At times the vividness of a retold story or event can be more intensified than the experience itself, depending both on the storyteller and the listener. This extra intensity is one quality that distinguishes poems that endure, loved by thousands of readers, from poems that are quickly forgotten.

Here's another thing to think about. Part of our experience of life is its transience—its quality of passing quickly. Philosopher Hans Gadamer says this:

> Whenever we have to hold something, it is because it is transient and threatens to escape our grasp. In fact, our fundamental experience as beings subject to time is that all things escape us, that all the events of our lives fade more and more, so that at best they glow with an almost unreal shimmer in the most distant recollection.

This writer goes on to suggest that poems and the poetic word bring time to a standstill. In particular, images in a poem mark the intersection between what is passing and what is eternal. Images bring us alive to memory—smelling the new paint of the room you worked on with your father, riding the Ferris wheel on your family vacation and feeling your stomach jump as it turned downward, or watching a face behind a rain-streaked window on the day you found out about your friend's illness. They remind us that we are alive in bodies and that time is passing.

As you study this book you will learn that many other **figures of speech**, or **figurative language**, use images. For instance, **metaphors**, or **word pictures**, make a direct and deep connection between a concrete image and an abstract idea—*my love is a rose*—or between two different concrete images—*her hair is a shining metal helmet*. **Symbols** use a person, object, image, word, or event to evoke a range of meaning beyond the thing itself: the dove of peace, the cross, the Star of David, or a host of personal symbols built over the course of a single poem. (See an example of this in the poem *The Crow*, in which the image of the crow comes to stand for a prophet who is trying to get the speaker's attention, just as prophets in all traditions come

to deliver a burning message to people who do not want to hear it.) Many of the things you will notice poems doing begin with image as their basement. Images in a given poem often work together (what we might call a **family of images**) to create a larger whole. *Storm Ending* achieves this. Sometimes a single deep image is developed throughout a poem, as in *The Swing*. Jay Parini, in his introduction to the *Wadsworth Anthology*, describes the literary image this way:

> An image is a complex emotional unit, involving the whole of the reader's mind. It compels attention by its sound as well as its visual element. It conjoins thought and emotion, making a unified impression. In the very best poems, images lodge deep in the mind, where they cannot be easily removed.

As you read the following poems—closely!—may an image lodge itself deeply also in you.

LEARNING TO READ CLOSELY

Rainer Maria Rilke (1875–1926)
Translated by Edward Snow

The Panther*

His gaze has from the passing of the bars
grown so tired, that it holds nothing anymore.
It seems to him there are a thousand bars
and behind a thousand bars no world.

The supple pace of powerful soft strides,
turning in the very smallest circle,
is like a dance of strength around a center
in which a great will stands numbed.

Only sometimes the curtain of the pupils
soundlessly slides up—. Then an image enters,
glides through the limbs' taut stillness,
dives into the heart and dies.

*images are underlined

From the second line we understand that the speaker is investing the panther with meaning beyond the literal; in other words, we are aware that the panther means more than a panther in this poem as soon as we get to the word "tired" to describe his gaze. Then the perspective of the panther is further unspooled for us when the speaker says, "It seems to him." Though we have all looked at an animal and imagined what it might be thinking, very few of us have declared with such certainty that we know precisely what it thinks. Notice that the first **stanza** puts great emphasis on the bars by bringing them physically before us as they are, always, before the panther: three times in three **lines** they are mentioned and thus they pass inescapably before our eyes, too.

This poem uses stanzas deliberately and skillfully, demonstrating the way that stanzas function as rooms (the meaning of the Italian root of the word). Each one serves a different purpose in the poem. Notice how they end—definitively. The first stanza ends with "no world"; the second, "stands numbed"; the third, "dies." Each stanza ending ("world" at the end of the first; "numbed," the second; "dies," the third) lets the reader stay awhile in the reality of the stanza just finished. The white space between stanzas produces a longer pause than that at the end of the line.

The second stanza reveals to us the strength and agility and potential power of the panther, which is currently impotent. Unlike the first stanza, which is clipped and broken into two sentences, this stanza has a single sentence that, with each line, paces and spills onto the following line, much like the motion of the cat.

The third stanza formally demonstrates the emotional movement of the poem for us. The **caesura** (or middle of the line interruption, in this case a dash) of the second line records the possibility and hope of change represented by the entering image. The text is interrupted by an image, and the poem pauses, causing the reader to pause as the image "enters" and "glides" and "dives." Utter despair and paralysis follow when hope cannot be realized or acted upon and the image "dies." The image that "dives into the heart and dies" represents the failed possibility of a life outside the bars, of an image other than bars. The poem ends on the word of death. This poem was written originally in German, which means that in translation it is a new creation, a new poem made by poet and translator where some of the original skill and intent are lost and replaced with different sounds and shapes and words which, though changed, are often equally beautiful.

This poem is a wonderful example of how the ideas and the **shape** of a poem can work together. Poetry uses all of its lines and spaces, which prose doesn't have, to create meaning. Rilke's poem *The Panther* operates largely on the basis of **symbolism**, using images to create a picture that has meaning beyond itself. The panther is real but it is also a symbol of a state of utter despair and cagedness. There are many occasions in which an individual, a community, or even a people group experiences hopelessness and cannot imagine escaping the situation or state of mind which cages it. Rainer Maria Rilke, the poet, doesn't spell out for us whether or not this panther is meant to represent something specific, like slavery, or being trapped in a bad relationship, or an emotional or economic depression. He lets us fill in the specifics according to our own experience. He does, however, clearly express what it feels like to be in a cage and lose all hope. This cage is not simply the literal cage of the panther (though it is that); it is also the many cages that are possible in the human experience. Though many powerful poems do assign more specific meaning to their images—see the next chapter on metaphor—symbolism gives more interpretative freedom to the reader. In a poem like *The Panther*, such freedom actually helps us feel more intensely the imprisonment of the animal. We are free to assign meaning to his plight; he is not.

ANTHOLOGY

Jean Toomer (1894–1967)

Storm Ending

Thunder blossoms gorgeously above our heads,
Great, hollow, bell-like flowers,
Rumbling in the wind,
Stretching clappers to strike our ears.
Full-lipped flowers
Bitten by the sun
Bleeding rain
Dripping rain like golden honey–
And the sweet earth flying from the thunder.

1. Notice how Toomer's poem takes you to a distinct place, a specific experience constructed by image layered upon image. Make a list of all the verbs in the poem, then all the nouns, then all the adjectives, and adverbs.

2. We may expect images in poetry to always be nouns, *things* we can see, touch, smell, etc., but in this poem the primary image is announced by a verb—can you name it?

3. How would you describe the atmosphere created in this poem? Is the overall feeling of this poem negative or positive? Dark or light? Fearful or comforting? What specific evidence can you point to in the poem to defend your answer?

Please note that the explications and answers are located in the Teacher's Pages at the end of each chapter.

Robert Frost (1874–1963)

Dust of Snow

The way a crow
shook down on me
the dust of snow
from a hemlock tree

Has given my heart
a change of mood
and saved a part
of a day I rued.

1. What is the small story in this poem and what are its images?
2. What does the word "rue" mean?
3. Has anything like this ever happened to you?
4. What can you guess about the change of mood in the poet's heart? Why doesn't he name his emotions more specifically?
5. Think about the title of the poem: the image of snow dust was significant enough to the poet that in this very short poem he included its exact wording twice. Why?

Judith Kunst (1970–)

The Crow

Was it because
at last
I cleaned the window

that he threw himself
against the glass?
I thought, poor crow–

he doesn't know
the evergreens
and blue sky

are behind him.
I turned back
to my page

but *whumpp*–
the bird attacked
the glass again.

His long claws
scuffled at the pane
and I yelled "Crow!

go away!"
Again his body slapped
the glass,

again,
and then again,
and then at last

he caught my eye–
oh, prophet,
terrified.

1. This poem gives us another encounter between a crow and a human being. What are the specific images that place us in the scene of the poem?
2. Who is the main character? What specific evidence can you point to in the poem to support your answer?
3. How many different feelings can you find in this poem?
4. At exactly what point in the poem do we discover the crow is more than just a crow? How do you know?
5. What is a prophet? What images or feelings does that word call up for you? Why do you think the poet composed the last stanza of the poem so that it is not totally clear who is "terrified"?
6. Look again at the first sentence of the poem; what might be the significance of the speaker cleaning the window glass?

Walt Whitman (1819–1892)

Cavalry Crossing a Ford

A line in long array where they wind betwixt green islands,
They take a serpentine course, their arms flash in the sun—hark to the musical clank,
Behold the silvery river, in it the splashing horses loitering stop to drink,
Behold the brown-faced men, each group, each person a picture, the negligent rest on the saddles,
Some emerge on the opposite bank, others are just entering the ford—while,
Scarlet and blue and snowy white,
The guidon flags flutter gayly in the wind.

1. What are we looking at in this poem?
2. How do the images draw you into the long ago time period portrayed in the poem?
3. The poet uses two verbs that make *you* as the reader a character in this poem—what are they?
4. What, to you, is the most interesting or powerful image?
5. Have you seen anything that looks like this, or any part of this kind of scene elsewhere? How many sentences does this poem use? What is the effect of that number?
6. How does the way in which the poem is structured echo or help express the pictures?
7. What different physical senses do we get to experience through this poem?
8. Is there a mood established in the poem through the images? What is it?

Ezra Pound (1885–1972)

In a Station of the Metro

The apparition of these faces in the crowd:
Petals on a wet, black bough.

1. What are we looking at in this picture? What are the petals? What is the black bough?
2. What kind of mood does the imagery (the second line) give us?
3. Why do we need the title?
4. How is the length and shape of this poem perfectly chosen to help lodge the single image in our minds?
5. What color are the petals you imagine as you read?
6. What images or experiences in your own life are similar to those portrayed in the poem?
7. Why do you think the poet chose the word "apparition"?

Robert Louis Stevenson (1850–1894)

The Swing

How do you like to go up in a swing,
Up in the air so blue?
Oh, I do think it the pleasantest thing
Ever a child can do!

Up in the air and over the wall,
Till I can see so wide,
River and trees and cattle and all
Over the countryside–

Till I look down on the garden green,
Down on the roof so brown–
Up in the air I go flying again,
Up in the air and down!

1. Does this poem remind you of your own experience?
2. What are some of the images that create the experience portrayed in the poem?
3. What are some of the words that create the experience?
4. What is the effect of the rhymes? Circle the rhymes. Underline the images.
5. Why do you think the poet uses the word "down" three times in the last stanza?
6. What are some feelings one might feel on a swing? Can you find one or more of these feelings in the language of this poem?
7. Is the poem about anything more than childhood swinging? How can you tell?

ACTIVITIES

1. Take five minutes and freewrite about images from one of the four seasons. (In freewriting, you write for the entire time, not planning what you say, but simply writing anything that comes to your mind, even when nothing comes to your mind. It helps to generate ideas.)
2. Describe an image that is important to you. Discuss and identify an image that's important to your class. What kind of images did you choose? Could they be called symbols? Why or why not? If they are symbols, what multiple meanings do your images represent?
3. Describe the past school year through four images.
4. Figure out which sense (of our five) is most important or strongest to you.
5. Cut out a series of images from a magazine that describes you or a relationship that's important to you. Make a collage with the images—does it matter how the pictures are arranged? Do two different arrangements convey two different feelings in you? Why?
6. Write your own version of the Ezra Pound poem. Its title should announce your location ("At…"), and the two-line body should present one glimpse, one impression of that location, using an image from nature.
7. Play an **association** game with a partner or have a single person leading the class.The leader says a word and you respond with a word that comes to your mind and then the other person (or you could go around the room with this) responds with another word. Continue for a while and see how the brain makes a necklace of these words and thoughts.
8. Write a poem like the poem titled *The Panther* but with a different animal, perhaps a snake. Describe the motion of a snake by demonstrating it. Use the lines and the stanzas to help you. If you'd prefer a different animal (say, an elephant), feel free.
9. The words "the way…" are commonly used to introduce an image that is a complete experience—not just the crow himself but *the way* he shook the snow; not just the thunder and rain but *the way* it looked and moved in the sky. Write your own version of the poem *Dust of Snow*, keeping Frost's structure but replacing his story and images with your own, either real or imagined, serious or silly.

Ezra Pound

VOCABULARY

Abstract language: words that suggest concepts, ideas, and generalizations, such as peace and justice.

Association: a leap that the mind makes when one thing or idea makes you think of another. When this is recorded it is called stream of consciousness—the stream of thought that the mind runs along at any given time.

Caesura: a pause in the middle of a line of poetry marked by punctuation.

Concrete language: words that describe particular things (bug, table, nose) as opposed to words that are abstract.

Family of images: a collection of images in a single poem that work together to form an intentional group of concrete details that create a larger picture of significance.

Figurative language: language that imposes a figure on the surface or content of what is actually there (the literal). Metaphor, simile, and symbol all do this; they suggest something beyond what they say.

Figure of speech: saying one thing and suggesting another, so that words have significance beyond the literal meaning. To compare one thing to another. Literally, to superimpose a figure upon the surface of what is truly there.

Image: a concrete detail that speaks to the senses.

Line: the place where the poet deliberately ends a line, a distinctive feature of poetry, as opposed to prose in which the lines are not broken by the writer but by the margins of the page. Also referred to as "verse" or "stich."

Literal: that which actually is there, concrete.

Metaphor: a comparison between two things that are unlike; a resemblance forged in the mind of the poet between two unlike things.

Senses or sensing: our ability to perceive with our sense organs—touch, taste, hear, see, smell.

Shape: the element that most closely involves the visible form of the poem on the page. Also referred to as "form."

Stanza: the equivalent of the paragraph in prose, a group of lines gathered as a unit in a poem.

Symbol: use of a person, object, image, word, or event to evoke a range of meaning beyond the thing itself; an important image in a poem that has multiple, unspecified meanings and suggestions in its use.

Symbolism: representing things by symbols, or investing things with a symbolic meaning or character.

Word picture: another name for a metaphor.

EXPLICATIONS AND ANSWERS

p. 6, *Storm Ending* by Jean Toomer

Explication

Different people associate storms with different things. One person, for instance, might associate a storm with fear, while another thinks of the smell of wet pavement, and still another remembers the sight of earthworms emerging from the ground onto the sidewalk. If you ask your students what image they associate with storms, no doubt you will receive a variety of answers. However, it is not very likely that anyone in the class will share Jean Toomer's association. In this poem, he pictures thunder as an immense blooming flower in the stormy sky, an image that affects readers because it is so unexpected. Thunder is so loud that it shakes windows in their panes; flowers are so frail that they are easily crushed by a careless step. Until Toomer brings them together in this poem, the two seem to have very little in common.

Asking your students to "picture" the first line in their minds is a tricky task because, contrary to the first assumption many readers may make, the line refers to thunder, not lightning. You can't "picture" thunder in your mind; you can really only imagine the way it feels and sounds, rumbling across the sky and vibrating in the very soles of your feet. If you've seen a time-lapsed movie of a flower blooming, in which the process is sped up so that the petals open and curl in a matter of seconds, then you know what Toomer is comparing to thunder. Ask your students if they agree that thunder can sound in the same way that a blooming flower looks and that rain can feel like "golden honey" after the tension and violence of a storm. Ask them to close their eyes while you slowly read the poem aloud. Pause between lines, allowing the words to linger so that they can piece together all of the images in their minds. Then discuss which of the images were the most effective for your students and which ones they had difficulty picturing.

Answers

1. Notice how Toomer's poem takes you to a distinct place, a specific experience constructed by image layered upon image. Make a list of all the verbs in the poem, then all the nouns, then all the adjectives, and adverbs.

   The verbs in the poem include: blossoms, rumbling, stretching, strike, bleeding, dripping, flying. The nouns in the poem include: thunder, heads, flowers, wind, clappers, ears, flowers, sun, rain, rain, honey, earth, thunder. The adjectives in the poem include these: great, hollow, bell-like, full-lipped, golden, sweet. The adverb that appears in the poem is "gorgeously."

2. We may expect images in poetry to always be nouns, *things* we can see, touch, smell, etc., but in this poem the primary image is announced by a verb—can you name it?

   The main image of the poem is that of thunder opening like a flower as the poet announces in line 1 that the "thunder blossoms."

3. How would you describe the atmosphere created in this poem? Is the overall feeling of this poem negative or positive? Dark or light? Fearful or comforting? What specific evidence can you point to in the poem to defend your answer?

   You might say that the atmosphere is frightening because the image of the earth "flying" from the thunder and the words "strike," "bitten," and "bleeding" all portray violent images. However, you might say that the atmosphere of the poem is one of appreciation, because the speaker also uses images that are beautiful and gentle, such as the repeated mention of "flowers," as well as the use of the words "blossoms" and "honey." Because of this, while the poem may not be calm, peaceful, or comforting, it does not necessarily have a negative tone. We assume that the quality of light is affected by the story—it is probably more dark than light, though we note that the storm is ending (as we see by the title) and therefore some of the darkness may be lifting. Here, as in the whole poem, there is a tension—while the atmosphere is cloud-dark, it is also influenced by the flowers, the honey, and the mention of sun. Poetry and all of literature are often complex, and complexity involves a reality that is not simply black or white, light or dark, true or false. Often two seemingly contradictory aspects can both be true. In fact, truth usually needs this kind of tension, which we call paradox, in order to be identified properly. Another aspect of interpreting literature is that there are several or even many different "readings" or interpretations of a single text. As readers, the students' job is to learn the art of interpretation and to support their analyses. This textured poem has successfully represented the experience of a complex moment, giving us the sensation of the storm's powerful, sensuous presence, which, even as we read, is lifting.

p. 7, *Dust of Snow* by Robert Frost

Explication

In *Dust of Snow*, the length of the lines and the quick rhythm of the rhymes keep the poem moving at a fairly rapid pace. However, the white space between the two stanzas forces the reader to pause. In that short pause, Frost sets his readers up for a surprise. Many people would be irritated that snow had fallen on them, getting under their collar and melting on their neck. Frost, however, is not irritated in the least. A great lover of nature, Frost surprises us in the second stanza by remarking that this simple event has redeemed a day he "rued." The crow shaking snow on him has given him a feeling that someone might get from an unexpected hug, a compliment from a respected associate, or an inside joke shared between friends. Ask your students if they have ever had a bad day during which something small and unremarkable happened to make them feel much better.

Answers

1. What is the small story in this poem and what are its images?

   The small story is that the speaker has had a bad day, but as he's walking under a hemlock tree a crow moves on one of the branches and the snow that falls on the speaker brightens his day. This story is conveyed through two stanzas, two separate units, and two primary images: first, the crow's movement causes snow to fall off a hemlock tree onto the speaker, and second, the speaker's heart experiences a change of mood because of this event. Snow, speaker, and tree are the images that convey this small story.

2. What does the word "rue" mean?

   In its verb form, rue means "to think of something with sorrow or regret."[11]

3. Has anything like this ever happened to you?

   Answers will vary.

4. What can you guess about the change of mood in the poet's heart? Why doesn't he name his emotions more specifically?

   The speaker doesn't tell us why he disliked or regretted his day, just as he doesn't tell us why the event described in this poem brightened his day. However, based on our own life experiences, we can imagine any number of reasons why he might be in a bad mood. If you take a moment to imagine what it would be like to have snow fall unexpectedly on you, perhaps the most immediate response for most people would be surprise at its coldness, at the way it falls down unexpectedly, or curiosity at what caused it to fall. His pleasure at this surprise may suggest that when he walked beneath the tree he was deep in thought, contemplating some unnamed trouble. The snow serves to distract him momentarily from these troubles and perhaps see the humor in mild misfortune. Because the poet chose to not name his emotion specifically, the poem has appeal to a wider audience; readers can imagine this scene relating to a range of emotions they themselves have experienced.

5. Think about the title of the poem: the image of snow dust was significant enough to the poet that in this very short poem he included its exact wording twice. Why?

   The poet mentions the dust of snow twice in the poem because it is the hinge or significant moment in the poem. It is the cleansing agent—the element that saves the day and lifts the poet's heart. Titles, like the pointers a teacher might use in the classroom to direct students' attention to specific details, demonstrate the focus of the poem clearly. Such a simple thing as snow dust and yet so much depended on it.

p. 8, *The Crow* by Judith Kunst

Answers

1. This poem gives us another encounter between a crow and a human being. What are the specific images that place us in the scene of the poem?

   The specific images that place us in the scene of the poem include: a clean window in stanza 1; the crow throwing itself against the glass in stanza 2; the reflection of evergreens and blue sky on the glass in stanza 3; the page the speaker is reading in stanza 4; and the crow throwing itself repeatedly against the window in stanzas 5 through 8.

[1] *Merriam-Webster Online*, s.v. "Rue," <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/rue> (accessed June 16, 2009).

2. Who is the main character? What specific evidence can you point to in the poem to support your answer?

You could argue either that the crow is the main character or that the speaker is the main character. The crow could be the main character because it is the subject of the poem that carries out most of the action; it beats itself against the window and catches the speaker's eye. You might also argue that the speaker is the main character, because while the crow might be more active, the speaker is the one who actually observes, thinks, reads, and speaks in the poem ("Crow! / go away!") and she seems to suggest that the crow is important, not for its own sake, but because it helps the speaker realize something at the end of the poem.

3. How many different feelings can you find in this poem?

The speaker expresses pity in the second stanza, perhaps irritation or impatience in the sixth and seventh stanzas, and terror in the last stanza.

4. At exactly what point in the poem do we discover the crow is more than just a crow? How do you know?

This question is open for discussion. You could say that it is impossible to pinpoint an exact moment at which the crow becomes more than just a crow and that the realization builds only upon reading and rereading the poem. For other readers, the title might have first tipped them off; after all, even the most straightforward descriptive poem is doing more than just describing its subject. Or you might point out that when the speaker expresses pity for the crow because "he doesn't know / the evergreens / and blue sky / are behind him," the speaker has moved from merely describing an animal to attributing humanlike qualities to that animal, a transition that begins the crow's transformation from animal in the first stanza to prophet in the last stanza.

5. What is a prophet? What images or feelings does that word call up for you? Why do you think the poet composed the last stanza of the poem so that it is not totally clear who is "terrified"?

A prophet, by definition, is "one who utters divinely inspired revelations."[22] Associated images and ideas will vary depending on the reader's experiences, but some may include biblical prophets or mythological prophets. Kunst likely made the last stanza ambiguous because it seems as if both the speaker and the crow are terrified—the crow because of its confusion and pain, and the speaker because of his or her identification with and sudden deeper understanding of the crow's situation.

6. Look again at the first sentence of the poem; what might be the significance of the speaker cleaning the window glass?

The significance of the clean glass may be that it allows the speaker to see out of the window, to witness the crow's actions clearly, and to eventually understand the symbolism of the crow's struggle. For the crow, the clean glass becomes a mirror that causes confusion rather than clear vision.

p. 9, *Cavalry Crossing a Ford* by Walt Whitman

Explication

Skilled poets, when presenting readers with an image, should be able to appeal to nearly all of the reader's senses. Walt Whitman, most people would agree, is a skilled poet, and his poems, which lack specific formal elements, allow the reader to experience his words with nearly every sense.

The primary sense to which Whitman appeals in this poem is sight. He does not give his vantage point in the poem, but one might imagine that he is standing on the top of a nearby hill and looking down upon this scene. From this vantage point, he is able to clearly see the ford (a place in which a river is shallow enough to be waded across). The long line of cavalrymen looks like a snake that winds "betwixt green islands." In this poem, Whitman uses colors to paint an image for the reader: the river, flashing in the sunlight, looks "silvery," the islands are "green," the men are all "brown-faced" from being in the sun so often, and the "guidon flags" (small flags used for guidance by soldiers) are "Scarlet and blue and snowy white." He also provides us with a very clear picture of the attitude of the cavalrymen. Each one is a unique "picture"; some are still crossing the ford, some lead their horses to drink, and some are "negligent" toward their horses, preferring to rest in their saddles. In addition to appealing to the sense of sight, Whitman also gives the reader something to hear. He describes in the second and third lines how the soldiers' "arms" have a "musical clank," and how the horses are "splashing" in the water.

As students will discover in, chapter 14, "Walt Whitman: A Case Study in Open Verse" (p. 184), Whitman lived during the Civil War and was profoundly affected by the events and images of war. With your students, you can discuss how this

[2] Ibid., s.v. "Prophet," <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/prophet> (accessed August 6, 2009).

poem would have been different if Whitman had lived during the twentieth century or if he was alive today. How would his poem have looked if it were about tanks and trenches during World War II, or how might Whitman have portrayed modern warfare?

Answers

1. What are we looking at in this poem?

   In this poem we are watching a mounted unit of the military crossing a shallow part of a river.

2. How do the images draw you into the long ago time period portrayed in the poem?

   Read by contemporary readers, the images in this poem—of soldiers on horseback carrying flags—can be contrasted with how scenes of warfare have been portrayed since then: tanks, trenches, jet planes, jeeps, etc. However, the flags, arms (weapons), horses, and uniforms described are images from another era, and therefore the reader is drawn into the physical atmosphere of the time and place first, before any comparisons to today's warfare are made.

3. The poet uses two verbs that make *you* as the reader a character in this poem—what are they?

   The poet tells you to "hark to the musical clank," inviting you to listen to the activities he can hear, and he also says to "Behold" the various people and events, asking you to also look at the scene.

4. What, to you, is the most interesting or powerful image?

   Answers will vary.

5. Have you seen anything that looks like this, or any part of this kind of scene elsewhere? How many sentences does this poem use? What is the effect of that number?

   This scene, vividly pictured, may remind us of illustrations we've seen in history books or of a page from *The Lord of the Rings*, when the adventurers visit the elven city of Rivendell. This type of scene is not something we would see during a visit to the river nearest us. The poem contains five phrases (as opposed to lines). Some of these phrases are long enough that they take up more than one line, and the way they curl around onto the next line parallels the way Whitman describes the line of cavalrymen winding in a serpentine way between islands.

6. How does the way in which the poem is structured echo or help express the pictures?

   The long, winding sentence reflects the way the troupes are waiting in a long "line" that "wind[s]" and takes a "serpentine course." The way that the images are laid out one after the other also seems to echo the way the speaker's eyes roam over the view before him, taking in one detail at a time and dwelling on it.

7. What different physical senses do we get to experience through this poem?

   We use our hearing as we respond to the speaker's invitation to "hark" to "the musical clank" of the stirrups and the spurs and the splashing of the horses. The poet also asks us to "behold" the scene, and then goes on to deliver the scene to our sense of sight. We see the "long array," the "green islands," their weapons flashing in the sun, the "silvery" river, the horses, the "brown-faced men," and their "guidon flags" that are "scarlet and blue and snowy white." The poet even goes so far as to say that each person is a "picture," strongly suggesting that we should read this poem as a snapshot or a portrait.

8. Is there a mood established in the poem through the images? What is it?

   This question could be answered in different ways, depending on how a person reads it. It might be argued that the poem contains a lazy, slow, or relaxed mood; this would arise from the image of a long line that "wind[s]," the description of the horses "loitering" to drink, and the mention that some men are "negligent" because they remain on their horses rather than dismounting and continuing on foot. You could also argue that the poem contains a somewhat festive mood, supported by the mention of the "musical clank," the many colors, and the flags fluttering "gayly in the wind." These two moods do not exclude one another, and it's possible that students may sense other moods in the poem as well.

p. 10, *In a Station of the Metro* by Ezra Pound

Answers

1. What are we looking at in this picture? What are the petals? What is the black bough?

   As the title indicates, we are standing with the speaker in a station of the Metro (a subway station). The station is crowded, but we are looking at particular faces that emerge from the crowd and stand out vividly, in the same way that colorful flower petals would stand out on an otherwise colorless branch. We don't know precisely what the black bough represents in the comparison. It could be the throng of people or perhaps even the train itself.

2. What kind of mood does the imagery (the second line) give us?

The fact that this poem takes place below ground in a windowless station, as well as the mention of "wet" and "black" all suggest a mood of gloominess or loneliness. However, the apparition of the faces brings light or hope to the otherwise gloomy scene. We are not told whether these faces are familiar to the poet, or whether he simply finds them beautiful or startling, but it is clear that they bring a positive note to the mood of the poem.

3. Why do we need the title?

The title of the poem is a full one-third of the poem. It tells us where the poem takes place and gives context to the brief lines that follow. Without it, we would still know about the apparition of the faces, but we would have no background on which to paint our idea of those faces.

4. How is the length and shape of this poem perfectly chosen to help lodge the single image in our minds?

The length of the poem, which is extremely brief, echoes the sense that the event described lasted for only a moment and then was gone. Just as the apparition of the faces seems to pleasantly startle the speaker, so his poem may startle readers who are used to longer, wordier poems. It is also important to note that because there are so few words in this poem, each word must be active, strong, and memorable.

5. What color are the petals you imagine as you read?

Answers will vary.

6. What images or experiences in your own life are similar to those portrayed in the poem?

Answers will vary.

7. Why do you think the poet chose the word "apparition"?

Think of some of the other words that could be substituted for "apparition," such as "appearance," or "arrival." These words don't contain as much startling immediacy as "apparition," possibly because "apparition" also carries connotations of ghosts, spirits, and specters. Apparition suggests a physical presence that is precise, though not common to our experience. It hearkens to common trope in literature—the startling appearance of a being not of this world, as in *A Christmas Carol* by Charles Dickens.

p. 10, *The Swing* by Robert Louis Stevenson

Answers

1. Does this poem remind you of your own experience?

Answers will vary.

2. What are some of the images that create the experience portrayed in the poem?

The title provides us with the first image—a swing—but then the poem goes on to describe the view from this swing with more detail. In the first stanza we are told that the swing is in the pleasant blue air, or sky. Then, in the second stanza, we find that the vantage point from the swing allows one to see over the wall of the garden to the "river and trees and cattle and all / Over the countryside." Finally, in the third stanza, the swing goes so high that it seems as if the rider can look down on the garden and a nearby roof from above.

3. What are some of the words that create the experience?

The word "up" is probably one of the most prominent and noticeable words, found repeatedly in all three stanzas. It contributes to the sense of the swing's movement. The repeated use of the word "down" in the last stanza also portrays a sense of movement. Readers might also notice that the word "air" appears in all three stanzas, giving the poem a weightless feeling.

4. What is the effect of the rhymes? Circle the rhymes. Underline the images.

The rhyming pattern helps to portray a swinging motion by the rhythmic cycle between lines: *abab*.

How do you like to go up in a swing,
  Up in the air so blue?
Oh, I do think it the pleasantest thing
  Ever a child can do!

Up in the air and over the wall,
  Till I can see so wide,
River and trees and cattle and all
  Over the countryside—

Till I look down on the garden green,
  Down on the roof so brown—
Up in the air I go flying again,
  Up in the air and down!

5. Why do you think the poet uses the word "down" three times in the last stanza?

Stevenson may use the word "down" three times in the last stanza because, while "up" leaves us high in the air, "down" brings us back to earth and gives a sense of finality to the ending of the poem. Also, by using the word "down" three times, the poet emphasizes the heights reached by the rider—she has to go down, down, down to return from her journey into the air.

6. What are some feelings one might feel on a swing? Can you find one or more of these feelings in the language of this poem?

One might feel a sense of excitement and elation, a sense that is echoed in the poem's use of exclamation points, as well as the use of words such as "so" ("so blue," "so wide," and "so brown") and "pleasantest." Some readers might suggest that being so far above the countryside would be a little frightening, but this might be a good opportunity to point out that sometimes images are not universally understood and that the feeling a reader gets from a poem's images is not always found in the poem itself, and that when talking about poetry it is often helpful to make a distinction between how an image makes you feel and how the language and tone of the poem suggest it is supposed to make you feel.

7. Is the poem about anything more than childhood swinging? How can you tell?

The poem does seem to have some deeper meaning lying beneath the lighthearted imagery of a child swinging. One thought is that as children we are not tied to the duties of adult life (i.e., tending garden, maintaining a home, etc.) and therefore we can "fly," if you will, above all of that. By keeping the big picture in mind—the whole view, the up and down—we gain perspective and, subsequently, joy. Some of the lines that support the idea that there is a deeper meaning to the poem include the following. The emphasis on color in line 2—"the air so blue"—suggests a more intense experience. Line 6 says, "Till I can see so wide." Sight often refers to more than what the eye can see and can indicate what the mind and intelligence comprehend. In line 12, "Up in the air and down" could be widened beyond the physical motion of the swing to include the swing of emotional experiences.

02

METAPHOR

{*the elements of poetry*}

A metaphor is a figure of speech in which two unlike things are compared: the sun is a blood orange; the ocean is a grave; your smile is a butterfly. Such comparisons ask you—or force you—to see the world in a different way. Every day our mind works associatively—an image leads us to think of something like it and instantly we have associated two things that were not previously associated. Like stepping stones for the imagination, the mind follows this path of images: falling blossoms remind us of snow or the shape of a cloud suggests an animal or spaceship. Poetry takes this universal human practice and uses it to make art, layering or joining unlike images in ways that will move the reader. Good metaphors are springs that help readers make leaps in imagination.

The word "metaphor" comes from two Greek words: *meta* meaning "across," "transport," "transfer," and *pherein,* which means "to bear or carry." Together the suggestion is "to carry across." So the metaphor, which compares one thing to something it is clearly not (the sun is not an orange), carries across the meaning of one object to another (we re-imagine the sun as an orange and sometimes the other way around as well, the orange is like a little sun). If we were making a math problem out of this idea, we would write it this way: A = B. Often there is an abstract subject that is compared to a concrete object, and in this case the subject A ("hope" in the line "hope is the thing with feathers," from the anthology in this chapter) is carried by the image B ("the thing with feathers" or a bird). The writer asks us to imagine how hope could be a bird, how A could be equal to B. This act of the imagination enlarges our understanding of A, which in this case is hope.

Metaphor is the basis of poetic thinking. A poet was once asked, "Do you think in verse?" His answer was, "I don't think in rhymed iambic pentameter, but I am always drawing connections between things that were not in natural relationship to each other before my mind brought them together." Poems do this work of creating relationships between things by making unexpected comparisons. Metaphor is the natural way humans think about the unknown (the frog leg tastes like chicken), and make the familiar fresh again. For instance, when was the last time that you thought of hope as being like a bird? Emily Dickinson starts a poem with this startling insistence—"hope is the thing with feathers." At first we don't understand how an abstract concept could be compared to a living thing. But after reflection, we realize that this statement is true. Hope has properties of a bird: it flies, it survives terrible weather, it sings even when it seems there is no reason to sing. Sometimes metaphor sharpens our perception and sometimes it goes further and surprises us, which is one of the aspects most treasured about poems, for we never outgrow our love of a surprise. Poets insist that even the writer must be surprised for the poem to surprise and delight the reader. So much of what we say is tired and **clichéd** and not considered attentively; therefore, poetry is essential not only to understand the unknown but also to clarify reality—helping us to see the world in its glory and degradation and every state in between. Metaphors also help to express the emotional depth or texture or complexity of different events, situations, objects, or persons. For a good example of this, see Yeats's poem, *He Wishes for the Cloths of Heaven* in the "Learning to Read Closely" section of this chapter.

Even when we try to explain what poems are, we use metaphors. What follows are some examples of metaphors used to describe poems. This list is from Edward Hirsch's book *How to Read a Poem and Fall in Love with Poetry*.

A capsule where we wrap up our punishable secrets..... William Carlos Williams

A well-wrought urn ..... Cleanth Brooks

A walk ..... A.R. Ammons

A verbal icon..... W.K. Wimsatt

A meteor..... Wallace Stevens

A hand, a hook, a prayer, a soul in action ..... Edward Hirsch

Metaphor is not only basic to poetry; it is also basic to life. Consider your own experiences. Comparisons sharpen and vivify your experience, and they are also useful. When it is snowing outside and you want to know if it will be good snow for snowballs, you ask your brother to tell you what kind of snow it is. "Like sugar," he says, and you have your answer (it will not be good for snowballs) as well as a metaphor (which is in the form of a **simile** because it uses "like"). You come home from your basketball game and your father asks you to take out the trash. "Dad," you moan, "I am a bump on a log, a sack of potatoes, a dead body, a leaden window," and your father has a more compelling description of why you are having trouble getting up from the couch. Notice that the actual nature of the comparison you make subtly changes what you are saying about your condition. If you are a leaden window, you are both fragile and heavy; if you are a sack of potatoes, you are something that can be moved, but only with difficulty.

There are many kinds of metaphor—**personification** and simile are two of the most important. Simile is a metaphor that uses "like" or "as" in the middle, and this extra word softens

the comparison ("My love is like a red, red rose," or "My holes were empty like a cup"). Metaphor without the language of "like" or "as" is sometimes more bold because it makes a stronger and often stranger claim. In personification, the writer gives human qualities to an object that is not human or alive. For example, the light in spring is personified; the leaves and the wind talk to each other. Personification suggests that the world is awake in ways to which we are not attuned—as if the whole physical world were participating in our lives. Stories have often explored this idea in the figure of the dolls who wake up and talk and move at night (as in the story *Miss Happiness and Miss Flower* or the film *Toy Story*) or the museum pieces that live wild lives when the humans disappear (reference the film *A Night at the Museum*) or the trees that talk and fight in battles (reference the films *The Chronicles of Narnia* and *The Lord of the Rings*). This is a cherished intuition—that the inanimate or insensate world is more alive and active than we first thought.

Poets and thinkers have talked about the way in which objects relate to the thought lives of humans. Walt Whitman articulates this by addressing objects: "You objects that call from diffusion my meanings and give them shape." He suggests that "meanings" need objects to bring them forth, make them clear, and perhaps personify them. Yeats explained that "we are happy when for everything inside us there is a corresponding something outside us," as if the physical, inanimate world could help to draw out the subjective aspects of our own thought life and give them clearer and more physical meaning. Did it ever seem that the wind was speaking to you? Did the voice of the wind take on the emotion that you were feeling when you heard it—forlorn, perhaps, or frightened? Personifying our inner emotions in this way helps us to perceive and address them; as one child observed, personification "insides it out."

Many of our words and common phrases contain these word pictures (as metaphors are sometimes called) but the pictures have been forgotten. They have become what we call **dead metaphors**. For example, when your teacher says, "Do you grasp the idea?" is he suggesting someone has actually reached out with her hand to hold on to an idea? No, he is talking about the ability of the mind to understand an abstract thought, using the picture of a hand grasping a rope to give a clearer, sharper picture to the notion of understanding something, of having something close enough to us to be able to hold it and touch it and possess it. When we say this phrase now, we are not thinking of the physical act of grabbing on to a rope or someone's hand. Or when it is raining we might say, "It's pouring outside." This picture suggests a large amount of water being poured from a source, like a pitcher. This phrase contains a dead metaphor because our minds jump to the metaphor's meaning so quickly that we don't remember that it is a metaphor.

Part of what it means to be educated is to learn how to interpret a metaphor. One must learn what about the comparison applies to the subject of the metaphor and where the comparison ends—what the metaphor is not suggesting. For instance, consider the classic simile "My love is like a red, red rose." As readers, we must decide what aspects of love this speaker is emphasizing—its thorny quality, its sweetness, its complicated structure? Hence, there is a sifting intelligence necessary on the part of the reader to decide how the metaphor is being used. Walt Whitman said, "The reader will always have his or her part to do, just as much as I have mine." When it comes to poetry, if not all kinds of writing, the *reader's* imagination is as important as the *writer's* imagination. By listening hard and meditating on the suggestions the writer is making, particularly in his comparisons, we become a participant in the poem's sum of meaning.

Some scholars argue that buried deep in almost every word in our language is a metaphor. They say that language itself was called forth to name human situations and experiences and tools as they were needed. For instance, our word "thunder" comes from the Middle English *thoner* and the Old English *thunor*. These two words are closely related to the Norse god Thor, son of Woden, who rode through the sky in a chariot. In his hand he carried a hammer that he threw, and its head was so bright that it made lightning when it moved through the air. It returned to his hand after he threw it. When it struck the ice mountains they splintered into fragments. Thor's hammer made thunder. The Germans called this god Donar and Thunar. Notice how the story, the comparison, is literally at the root of this word (and notice, too, how the word root is also a metaphorical image). Thunder is explained by the metaphor or word picture of the god throwing his hammer through the sky. For the Norse people who worshiped Thor, his name and the word for thunder would be mixed with no little degree of awe and fear. In our time, this word still contains that story and the little charge of thunder that comes from the name of the thunder god. A more common example is the word "transgression," which to us means an error, mistake, or misdemeanor, but once meant "to cross a line." The metaphorical significance has been lost so that the current understanding is that the word is abstract. Yet once it was physical, a picture of someone crossing a line that he was forbidden to cross—like the yellow tape around a house after a fire. Poets know this…and so do good readers of poetry.

Try for one day to speak without using any metaphor—it is doubtful that you can. If you come away from this chapter understanding that metaphor is not some technical and formidable poetry tool but rather something universal and human, something poetry celebrates and makes use of, you will have succeeded in understanding its importance.

LEARNING TO READ CLOSELY

William Butler Yeats (1865–1939)

He Wishes for the Cloths of Heaven

Had I the heaven's embroidered cloths,
Enwrought with golden and silver light,
The blue and the dim and the dark cloths
Of night and light and the half-light,
I would spread the cloths under your feet:
But I, being poor, have only my dreams;
I have spread my dreams under your feet;
Tread softly because you tread on my dreams.

The metaphor here is buried but clear: the poet is comparing his poems to dreams spread like embroidered cloths under the feet of the listener. This has historically been an action performed for kings and important people—to spread something under their feet to walk on (the red carpet). The metaphor begins with the poet suggesting that the heavens are like beautifully decorated cloths that someone sewed pictures and perhaps ornaments onto and hung in the sky. When something is "wrought," it is elaborately embellished or ornamented, so the word "enwrought" serves to further elaborate on the kind of ornament on this "cloth," or the sky—golden and silver light, gold, the light of the sun, silver, the light of the moon. The speaker goes on to describe other familiar shades of the sky—"the blue and the dim and the dark cloths." In other words, the sky isn't simply filled with light; it also has varying shades of blue and darkness. Listen to how those shades play upon our ear both in terms of sound and **rhythm** (the way the words sound together, their flow or beat): blue, dim, dark are the words that create both the **alliteration** of the two "d's" but also the pattern of speech: "the ___, and the ____, and the ____," could be pounded out neatly on a drum. The following line works on our ear and body's movement as well with the "night, light, light" sounds repeating themselves, and the same rhythm created by the linking words: "of ____, and ____, and the _____."

The speaker (the mask or persona the poet has adopted for the poem) has an earnest, almost pleading **tone** of voice, and as a reader we sense wistfulness or soft regret at the fact that she doesn't have the heaven's embroidered cloths to spread for us. We also sense that the speaker would do anything to acquire those cloths. He wants to treat *us* like kings and queens; he wants to spread them under *our* feet, but because he is poor he must spread something else that is precious under our feet—his dreams. Here the poems are all referred to collectively as the poet's dreams. He suggests that he has collected everything that matters most to him, every strange and beautiful part of his mind (conscious and unconscious) just for us. He is casting himself upon our mercy by giving them to us, and he asks in return that we "tread softly" on his dreams.

Notice that the poem's end words rhyme, almost without trying to. The end words of lines 1 and 3 (cloths) are the same, as are the end words of lines 2 and 4. The same thing is true of the four end words of the last four lines: feet/feet, dreams/dreams. Notice as well that almost every line has nine syllables. This just barely falls short of the pentameter line (ten syllables), suggesting perhaps a fear of falling short of what one wishes, as well as of the expectations of the audience.

How are poems like dreams under our feet? When someone writes a piece of language as if he were making an alabaster statue, he puts all of his skill and hope and even parts of his deepest self into the poem. The speaker suggests that his fate, the reception of his work and even of his person, is in our hands. Who are we? We are the readers. According to Yeats, we are as powerful as kings and queens. What are poems made of, according to the poem collectively? Poems are made of delicate work, of light, of shades of color, of all the times of day, of all that matters most to human beings. This is perhaps what the critic Allan Grossman means when he says that poems keep the image of the person precious in the world—one human being speaking to another, to many others, of all that matters most deeply, and speaking with all of the skill and beauty she can muster. This would be one argument for learning to be a good reader! Sometimes life experience also prepares us to read well. For instance, because I have written poems and felt the feelings of the speaker, I understand the nature of the poem and the pleading, longing tone of voice. Your life experience will help you to read insightfully as well.

Such a small poem and yet so much contained within! Anyone making art in the world makes herself vulnerable to the opinion of others. It has been said that a work of art is not finished until it is received by others. Do you agree? This would be an excellent poem to memorize.

ANTHOLOGY

Emily Dickinson (1830–1886)

Hope is the thing with feathers

Hope is the thing with feathers
That perches in the soul,
And sings the tune—without the words,
And never stops at all,

And sweetest in the gale is heard;
And sore must be the storm
That could abash the little bird
That kept so many warm.

I've heard it in the chillest land,
And on the strangest sea;
Yet, never, in extremity,
It asked a crumb of me.

1. Hope is being compared to what? Describe Dickinson's metaphor in your own words.
2. What are some of the things a bird does that hope also does?
3. How does birdsong make us feel, according to the poet? How does hope make us feel?
4. Circle the rhymes in this poem. Does this poem have a rhythm that you can tap out on a table?
5. In what way does a wild bird that lives outside ask nothing of us? In what way does hope not ask anything of us?
6. Dickinson was a recluse who rarely stepped outside of her house—what then does she mean when she says she's heard the bird of hope "in the chillest land / And on the strangest sea"?
7. How about you—when have you felt hope or needed to feel hope?
8. According to the last two lines of the poem, can hope be something that gets hungry? Can hope be something we can feed?

TE Please note that the explications and answers are located in the Teacher's Pages at the end of each chapter.

William Wordsworth (1770–1850)

I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud

I wandered lonely as a cloud
That floats on high o'er vales and hills,
When all at once I saw a crowd,
A host, of golden daffodils;
Beside the lake, beneath the trees,
Fluttering and dancing in the breeze.

Continuous as the stars that shine
And twinkle on the milky way,
They stretched in never-ending line
Along the margin of a bay:
Ten thousand saw I at a glance,
Tossing their heads in sprightly dance.

The waves beside them danced; but they
Out-did the sparkling waves in glee:
A poet could not but be gay,
In such a jocund company:
I gazed—and gazed—but little thought
What wealth the show to me had brought:

For oft, when on my couch I lie
In vacant or in pensive mood,
They flash upon that inward eye
Which is the bliss of solitude;
And then my heart with pleasure fills,
And dances with the daffodils.


William Wordsworth

Here the speaker suggests a metaphor for himself: he is like a cloud being blown (wandering) across the hills and fields.

1. What does the speaker see? What does he do with what he sees?
2. Think about the two ways the poet represents himself: floating like a cloud and lying on a couch. How are these two images different? How are they similar—especially in relation to the crowd of daffodils?
3. What has happened between the first stanza's emotion of lonely wandering and the final stanza's emotion of blissful solitude?
4. Name two similes in this poem. Each stanza in the poem contains a pair of verbs, adverbs, or adjectives that basically mean the same thing—"vacant" and "pensive" in stanza four, for example. Find the three other pairs of words, and define any you don't know.

Emily Dickinson (1830–1886)

A Light exists in Spring

A Light exists in Spring
Not present on the Year
At any other period–
When March is scarcely here

A Color stands abroad
On Solitary Fields
That Science cannot overtake
But Human Nature feels.

It waits upon the Lawn,
It shows the furthest Tree
Upon the furthest Slope you know
It almost speaks to you.

Then as Horizons step
Or Noons report away
Without the Formula of sound
It passes and we stay–

A quality of loss
Affecting our Content
As Trade had suddenly encroached
Upon a Sacrament.

This poem describes the light in spring and personifies it. That is, it describes the light in spring as if it were a person that came to visit.

1. Where do you see the light being treated as a person in this poem?
2. Why would the speaker feel discontented loss when the light leaves? Have you ever felt this way about the light in spring, or other kinds of light—say at a carnival, in a movie theater, or in a particular spot of your own home?
3. Look up definitions for the words "trade," "sacrament," and "encroached." Explain how the last stanza is a simile describing how we feel at the loss of spring's particular light.

Anonymous

An Autumn Greeting

"Come," said the Wind to the Leaves one day.
"Come over the meadow and we will play.
Put on your dresses of red and gold.
For summer is gone and the days grow cold."

1. This is another example of personification—what in the poem tells you this?
2. What kind of people do you imagine the Wind and the Leaves to be?
3. Can you name the metaphor in line 3? Can you name a less obvious metaphor in line 2?
4. What is the feeling, or **tone,** of this poem, and is there more than one?

Robert Louis Stevenson (1850–1894)

At the Seaside

When I was down beside the sea
A wooden spade they gave to me
To dig the sandy shore.

My holes were empty like a cup,
In every hole the sea came up,
Till it could come no more.

1. Describe what is happening here as the tide rises.
2. Find and name the simile in the poem.
3. How old is the speaker in this poem? What evidence can you find in the poem to defend your answer?
4. What kind of feeling are we left with at the end of this poem? Does the sea's action leave us, or leave the speaker, with a positive feeling or a negative feeling? Can you defend both possible answers?

Langston Hughes (1902–1967)

Mother to Son

Well, son, I'll tell you:
Life for me ain't been no crystal stair.
It's had tacks in it,
And splinters,
And boards torn up,
And places with no carpet on the floor—
Bare.
But all the time
I'se been a-climbin' on,
And reachin' landin's,
And turnin' corners,
And sometimes goin' in the dark
Where there ain't been no light.
So boy, don't you turn back.
Don't you set down on the steps
'Cause you finds it's kinder hard.
Don't you fall now—
For I'se still goin', honey,
I'se still climbin',
And life for me ain't been no crystal stair.

1. Who is speaking and to whom?
2. What metaphor does the speaker use to communicate her message?
3. What does the image of the crystal stair suggest?
4. How else does the speaker's voice communicate the same message?
5. How do the line breaks contribute to the meaning?

Robert Frost (1874–1963)

Nothing Gold Can Stay

Nature's first green is gold,
Her hardest hue to hold.
Her early leafs a flower;
But only so an hour.
Then leaf subsides to leaf.
So Eden sank to grief,
So dawn goes down to day.
Nothing gold can stay.

1. When is the natural world full of the shade of green that the poet considers as precious as gold?
2. How is that time of year as valuable or worthwhile as gold?
3. Why is this hue, or color, hard to hold?
4. How is the losing of the green and the flowers of spring like the story of the Garden of Eden?
5. Explain the different losses charted in the poem, and then explain how the last line means more than the title, even though it is a repeated line.

George Herbert (1593–1633)

The Pulley

When God at first made Man,
Having a glass of blessings standing by–
Let us (said He) pour on him all we can;
Let the world's riches, which dispersèd lie,
Contract into a span.

So strength first made a way,
Then beauty flow'd, then wisdom, honour, pleasure:
When almost all was out, God made a stay,
Perceiving that, alone of all His treasure,
Rest in the bottom lay.

For if I should (said He)
Bestow this jewel also on My creature,
He would adore My gifts instead of Me,
And rest in Nature, not the God of Nature:
So both should losers be.

Yet let him keep the rest,
But keep them with repining restlessness;
Let him be rich and weary, that at least,
If goodness lead him not, yet weariness
May toss him to My breast.

1. In this poem we see God as a creator or mad scientist with a glass full of blessings next to him as he puts the finishing touches on humankind. What does he "pour" on Man? What does he withhold and why?
2. How does the lack of rest function in this plan to bring humankind to God? What do you think about the way man and God are portrayed?

ACTIVITIES

1. Listen to people speaking (as well as yourself) to find metaphors buried in everyday speech. Even children who are very young use metaphors. I heard one say, "Mommy, the moon is broken" once when looking up at a waning moon on a dark night for the first time. Another said, "Are we in outer space?" the first time he rode an underground subway train. Make a list of ten "found metaphors" to bring to class. Put them all in a hat and have each student draw three out and make a poem that includes at least one.

2. Make metaphors and similes by completing the following sentences. Do it thoughtfully but fairly quickly, without thinking too much about them:

   The shy girl's hand in the air shook like a_____.
   The old man's hands on the ancient book shook like _____.
   Tree branches over my head shook their new leaves like_____.
   The little boys shook with suppressed laughter like _____.
   The mayor's handshake was a_____.
   The mother's stern headshake was a _____.
   Badly shaken, the rookie cop collapsed like a_____.
   The exhausted boy just couldn't shake them; he was a_____ to their _____.

3. Choose one of the following bird activities: draw a picture of the bird of hope as you imagine it from Dickinson's poem; consider getting out bird books and sketching a bird here on this page or in your writer's notebook; study the birds in your neighborhood carefully. Will you ever see a bird now without considering the way in which its miraculous wings defy gravity and lift it into the air? This is how poetry begins to live with us each day and in the scenes we encounter.

4. Hundreds of poems have been written using birds as a metaphorical image; write a bird poem of your own. There are numerous poems about birds in this book. In preparation for writing this poem you could read through them and jot down some notes, or notice which use of them appeals to you. *Brave Sparrow*, *Dust of Snow*, *Questioning Faces* are a few of them.

5. Memorize one of the poems in this book by incorporating hand motions, and then recite it at an assembly or at dinnertime.

6. Science and metaphor: List all the metaphors you can think of that science uses to explain abstract ideas, then try to explain the metaphor and why it is a metaphor. You'll find that you are so used to these that you can hardly remember that they are metaphors. Take a science metaphor and turn it into a metaphor about nature, childhood, friendship, or fear.

7. Four of the poems in this chapter's anthology use the image or the word "field." Hold a discussion in your classroom about the many different meanings, feelings, and associations this word can evoke in us. Cast a wide net—fields of political candidates, baseball fields, etc. Also consider culture—does "field" evoke a different feeling in Arizona or Africa than in New York City? Come prepared with a little internet or library research—what are the linguistic origins of the word?

VOCABULARY

Alliteration: repetition of consonant sounds at the beginning of words next to each other (initial consonant sounds), such as roof/ruthlessness, brain/British.

Cliché: an expression that has lost ingenuity, originality, and impact and become commonplace by long overuse.

Dead metaphor: a metaphor with which we have become so familiar we are no longer aware that it is a metaphor.

Extended metaphor: a sustained comparison in which the whole poem consists of a series of related metaphors, or a single metaphor stretched throughout the whole poem. It is also called a conceit. (*Hope is the thing with feathers* does this.)

Personification: a metaphor that gives human characteristics to something that is not human.

Rhythm: the beat of the words together; the recurrence of movement and sound; the way in which sounds move; the rise and fall of words together.

Simile: a metaphor or comparison that uses "like" or "as."

Tone: the attitude of the poem, of the poet toward the subject of the poem; the emotional atmosphere of the poem.

EXPLICATIONS AND ANSWERS

p. 19, *Hope is the thing with feathers* by Emily Dickinson

Answers

1. Hope is being compared to what? Describe Dickinson's metaphor in your own words.

Hope is being compared to a bird that flies and stays out in all weather; it is a fragile creature that lives against many odds.

2. What are some of the things a bird does that hope also does?

A bird soars, perches on a branch, and sings with all its might. Hope also reaches for the sky, makes a place for itself to rest, and brings music into our lives.

3. How does birdsong make us feel, according to the poet? How does hope make us feel?

The poet indicates that hearing a bird singing on a bad day reminds us that there is still music in the world, there is still a reason to sing—even if we don't feel like singing ourselves. Hope makes us feel as if it is possible to keep going. It warms our hearts with its music.

4. Circle the rhymes in this poem. Does this poem have a rhythm that you can tap out on a table?

The rhyming word sets are "soul / all," "words / heard / bird," "storm / warm," and "sea /extremity / me." The rhyme scheme is *abcb dede fggg*, which means that, though some of the lines do rhyme, the rhyme scheme is not regular. The poem does have a regular rhythm, however. If you look ahead to the chapter about Emily Dickinson, you will see that this poem follows "hymn" or "common" meter. In hymn meter, the poem alternates between lines with four beats and lines with three beats—iambic tetrameter and iambic trimester.

If you would like to help students recognize the hymn meter, you can read it like this, exaggerating the stress on capitalized syllables with your voice and maybe even a tap on the table:

HOPE is the THING with FEA-THERS
That PERches IN the SOUL,
And SINGS the TUNE—withOUT the WORDS,
And NEver STOPS at ALL.

And SWEEtest IN the GALE is HEARD;
And SORE must BE the STORM
That COULD aBASH the LIttle BIRD
That KEPT so MAny WARM.

I've HEARD it IN the CHILLest LAND,
And ON the STRANgest SEA;
Yet, NEver, IN exTREMiTY,
It ASKED a CRUMB of ME.

5. In what way does a wild bird that lives outside ask nothing of us? In what way does hope not ask anything of us?

A wild bird does not need to be fed or cared for by us as a house pet would. Some people leave food in bird feeders, but most wild birds can survive without human intervention. Dickinson suggests that hope similarly survives without our tending to it, not asking anything from us. Because of this we are driven onward by a desire to live, to continue in the world.

6. Dickinson was a recluse who rarely stepped outside of her house—what then does she mean when she says she's heard the bird of hope "in the chillest land / And on the strangest sea"?

The "chillest land" and "strangest sea" can serve here as a metaphor for difficult times.

7. How about you—when have you felt hope or needed to feel hope?

Answers will vary.

8. According to the last two lines of the poem, can hope be something that gets hungry? Can hope be something we can feed?

Dickinson suggests, in the last two lines especially, that hope is a force in us, a will to continue, a drive to live that exists even beyond our feelings at any given moment. To sum it up, she says that to be human is to have hope enough to push through in life. She is not necessarily arguing that we *feel* good or *feel* hopeful, but that the drive to go onward is strong in us. This is attested to by reports from concentration camps and prison camps where, despite miserable conditions, people

fought hard to keep living. However, different readers may argue that hope can or should be fed. They may support this suggestion by saying that at times it takes conscious energy and effort to keep up hope during times of trial. It is OK to disagree with the poet, as long as you are able to support your answer. According to the poet, hope is something that nearly always presses forward without being fed by us. However, the student is free to disagree with the poet's definition of hope. The poet believes that hope, like a wild bird without a backyard feeder, feeds itself.

p. 20, *I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud* by William Wordsworth

Explication

After this poem has been read through once, it can be better understood by using the last stanza as a frame for the rest of the poem. In the last stanza, the poet invites the reader to imagine him comfortably lounging on his "couch" and recollecting a past experience. Wordsworth is famous for having described poetry as "emotion recollected in tranquility," an idea that is portrayed in this poem. In the third stanza, when Wordsworth writes that he "little thought / What wealth the show to me had brought," he indicates that he has often thought back to this experience and relived it through his imagination.

Once the reader has firmly installed the image of the poet in his living room in his mind, the reader can enter the poet's imagination and travel back with him to the experience he describes. He begins in the first line by describing himself through a simile: "I wandered lonely as a cloud." This line places him at a distance from the earth, separated and lonely. However, in the third line, he is brought out of his loneliness when a field of golden daffodils captures his attention. Wordsworth personifies the daffodils by describing them as a "crowd" that tossed "their heads in sprightly dance" and "Out-did the sparkling waves in glee." Forming crowds, dancing, and feeling glee are all human activities; thus, when Wordsworth writes that they are "jocund company," he literally means that they have become like joyful companions to him. These companions, full of natural beauty, infect the poet with the jovial attitude their "dancing in the breeze" communicates.

Answers

1. What does the speaker see? What does he do with what he sees?

   The speaker sees a "crowd" of daffodils by a lake and under some trees. The movement of these daffodils reminds the poet of dancing, and so he personifies the daffodils (gives them humanlike qualities), and says that they are good company for a lonely poet. You could also answer that the poet saves up the image for later, because he also tells in the third and forth stanzas how the image of these daffodils has given him pleasure many times since the actual event.

2. Think about the two ways the poet represents himself: floating like a cloud and lying on a couch. How are these two images different? How are they similar—especially in relation to the crowd of daffodils?

   The two images are different in that the image of the poet floating like a cloud suggests that he is moving freely through the sky, while the image of him lying on the couch gives the impression that he is indoors and stationary. The images are similar in that they provide him with a vantage point from which he can observe the daffodils. The image of the cloud positions him literally above the daffodils; when he is lying on the couch, his memory and imagination provide him with another view of the dancing flowers.

3. What has happened between the first stanza's emotion of lonely wandering and the final stanza's emotion of blissful solitude?

   In the first stanza the poet compares himself to a lonely cloud, but by the last stanza he speaks of the "bliss of solitude." The difference between the first and last stanzas is that in the beginning he is wandering and he emphasizes his loneliness—the fact that he is alone and perhaps his emotional state as well—whereas in the end he is technically alone but emotionally he is able to stop and dwell on the good company of the daffodils. It may be helpful to know that Wordsworth was famous for the phrase "Emotion recollected in tranquility," and that what he loved most about sublime experiences was being able to recollect them later and create poetry from them.

4. Name two similes in this poem. Each stanza in the poem contains a pair of verbs, adverbs, or adjectives that basically mean the same thing—"vacant" and "pensive" in stanza four, for example. Find the three other pairs of words, and define any you don't know.

   The two similes in the poem are the poet who was "lonely as a cloud" and the daffodils that were "continuous as the stars." The pairs of words that share similar meanings are "fluttering" and "dancing" in stanza 1; "shine" and "twinkle" in stanza 2; and "glee" and "gay" in stanza 3. (**Note:** While it may seem as though the words "vacant" and "pensive" are too different to be said to share similar meanings, they both convey and emphasize the poet's state of absentmindedness and thus are similar in that way.)

p. 21, *A Light exists in Spring* by Emily Dickinson

Explication

When students read Emily Dickinson's other poems in chapter 12, "Emily Dickinson: A Case Study in Form" (p. 154), they will probably suspect that spring was a fruitful season for her imagination. For instance, in this poem she suggests that there is a particular light that exists during spring but not at any other time of the year. In the first stanza, Dickinson begins by talking about spring in general, and then suggests an even more specific time by saying that March "is scarcely here." In the second stanza, she suggests that this light is one that has no scientific explanation, but that human beings can instinctively "feel" when it stirs the dead, frozen land from the grip of winter. This light has an ethereal quality, described as always falling on "the furthest Tree" or "the furthest Slope you know." When she writes that it "almost speaks to you," she captures the way spring seems to tease us, showing up one day only to hide behind the frost the next. Even when this early coming of spring does seem to finally settle down to stay, it eventually leaves again to be replaced by summer. In doing so, it leaves us with "A quality of loss" that makes us feel unsettled. She tells us in the last line that to her the loss of spring is as jarring as if the sanctity of a holy place were besmirched by trade. This calls to mind the New Testament story of Christ overturning the moneylenders' tables in the temple, with which Dickinson would have been familiar.

Answers

1. Where do you see the light being treated as a person in this poem?

We see the light being treated as a person in stanza 3, indicated by the words "waits," "shows," and "speaks."

2. Why would the speaker feel discontented loss when the light leaves? Have you ever felt this way about the light in spring, or other kinds of light—say at a carnival, in a movie theater, or in a particular spot of your own home?

The poet describes the light of spring as a pleasant companion that is missed when it leaves—"It passes and we stay." Note that the natural world to Dickinson was precious and an integral part of her daily life. She once called the hills and the sunset her companions. This poem is set in the time of year when we are hungry for light. We have waited out winter's darkness and can hardly abide any further absence of light, which explains why the speaker would feel discontent loss when the light leaves.

3. Look up definitions for the words "trade," "sacrament," and "encroached." Explain how the last stanza is a simile describing how we feel at the loss of spring's particular light.

By definition "trade" means "business or work," or, more specifically, "the business of buying and selling."[1] "Sacrament" by definition, is "a Christian rite (such as baptism or holy communion) ordained by Christ and held to be a means of divine grace or to be a sign or symbol of spiritual reality."[2] "Encroached" means "to enter by gradual steps or by stealth into the possessions or rights of another."[3] The speaker provides this simile to explain how she feels about the departure of the light: if the light equals a sacrament, then the interruption of the light by the changing of spring to summer equals an interruption by "trade" (or business). This may be a reference to the famous story of Jesus clearing the temple when people were using it as a place to sell things and make money. Christ came in, turned the tables upside down, and said, "My father's house will not be used as a marketplace" (see John 2:16). The mention of trade, however, may not be so specific, but may instead simply refer to something daily and common intruding on that which is holy. A sacrament is a consecrated rite or ritual in the Christian church, such as baptism or communion. According to this simile, then, the speaker feels that spring's light is somehow purer than the light of any other season. And when it leaves, we feel its loss. She also says that this fact is something that can't be quantifiably measured—"That Science cannot overtake"—but is rather something that "Human Nature feels."

[1] *Merriam-Webster Online*, s.v. "Trade," <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/trade> (accessed August 6. 2009).

[2] *Merriam-Webster Online*, s.v. "Sacrament," <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/sacrament> (accessed August 6, 2009).

[3] *Merriam-Webster Online*, s.v. "Encroach," <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/encroached> (accessed August 6, 2009).

p. 22, *An Autumn Greeting* by Anonymous

Answers

1. This is another example of personification—what in the poem tells you this?

   Personification can be seen when the Wind speaks to the Leaves. Not only does the Wind carry out a human activity—speaking—but "Wind" and "Leaves" are capitalized as if they were people's names.

2. What kind of people do you imagine the Wind and the Leaves to be?

   Answers to this question may vary depending on how each reader perceives the tone of the poem, but most will probably agree that the Wind and Leaves are fun-loving—because of the mention of "play" and of putting on colorful clothes—and also that they are probably friends.

3. Can you name the metaphor in line 3? Can you name a less obvious metaphor in line 2?

   In line 3, the "dresses of red and gold" are a metaphor for when the leaves change color during autumn. The less obvious metaphor in line 2 is an image: if you try to picture what it might look like when leaves and the wind "play," you can see how they actually do "play" in a sense—that is, the Wind picks the Leaves up off the ground and tosses them gently into the air.

4. What is the feeling, or **tone,** of this poem, and is there more than one?

   As already mentioned, the initial tone of the poem seems lighthearted in that the Wind is asking the Leaves to come "play." However, by the end of the poem, the tone turns a little sad because the Wind mentions how "summer is gone and the days grow cold," foreshadowing the arrival of winter and the death of the Leaves.

p. 22, *At the Seaside* by Robert Louis Stevenson

Answers

1. Describe what is happening here as the tide rises.

   The speaker in this poem—presumably a child—has dug holes in the sand. As the tide comes up, the holes fill with ocean water.

2. Find and name the simile in the poem.

   The simile in the poem is found in stanza 2, line 1—"my holes were empty like a cup."

3. How old is the speaker in this poem? What evidence can you find in the poem to defend your answer?

   The speaker is most likely a child, because he or she tells how "they," presumably adults, give him or her a "wooden spade," or a toy shovel, to use for digging in the sand.

4. What kind of feeling are we left with at the end of this poem? Does the sea's action leave us, or leave the speaker, with a positive feeling or a negative feeling? Can you defend both possible answers?

   When it comes to the readers' sense of feeling in the poem, you will likely receive two different answers. Some readers may feel that this poem leaves them with a sense of excitement or happiness because the tidewater fills cups that were empty. Others, however, might take away a sense of sadness because the poem implies that the speaker's labor will soon be destroyed by the rising tide.

p. 23, *Mother to Son* by Langston Hughes

Answers

1. Who is speaking and to whom?

   A mother is speaking to her son.

2. What metaphor does the speaker use to communicate her message?

   The speaker uses the metaphor of the journey of life being like a long climb up a bare, broken staircase with splinters and torn boards that goes on and on.

3. What does the image of the crystal stair suggest?

   The use of the material crystal might make us think of Disney fairy tales like Cinderella, suggesting a fairy-tale life where the story resolves easily. Instead, she suggests that the story is laced with work, labor, struggle, that we are "climbing the staircase of our lives" every day.

4. How else does the speaker's voice communicate the same message?

The repetition of the word "and" at the beginning of some of the lines suggests that the speaker is wearily listing her hardships. Also, Langston Hughes, as an African American writing during the Civil Rights movement, chooses to write this poem in an African American dialect, suggesting that perhaps some of the speaker's troubles have had to do with her race.

5. How do the line breaks contribute to the meaning?

The line breaks act like steps that the reader has to climb, with the end of each line requiring us to "reach" to the beginning of the next one. It also seems to indicate that the speaker is too out of breath from climbing to speak except in short bursts.

p. 24, *Nothing Gold Can Stay* by Robert Frost

Answers

1. When is the natural world full of the shade of green that the poet considers as precious as gold?

The poet's words "nature's first green" indicate to us that he is referring to springtime, when nature's hue of green is the most precious and beautiful.

2. How is that time of year as valuable or worthwhile as gold?

Spring is when the earth comes back to life after the winter, and without it, the world would be devoid of life. Gold is a valuable, precious metal, as is this color of green because it lasts for only a little while.

3. Why is this hue, or color, hard to hold?

"Nature's first green" is hard to hold because the brilliant green color of brand-new leaves quickly changes to the deeper, darker green of more mature plants.

4. How is the losing of the green and the flowers of spring like the story of the Garden of Eden?

The loss of spring is like the story of the Garden of Eden because, according to the biblical account, after Adam and Eve sinned, humanity gradually declined further and further into sin—just as, after the end of spring, the seasons go from summer to the dying of autumn to the barrenness of winter.

5. Explain the different losses charted in the poem, and then explain how the last line means more than the title, even though it is a repeated line.

There are a number of losses mentioned in this poem. Lines 1–2 talk about the loss of early spring. Lines 3–4 point out how quickly the blossoms on trees give way to leaves. Line 5 grieves the loss of the amazing color of young leaves, which, as they begin the process of photosynthesis, turn a darker green. In line 6, Eden "sank to grief," which refers to how Adam and Eve ate from the forbidden tree and had to leave behind the glory of the Garden of Eden, losing their innocence, their eternal life, and their communion with God. Line 7 mourns the loss of the beauty of dawn, which gives way to the glaring light of day. You might come away with the sense that this poem means only that no good thing lasts. However, it's also possible to note that all of the losses mentioned in the poem—the progress of spring, the dying of the day, and the loss of Eden—are not final. Early spring ends, but it comes again. Each day ends in night, but the dawn returns again the next morning. Christians believe that though Adam and Eve's disobedience lost to humanity our access to the original Eden, it is possible to be restored to God through Christ. The poem articulates the particular sensation of grief over loss of an original state or particular moment of beauty and innocence. It shows through its variety of metaphors how this sensation is patterned in all of our experience. However, the metaphors of the poem also leave us with some hope, as they are examples of loss that is restored. The repetition of the title resonates with the references and experiences that have accumulated in the course of the poem. As the poem has widened in magnitude of its observation—moving from a color to the nature of mankind—so too the title has moved from the literal focus on the color to a larger notion of that which is gold(en) or ideal, perfect, without dross or blemish.

p. 24, *The Pulley* by George Herbert

Answers

1. In this poem we see God as a creator or mad scientist with a glass full of blessings next to him as he puts the finishing touches on humankind. What does he "pour" on Man? What does he withhold and why?

   God pours out on mankind, like water, the blessings of "beauty, "wisdom, honour," and "pleasure" and withholds the gift of rest or peacefulness. God does this because he wants humankind to be tossed to His breast, dependent on him. God reasons that humans might not need or love Him if they were complete.

2. How does the lack of rest function in this plan to bring humankind to God? What do you think about the way man and God are portrayed?

   When we are restless, we have forgotten what is good and what there is to be grateful for. Restlessness creates an agitation and emptiness, a lack of ability to enjoy what we have. Such a state of mind might drive us, the poet reasons, to look for rest outside ourselves. In doing so, we may seek for God and find Him. At first, we might resent God for withholding a blessing we need so badly, but then we realize that God is motivated by love. God desires fellowship with His creation, and we can see His care and His longing for us. We hear His voice in lines 3–5, but it enters the poem permanently in line 11 so that we are hearing His voice and its tone of tenderness and desire.

11

SHAPING FORMS

{*the formal history of poetry*}

Verse forms are not the only kind of form; there are also **shaping forms**, which are not defined by meter and rhyme but rather by subject and theme. Their origin is societal. Just as words were devised from need, so too were shaping forms: the need to mourn the dead, to console the living, to celebrate and praise significant people and events, and to speak to the land from which we come. Shaping forms are communal poems and remind us that poetry has always had a place in the communities of history, for at the center of the need to be a society is the need to mark the passage of time together in poems. All of these forms came from times when poets and poetry played a very public, central role in the life of a given culture. Today these forms are kept alive by poets of all kinds, and also by government leaders, ministers and priests, famous singers and musicians, journalists, and personal or communal websites. The formal guidelines for the three shaping forms described here—the ode, the elegy, and the pastoral—are much less precise than for verse forms.

Ode

Originally a song or lyric, the ode is solemn, heroic, and elevated, often for a significant social occasion or to honor someone who has done great deeds.

This form began during the classical period with a great deal of pomp and even flattery and exaggeration. Human nature inclines us to fall into this form, as you often see when people are speaking to each other at social gatherings or public occasions. Yet as time passed, the ode form

changed, and during the Romantic period other elements besides people began to be celebrated. John Keats wrote a series of historic odes to various objects and ideas, including autumn and the Grecian urn. Other poets took up the form and moved it out of its purely ceremonial (and highly political) use. Today, poets use the ode to celebrate many things, including America, animals, the Brooklyn Bridge, and large abstract ideas about meaning and existence. A commonality found in odes written across the ages is that each usually celebrates something much larger and wider than the thing itself.

LEARNING TO READ CLOSELY

Alexander Pope (1688–1744)

Ode on Solitude

I.

How happy he, who free from care
The rage of courts, and noise of towns;
Contented breathes his native air,
In his own grounds.

II.

Whose herds with milk, whose fields with bread,
Whose flocks supply him with attire,
Whose trees in summer yield him shade,
In winter fire.

III.

Blest! who can unconcern'dly find
Hours, days, and years slide swift away,
In health of body, peace of mind,
Quiet by day,

IV.

Sound sleep by night; study and ease
Together mix'd; sweet recreation,
And innocence, which most does please,
With meditation.

V.

Thus let me live, unheard, unknown;
Thus unlamented let me die;
Steal from the world, and not a stone
Tell where I lie.

Alexander Pope

Here Alexander Pope praises the life of a man who owns a few acres of land and is content to breathe "his native air." In other words, he is happy to be alone on his own land. Pope praises the self-sufficiency of such a man who has milk from his cows, who grows his own wheat for bread, whose sheep provide the wool for his clothes, and who lives wholly off of his own good land and from his own hands' work. This blessed man is further favored if he can find hours, days, years of good physical health and of mental peace. This produces good sleep, study, and ease: "sweet recreation." Somehow this keeping apart from the social world and keeping close to the natural world leads to innocence and time for meditation. The speaker goes on to say (ironically, because we are reading his poem 300 years later) that this life that he proposes is "unheard, unknown," and utterly solitary. He would like to leave the world and not have even a headstone speak of his death and life.

This solitude or withdrawal from the social realm is intertwined with the traditional "retreat to the land" mentality of the pastoral poem. The speaker is certainly not considering the stink of the animals, the back-breaking work that leaves little time for meditation, or the risk of poverty if crops should fail or disease should kill the flocks. Perhaps the speaker is meant to be a gentleman farmer who has enough income to survive without the farm and keeps it for his pleasure and leisure? There are some beautiful moments in this poem, even quotable moments ("contented breathes his native air," "sweet recreation") that are common longings. However, the poem simply omits many of the realities of the life this speaker claims to desire—not to mention the final stanza's omission of all people entirely! In this sense, Pope's poem seems an ode to a fantasy.

On the other hand, the language of this poem suggests a speaker who may in fact be well acquainted with hard work—but work of a different kind than traditional farming. We learn in the first stanza that he seeks to escape "the rage of courts" and the "noise of towns"—indicating a hectic political and urban life. Perhaps this speaker also travels a great deal, or has migrated far from his original home; he longs for "his own grounds." The final stanza, too, suggests by its exaggerated solitude—not even the stones of his land will tell where or who he is!—how deeply the speaker yearns for respite from his current life and work.

Everything in the poem works to provide this respite—if only in fantasy. Notice the formal choices of three lines of about the same length (approximately six syllables or three feet) and one short line of four syllables or two feet. The last line of each quatrain has the effect of things coming peacefully to rest, a quietness. The rhyme scheme is *abab*, which also contributes to the sense of regularity and of closure—when each wave of the rhyme scheme is completed, our expectations come to rest, to stillness. Similarly, the punctuation, which is nearly always (except once) a period, reinforces this focus on stillness.

Do you have such fantasies—either of getting away from people and the stress of your current circumstances, or of finding the right person, group, or setting? What might be the value of using the tools of poetry to write about your dreams? What might be the pitfalls?

ANTHOLOGY

Percy Bysshe Shelley (1792–1822)

Ode to the West Wind

I.

O wild West Wind, thou breath of Autumn's being
  Thou from whose unseen presence the leaves dead
Are driven like ghosts from an enchanter fleeing,

  Yellow, and black, and pale, and hectic red,
Pestilence-stricken multitudes! O thou
  Who chariotest to their dark wintry bed

The wingèd seeds, where they lie cold and low,
  Each like a corpse within its grave, until
Thine azure sister of the Spring shall blow

  Her clarion o'er the dreaming earth, and fill
(Driving sweet buds like flocks to feed in air)
  With living hues and odours plain and hill;

Wild Spirit, which art moving everywhere;
Destroyer and preserver; hear, O hear!

II.

Thou on whose stream, 'mid the steep sky's commotion,
  Loose clouds like earth's decaying leaves are shed,
Shook from the tangled boughs of heaven and ocean,

  Angels of rain and lightning! there are spread
On the blue surface of thine airy surge,
  Like the bright hair uplifted from the head

Of some fierce Mænad, even from the dim verge
  Of the horizon to the zenith's height,
The locks of the approaching storm. Thou dirge

  Of the dying year, to which this closing night
Will be the dome of a vast sepulchre,
  Vaulted with all thy congregated might

Of vapours, from whose solid atmosphere
Black rain, and fire, and hail, will burst: O hear!

III.

Thou who didst waken from his summer dreams
The blue Mediterranean, where he lay,
Lull'd by the coil of his crystàlline streams,

Beside a pumice isle in Baiæ's bay,
And saw in sleep old palaces and towers
Quivering within the wave's intenser day,

All overgrown with azure moss, and flowers
So sweet, the sense faints picturing them! Thou
For whose path the Atlantic's level powers

Cleave themselves into chasms, while far below
The sea-blooms and the oozy woods which wear
The sapless foliage of the ocean, know

Thy voice, and suddenly grow gray with fear,
And tremble and despoil themselves: O hear!

IV.

If I were a dead leaf thou mightest bear;
If I were a swift cloud to fly with thee;
A wave to pant beneath thy power, and share

The impulse of thy strength, only less free
Than thou, O uncontrollable! if even
I were as in my boyhood, and could be

The comrade of thy wanderings over heaven,
As then, when to outstrip thy skiey speed
Scarce seem'd a vision—I would ne'er have striven

As thus with thee in prayer in my sore need.
O! lift me as a wave, a leaf, a cloud!
I fall upon the thorns of life! I bleed!

A heavy weight of hours has chain'd and bow'd
One too like thee—tameless, and swift, and proud.

V.

Make me thy lyre, even as the forest is:
What if my leaves are falling like its own?
The tumult of thy mighty harmonies

Will take from both a deep autumnal tone,
Sweet though in sadness. Be thou, Spirit fierce,
My spirit! Be thou me, impetuous one!

Drive my dead thoughts over the universe,
Like wither'd leaves, to quicken a new birth;
And, by the incantation of this verse,

Scatter, as from an unextinguish'd hearth
Ashes and sparks, my words among mankind!
Be through my lips to unawaken'd earth

The trumpet of a prophecy! O Wind,
If Winter comes, can Spring be far behind?

This famous and beautiful ode is not easy to grasp in one quick read. Take the time to read it again, out loud, noting that "thou," "thy," and "thine" are old ways of saying "you" and "your." Throughout this poem the poet is speaking directly to the West Wind.

1. Would the poem feel different if the poet had not addressed the West Wind directly and instead described the wind from the third-person voice?
2. What do you think the poet means when he asks the West Wind to "Make me thy lyre"? (Hint: He also asks the wind to "scatter…my words among mankind!")
3. What do you think the poet's state of mind is when he ends with, "If winter comes, can Spring be far behind?"? What would he be longing for in Spring, and how does this relate to the West Wind? How also does Spring relate to his ambitions for his writing life, for his words?
4. Name the meter and rhyme scheme of this poem, and identify one additional poetic tool used.

Percy Bysshe Shelley

John Keats (1795–1821)

To Autumn

1.

Season of mists and mellow fruitfulness,
Close bosom-friend of the maturing sun;
Conspiring with him how to load and bless
With fruit the vines that round the thatch-eves run;
To bend with apples the moss'd cottage-trees,
And fill all fruit with ripeness to the core;
To swell the gourd, and plump the hazel shells
With a sweet kernel; to set budding more,
And still more, later flowers for the bees,
Until they think warm days will never cease,
For Summer has o'er-brimm'd their clammy cells.

2.

Who hath not seen thee oft amid thy store?
Sometimes whoever seeks abroad may find
Thee sitting careless on a granary floor,
Thy hair soft-lifted by the winnowing wind;
Or on a half-reap'd furrow sound asleep,
Drows'd with the fume of poppies, while thy hook
Spares the next swath and all its twined flowers:
And sometimes like a gleaner thou dost keep
Steady thy laden head across a brook;
Or by a cyder-press, with patient look,
Thou watchest the last oozings hours by hours.

3.

Where are the songs of Spring? Ay, where are they?
Think not of them, thou hast thy music too,–
While barred clouds bloom the soft-dying day,
And touch the stubble plains with rosy hue;
Then in a wailful choir the small gnats mourn
Among the river sallows, borne aloft
Or sinking as the light wind lives or dies;
And full-grown lambs loud bleat from hilly bourn;
Hedge-crickets sing; and now with treble soft
The red-breast whistles from a garden-croft;
And gathering swallows twitter in the skies.

1. This is another ode to something in nature, but it has a very different feel and scope than Shelley's grand sweep. Can you name three ways in which the poems are similar and three ways in which they are different?

2. The poet here is extolling the season of Autumn and all that comes with it. What images or phrases in this poem struck you as exactly accurate—made you nod your head in recognition of the essence of Autumn as you have experienced it? What images or phrases surprised you?

3. As with Shelley's, this ode directly addresses Autumn as a person. In your own words, what message does Keats want to convey to Autumn in this poem?

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow (1807–1882)

The Fire of Driftwood

Devereux Farm, near Marblehead

We sat within the farm-house old,
Whose windows, looking o'er the bay,
Gave to the sea-breeze damp and cold,
An easy entrance, night and day.

Not far away we saw the port,
The strange, old-fashioned, silent town,
The lighthouse, the dismantled fort,
The wooden houses, quaint and brown.

We sat and talked until the night,
Descending, filled the little room;
Our faces faded from the sight,
Our voices only broke the gloom.

We spake of many a vanished scene,
Of what we once had thought and said,
Of what had been, and might have been,
And who was changed, and who was dead;

And all that fills the hearts of friends,
When first they feel, with secret pain,
Their lives thenceforth have separate ends,
And never can be one again;

The first slight swerving of the heart,
That words are powerless to express,
And leave it still unsaid in part,
Or say it in too great excess.

The very tones in which we spake
Had something strange, I could but mark;
The leaves of memory seemed to make
A mournful rustling in the dark.

Oft died the words upon our lips,
As suddenly, from out the fire
Built of the wreck of stranded ships,
The flames would leap and then expire.

And, as their splendor flashed and failed,
We thought of wrecks upon the main,
Of ships dismasted, that were hailed
And sent no answer back again.

The windows, rattling in their frames,
The ocean, roaring up the beach,
The gusty blast, the bickering flames,
All mingled vaguely in our speech;

Until they made themselves a part
Of fancies floating through the brain,
The long-lost ventures of the heart,
That send no answers back again.

O flames that glowed! O hearts that yearned!
They were indeed too much akin,
The drift-wood fire without that burned,
The thoughts that burned and glowed within.

1. What do you think this ode is celebrating or marking?

2. What does Longfellow mean when he speaks of the realization that friends sometimes know, even while they're still together, that they will have "separate ends," or when he references the "swerving of the heart"? What happens in the poem after this admission?

3. What images support the pain that he describes?

4. What are some of the formal choices that the poet makes along with the shaping and thematic choices?

Joy Harjo (1951–)

Perhaps the World Ends Here

The world begins at a kitchen table. No matter what, we must eat to live.
The gifts of earth are brought and prepared, set on the table. So it has been since creation, and it will go on.
We chase chickens or dogs away from it. Babies teethe at the corners. They scrape their knees under it.
It is here that children are given instructions on what it means to be human. We make men at it, we make women.
At this table we gossip, recall enemies and the ghosts of lovers.
Our dreams drink coffee with us as they put their arms around our children. They laugh with us at our poor falling-down selves and as we put ourselves back together once again at the table.
This table has been a house in the rain, an umbrella in the sun.
Wars have begun and ended at this table. It is a place to hide in the shadow of terror. A place to celebrate the terrible victory.
We have given birth on this table, and have prepared our parents for burial here.
At this table we sing with joy, with sorrow. We pray of suffering and remorse. We give thanks.
Perhaps the world will end at the kitchen table, while we are laughing and crying, eating of the last sweet bite.

This is an ode to a kitchen table, which is a literal piece of furniture. The poet clearly demonstrates all that happens at the table, and therefore all that is symbolized or contained within the image of the table.

1. List some of the things that happen at the table. Is the list universal, or does it seem to belong to a particular culture?
2. Learn a little bit about the poet, Joy Harjo, by checking out a book of her poems or researching her on the Internet and then revisit the previous question. Does your answer to question 1 remain the same?
3. What happens at your own kitchen table?
4. What do you make of the form of the long lines standing singly by themselves? How would the tone of the poem be different if Harjo had written in first person ("I") rather than in the third person ("we")?
5. Would the poem work if the poet had personified the table and addressed it directly? Why or why not?
6. What effect do the title and the final stanza have on the overall tone of this poem? Is it sad, happy, or something else?

Elegy

The elegy is a lament or mourning for someone who has died. It seeks consolation and describes the circumstances and nature of the loss. Sometimes it lists the virtues of the person who has died. The collected history of poetry, especially contemporary, shows many elegies of poets mourning other poets. The struggle, in the elegy, is between public manners and strong private feeling. The accomplishment is to make a tribute to the person who died and to give meaningful shape to the sadness of loss.

LEARNING TO READ CLOSELY

Ben Jonson (1572–1637)

On my first son

Farewell, thou child of my right hand, and joy;
My sin was too much hope of thee, loved boy.
Seven years thou wert lent to me, and I thee pay,
Exacted by thy fate, on the just day.
Oh, could I lose all father now! For why
Will man lament the state he should envy?
To have so soon 'scaped world's and flesh's rage,
And if no other misery, yet age!
Rest in soft peace, and asked, say, Here doth lie
Ben Jonson his best piece of poetry.
For whose sake henceforth all his vows be such
As what he loves may never like too much.

The speaker in this poem directly addresses his dead son, calling him "child of my right hand," which literally means "Benjamin," the name of the poet's son who died. Being at someone's "right hand" is a position of honor and importance, but beyond that Jonson calls him the child of his "joy." He calls his many eager hopes for his child and their life together "too much." Here on the page, the grieving father is reckoning with the shattered expectation that he and his son would have many years together. Here he says the boy was lent to him and that it is God's right to take the child back. The argument pushes forward and says that the child is in a state that the speaker should envy—a perfected, happy state outside of this "world's and flesh's rage." The living still endure the pain of physical aging, the speaker notes, and therefore this child has been blessed by death. By logical deduction, the fortunate child's father should be happy for him, he argues, but beneath the flawless logic we sense his deep loss and grief. He is wrestling with himself and his feelings, but he has not yet been able to win over his heart with his intellect.

The speaker, Ben Jonson, wishes his son to "rest in soft peace," and calls the boy his "best piece of poetry"—the best thing he ever made. Aptly this poem is an inadequate expression, for even a poem is slight in light of the ultimate poem—the boy. The grief-stricken father decides to "never like too much" that which he loves. This seems strange at first: how can the speaker not like too much what he loves, for "love" contains "like," doesn't it? The suggestion seems to be that he will never set his whole heart and hopes on a beloved again. This will not preclude love but perhaps will affect his expectations—he will hold those he loves more lightly from this time forward.

This poem is set in a single stanza with couplet rhymes. Couplet rhymes, with their tight sound pattern that is soon abandoned, reminds us of the child's short life and fading sound. We sense here that the speaker is trying to argue himself into a change of heart, and because the sonnet form is so often used for argument, and this poem is similar in length (this one is twelve lines; sonnets are fourteen lines), there is the echo of the sonnet. The sonnet form cut short is also appropriate for the subject matter, which dwells on this life cut short and the loss in the wake of the beloved's absence.

We know from history that Ben Jonson did lose a son, and that he lost a daughter, too. Historically at this time (1600s) it was common to lose children; almost every family lost one, and we hear that reality in the voice of the speaker. He accepts this as just and perhaps even to be expected. Yet he was nonetheless unprepared for the tragedy and he cannot align his heart with the reality.

Poetry and other art forms are a place where people can turn to pour out grief, to make something of sadness, or to simply give words to an enormous, shapeless feeling. Here Jonson works hard at the poetic craft, the art form, but suggests that no amount of skill will ever match the beauty, art, and craft of his son, "his best piece of poetry." Robert Frost once said, "Like a piece of ice on a hot stove, the poem must ride on its own melting." Jonson's terse, heartfelt elegy is a perfect example of how poems use finite language to help us access infinite mysteries.

Ben Johnson

ANTHOLOGY

Anne Bradstreet (1612–1672)

Verses upon the Burning of our House

In silent night when rest I took,
For sorrow near I did not look,
I waken'd was with thund'ring noise
And piteous shrieks of dreadful voice.
That fearful sound of "fire" and "fire,"
Let no man know is my Desire.
I starting up, the light did spy,
And to my God my heart did cry
To straighten me in my Distress
And not to leave me succourless.
Then coming out, behold a space
The flame consume my dwelling place.
And when I could no longer look,
I blest his grace that gave and took,
That laid my goods now in the dust.
Yea, so it was, and so 'twas just.
It was his own; it was not mine.
Far be it that I should repine,
He might of all justly bereft
But yet sufficient for us left.
When by the Ruins oft I past
My sorrowing eyes aside did cast
And here and there the places spy
Where oft I sate and long did lie.
Here stood that Trunk, and there that chest,
There lay that store I counted best,
My pleasant things in ashes lie
And them behold no more shall I.
Under the roof no guest shall sit,
Nor at thy Table eat a bit.
No pleasant talk shall 'ere be told
Nor things recounted done of old.
No Candle 'ere shall shine in Thee,
Nor bridegroom's voice ere heard shall bee.
In silence ever shalt thou lie.
Adieu, Adieu, All's Vanity.
Then straight I 'gin my heart to chide:
And did thy wealth on earth abide,
Didst fix thy hope on mouldring dust,
The arm of flesh didst make thy trust?
Raise up thy thoughts above the sky
That dunghill mists away may fly.
Thou hast a house on high erect
Fram'd by that mighty Architect,
With glory richly furnished
Stands permanent, though this be fled.
It's purchased and paid for too
By him who hath enough to do.
A price so vast as is unknown,
Yet by his gift is made thine own.
There's wealth enough; I need no more.
Farewell, my pelf; farewell, my store.
The world no longer let me love;
My hope and Treasure lies above.

1. For what is this poem an elegy?

2. How does the speaker in the poem deal with the loss she describes? Does her reflection offer her consolation from the loss of all of her goods? Would it console you?

3. Is there a particular line or lines that struck you, that might be worth remembering if something this difficult were to happen to you?

4. What do you think about the formal choices, again of couplets (though without stanza breaks)?

A.E. Housman (1859–1936)

To an Athlete Dying Young

The time you won your town the race
We chaired you through the market-place;
Man and boy stood cheering by,
And home we brought you shoulder-high.

To-day, the road all runners come,
Shoulder-high we bring you home,
And set you at your threshold down,
Townsman of a stiller town.

Smart lad, to slip betimes away
From fields where glory does not stay
And early though the laurel grows
It withers quicker than the rose.

Eyes the shady night has shut
Cannot see the record cut,
And silence sounds no worse than cheers
After earth has stopped the ears.

Now you will not swell the rout
Of lads that wore their honours out,
Runners whom renown outran
And the name died before the man.

So set, before its echoes fade,
The fleet foot on the sill of shade,
And hold to the low lintel up
The still-defended challenge-cup.

And round that early-laurelled head
Will flock to gaze the strengthless dead,
And find unwithered on its curls
The garland briefer than a girl's.

1. What is the speaker mourning in this poem?
2. How does this speaker console himself in his grief, and how is it similar to Anne Bradstreet's consolation or to Ben Jonson's?
3. What do you think the speaker means when he calls the dead boy "Smart lad"?
4. Once again, a poem that speaks of death is using a rhyme scheme that cuts short the length of time between similar sounds. What rhyme scheme is this?
5. What is the stanza form? How effective do you find it?
6. What are some of the other sound and rhythmic effects that create the musical quality of the poem?

Pastoral

The pastoral form celebrates the virtues of rural life and examines why it is good to live on the land, in the countryside.

This tradition began with the Greeks, who celebrated Arcadia, a pastoral civilization in 400 BC. Arcadia soon became a symbol of perfection in the pastoral life. This longing for the ideal, natural place was passed on throughout cultures and from poet to poet: from Greece to Italy, to England, and to all over the Western world. At certain times in history it has become a troubled and dark form. For instance, during the Industrial Revolution, the natural world was being destroyed, so the pastoral became an outcry and an escape from the indignity and losses of that time. It was during the Romantic movement in literature (the eighteenth into the nineteenth centuries) that the form reached a crisis point in history, and the pastoral seemed to gain new strength as it battled the monster of progress. In today's poetry, the relationship to nature is somewhat dependent on the individual, but it remains part of this long tradition of the pastoral. When a writer responds to nature she is usually aware of the fact that many before her have done the same thing.

ANTHOLOGY

Christopher Marlowe (1564–1593)

The Passionate Shepherd to His Love

Come live with me and be my Love,
And we will all the pleasures prove
That hills and valleys, dale and field,
And all the craggy mountains yield.

There will we sit upon the rocks
And see the shepherds feed their flocks,
By shallow rivers, to whose falls
Melodious birds sing madrigals.

There will I make thee beds of roses
And a thousand fragrant posies,
A cap of flowers, and a kirtle
Embroider'd all with leaves of myrtle.

A gown made of the finest wool
Which from our pretty lambs we pull,
Fair lined slippers for the cold,
With buckles of the purest gold.

A belt of straw and ivy buds
With coral clasps and amber studs:
And if these pleasures may thee move,
Come live with me and be my Love.

Thy silver dishes for thy meat
As precious as the gods do eat,
Shall on an ivory table be
Prepared each day for thee and me.

The shepherd swains shall dance and sing
For thy delight each May-morning:
If these delights thy mind may move,
Then live with me and be my Love.

1. This speaker is using the country to make a romantic appeal or proposition. What is that appeal and to whom is he making it?
2. Circle the refrain in this poem.
3. Label the rhyme scheme, and name the meter and stanza type.
4. If you were the girl to whom this speaker was appealing, what would your response be? Does the fact that his appeal is based on a place and not on the attraction of his own person strengthen or weaken his argument?
5. To what extent do you believe the picture of the country life is being glorified or romanticized here?
6. If you've spent time in the countryside, what are some of the nice aspects of that life? What is unpleasant about it? Where will you decide to live when you have the choice?

A.E. Housman (1859–1936)

Loveliest of Trees

Loveliest of trees, the cherry now
Is hung with bloom along the bough,
And stands about the woodland ride
Wearing white for Eastertide.

Now, of my threescore years and ten,
Twenty will not come again,
And take from seventy springs a score,
It only leaves me fifty more.

And since to look at things in bloom
Fifty springs are little room,
About the woodlands I will go
To see the cherry hung with snow.

1. Here the landscape reminds the speaker of a truth about his life. Can you describe that truth in your own words? What is the speaker realizing about his life?

2. Why would the action of looking at the blooms of cherry trees trigger this thought in him?

3. What do you think he is longing for, and how does that show up in his tone of voice?

4. How do the form and language choices of the poem support these thoughts?

ACTIVITIES

1. Try writing in each of the forms discussed in this chapter. Prepare by reading poems from each of the genres. What follows are some prompts for each form.
2. **Ode:** Make a list of things or people that you love, admire, or find quirky or interesting. Choose one or two to develop, letting your mind wander and your tongue exaggerate their virtues. Think symbolically (as in the example of *Perhaps the World Ends Here*) and make notes about all of the ideas and important events that take place surrounding this person, place, or thing. Shape this associative list into a poem, then keep writing and shaping, always seeking to relate the words and sounds to the subject you've chosen to praise.
3. **Elegy:** Don't limit yourself to the death of a loved one, though such a loss is certainly something about which you should feel free to write. Think about your personal anniversaries—significant moments of loss or farewell that have marked your life. Consider even what you were doing last year at this time—something you may never do again. Choose a structure or strategy that one of the elegies in this section employs—perhaps the rhyming couplet, or an examination of how the loss might be a blessing. Let images from the natural world and its seasons, so continuously dying and being reborn, seep into your writing; let your language rue the loss in whatever way is most truthful for you.
4. **Pastoral:** Think about your relationship to the natural world. Are you more like the person who loves everything natural and lives in harmony with the earth, or do you tend to agree with my friend who once said, "Nature wants you dead"? Regardless of your inclinations, you can write an interesting pastoral poem. Describe a scene outside your window (real or imaginary but always with reality in it), and describe it accurately according to your feelings about nature. Try using a refrain or use a line from Dylan Thomas or e.e. cummings to get you started.
5. As a class, read aloud *The Passionate Shepherd to His Love* by Christopher Marlowe, then look up *The Nymph's Reply to the Shepherd* by Sir Walter Ralegh and read that aloud in response. Choose a boy and a girl to do this, and be sure to know what the poem is saying so you can express it according to the proposal and smart-aleck reply.
6. Talk about what in your class, school, or family life is ode-worthy, elegy-worthy, and pastoral-worthy, then make lists of these and explain why you would want to memorialize them in poems.
7. Discuss the memorializing function of poems.

VOCABULARY

Shaping forms: forms that are not defined by meter and rhyme but by society and history. Their origin is societal; just as words were devised from need, so were these shaping forms.

EXPLICATIONS AND ANSWERS

pp. 139–141, *Ode to the West Wind* by Percy Bysshe Shelley

Explication

In line 2, Shelley speaks of the wind's "unseen presence," and so identifies one of the most interesting features of this poem: it is about something that cannot be seen except by observing its effect on other things. How do we know the wind exists? Because, as Shelley says, it drives the leaves into the air "like ghosts" trying to escape "from an enchanter." Or, as he also observes, we know of the wind because it scatters the seeds away from their parent plants to create life elsewhere. Because it both drives dead leaves and carries live seeds, Shelley concludes at the end of the first section that the wind is both "Destroyer and preserver." Then, in the second part, he lifts the reader's eye away from the earth and toward the sky, where (like the "decaying leaves") the clouds are driven across the sky by the invisible wind, grinding together to create the "approaching storm" and shedding "Black rain" when they grow heavy and burst. Again, Shelley identifies the wind by its effect on the clouds; although he cannot actually see the wind, he can see its part in a storm.

In section III, Shelley continues to develop the theme of the wind's visible effects on nature. This time, he talks about the way the wind affects the ocean. When the seasons change from summer to fall and winter on the Mediterranean, the wind picks up and wakes "The blue Mediterranean," ruffling its reflection of ancient ruins that, Shelley says, are covered with vividly colored moss and flowers. Describing the wind's power and strength, Shelley also observes that the waves "Cleave themselves into chasms" when the wind cuts through them. Even the plants far below the ocean's surface sense the wind's movement; in a note, Shelley explains lines 38–42 by saying, "The vegetation at the bottom of the sea . . . sympathizes with that of the land in the change of seasons, and is consequently influenced by the winds which announce it."[1]

So far, in the first three sections one, the poem has done a lot of moving around, ranging from the autumnal earth, to the stormy sky, to the Mediterranean Sea. In section IV, Shelley expands this theme of movement when he tells the wind that he, like the wind, is "tameless, and swift, and proud." He wishes that, like the wind, he was not bound to the earth, and that he could be moved by the wind in the same way as "a wave, a leaf, a cloud." He also says in the second and third stanzas of the fourth section that when he was younger, outrunning the wind didn't seem like an unattainable dream, and he wishes he still felt so invincible. Through expressing this desire, Shelley shows that he does not literally want to be picked up by the wind; he does, however, wish for the *feeling* of freedom that he felt in his youth and that, now that he is older and bowed down with cares, has become impossible. The weight of sadness Shelley feels is so poignant when he cries out "I fall upon the thorns of life! I bleed!" that most readers cannot help but feel hopeless on his behalf. However, in the fifth and final section, Shelley offers himself and the reader a solution to his problem. Even though he cannot literally fly away on the wind, and even though he can never escape his adult responsibilities (the "thorns of life") completely, he still hopes that he can find a contentment that is "Sweet though in sadness." In order to do so, he asks that he turn into a "lyre," or an eolian harp, which was a popular novelty during the Romantic period. When people placed eolian harps or lyres in their window, the wind coming through the window caused the strings to vibrate and create music. In the same way, Shelley requests that he become a lyre, and the wind (now transformed into a metaphorical wind of inspiration) draw music from him. In the third stanza of this section, he refers to his writing as "dead thoughts," suggesting that the leaves of paper bearing his poems will be scattered by the wind just like the dead leaves of autumn. And finally, in the last two lines of the poem, he poses a question: "If Winter comes, can Spring be far behind?" Placed in such close conjunction with the references to inspiration and writing, it becomes clear that the "Winter" Shelley is experiencing is a dry time in his creative work, while the "Spring" to which he is looking forward is the sort of outpouring of his abilities that he had when he was younger.

If students feel like this poem has ended in an unexpected way, their feeling is justified. The title suggests that the poem will be about the West Wind and, for the first three sections, this is indeed what the poem is about. But in the last two sections, Shelley transforms his ode from one that merely praises the actual West Wind to one that praises what the West Wind can represent. To Shelley, the West Wind stands for freedom, inspiration, and his own personality. In writing an *Ode to the West Wind*, it makes sense that in the end, the poem would be about the way in which the West Wind provides inspiration to the poet. Once students come to this realization, it may be helpful to go back with them and discuss how their understanding of the first three stanzas may have changed once they read and understood the end of the poem.

[1] Margaret Ferguson, Mary Jo Salter, and Jon Stallworthy, eds. *The Norton Anthology of Poetry* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1997), 774.

Answers

1. Would the poem feel different if the poet had not addressed the West Wind directly and instead described the wind from the third-person voice?

The poem addresses the West Wind as if it were a character in a story, with a personality and a will. The speaker does this with passion—the very first word is "O," which suggests a heartfelt exclamation. In the course of the poem, we come to think the West Wind has a mind ("impetuous one"), plans ("Destroyer and preserver"), thoughts ("Be thou, Spirit fierce"), and even an ear ("O hear!"). We see the wind as a powerful force from whom the speaker asks for action on his behalf. This creates an immediacy, an urgency, and a sense of the speaker's great need and desire. The wind has a Godlike role in the speaker's mind. The poem would definitely feel different if it talked about the West Wind in the third person rather than addressing it directly. For one thing, instead of saying "thou" and "thine," the poet would have had to repeatedly say "the wind" or "it."

2. What do you think the poet means when he asks the West Wind to "Make me thy lyre"? (Hint: He also asks the wind to "scatter…my words among mankind!")

A lyre is a harp-like instrument. When the poet asks the wind to "Make me thy lyre," he means that he would like the wind to speak through him. In line 57, the speaker compares himself to a forest, through which the wind blows and makes a "tumult" of "mighty harmonies." He is asking for the wind to lend his music and strength to the speaker, to make the speaker's words (and poems) powerful.

3. What do you think the poet's state of mind is when he ends with, "If winter comes, can Spring be far behind?"? What would he be longing for in Spring, and how does this relate to the West Wind? How also does Spring relate to his ambitions for his writing life, for his words?

In the fourth and fifth stanzas of the fourth section, the poet laments that though he originally had the wild spirit of the wind, he feels weighed down with cares:

> O! lift me as a wave, a leaf, a cloud!
> I fall upon the thorns of life! I bleed!
> A heavy weight of hours has chain'd and bow'd
> One too like thee—tameless, and swift, and proud.

The poet does not specifically describe the source of the oppression he feels when he exclaims "I bleed!" but it seems from the context of the poem that he feels his creative and imaginative well has run dry and he is having trouble writing. With this in mind, his question, "If Winter comes, can Spring be far behind?" parallels his lack of inspiration with Winter, and expresses a hope that, like the seasons, inspiration comes and goes cyclically. If so, he asks that the West Wind usher in the Spring, a request that also figuratively echoes his desire that the West Wind bring him and his "dead thoughts" back to life and liveliness.

Writers, like everyone else, struggle with feeling dead, burned out (like a fire, line 66), and withered. The speaker is asking for the wind to infuse him with life not only for the sake of his emotional life, but also for the sake of his writing life. The speaker reasons that he cannot inspire others if he himself is not inspired. The wind is a muse—an inspiration—full of power, freshness, and action, and the poet desires this in his writing life as well. He would like to be in the spring of his creativity and not the winter. Since the wind brings the earth into spring, the speaker asks that his own work and mind would likewise be ushered into a growing period.

4. Name the meter and rhyme scheme of this poem, and identify one additional poetic tool used.

The lines in this poem are generally pentameter, though they sometimes deviate by a syllable or two. The lines are roughly iambic, though frequently not completely iambic. The poem is divided into five different sections and within each section the fourteen lines are divided into five stanzas: four stanzas with three lines each and a couplet at the end. The stanzas follow a rhyme scheme of *aba cdc efe ghg ii*, although very few of the rhymes are exact rhymes.

Students might recognize the poetic tool of personification when the poet speaks to the West Wind and calls the Mediterranean "he" in lines 29–31. They might also identify metaphor/simile when he compares a seed to "a corpse within its grave" in lines 7-8, loose clouds to "decaying leaves" in line 16, and rain and lightning to "bright hair uplifted" in lines 18–21. Students might enjoy discussing how the sections in this poem are similar to or differ from the sonnet form. Though they contain fourteen lines and end with a rhyming couplet (like English or Shakespearean sonnets), they contain four tercets rather than three quatrains, and their rhyme scheme differs as well.

p. 142, *To Autumn* by John Keats

Explication

Keats seems to situate autumn, both in his ode and in his imagination, between the harsh heat of summer and the barren cold of winter; the seasons are marked by a color gradient that goes from a bold red in the summer to colorless white in the winter. Autumn is dressed in the soft, rich colors that fall in between these extremes. In the first stanza, Keats describes how autumn and its "bosom-friend," the "maturing" sun, have cultivated a ripe, fruitful crop. Then, having described the fecundity of the transition from summer to fall, in the second stanza Keats writes about the harvest of those crops. Here he personifies autumn as a reaper, a gleaner, or the owner of a cider press. To Keats, autumn both creates and then harvests the crop. Then, in the third stanza, the ode becomes more personal; Keats vividly describes an autumn day as he experiences it. He says that though people usually look forward to the spring, autumn has music of its own: the "wailful choir" of gnats, lambs, crickets, and the swallows that muster together before flying south.

Reading this ode, it is possible to imagine that Keats, enamored with the sort of brilliant autumn day he describes, compiled a list of all the things he loved about that season. Then, selecting the ones that were most important, he arranged them into an ode that, with the vividness of its language and imagery, was able to convey his love of autumn almost directly into the mind of his reader. If the ode, a poem praising a particular person or thing, appeals to your students, you may want to work on creating one with them. To begin, they can choose an object or person to which they will address their poem. Then they can create a list of all the best characteristics of their subject, highlighting the ones that are most important. After that, it's only a matter of using Keats's ode as a model. They can have as many stanzas as they want, but an important aspect of each stanza is that they keep it unified by including imagery and information that have things in common. Keats's ode does have a rhyme scheme (*ababcdedcce* or *ababcdecdde*), but because it is not a very tight rhyme scheme, it may not strongly stand out to the reader. Keats's poem also has an iambic meter, or ten syllables per line. However, because it's not iambic pentameter (that is, it doesn't contain a steady rhythm of stressed and unstressed syllables), its meter doesn't stand out that much either. Although it is always helpful to notice the poetic elements in a poem, if your students are trying to explore the ode itself, it is even more helpful to emphasize the poem's function.

Answers

1. This is another ode to something in nature, but it has a very different feel and scope than Shelley's grand sweep. Can you name three ways in which the poems are similar and three ways in which they are different?

Answers will vary. These two poems are similar because they fulfill the basic definition of an ode; that is, they elevate something and praise it. Both directly address an aspect of nature, calling it "thee." They also both range in their scope over the earth; Shelley speaks of the Mediterranean and ranges over the ocean, while Keats says that anyone may seek Autumn "abroad."

However, the two poems clearly differ from one another as well. Students might first notice the formal, or structural, differences between the two poems. *To Autumn* is shorter than *To the West Wind*; it contains only three sections instead of five, and each section contains eleven lines rather than fourteen. It also has a different rhyme scheme: *ababcdedcce*.

Apart from structural differences, the two odes have different tones and purposes as well. In the introduction to the ode at the beginning of this chapter, you learned that in odes the thing praised often stands for something larger or greater than itself. This was the case in Shelley's *Ode to the West Wind*, in which the West Wind grew to represent the poet's inspiration. In *To Autumn*, however, Keats does not use Autumn to symbolize something else. Rather, he spends the ode enumerating Autumn's good qualities.

2. The poet here is extolling the season of Autumn and all that comes with it. What images or phrases in this poem struck you as exactly accurate—made you nod your head in recognition of the essence of Autumn as you have experienced it? What images or phrases surprised you?

Answers will vary. Some of the possible images or phrases describing Autumn that students might point out include: mists, fruitfulness, loaded vines, trees loaded with apples, gourds, nuts, corn, flowers with bees at them, long warm days, stubbled fields, clouds of gnats, the sound of lambs bleating, crickets singing, other birds singing, and the swallows flying quickly and changing directions as a flock.

3. As with Shelley's, this ode directly addresses Autumn as a person. In your own words, what message does Keats want to convey to Autumn in this poem?

Keats seems to want to thank Autumn for the plenty it brings and to assure Autumn that it is the best season. In section 3, when he says, "Where are the songs of Spring? Ay, where are they? / Think not of them, thou hast thy music too,—" he assures Autumn that, though people may overlook it in favor of spring, Autumn's "music" and qualities have their own unique beauty.

p. 143, *The Fire of Driftwood* by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

Answers

1. What do you think this ode is celebrating or marking?

According to the title, the physical object that the poem celebrates is the fire made of driftwood. However, as students may notice, the driftwood fire doesn't actually make its entrance into the poem until the eighth stanza. Until that point, the focus of the ode is friendship and memory. Gradually, through the poet's skillful weaving, these two topics come together, until in the last stanza they unite and the poet tells us that the fire and the hearts of the friends are "too much akin, / The drift-wood fire without that burned, / The thoughts that burned and glowed within." After having read the poem through once or twice, it becomes apparent that this poem celebrates, not the fire of driftwood, but the way in which memory is like a fire of driftwood.

2. What does Longfellow mean when he speaks of the realization that friends sometimes know, even while they're still together, that they will have "separate ends," or when he references the "swerving of the heart"? What happens in the poem after this admission?

Although the speaker doesn't specifically describe the friends and their personal situations, we get the impression that these people were once good friends who have been separated by different life circumstances. When this poem takes place, they have come back together after some time to talk and visit, but Longfellow seems to suggest that that "first slight swerving of the heart," in which they began to lose what they had in common, really has forced them into "separate ends"—that is, though they began life together, they will not finish it together. After the poet makes this admission, which sets up the true subject of the poem, he moves on to weave the description of the wrecked ships and the driftwood fire with the sorrowful image of friends who have gone separate ways.

3. What images support the pain that he describes?

The poet compares memory with "leaves" that "seemed to make / A *mournful* rustling in the dark." He also describes some of the musings of the friends by saying, "We thought of wrecks upon the main, / Of ships dismasted, that were hailed / And sent no answer back again." Placed in conjunction with the poet/speaker's musing about the way in which friendships sometimes drift apart, these memories of "wrecks" in which ships could no longer communicate with one another resonate with friendships that, when dashed against "rocks" or difficulties, are severely damaged.

The poem's formal choices include a division into twelve stanzas, a rhyme scheme of *abab*. It is written in iambic tetrameter. Alliteration is another formal device that is peppered throughout the poem:

easy entrance
strange, old-fashioned, silent
slight swerving
spake / Had something strange
memory seemed to make / A mournful
stranded ships
flashed and failed
blast, the bickering
fancies floating
long-lost

4. What are some of the formal choices that the poet makes along with the shaping and thematic choices?

The chief shaping device is the fact that the poem is an ode to memory—to "vanished scene, / Of what we once had thought and said, / Of what had been, and might have been, / And who was changed, and who was dead." As an ode it is both celebrating and mourning. The act of remembering/celebrating turns toward mourning in this case; the speaker becomes heartsick about what has passed by and is no longer accessible except through memory. The shaping and formal choices intertwine in the way in which the scene unfolds, the fact that the poet chooses to make each stanza a piece of the story in front of a fire that also unfolds. Each stanza corresponds to a development in the remembering and celebrating: the setting, the activity, the subjects, the friends entertained, and the emotions they felt. The way in which the conversation among friends about "long-lost ventures of the heart" was like a fire—in the manner of conversing and in the strong emotion, the yearning, they felt in their hearts. The interplay between the fire in front of them and the fire in their hearts reflects the theme.

p. 144, *Perhaps the World Ends Here* by Joy Harjo

Answers

1. List some of the things that happen at the table. Is the list universal, or does it seem to belong to a particular culture?

The following is a list of the things that have occurred at the table in the poem:

- food from the earth has been eaten;
- babies have teethed at its corner;
- children have been given instructions about how to grow up;
- adults have gossiped;
- adults have remembered dreams that haven't come true;
- people have been sheltered from the elements;
- wars have begun and ended there;
- women have given birth; and
- people have sung, prayed, and given thanks.

Most of these things, such as eating, gossiping, and giving thanks, are fairly universal and often take place in our own culture. Some of the other activities, however, may seem more unusual to students. For instance, in our culture, women do not often give birth on the kitchen table.

2. Learn a little bit about the poet, Joy Harjo, by checking out a book of her poems or researching her on the Internet and then revisit the previous question. Does your answer to question 1 remain the same?

Poets.org or wikipedia.org are two readily accessible resources. If you look up Harjo's biography, you will discover that she is of Native American ancestry and a member of the Muscogee nation of Oklahoma. Many people groups have traditions that surround the table. The students may see a relationship between the poet's ancestry and traditions and the poem.

3. What happens at your own kitchen table?

Answers will vary.

4. What do you make of the form of the long lines standing singly by themselves? How would the tone of the poem be different if Harjo had written in first person ("I") rather than in the third person ("we")?

The long lines suggest the breadth of experiences that the table hosts. A lot happens here. If the poet had said "I" instead of "we," she would have sacrificed the sense she wished to convey that this table was a focal point of the community or family. Instead, by saying "we," the poet communicates that this table has been important to many people from many different generations.

5. Would the poem work if the poet had personified the table and addressed it directly? Why or why not?

Because the poet speaks *about* the table and focuses on "we," the poem includes us in its scope—we are able to think of ourselves as included in the pronoun. If she were to address the poem to the table, as though it were a person, we, the readers, drawing on our own common experiences, would not be as integrally involved. She is celebrating common life shared by all with the table as its location more than she is celebrating the table itself.

6. What effect do the title and the final stanza have on the overall tone of this poem? Is it sad, happy, or something else?

Throughout the entire poem, an implicit theme is the movement of time and the growth of many generations—babies teethe, children learn how to be adults, adults live their lives, and then they give birth to more babies. The title and the last line, then, remind us that when beginnings are present, so are endings. This reminder saddens the tone of the poem. But, despite the possibility that the world might end at this table, the poet writes that they are "laughing *and* crying," and that they are "eating of the last *sweet* bite." The sadness of endings is tempered by the sweetness of the life being lived, and the poet suggests that she might not regret the end of the world if it came in the midst of such abundant living.

p. 147, *Verses upon the Burning of our House* by Anne Bradstreet

Explication

If students read Ben Jonson's *On my first son* alongside this elegy by Anne Bradstreet, they may notice some similarities. For instance, in the same way that Jonson says his son had been temporarily loaned to him by God, Bradstreet speaks of God's ability to both give and to take away. As the Bible says of human beings in Genesis 3:19, Bradstreet says that her house was taken from the earth and will, now that it has burned down, return to the earth. However, even though her language is the language of acceptance, she is like Jonson in that she cannot help but grieve. She obviously loved her house, and she regrets that she has lost the "pleasant talk," the meals, the candlelight and the "things recounted done of old." Finally, like Jonson, she concludes that the cure to grief is to become less attached to the things she loves. She writes, "There's wealth enough; I need no more. / Farewell, my pelf; farewell, my store. / The world no longer let me love; / My hope and Treasure lies above." Clearly Bradstreet is sad that she has lost the memories and familiarity of her home, but in the end she seems to decide her home and all that was in it were merely material things, essentially replaceable.

As *On my first son*, Bradstreet's poem is written in rhyming couplets, a tight and controlled form. Additionally, like Jonson, her tone gradually loses some of its control as the poem progresses. At the line "Adieu, Adieu, All's Vanity," you can almost picture her throwing up her hands in despair as she views the smoking, ashen remains of her home. Though losing a house is not nearly as tragic as losing a child, Bradstreet still feels that she has lost something irreplaceable, and that is why she has written an elegy about the experience.

Ask students if any of them have experienced the burning of a house, or known anyone who has. Tell them to imagine losing their physical lives that way. What would they miss most? What could not be replaced? What one thing would they try to save from the fire? Have students take a few minutes to freewrite on the thing they would save from their burning houses—what it is and what it means to them. If even that one thing were taken from them in the first, would they be able to say with Bradstreet "There's wealth enough"?

Answers

1. For what is this poem an elegy?

The poem is an elegy for the poet's house, which was destroyed in a fire.

2. How does the speaker in the poem deal with the loss she describes? Does her reflection offer her consolation from the loss of all of her goods? Would it console you?

In lines 14–17, she consoles herself by saying that God had given her the house in the first place, and so He had a right to take it away—a biblical concept that originates in the book of Job. The poet also comforts herself by saying that, as a Christian, she should not depend on possessions to make her happy and secure (lines 38–40). Instead, she reminds herself that she has a mansion—a "house on high"—that she will eventually move to when she dies, and that house should be enough to satisfy her (lines 43–48). Readers may differ in their opinions regarding whether or not these things would console them in the face of a similar disaster. Some readers may also want to discuss whether the poet herself is completely comforted by her own words, considering she has to keep chiding and reminding herself.

3. Is there a particular line or lines that struck you, that might be worth remembering if something this difficult were to happen to you?

Answers will vary.

4. What do you think about the formal choices, again of couplets (though without stanza breaks)?

The short span of the couplet is noteworthy here. The sound opens at the end of one line and closes at the end of the next—there is a short span between the two that creates the sense of something shutting down. The burning of the house has this effect on a life; a chapter is closed, a period of time that lasted in this house is now over. The form emphasizes the loss.

p. 148, *To an Athlete Dying Young* by A.E. Housman

Answers

1. What is the speaker mourning in this poem?

The poet is mourning the death of an athlete who had a great deal of promise but died at a young age and couldn't continue his promising career.

2. How does this speaker console himself in his grief, and how is it similar to Anne Bradstreet's consolation or to Ben Jonson's?
The speaker consoles himself that many athletes live so long that their name and fame have faded from the public memory long before they themselves have died. This young athlete, however, has died at a high point of fame. In comparing this elegy with the previous two, students might notice that both Ben Jonson and Anne Bradstreet spend some time chiding themselves for being overly attached to what they have lost, whereas this poet does not chide himself at all. On the other hand, both Housman and Jonson seem to celebrate that the young man they each mourn escaped the sad lingering of old age.

3. What do you think the speaker means when he calls the dead boy "Smart lad"?
When the poet calls the dead boy "Smart lad," the surface interpretation would be that he's congratulating the dead boy for getting out while the getting was good. This is the overall message of the poem; the poet consoles himself by saying that, on the positive side, at least the young athlete didn't live long enough to see his fame wither. This, of course, is ridiculous, because the young athlete certainly didn't die intentionally. The poet seems to know that he is consoling himself with an untruth, and so when he says "Smart lad," he communicates his sense of the irony of his own statements.

4. Once again, a poem that speaks of death is using a rhyme scheme that cuts short the length of time between similar sounds. What rhyme scheme is this?
This poem is composed of rhymed couplets—*aabb ccdd*, etc.

5. What is the stanza form? How effective do you find it?
Each stanza contains four lines (a quatrain) or two sets of couplets. Answers may vary as to how effective readers find this arrangement. If the stanza were instead a simple couplet, there would be less time for the speaker to develop his reflection on the beloved young athlete. If it were longer it might not feel as brief as the life was.

6. What are some of the other sound and rhythmic effects that create the musical quality of the poem?
This poem contains alliteration ("road all runners," "smart lad, to slip," "shady night has shut," "silence sounds," etc.) and assonance ("though the laurel grows," "hold to the low," "still-defended challenge-cup," etc.). In addition to a consistent rhyme scheme, it also has a regular meter. Each line contains either seven or eight syllables, four of which are stressed. All of the sound effects lend the poem its intense musical quality and beauty and highlights the beauty of the moment, while giving the sadness poignancy. This is the power of poetry generally, not only in this poem. But we notice the ways in which the theme of mourned death is aptly put forth through the music of this poem.

p. 150, *The Passionate Shepherd to His Love* by Christopher Marlowe

Explication

Often pastoral poems, in speaking of the charm and simplicity of the natural world, set up an explicit contrast between the country and the city. However, though the poet Christopher Marlowe may have lived and died enmeshed in the scandals and intrigues of the city of London, his passionate shepherd seems to have never known city life. When the shepherd praises the life of the country-dweller, he does so not by emphasizing the contrast between the city and the country, but by reveling in the countryside's pure attributes. Composed of rhyming couplets in iambic tetrameter, this poem has a simple, almost romping sound that seems to fit the image Marlowe gives of the cheerful, straightforward shepherd.

Although the shepherd makes no direct reference to the city, he does seem to replace the pleasures and entertainments of urban life with those of the country. Instead of going to the theatre to be entertained by plays or musicals, he tells his love that they will watch "shepherds feed their flocks" and listen to the "shallow rivers, to whose falls / Melodious birds sing madrigals." A madrigal is a song that contains parts for multiple voices, usually sung a cappella, and emphasizes harmony, so the shepherd is saying here that the song of the birds harmonizes with the sound of falling water. Instead of living in a mansion and sleeping in a four-poster bed, the shepherd tells his love that he will make her a bed of "roses" and "posies." Instead of dressing in the latest uncomfortable fashion, created to make women look like something they are not, the shepherd's love can wear a gown, kirtle (a loose tunic worn over the gown), cap, slippers, and belt made from natural materials he has gathered for her. Finally, he concludes that if any of these enticements sound appealing to his love, then she should come to live with him.

What do your students think of this offer to the girl? Is it honorable? Is it realistic? Is it appealing? Have the class read *The Nymph's Reply to the Shepherd*, Sir Walter Ralegh's poem that answers this one, to get an idea of what some of the holes in the offer might be. Ask students if they would leave their lives to go with the shepherd? Does the shepherd seem able to provide for his love? This poem raises the question of the definition of love—what is the difference between passion and love? When you choose to join your life to someone else's, what are you choosing? Is it good to know ahead of time what you're choosing or is it better to dash into it and fully enjoy the experience?

Answers

1. This speaker is using the country to make a romantic appeal or proposition. What is that appeal and to whom is he making it?

   As the title suggests, this poem is an appeal from a passionate shepherd to his love. He asks her to live with him and let nature provide her amusement, shelter, clothing, and food.

2. Circle the refrain in this poem.

   The refrain "Come live with me and be my love" —or a close variation—occurs in lines 1, 20, and 28.

3. Label the rhyme scheme, and name the meter and stanza type.

   This poem follows a rhyme scheme of *aabb*, or of quatrains (four-lined stanzas) composed of two couplets. Its meter is iambic tetrameter, or eight syllables arranged into four iambic feet. The meter, when exaggerated, sounds like this: "Come LIVE with ME and BE my LOVE / and WE will ALL the PLEASures PROVE."

4. If you were the girl to whom this speaker was appealing, what would your response be? Does the fact that his appeal is based on a place and not on the attraction of his own person strengthen or weaken his argument?

   Answers will vary.

5. To what extent do you believe the picture of the country life is being glorified or romanticized here?

   Answers will vary. In order to point out some ways in which the countryside has been romanticized, you might discuss where this couple would live during the winter, where the shepherd has found the "purest gold" for his love's shoe buckles, or whether anyone could really wear clothes made from leaves. You might also discuss the nature of the proposal: that he isn't making a vow to her but asking for her company at his pleasure.

6. If you've spent time in the countryside, what are some of the nice aspects of that life? What is unpleasant about it? Where will you decide to live when you have the choice?

   Answers will vary.

p. 151, *Loveliest of Trees*

Answers

1. Here the landscape reminds the speaker of a truth about his life. Can you describe that truth in your own words? What is the speaker realizing about his life?

   The speaker first says that he expects to live "threescore years and ten," meaning that he hopes to live until he is seventy. He realizes in the course of the poem, though, that already "Twenty will not come again," meaning that he is twenty years old and has only "fifty more" left to live. He comes to this realization because of the enjoyment he derives from looking at the beautiful blossoms on the cherry tree, which blooms around Easter time. The blossoms remind him that each time he sees them, another year has passed, and he has one less year to which he can look forward.

2. Why would the action of looking at the blooms of cherry trees trigger this thought in him?

   Perhaps he is reminded of his mortality by the whiteness of the blossoms, since the color white is sometimes considered the color of old age. Or perhaps when he says that "to look at things in bloom / Fifty springs are little room," he simply means that the more you enjoy doing something, the less time it seems you have to do it.

3. What do you think he is longing for, and how does that show up in his tone of voice?

   He longs, first of all, to go about in the "woodlands" to "see the cherry hung with snow" as often as he can before he dies. It is also possible to say that his desire to see as much of the cherry trees as possible echoes a larger desire he has to enjoy his life as much as possible and to not regret having wasted his time. The speaker sees the spring as a symbol for the youth of one's life and is conscious of the passing of time and of his youth.

4. How do the form and language choices of the poem support these thoughts?

   This poem, like *The Passionate Shepherd to His Love*, is arranged into quatrains of rhyming couplets. It is also similar to Marlowe's pastoral because each line contains four stressed syllables, although the line length and syllable count varies slightly. Both the rhyme scheme and the rhythm of the language make the poem sound consistent and places similar sounds in close quarters with one another—aspects that lend it a simpler, more singsong sound. The simplicity of the sound and the fact that very few of the words exceed two or three syllables in length support the poet's decision to enjoy the simplistic pleasure of looking at cherry blossoms as often as possible. The stanzas function to give us the sensation of the passage of time and the need to drink in the experience now. We feel that, even in the space of the poem, the speaker has aged and lost time with the trees.

Quizzes

CHAPTER 1 QUIZ

p. 10, *The Swing* by Robert Louis Stevenson

How do you like to go up in a swing,
Up in the air so blue?
Oh, I do think it the pleasantest thing
Ever a child can do!

Up in the air and over the wall,
Till I can see so wide,
River and trees and cattle and all
Over the countryside–

Till I look down on the garden green,
Down on the roof so brown–
Up in the air I go flying again,
Up in the air and down!

1. What is the primary image in this poem?

2. Name one image glimpsed by the speaker over the wall.

3. How does the difference in length between the alternating lines contribute to the poem's meaning?

4. How many stanzas does this poem contain?

5. How many lines are in each stanza?

6. Write down a rhyme found in the poem, listing the stanza in which it is found.

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Till I look down on the garden green,
Down on the roof so brown–
Up in the air I go flying again,
Up in the air and down!

1. What is the primary image in this poem?
Someone swinging on a swing is the primary image in the poem.

2. Name one image glimpsed by the speaker over the wall.
The speaker glimpses a river, trees, cattle, and the whole countryside.

3. How does the difference in length between the alternating lines contribute to the poem's meaning?
The differences in length mimic the motion of the swing.

4. How many stanzas does this poem contain?
There are three stanzas in this poem.

5. How many lines are in each stanza?
There are four lines in each stanza.

6. Write down a rhyme found in the poem, listing the stanza in which it is found.
In the first stanza, the rhymes are "swing" / "thing" and "blue" / "do." In the second stanza, the rhymes are "wall" / "all" and "wide" / "countryside." In the third stanza, the rhymes are "green" / "again" and "brown" / "down."

CHAPTER 2 QUIZ

p. 20, *I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud* by William Wordsworth

I wandered lonely as a cloud
That floats on high o'er vales and hills,
When all at once I saw a crowd,
A host, of golden daffodils;
Beside the lake, beneath the trees,
Fluttering and dancing in the breeze.

Continuous as the stars that shine
And twinkle on the milky way,
They stretched in never-ending line
Along the margin of a bay:
Ten thousand saw I at a glance,
Tossing their heads in sprightly dance.

The waves beside them danced; but they
Out-did the sparkling waves in glee:
A poet could not but be gay,
In such a jocund company:
I gazed—and gazed—but little thought
What wealth the show to me had brought:

For oft, when on my couch I lie
In vacant or in pensive mood,
They flash upon that inward eye
Which is the bliss of solitude;
And then my heart with pleasure fills,
And dances with the daffodils.

1. How many stanzas does this poem contain?

2. How many lines are in each stanza?

3. What is the term for the way this poet treats the daffodils as if they are human beings?

4. Does this poem contain any similes? If so, list one.

5. What is the main metaphor in this poem?

6. What do you call a metaphor, such as the one in this poem, which the poet sustains throughout the entire poem?

7. Identify one example of alliteration and underline the part of the word that creates the effect.

CHAPTER 2 QUIZ ANSWERS

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And then my heart with pleasure fills,
And dances with the daffodils.

1. How many stanzas does this poem contain?
There are four stanzas in the poem.

2. How many lines are in each stanza?
There are six lines in each stanza.

3. What is the term for the way this poet treats the daffodils as if they are human beings?
This term is personification.

4. Does this poem contain any similes? If so, list one.
Line 1 contains the simile "lonely as a cloud"; and line 7 contains the simile "continuous as the stars that shine."

5. What is the main metaphor in this poem?
The main metaphor of this poem is the poet's comparison of himself to a cloud.

6. What do you call a metaphor, such as the one in this poem, which the poet sustains throughout the entire poem?
A metaphor that is sustained throughout a poem is known as an extended metaphor.

7. Identify one example of alliteration and underline the part of the word that creates the effect.
The alliteration in line 2 is "high"/"hills"; line 5–6 "beside"/"beneath"/"breeze." The alliteration in line 7 is "stars"/"shine"; line 17 "gazed"/"gazed." Alliteration in line 18 is "What wealth"; line 24 "dances"/"daffodils."

CHAPTER 11 QUIZ

1. Note one poem (title and author) included in this chapter, and identify the type of poem it is.

2. Identify the poetic form associated with the following attributes. One poetic form may be the answer for more than one question.

a. This form mourns someone who has died.

b. This form celebrates the virtues of rural life.

c. This form was originally a song or lyric.

d. This form was used as an outcry against the Industrial Revolution.

e. This form is used to elevate or honor someone or something.

CHAPTER 11 QUIZ ANSWERS

1. Note one poem (title and author) included in this chapter, and identify the type of poem it is.

Any of the following would be acceptable answers:

Odes: *Ode on Solitude* by Alexander Pope, *Ode to the West Wind* by Percy Bysshe Shelly, *To Autumn* by John Keats, *The Fire of Driftwood* by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, *Perhaps the World Ends Here* by Joy Harjo

Elegy: *On my first son* by Ben Jonson, *Verses upon the Burning of our House* by Anne Bradstreet, *To an Athlete Dying Young* by A.E. Housman

Pastoral: *The Passionate Shepherd to His Love* by Christopher Marlowe, *Loveliest of Trees* by A.E. Housman

2. Identify the poetic form associated with the following attributes. One poetic form may be the answer for more than one question.

a. This form mourns someone who has died.

An elegy mourns someone who has died.

b. This form celebrates the virtues of rural life.

Pastoral forms celebrate rural life.

c. This form was originally a song or lyric.

Odes were originally songs or lyrics.

d. This form was used as an outcry against the Industrial Revolution.

Pastoral poems were used as outcries against the Industrial Revolution.

e. This form is used to elevate or honor someone or something.

An ode is used to elevate or honor.