Writing Essays

1. Write an essay comparing the speakers of the "passionate shepherd" poems (by Marlowe, Ralegh, and Lewis). How are the speakers alike, and how are they different? How do their words and references indicate their characters? How do the speakers influence your judgments of the poems in which they appear?
2. Write an essay discussing the relationships between location, thought, and character as asserted in the poems by Arnold, Blake, Cowper, Hardy, and Shore. What importance do place and time have on the development of character? How do responses to time, historical period, and place influence ideas about how to live?
3. Consider Gray's "Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard," Rossetti's "A Christmas Carol," and Wright's "A Blessing" as poems embodying a type or types of religious experience. In an essay discuss what common or similar circumstances occasion the religious reflections in the poems? What common ideas and conclusions do the poems express? Describe the nature of the speakers and discuss the ways in which their observations illustrate their qualities. What philosophical or sectarian differences do you find? On the basis of your study, explain typical patterns of religious experience. (For ideas about how to approach this topic, you may wish to consult Chapter 28 and also the section on archetypal criticism in Chapter 27.)

Creative Writing Assignment

1. Write a short poem, biographical or autobiographical, showing how a certain time, place, or experience has shaped a present quality of character and/or a certain decision about life, friendships, and goals.

Library Assignment

1. Use your library resources to locate two university press books about Robert Browning. Analyze the extent to which they discuss Browning's use of dramatic monologue. With the aid of what you discover, write a brief essay on Browning's use of the dramatic monologue as a means of disclosing character.

Chapter 14

Imagery: The Poem's Link to the Senses

In literature, **imagery** refers to words that trigger your imagination to recall and recombine images—memories or mental pictures of sights, sounds, tastes, smells, sensations of touch, and motions. The process is active and even vigorous, for when words or descriptions produce images, you are using your personal experiences with life and language to help you understand the works you are reading. In effect, you are re-creating the work *in your own way* through the controlled stimulation produced by the writer's words. Imagery is therefore one of the strongest modes of literary expression because it provides a channel to your active imagination, and along this channel, writers bring their works directly to you and into your consciousness.

For example, reading the word *lake* may bring to your mind your literal memory of a particular lake. Your mental picture—or image—may be a distant view of calm waters reflecting blue sky, a nearby view of gentle waves rippling in the wind, a close-up view of the sandy lake bottom from a boat, or an overhead view of a sun-drenched shoreline. Similarly, the words *rose, apple, hot dog, malted milk,* and *pizza* all cause you to recollect these objects, and, in addition, may cause you to recall their smells and tastes. Active and graphic words like *row, swim,* and *dive* stimulate you to picture moving images of someone performing these actions.

A comparison with the art of painting may be additionally instructive. In Frida Kahlo's "The Two Fridas" (I–2), there are two separate self-images, sitting calmly side by side. The two figures are dressed differently, suggesting the artist's idea that she has two different roles to play in her life. Of special note, however, is the shocking detail that both figures are shown with open hearts, which are connected by open and exposed arteries passing between them. The same blood, in short, is sustaining the lives of both subjects. The left-hand Frida is stanching a flow of blood with an arterial clamp, but nevertheless an amount of blood has stained her white dress, whereas the arteries of the right-hand Frida, though open, are not comparably afflicted. These side-by-side images suggest that the artist is showing that, for whatever reason, her opposing commitments are so powerful that they are potentially draining her of life itself. Here, the artist has used external images to reveal an overwhelming inner personal dilemma.

Responses and the Poet's Use of Detail

In studying imagery, we try to comprehend and explain our imaginative reconstruction of the pictures and impressions evoked by the poem's images. We let the poet's words simmer and percolate in our minds. To get our imaginations stirring,

we might follow a description by Samuel Taylor Coleridge in lines 37–41 of "Kubla Khan."

> A damsel with a dulcimer
> In a vision once I saw:
> It was an Abyssinian maid,
> And on her dulcimer she played
> Singing of Mount Abora.

Note that we do not read about the color of the young woman's clothing or learn anything else about her appearance except that she is playing a stringed instrument, a dulcimer, and that she is singing a song about a mountain in a foreign, remote land. But Coleridge's image is enough. From it we can visualize a vivid, exotic picture of a young woman from a distant land singing, together with impressions of the loveliness of her song (even though we never hear it or understand it). The image lives.

The Relationship of Imagery to Ideas and Attitudes

Images do more than elicit impressions. By the *authenticating* effects of the vision and perceptions underlying them, they give you new ways of seeing the world and of strengthening your old ways of seeing it. Shakespeare, in Sonnet 116: "Let Me Not to the Marriage of True Minds" (Chapter 18), develops the idea that love provides people with consistency of purpose in their lives. Rather than stating the idea directly, he uses images of a landmark or lighthouse and also of a fixed star—sights with which we as his readers are familiar.

> . . . it [love] is an ever fixéd mark
> That looks on tempests and is never shaken;
> It is the star to every wandering bark°
> Whose worth's unknown, although his° height be taken.

bark: *boat, ship* his: *its*

These images form a link with readers that is clear and also verifiable by observation. Such uses of imagery comprise one of the strongest means by which writers reinforce ideas.

In addition, as you form mental pictures and impressions from a poet's images, you respond with appropriate attitudes and feelings. Thus the phrase "Beside the lake, beneath the trees," from Wordsworth's poem "Daffodils" (Chapter 12) prompts both the visualization of a wooded lakeshore and the related pleasantness of outdoor relaxation and happiness. A contrasting visualization is to be found in Hubert von Herkomer's painting *Hard Times* (p. I–6), in which all the images—the tired faces, the heavy load, the tools, the bleak road, the leafless trees—point toward the harsh life of the worker and his family, causing a response of sadness and sympathy. By using such imagery, artists and poets create sensory vividness, and they also influence and control our attitudes as readers.

Types of Imagery

Visual Imagery Is the Language of Sight

Human beings are visual. Sight is the most significant of our senses, for it is the key to our remembrance of other sense impressions. Therefore, the most frequently occurring literary imagery is to things we can visualize either exactly or approximately—**visual images.** In the three-stanza poem "Cargoes," John Masefield creates mental pictures or images of ocean-going merchant vessels from three periods of human history.

JOHN MASEFIELD (1878–1967)

Cargoes (1902)

Quinquireme° of Nineveh° from distant Ophir,°
Rowing home to haven in sunny Palestine,
With a cargo of ivory,
And apes and peacocks,°
Sandalwood, cedarwood,° and sweet white wine. 5

Stately Spanish galleon coming from the Isthmus,°
Dipping through the Tropics by the palm-green shores,
With a cargo of diamonds,
Emeralds, amethysts,
Topazes, and cinnamon, and gold moidores.° 10

Dirty British coaster with a salt-caked smoke stack,
Butting through the Channel in the mad March days,
With a cargo of Tyne coal,°
Road-rails, pig-lead,
Firewood, iron-ware, and cheap tin trays. 15

1 *quinquereme:* the largest of the ancient warships, although no wrecks are known to have survived from antiquity. Very likely a quinquereme was powered by three tiers of oars and was named "quinquereme" because five men operated each vertical oar station. The top two oars were each taken by two men, while one man alone took the bottom oar. *Nineveh:* the capital of ancient Assyria, and an "exceeding great city" (Jonah 3:3). *Ophir:* Ophir probably was in Africa and was known for its gold (1 Kings 10:22; 1 Chron. 29:4). Masefield quotes from some of the biblical verses in his first stanza. 4 *apes and peacocks:* 1 Kings 10:22; 2 Chron. 9:21.5 *cedarwood:* 1 Kings 9:11. 6 *Isthmus:* the Isthmus of Panama. 10 *moidores:* coins used in Portugal and Brazil at the time the New World was being explored. 13 *Tyne coal:* coal from Newcastle upon Tyne, in northern England, proverbial for its coal production.

QUESTIONS

1. Consider the images of life during three periods of history: ancient Israel at the time of Solomon (c. 950 BCE), sixteenth-century Spain, and modern England. What do these images tell you about Masefield's interpretation of modern commercial life?
2. To what senses do most of the images refer (e.g., sight, taste)?

3. The poem contains no complete sentences. Why do you think Masefield included only verbals ("rowing," "dipping," "butting") to begin the second line of each stanza, rather than finite verbs?
4. In historical reality, the quinquereme was likely rowed by slaves, and the Spanish galleon likely carried riches stolen from Central American natives. How might these unpleasant details affect the impressions otherwise achieved in the first two stanzas?

Masefield's images are vivid as they stand and need no further amplification. For us to reconstruct them imaginatively, we do not need ever to have seen the ancient biblical lands or waters, or ever to have seen or handled the cheap commodities on a modern merchant ship. We have seen enough in our lives to *imagine* places and objects like these, and hence Masefield is successful in fixing his visual images in our minds.

Auditory Imagery Is the Language of Sound

Auditory images trigger our experiences with sound. For such images, let us consider Wilfred Owen's "Anthem for Doomed Youth," which is about the death of soldiers in warfare and the sorrow of their loved ones.

WILFRED OWEN (1893–1918)

Anthem for Doomed Youth (1920)

What passing-bells° for these who die as cattle?
Only the monstrous anger of the guns.
Only the stuttering rifles' rapid rattle
Can patter out their hasty orisons.°
No mockeries for them from prayers or bells, 5
Nor any voice of mourning save the choirs—
The shrill, demented choirs of wailing shells;
And bugles calling for them from sad shires.°

What candles may be held to speed them all?
Not in the hands of boys, but in their eyes 10
Shall shine the holy glimmers of good-byes.
The pallor of girls' brows shall be their pall;
Their flowers the tenderness of patient minds,
And each slow dusk a drawing-down of blinds.

°1 *passing-bells:* church bells tolling upon the entry of a funeral cortege into a church cemetery. 8 *shires:* British counties.

QUESTIONS

1. What type of imagery predominates in the first eight lines? How does the imagery change in the last six lines?
2. Contrast the images of death at home and death on the battlefield. How does this contrast affect your experience and understanding of the poem?

3. Consider these images: "holy glimmers of good-byes," "pallor of girls' brows," "patient minds," "drawing-down of blinds." What relationship do the people defined by these images have to the doomed youth?

The poem begins with the question of "What passing-bells" may be tolled "for these who die as cattle." Owen's speaker is referring to the traditional tolling of a church bell to announce a burial. The images of these ceremonial sounds suggest a period of peace and order, when there is time to pay respect to the dead. But the poem points out that the only sound for those who have fallen in battle is the "rapid rattle" of "stuttering" rifles—not the solemn, dignified sounds of peace but the horrifying noises of war. Owen's auditory images evoke corresponding sounds in our imaginations, and they help us to experience the poem and to hate the uncivilized depravity of war.

Olfactory, Gustatory, and Tactile Imagery Refers to Smell, Taste, and Touch

In addition to sight and sound, you will find images from the other senses: smell, taste, and touch. Shakespeare includes an **olfactory image** of sweet perfumes in Sonnet 130: "My Mistress' Eyes Are Nothing Like the Sun," and the odor of roses is suggested in Burns's "A Red, Red Rose" (Chapter 15) and in Shelley's "Music, When Soft Voices Die" (Chapter 11).

Gustatory images—taste images—are also common, though less frequent than those referring to sight and sound. Lines 5 and 10 of Masefield's "Cargoes," for example, include images of "sweet white wine" and "cinnamon." Although the poem refers to these commodities as cargoes, the words themselves also register in our minds as gustatory images because they evoke our sense of taste.

Images of touch and texture—**tactile images**—are not as common, because touch is difficult to render except in terms of effects. The speaker of Amy Lowell's "Patterns" (Chapter 22), for example, uses tactile imagery when imagining a never-to-happen embrace with her fiancé, who we learn has been killed on a wartime battlefield. Her imagery in lines 51–52 records the effect of the embrace ("bruised"), whereas her internalized feelings are expressed in metaphors ("aching, melting"):

> And the buttons of his waistcoat bruised my body as he clasped me
> Aching, melting, unafraid.

Tactile images are not uncommon in love poetry, where references to touch and feeling are natural.

Kinetic and Kinesthetic Imagery Refers to Motion and Activity

References to movement are also images. Images of general motion are **kinetic** (remember that *motion pictures* may be called "cinema"; note the closeness of *kine* in *kinetic* and *cine* in *cinema*), whereas the term **kinesthetic** is applied to human or animal movement. Imagery of motion is closely related to visual images, for motion is most often seen. Masefield's "British coaster" is a visual image, but

when it goes "Butting through the channel," this reference to motion makes it also kinetic. When Hardy's skeletons sit upright at the beginning of "Channel Firing," the image is **kinesthetic,** as is the action of Lowell's speaker in "Patterns," walking in the garden after hearing about her fiancé's death. Both types are seen at the conclusion of the following poem, Elizabeth Bishop's "The Fish."

ELIZABETH BISHOP (1911–1979)

The Fish (1946)

I caught a tremendous fish
and held him beside the boat
half out of water, with my hook
fast in a corner of his mouth.
He didn't fight. 5
He hadn't fought at all.
He hung a grunting weight,
battered and venerable
and homely. Here and there
his brown skin hung in strips 10
like ancient wallpaper,
and its pattern of darker brown
was like wallpaper:
shapes like full-blown roses
stained and lost through age. 15
He was speckled with barnacles,
fine rosettes of lime,
and infested
with tiny white sea-lice,
and underneath two or three 20
rags of green weed hung down.
While his gills were breathing in
the terrible oxygen
—the frightening gills,
fresh and crisp with blood, 25
that can cut so badly—
I thought of the coarse white flesh
packed in like feathers,
the big bones and the little bones,
the dramatic reds and blacks 30
of his shiny entrails,
and the pink swim-bladder
like a big peony.
I looked into his eyes
which were far larger than mine 35
but shallower, and yellowed,
the irises backed and packed
with tarnished tinfoil
seen through the lenses
of old scratched isinglass.° 40

° isinglass: a thin sheet of mica

They shifted a little, but not
to return my stare.
—It was more like the tipping
of an object toward the light.
I admired his sullen face,
the mechanism of his jaw, 45
and then I saw
that from his lower lip
—if you could call it a lip—
grim, wet, and weaponlike,
hung five old pieces of fish-line, 50
or four and a wire leader
with the swivel still attached,
with all their five big hooks
grown firmly in his mouth.
A green line, frayed at the end 55
where he broke it, two heavier lines,
and a fine black thread
still crimped from the strain and snap
when it broke and he got away.
Like medals with their ribbons 60
frayed and wavering,
a five-haired beard of wisdom
trailing from his aching jaw.
I stared and stared
and victory filled up 65
the little rented boat,
from the pool of bilge
where oil had spread a rainbow
around the rusted engine
to the bailer rusted orange, 70
the sun-cracked thwarts,
the oarlocks on their strings,
the gunnels—until everything
was rainbow, rainbow, rainbow!
And I let the fish go. 75

QUESTIONS

1. Describe the poem's images of action (kinetic, kinesthetic). What is unusual about them?
2. What impression does the fish make upon the speaker? Is the fish beautiful? Ugly? Why is the fish described in such detail?
3. What do the "five old pieces of fish-line" indicate (line 51)?
4. How is the rainbow formed around the boat's engine? Why does the speaker refer to the "pool of bilge"? What does the rainbow mean to the speaker?
5. What right does the speaker have to keep the fish? Why does she choose to relinquish this right?

The kinetic images at the end of "The Fish" are those of victory filling the boat (difficult to visualize) and the oil spreading to make a rainbow in the bilgewater

(easy to visualize). The kinesthetic images are readily imagined—the speaker's staring, observing, and letting the fish go—and they are vivid and real. The final gesture is the necessary outcome of the observed contrast between the deteriorating artifacts of human beings and the natural world of the fish, and it is a vivid expression of the right of the natural world to exist without human intervention. In short, Bishop's kinetic and kinesthetic images are designed to emphasize the need for freedom not only for human beings but for all the earth and animated nature.

The areas from which kinetic and kinesthetic imagery can be derived are too varied and unpredictable to describe. Occupations, trades, professions, businesses, recreational activities—all these might furnish images. One poet introduces references from gardening, another from money and banking, another from modern real estate developments, another from the falling of leaves in autumn, another from life in the jungle, another from life in the home. The freshness, newness, and surprise of much poetry result from the many and varied areas from which writers draw their images.

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ELIZABETH BARRETT BROWNING (1806–1861)

Sonnets from the Portuguese, Number 14: If Thou Must Love Me (1850)

If thou must love me, let it be for nought
Except for love's sake only. Do not say
"I love her for her smile—her look—her way
Of speaking gently—for a trick of thought
That falls in well with mine, and certes° brought — *certainly* 5
A sense of pleasant ease on such a day"—
For these things in themselves, Belovéd, may
Be changed, or change for thee—and love, so wrought,° — *created*
May be unwrought so. Neither love me for
Thine own dear pity's wiping my cheeks dry— 10
A creature might forget to weep, who bore
Thy comfort long, and lose thy love thereby!
But love me for love's sake, that evermore
Thou mayst love on, through love's eternity.

QUESTIONS

1. Who is the speaker of this poem? Why might you conclude that the speaker is female?
2. What images does the speaker use to indicate possible causes for loving? What kinds of images are they? How does the speaker explain why they should be rejected?
3. How does the idea of lines 1, 13, and 14 build upon the ideas in the rest of the poem?

SAMUEL TAYLOR COLERIDGE (1772–1834)

Kubla Khan (1816)

In Xanadu did Kubla Khan
A stately pleasure dome decree:
Where Alph,° the sacred river, ran
Through caverns measureless to man
Down to a sunless sea. 5
So twice five miles of fertile ground
With walls and towers were girdled round:
And there were gardens bright with sinuous rills,
Where blossomed many an incense-bearing tree;
And here were forests ancient as the hills, 10
Enfolding sunny spots of greenery.
But oh! that deep romantic chasm which slanted
Down the green hill athwart a cedarn cover!
A savage place! as holy and enchanted
As e'er beneath a waning moon was haunted 15

3 Alph: possibly a reference to the river Alpheus in Greece, as described by the ancient writers Virgil and Pausanras.

By woman wailing for her demon lover!
And from this chasm, with ceaseless turmoil seething,
As if this earth in fast thick pants were breathing,
A mighty fountain momently was forced:
Amid whose swift half-intermitted burst (20)
Huge fragments vaulted like rebounding hail,
Or chaffy grain beneath the thresher's flail:
And 'mid these dancing rocks at once and ever
It flung up momently the sacred river.
Five miles meandering with a mazy motion (25)
Through wood and dale the sacred river ran,
Then reached the caverns measureless to man,
And sank in tumult to a lifeless ocean:
And 'mid this tumult Kubla heard from far
Ancestral voices prophesying war! (30)
The shadow of the dome of pleasure
Floated midway on the waves;
Where was heard the mingled measure
From the fountain and the caves.
It was a miracle of rare device, (35)
A sunny pleasure dome with caves of ice!

A damsel with a dulcimer
In a vision once I saw:
It was an Abyssinian maid,
And on her dulcimer she played (40)
Singing of Mount Abora.°
Could I revive within me
Her symphony and song,
To such a deep delight 'twould win me,
That with music loud and long, (45)
I would build that dome in air,
That sunny dome! those caves of ice!
And all who heard should see them there,
And all should cry, Beware! Beware!
His flashing eyes, his floating hair! (50)
Weave a circle round him thrice,
And close your eyes with holy dread,
For he on honeydew hath fed,
And drunk the milk of Paradise.

°41 *Mount Abora:* a mountain of Coleridge's imagination. But see John Milton's *Paradise Lost*, IV. 268–84.

QUESTIONS

1. How many of the poem's images might be sketched or visualized? Which ones would be panoramic landscapes? Which might be close-ups?
2. What is the effect of auditory images such as "wailing," "fast thick pants," "tumult," "ancestral voices prophesying war," and "mingled measure"?
3. When Coleridge was writing this poem, he was recalling it from a dream. At line 54 he was interrupted, and when he resumed he could write no more. How might an argument be made that the poem is finished?

4. How do lines 35–36 establish the pleasure dome as a place of mysterious oddity? What is the effect of the words "miracle" and "rare"? The effect of combining the images "sunny" and "caves of ice"?
5. Why does the speaker yearn for the power of the singing Abyssinian maid? What kinesthetic images end the poem? How are these images important in the speaker's desire to reconstruct the vision of the pleasure dome?

T. S. ELIOT (1888–1965)

Preludes (1910)

I

The winter evening settles down
With smell of steaks in passageways.
Six o'clock.
The burnt-out ends of smoky days.
And now a gusty shower wraps (5)
The grimy scraps
Of withered leaves about your feet
And newspapers from vacant lots;
The showers beat
On broken blinds and chimney-pots, (10)
And at the corner of the street
A lonely cab-horse steams and stamps.
And then the lighting of the lamps.

II

The morning comes to consciousness
Of faint stale smells of beer (15)
From the sawdust-trampled street
With all its muddy feet that press
To early coffee-stands.
With the other masquerades
That time resumes, (20)
One thinks of all the hands
That are raising dingy shades
In a thousand furnished rooms.

III

You tossed a blanket from the bed,
You lay upon your back, and waited; (25)
You dozed, and watched the night revealing
The thousand sordid images
Of which your soul was constituted;
They flickered against the ceiling.
And when all the world came back (30)
And the light crept up between the shutters
And you heard the sparrows in the gutters,
You had such a vision of the street,

As the street hardly understands;
35 Sitting along the bed's edge, where
You curled the papers from your hair,
Or clasped the yellow soles of feet
In the palms of both soiled hands.

IV

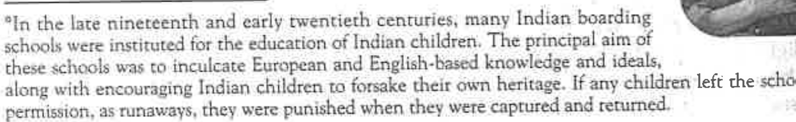
His soul stretched tight across the skies
40 That fade behind a city block,
Or trampled by insistent feet
At four and five and six o'clock;
And short square fingers stuffing pipes,
And evening newspapers, and eyes
45 Assured of certain certainties,
The conscience of a blackened street
Impatient to assume the world.

I am moved by fancies that are curled
Around these images, and cling:
50 The notion of some infinitely gentle
Infinitely suffering thing.

Wipe your hand across your mouth, and laugh;
The worlds revolve like ancient women
Gathering fuel in vacant lots.

QUESTIONS

1. From what locations are the images in the first stanza derived? How do the images shift in the second stanza? What is the connection between the images in the second and third stanzas?
2. Who is the "you" in the third stanza? What images are associated with this listener?
3. Who is the "His" of the fourth stanza? How do the images develop in this stanza? What is meant particularly in the images of lines 46–47?
4. What is the nature of the bodily imagery in the poem? The urban imagery? What impressions do these images cause?
5. In lines 48–51, what does the speaker conclude? How do the last two unnumbered stanzas constitute a contrast of attitude?



LOUISE ERDRICH (b. 1954)

Indian Boarding School: The Runaways° (1984)

Home's the place we head for in our sleep.
Boxcars stumbling north in dreams

°In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, many Indian boarding schools were instituted for the education of Indian children. The principal aim of these schools was to inculcate European and English-based knowledge and ideals, along with encouraging Indian children to forsake their own heritage. If any children left the schools without permission, as runaways, they were punished when they were captured and returned.

don't wait for us. We catch them on the run.
The rails, old lacerations that we love,
shoot parallel across the face and break 5
just under Turtle Mountains.° Riding scars
you can't get lost. Home is the place they cross.

The lame guard strikes a match and makes the dark
less tolerant. We watch through cracks in boards
as the land starts rolling, rolling till it hurts 10
to be here, cold in regulation clothes.
We know the sheriff's waiting at midrun
to take us back. His car is dumb and warm.
The highway doesn't rock, it only hums
like a wing of long insults. The worn-down welts 15
of ancient punishments lead back and forth.

All runaways wear dresses, long green ones,
the color you would think shame was. We scrub
the sidewalks down because it's shameful work.
Our brushes cut the stone in watered arcs 20
and in the soak frail outlines shiver clear
a moment, things us kids pressed on the dark
face before it hardened, pale, remembering
delicate old injuries, the spines of names and leaves.

°6 *Turtle Mountains:* the Turtle Mountain Chippewa Indian Reservation in north-central North Dakota

QUESTIONS

1. Who is the speaker? What has she been dreaming about? For whom does she speak? For herself? For others? Why does she say that "we" head for home "in our sleep"? How have the "we" left the Indian Boarding School? In reality? In their dreams?
2. Explain the nature of the images in the first and second stanzas. Could the images in the second stanza be considered as being based in fear? How do the images in the first two stanzas differ from the imagery in the third stanza? In the light of the nature of the images, can the poem be considered as a narrative based in a sequence of dreams?
3. Compare this poem with Tom Whitecloud's story "Blue Winds Dancing" in Chapter 5. In what ways are the speakers of these works similar? Are they both to be considered "runaways"? What happens to each speaker at the conclusions of the works?

SUSAN GRIFFIN (b. 1943)

Love Should Grow Up Like a Wild Iris in the Fields (1972)

Love should grow up like a wild iris in the fields,
unexpected, after a terrible storm, opening a purple
mouth to the rain, with not a thought to the future,
ignorant of the grass and the graveyard of leaves

around, forgetting its own beginning. Love should 5
grow like a wild iris
but does not.
Love more often is to be found in kitchens at the dinner hour,
tired out and hungry, lingers over tables in houses where
the walls record movements; while the cook is probably angry, 10
and the ingredients of the meal are budgeted, while
a child cries feed me now and her mother not quite
hysterical says over and over, wait just a bit, just a bit.
Love should grow up in the fields like a wild iris
but never does 15
really startle anyone, was to be expected, was to be
predicted, is almost absurd, goes on from day to day, not quite
blindly, gets taken to the cleaners every fall, sings old
songs over and over, and falls on the same piece of rug that
never gets tacked down, gives up, wants to hide, is not 20
brave, knows too much, is not like an
iris growing wild but more like
staring into space
in the street
not quite sure 25
which door it was, annoyed about the sidewalk being
slippery, trying all the doors, thinking
if love wished the world to be well, it would be well.
Love should
grow up like a wild iris, but doesn't, it comes from 30
the midst of everything else, sees like the iris
of an eye, when the light is right,
feels in blindness and when there is nothing else is
tender, blinks, and opens
face up to the skies. 35

QUESTIONS

1. Contrast the locations of the images in the first seven lines and in the next eight. How do the ideas of the poet depend on this contrast in locations?
2. Note the difference in the mood of the verbs, from the "should" clause in the first six lines to the declarative present verb in line 7. Also, note the present tense verbs from lines 8–13, and then the "should" again in line 14. What is the effect of this differing use of verbs?
3. Trace the image of the wild iris throughout the poem. Why is the iris wild, and not cultivated? How does the iris grow? What is the effect of the change in the image of the iris from the flower to the eye (line 32)?
4. How is the sentence in lines 30–31 ("it comes from / the midst of everything else") related to the ideas and images in the rest of the poem?

THOMAS HARDY (1840–1928)

For a photo, see Chapter 11, page 656.

For a photo, see Chapter 11, page 656.

Channel Firing (1914)

That night your great guns, unawares,
Shook all our coffins° as we lay,
And broke the chancel window-squares,
We thought it was the Judgment Day

And sat upright. While drearisome 5
Arose the howl of wakened hounds:
The mouse let fall the altar-crumb,
The worms drew back into the mounds,

The glebe° cow drooled. Till God called, "No;
It's gunnery practice out at sea 10
Just as before you went below;
The world is as it used to be:

"All nations striving strong to make
Red war yet redder. Mad as hatters
They do no more for Christés sake 15
Than you who are helpless in such matters.

"That this is not the judgment hour
For some of them's a blessed thing,
For if it were they'd have to scour
Hell's floor for so much threatening. . . . 20

"Ha, ha. It will be warmer when
I blow the trumpet (if indeed
I ever do; for you are men,
And rest eternal sorely need)."

So down we lay again. "I wonder, 25
Will the world ever saner be,"
Said one, "than when He sent us under
In our indifferent century!"

And many a skeleton shook his head.
"Instead of preaching forty year," 30
My neighbor Parson Thirdly said,
"I wish I had stuck to pipes and beer."

Again the guns disturbed the hour,
Roaring their readiness to avenge,
As far inland as Stourton Tower,° 35
And Camelot,° and starlit Stonehenge.°

2 *coffins:* It has been common practice in England for hundreds of years to bury certain people in the floors or basements of churches. 9 *glebe:* a parcel of land adjoining and belonging to a church. Cows were grazed there to keep the grass short. 35 *Stourton Tower:* a tower commemorating King Alfred the Great's defeat of the Danes in 879 CE. 36 *Camelot:* legendary seat of King Arthur's court. *Stonehenge:* a group of standing stones on Salisbury Plain, probably built as a place of worship before 1000 BCE. Stonehenge is one of England's famous landmarks.

QUESTIONS

1. Who is the speaker in this poem? What is the setting? The situation?
2. To whom does the "your" in line 1 refer? The "our" in line 2?
3. What has awakened the speaker and his friends? What mistake have they made?
4. What other voices are heard in the poem? How are their traits revealed?
5. What ideas about war and the nature of humanity does this poem explore?

GEORGE HERBERT (1593–1633)

The Pulley (1633)

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 dispersed lie,
Contract into a span."° 5

So strength first made a way;
Then beauty flowed, then wisdom, honor, pleasure.
When almost all was out, God made a stay,
Perceiving that, alone of all his treasure,
Rest° in the bottom lay. 10

"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. 15

"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." 20

°5 *into a span:* that is, within the control of human beings. 10 *rest:* (1) repose, security; (2) all that remains.

QUESTIONS

1. Describe the dramatic scene of the poem. Who is doing what?
2. What are the particular "blessings" that God confers on humanity, according to the speaker? Why should these be considered blessings?
3. Consider the image of the pulley as the means, or device (through "repining restlessness"), by which God compels people to become worshipful.
4. Analyze and discuss the meaning of the kinetic images signified by the words "pour," "flowed," "rest," and "toss."

GERARD MANLEY HOPKINS (1844–1889)

Spring (1877)

Nothing is so beautiful as Spring—
When weeds, in wheels, shoot long and lovely and lush;
Thrush's eggs look little low heavens, and thrush
Through the echoing timber does so rinse and wring
The ear, it strikes like lightnings to hear him sing; 5
The glassy peartree leaves and blooms, they brush
The descending blue; that blue is all in a rush
With richness; the racing lambs too have fair their fling.

What is all this juice and all this joy?
A strain of the earth's sweet being in the beginning 10
In Eden garden.— Have, get, before it cloy,
Before it cloud, Christ, lord, and sour with sinning,
Innocent mind and Mayday in girl and boy,
Most, O maid's child, thy choice and worthy the winning.

QUESTIONS

1. What images does the speaker mention as support for his first line, "Nothing is so beautiful as Spring"? Are these images those that you would normally expect? To what degree do they seem to be new or unusual?
2. What images of motion and activity do you find in the poem? Are these mainly static or dynamic? What do these suggest about the speaker's view of spring?
3. What is the relationship between "Eden garden" in line 11 and the scene described in lines 1–8? To what extent are spring and "Innocent mind and Mayday" a glimpse of the Garden of Eden?
4. Christ is mentioned in lines 12 and 14 (as "maid's child"). Do these references seal the poem off from readers who are not Christian? Why or why not?

A. E. HOUSMAN (1859–1936)

For a photo, see Chapter 12, page 691.

On Wenlock Edge (1887)

On Wenlock Edge° the wood's in trouble;
His forest fleece the Wrekin° heaves;
The gale, it plies the saplings double,
And thick on Severn° snow the leaves.

'Twould° blow like this through holt and hanger°
When Uricon° the city stood; 5

°1 *Wenlock Edge:* a range of high hills in western England, south of Birmingham. 2 *the Wrekin:* a volcano (now extinct) northwest of Birmingham. Housman suggests that the volcano is erupting, just one of the natural disturbances he describes in the first two stanzas. 4 *Severn:* a major river winding southward through the area toward Bristol. 5 *'Twould:* It would [back in Roman times]. 5 *holt and hanger:* woods and thick underbrush along a hillside or mountainside. 6 *Uricon:* Uriconium, a regional capital in western England during the Roman occupation from the first to the fifth centuries CE.

'Tis the old wind in the old anger,
But then it threshed another wood.

Then, 'twas before my time, the Roman
At yonder heaving hill would stare; 10
The blood that warms an English yeoman,°
The thoughts that hurt him, they were there.

There, like the wind through woods in riot,
Through him the gale of life blew high;
The tree of man was never quiet— 15
Then 'twas the Roman, now 'tis I.

The gale, it plies the saplings double;
It blows so hard, 'twill soon be gone.
Today the Roman and his trouble
Are ashes under Uricon. 20

°11 *yeoman:* a medieval English farmer who owned the land he farmed.

QUESTIONS

1. How extensively does the speaker stress the images of natural disturbances that are taking place on Wenlock Edge, with the wind, for example, plying the saplings double? Why does Housman repeat this line (line 3) in line 17?
2. What concerns of the ancient Roman in England are continued in the feelings of the speaker, who is inhabiting the same location as the Roman?
3. What is the view of history that the speaker develops in this poem? Is it a usual view of what we ordinarily think of as history? Why or why not? On what idea does the poem conclude?

DENISE LEVERTOV (1923–1997)

For a photo, see Chapter 12, page 693.

A Time Past (1975)

The old wooden steps to the front door
where I was sitting that fall morning
when you came downstairs, just awake,
and my joy at sight of you (emerging
into golden day—
the dew almost frost) 5
pulled me to my feet to tell you
how much I loved you:

those wooden steps
are gone now, decayed
replaced with granite, 10

hard, gray, and handsome.
The old steps live
only in me:
my feet and thighs
remember them, and my hands
still feel their splinters. 15
Everything else about and around that house
brings memories of others—of marriage,
of my son. And the steps do too: I recall
sitting there with my friend and her little son who died,
or was it the second one who lives and thrives? 20
And sitting there 'in my life,' often, alone or with my husband.
Yet that one instant,
your cheerful, unafraid, youthful, 'I love you too,'
the quiet broken by no bird, no cricket, gold leaves
spinning in silence down without 25
any breeze to blow them,
is what twines itself
in my head and body across those slabs of wood
that were warm, ancient, and now
wait somewhere to be burnt. 30

QUESTIONS

1. Describe the visual imagery of the poem. What tactile imagery is associated with the steps? What other images are part of the speaker's memory?
2. How is the image of the "old wooden steps" developed in the poem? What has happened to the wooden steps? What meaning may be derived from their having been replaced by the granite steps? How are these steps tied to the speaker's "time past"?
3. Why do you think the speaker expressly denies the recollection of any sounds of bird or cricket?

THOMAS LUX (b. 1946)

The Voice You Hear When You Read Silently (1997)

THE VOICE YOU HEAR WHEN YOU READ SILENTLY
is not silent, it is a speaking-
out-loud voice in your head: it is *spoken,*
a voice is *saying* it
as you read. It's the writer's words, 5
of course, in a literary sense
his or her "voice" but the sound
of that voice is the sound of *your* voice.
Not the sound your friends know
or the sound of a tape played back 10
but your voice
caught in the dark cathedral
of your skull, your voice heard
by an internal ear informed by internal abstracts

and what you know by feeling, (15)
having felt. It is your voice
saying, for example, the word "barn"
that the writer wrote
but the "barn" you say
is a barn you know or knew. The voice (20)
in your head, speaking as you read,
never says anything neutrally—some people
hated the barn they knew,
some people love the barn they know
so you hear the word loaded (25)
and a sensory constellation
is lit: horse-gnawed stalls,
hayloft, black heat tape wrapping
a water pipe, a slippery
spilled *chirrr* of oats from a split sack, (30)
the bony, filthy haunches of cows. . . .
And "barn" is only a noun—no verb
or subject has entered into the sentence yet!
The voice you hear when you read to yourself
is the clearest voice: you speak it (35)
speaking to you.

QUESTIONS

1. What is meant by the "constellation" being lit when the reader reads a word, in this case "barn"? How does "constellation" explain the development of the barn image in lines 26–30?
2. Why is the "voice you hear when you read silently/ . . . not silent"?
3. Describe the meaning and associations of "the dark cathedral/of your skull" in lines 11–12. What is particularly significant about the use of "cathedral" in these lines?

EUGENIO MONTALE (1896–1981)

Buffalo (Buffalo)° (1929)

Translated by Robert Zweig

Gusting, a sweet inferno channeled
crowds of every color
in the loop of blaring megaphones.
The buses gushed out
into the evening. (5)

On the churning gulf, heat evaporated
into smoke; down below, a shining arc

°The Vélodrome Buffalo, a Parisian cycling racetrack, was the site of many world cycling records from 1893 until World War I, when it was replaced by an airplane factory. The Buffalo was named after Buffalo Bill Cody, whose Wild West show was performed there during the first year of its existence.

etched a current and the crowd was ready
at the passage. A black man
slumbered inside a ray of light (10)
that cut the darkness; in a box, loose, easy women awaited
the ferry's landing. I said to myself:
Buffalo!—and the name worked.
I fell
into the limbo of the deafening voices of the blood where flashes (15)
burn the sight like flickers of mirror.
I heard the dry crashes, and all around me
saw the curved, striped backs whirling
on the track.

QUESTIONS

1. The setting of "Buffalo" is an indoor bicycle racetrack. Why do you think Montale chose this setting?
2. Is the description of this bicycle race objective or subjective? Which images can you cite to support your conclusion?
3. In Dante's "Inferno," a medieval Italian poem that greatly influenced Montale, a ferry takes Dante across a river into "hell." Might the ferry that the "loose, easy women" wait for be such a ferry? If so, how does that image help you to understand "Buffalo"?
4. What do you think is meant when the speaker says that uttering the word "Buffalo" worked? What did uttering that word do?

MARIANNE MOORE (1887–1972)

The Fish (1918)

wade
through black jade.
Of the crow-blue mussel-shells, one keeps
adjusting the ash-heaps;
opening and shutting itself like (5)

an
injured fan.
The barnacles which encrust the side
of the wave, cannot hide
there for the submerged shafts of the (10)

sun,
split like spun
glass, move themselves with spotlight swiftness
into the crevices—
in and out, illuminating (15)

the
turquoise sea
of bodies. The water drives a wedge

of iron through the iron edge
    of the cliff; whereupon the stars, 20

pink
rice-grains, ink-
    bespattered jelly fish, crabs like green
    lilies, and submarine
        toadstools, slide each on the other. 25

All
external
    marks of abuse are present on this
    defiant edifice—
        all the physical features of 30

ac-
cident—lack
    of cornice, dynamite grooves, burns, and
    hatchet strokes, these things stand
        out on it; the chasm-side is 35

dead.
Repeated
    evidence has proved that it can live
    on what can not revive
        its youth. The sea grows old in it. 40

QUESTIONS

1. Why is this poem titled "The Fish"? What actual fish does the poem describe? What images of other sea creatures do you find?
2. What action is described in this poem? In what ways may this poem be contrasted with Bishop's poem "The Fish"?
3. Describe the structure of rhymes in "The Fish." What pictorial image is suggested by the shapes of the stanzas and by the fact that most of the lines ending the stanzas extend grammatically to the next stanzas?
4. What idea does the speaker seem to be developing in the last three stanzas of the poem?

PABLO NERUDA (1904–1977)

Every Day You Play (1924)

Every day you play with the light of the universe.
Subtle visitor, you arrive in the flower and the water.
You are more than this white head that I hold tightly
as a cluster of fruit, every day, between my hands.

You are like nobody since I love you. 5
Let me spread you out among yellow garlands.

Who writes your name in letters of smoke among the stars of the south?
Oh let me remember you as you were before you existed.

Suddenly the wind howls and bangs at my shut window.
The sky is a net crammed with shadowy fish.
Here all the winds let go sooner or later, all of them. 10
The rain takes off her clothes.

The birds go by, fleeing.
The wind. The wind.
I can contend only against the power of men.
The storm whirls dark leaves 15
and turns loose all the boats that were moored last night to the sky.

You are here. Oh, you do not run away.
You will answer me to the last cry.
Cling to me as though you were frightened.
Even so, at one time a strange shadow ran through your eyes. 20

Now, now too, little one, you bring me honeysuckle,
and even your breasts smell of it.
While the sad wind goes slaughtering butterflies
I love you, and my happiness bites the plum of your mouth.

How you must have suffered getting accustomed to me, 25
my savage, solitary soul, my name that sends them all running.
So many times we have seen the morning star burn, kissing our eyes,
and over our heads the gray light unwind in turning fans.

My words rained over you, stroking you.
A long time I have loved the sunned mother-of-pearl of your body. 30
I go so far as to think that you own the universe.
I will bring you happy flowers from the mountains, bluebells,
dark hazels, and rustic baskets of kisses.

I want
to do with you what spring does with the cherry trees. 35

QUESTIONS

1. What is the situation in this poem? Who is talking to whom? What is their relationship?
2. Describe the nature of the images in this poem. What kinetic and kinesthetic images do you find? What is the effect of these images? What visual images do you find? What tactile images? Olfactory images? Gustatory images?
3. What reality is reflected in the poem's imagery? Analyze the images of lines 9–17 and their meaning.
4. What does the speaker mean by line 8, "Oh let me remember you as you were before you existed"?

OCTAVIO PAZ (1914–1998)

For a photo, see Chapter 11, page 662.

The Street (1963)

A long silent street.
I walk in blackness and I stumble and fall
and rise, and I walk blind, my feet
stepping on silent stones and dry leaves.
Someone behind me also stepping on stones, leaves: 5
if I slow down, he slows;
if I run, he runs. I turn: nobody.
Everything dark and doorless.
Turning and turning these corners
which lead forever to the street 10
where nobody waits for, nobody follows me,
where I pursue a man who stumbles
and rises and says when he sees me: nobody.

QUESTIONS

1. Describe the images of action in this poem. What kind of images are they? What is meant by the "someone" who seems to the speaker to be walking behind him? What happens when the speaker turns to see him?
2. For what reason does the speaker say he walks "blind" in blackness, and stumbles, and falls and rises? What is happening to the man who is following the speaker? Why do both the speaker and the following man say they see "nobody"? Why do they seem to be pursuing each other? Why do they never discover each other?
3. What do you make out of the poem's images of action, in which corners are turned that they lead "forever to the street / where nobody waits for, nobody follows me"? What is meant by the image of the street? What thoughts about human life seem to follow from images in the poem such as these?
4. This poem is one line short of fourteen, the number of lines traditionally contained in a sonnet. Why do you think the poet stopped at thirteen lines, and did not create a fourteenth line?

EZRA POUND (1885–1972)

In a Station of the Metro° (1916)

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

°*Metro:* the Paris subway.

QUESTIONS

1. Is the image of the wet, black bough happy or sad? If the petals were on a tree in the sunlight, what would be the effect?
2. What is the meaning of the image suggested by "apparition"? Does it suggest a positive or negative view of human life?
3. This poem contains only two lines. Is it proper to consider it as a poem nevertheless? If it is not a poem, what is it?

MIKLÓS RADNÓTI (1909–1944)

Forced March° (1944)

Translated by Zsuzsanna Ozsvath and Frederick Turner

Bor,° 15 September 1944

Crazy, he stumbles, flops, gets up, and trudges on again.
He moves his ankles and his knees like one wandering pain,
then sallies forth, as if a wing lifted him where he went,
and when the ditch invites him in, he dare not give consent,
and if you were to ask why not? perhaps his answer is 5
a woman waits, a death more wise, more beautiful than this.
Poor fool, the true believer: for weeks, above the rooves,
but for the scorching whirlwind, nothing lives or moves:
the housewall's lying on its back, the prune tree's smashed and bare;
even at home, when dark comes on, the night is furred with fear. 10
Ah, if I could believe it! that not only do I bear
what's worth the keeping in my heart, but home is really there;
if it might be!—as once it was, on a veranda old and cool,
where the sweet bee of peace would buzz, prune marmalade would chill,
late summer's stillness sunbathe in gardens half asleep, 15
fruit sway among the branches, stark naked in the deep,
Fanni waiting at the fence blonde by its rusty red,
and shadows would write slowly out all the slow morning said—
but still it might yet happen! The moon's so round today!
Friend, don't walk on. Give me a shout, and I'll be on my way! 20

°In the late days of World War II, allied troops advanced into Germany from all directions. Because there were many prisoners in concentration and work camps in countries around Germany, the Nazis determined to hide the evidence of any atrocities. They therefore forced their prisoners, who were given little if any food, to endure agonizing marches to camps in and near Germany—distances of hundreds of miles. Evacuating the Bor area of Yugoslavia in September 1944, the Germans forced a large number of Jewish laborers, one of whom was Radnóti, to walk to Hungary. "Forced March," one of his ten last poems, shows his reactions to the march, at the end of which he was shot to death and thrown into a mass grave. The poem was found in a small address book in the pocket of his raincoat after his body was exhumed in 1946. See also Cynthia Ozick's "The Shawl" (Chapter 4, page 260). *Bor:* A town in eastern Yugoslavia, about eighty miles southeast of Belgrade.

QUESTIONS

1. What is the purpose of the tactile images of tiredness and pain in lines 1–6?
2. What is the nature of the images in lines 7–10?
3. How does the poem's perspective shift at line 11? How do the images from lines 11–19 contribute to the speaker's mood, as shown in line 20? What do these lines tell you about human hope and strength?

FRIEDRICH RÜCKERT (1788–1866)

If You Love for the Sake of Beauty (1823)

Anonymous Translator

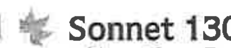
If you love for the sake of beauty, O never love me!
Love the sun, that has bright golden hair.
If you love for the sake of youth, O never love me!
Love the spring, that is reborn each year.
If you love for the sake of wealth, O never love me! 5
Love the mermaid, whose pearls are rich and clear.
If you love for the sake of love alone, O yes then, love me!
Love me as I love you—forever!

QUESTIONS

1. What is the poem's situation? Who is speaking? Who is the listener?
2. How do the images in lines 2, 4, and 6 exemplify the abstract concepts in lines 1, 3, and 5? How does the speaker use these images to reinforce his or her negative requests?
3. How may the final two lines be considered a climax of the poem?

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE (1564–1616)

For a portrait, see Chapter 24, page 1354.



Sonnet 130: My Mistress' Eyes Are Nothing Like the Sun (1609)

My mistress' eyes are nothing like the sun;
Coral is far more red than her lips' red;
If snow be white, why then her breasts are dun;
If hairs be wires, black wires grow on her head.
I have seen roses damasked,° red and white, 5 — *set in an elaborate bouquet*
But no such roses see I in her cheeks;
And in some perfumes is there more delight
Than in the breath that from my mistress reeks.
I love to hear her speak, yet well I know
That music hath a far more pleasing sound; 10
I grant I never saw a goddess go;
My mistress, when she walks, treads on the ground.
And yet, by heaven, I think my love as rare
As any she belied with false compare.

QUESTIONS

1. To what does the speaker negatively compare his mistress's eyes? Lips? Breasts? Hair? Cheeks? Breath? Voice? Walk? What kinds of images are created in these negative comparisons?
2. What conventional images does this poem ridicule? What sort of poem is Shakespeare mocking by using the negative images in lines 1–12?
3. In the light of the last two lines, do you think the speaker intends the images as insults? If not as insults, how should they be taken?
4. Are most of the images auditory, olfactory, visual, or kinesthetic? Explain.
5. What point does this poem make about love poetry? About human relationships? How does the imagery contribute to the development of both points?

STEPHEN STEPANCHEV (b. 1915)

Seven Horizons 2006

It is an old story: the oppressed
Become oppressors, the conquerers
Are conquered, the grass rises from
Their bones, and the rat is totem.

The archeologist of mounds
Studies the seven horizons of death 5
And discovers endless repetition,
Civilizations wearing out their plumes

And dying under their tin cans:
A shoe in the ashes, a set of false teeth,
A shattered hand, a cistern full of heads 10
Of broken jocks and forgotten movie stars.

Here in Flushing° I let the rain — *District in Queens, New York City*
Wash away my rotting selves,
The rubble of what I was, the thick
Deeps of silence among the ruins, 15

The seven layers of abandonment
No archeologist will ever read.

°13 *Flushing*: a district in Queens in New York City.

QUESTIONS

1. What is meant by "an old story"? What is the story? To what degree does the "story" represent an accurate view of human history? What does it mean to say that "the conquerors / Are conquered"? Is this observation true? Compare this view of history with that presented by W. B. Yeats's "The Second Coming" in Chapter 19.
2. What are the characteristics of the seven horizons of death? Why seven? What composes the discoveries of the "archaeologist of mounds"? What is the nature of the images that the archaeologist discovers?
3. Describe the speaker's view of himself in the last six lines. Why does he say that "No archaeologist" will ever read his seven layers of abandonment?

JAMES TATE (b. 1943)

Dream On (1998)

Some people go their whole lives
without ever writing a single poem.
Extraordinary people who don't hesitate
to cut somebody's heart or skull open.
They go to baseball games with the greatest of ease 5
and play a few rounds of golf as if it were nothing.
These same people stroll into a church
as if that were a natural part of life.
Investing money is second nature to them.
They contribute to political campaigns 10
that have absolutely no poetry in them
and promise none for the future.
They sit around the dinner table at night
and pretend as though nothing is missing.
Their children get caught shoplifting at the mall 15
and no one admits that it is poetry they are missing.
The family dog howls all night,
lonely and starving for more poetry in his life.
Why is it so difficult for them to see
that, without poetry, their lives are effluvial. 20
Sure, they have their banquets, their celebrations,
croquet, fox hunts, their seashores and sunsets,
their cocktails on the balcony, dog races,
and all that kissing and hugging, and don't
forget the good deeds, the charity work, 25
nursing the baby squirrels all through the night,
filling the birdfeeders all winter,
helping the stranger change her tire.
Still, there's that disagreeable exhalation
from decaying matter, subtle but ever present. 30
They walk around erect like champions.
They are smooth-spoken, urbane and witty.
When alone, rare occasion, they stare
into the mirror for hours, bewildered.
There was something they meant to say, but didn't: 35
"And if we put the statue of the rhinoceros
next to the tweezers, and walk around the room three times
learn to yodel, shave our heads, call
our ancestors back from the dead—"
poetrywise it's still a bust, bankrupt. 40
You haven't scribbled a syllable of it.
You're a nowhere man misfiring
the very essence of your life, flustering
nothing from nothing and back again.
The hereafter may not last all that long. 45
Radiant childhood sweetheart,
secret code of everlasting joy and sorrow,

fanciful pen strokes beneath the eyelids:
all day, all night meditation, knot of hope,
kernel of desire, pure ordinariness of life,
seeking, through poetry, a benediction 50
or a bed to lie down on, to connect, reveal,
explore, to imbue meaning on the day's extravagant labor.
And yet it's cruel to expect too much.
It's a rare species of bird
That refuses to be categorized. 55
Its song is barely audible.
It is like a dragonfly in a dream—
Here, then there, then here again,
Low-flying amber-wing darting upward
and then out of sight. 60
And the dream has a pain in its heart
the wonders of which are manifold,
or so the story is told.

QUESTIONS

1. Characterize the images from lines 3–20. What types of images, for the most part, are these? What part do they play in the poem's argument?
2. In lines 36–42 there is a different unit of imagery. What are the characteristics and purpose of these?
3. How does the speaker use images to characterize poetry from line 54 (if we take the repetition of "it" in lines 54, 55, 57, and 58 as descriptions of poetry). How true is the idea that poetry is a dream with a pain in its heart (line 63)? What is the effect of the final line?

DAVID WOJAHN (b. 1953)

"It's Only Rock and Roll, but I Like It": The Fall of Saigon (1975; 1990)

The guttural stammer of the chopper blades
Raising arabesques of dust, tearing leaves
From the orange trees lining the Embassy compound:
One chopper left, and a CBS cameraman leans
From inside its door, exploiting the artful 5
Mayhem. Somewhere a radio blares the Stones,
"I like it, like it, yes indeed. . . ." Carts full
Of files blaze in the yard. Flak-jacketed marines
Gunpoint the crowd away. The overloaded chopper strains
And blunders from the roof. An ice-cream-suited 10
Saigonese drops his briefcase; both hands
Now cling to the airborne skis. The camera gets
It all: the marine leaning out the copter bay,
His fists beating time. Then the hands giving way.

QUESTIONS

1. What actions are described in this poem? Why does the Saigonese man "cling to the airborne skis"? What happens to him?
2. Describe the poem's images of sound (auditory images). How many such images does the poem contain? What is their effect? What images of sight (visual) do you find? What other types of images?
3. Contrast the poem's title with its content.
4. Cumulatively, what is the relationship of the poem's images to the phrase "artful/Mayhem" in lines 5–6, and also to the poem's judgment about the American presence in Vietnam?

WRITING ABOUT IMAGERY

Questions for Discovering Ideas

In preparing to write, you should develop a set of thoughtful notes dealing with issues such as the following:

- What type or types of images prevail in the work? Visual (shapes, colors)? Auditory (sounds)? Olfactory (smells)? Tactile (touch and texture)? Gustatory (taste)? Kinetic or kinesthetic (motion)? Or is the imagery a combination?
- To what degree do the images reflect either the poet's actual observation or the poet's reading and knowledge of fields such as science or history?
- How well do the images stand out? How vivid are they? How does the poet make the images vivid?
- Within a group of images—say, visual or auditory—do the images pertain to one location or area rather than another (e.g., natural scenes rather than interiors, snowy scenes rather than grassy ones, loud and harsh sounds rather than quiet and soothing ones)?
- What explanation is needed for the images? (Images might be derived from the classics or the Bible, the Vietnam War or World War II, the behaviors of four-footed creatures or birds or fish, and so on.)
- What effect do the circumstances described in the poem (e.g., conditions of brightness or darkness, warmth or cold) have on your responses to the images? What purpose do you think the poet achieves by controlling these responses?
- How well are the images integrated within the poem's argument or development?

Answering questions like these will provide you with a sizable body of material that you can organize and then discuss in your essay.

Strategies for Organizing Ideas

Connect a brief overview of the poem to your plan for the body of your essay, noting perhaps that the writer uses images to strengthen ideas about war, character, or love or that the writer relies predominantly on images of sight, sound, and action. You might deal with just one of the following aspects, or you may combine your approaches, as you wish.

1. *Images suggesting ideas and/or moods.* Such an essay should emphasize the effects of the imagery. What ideas or moods are evoked by the images? (In this chapter the auditory images beginning Owen's "Anthem for Doomed Youth," for example, all point toward a condemnation of the brutality of war. The visual images in "Spring," by Hopkins, all point toward a sense of earthly and also divine growth and lushness.) Do the images promote approval or disapproval? Cheerfulness? Melancholy? Are the images drab, exciting, vivid? How? Why? Are they conducive to humor or surprise? How does the writer achieve these effects? Are the images consistent, or are they ambiguous? (The images in Masefield's "Cargoes" indicate first approval and then disapproval, with no ambiguity. By contrast, Shakespeare's images in "My Mistress' Eyes" might be construed as insults, but in context, they are really compliments [both in this chapter].)

2. *The types of images.* Here the emphasis is on the categories of images themselves. Is there a predominance of a particular type of image (e.g., visual or auditory), or is there a blending, as in Neruda's "Every Day You Play"? Is there a bunching of types at particular points in the poem or story? If so, why? Is there any shifting as the work develops (for example, in Owen's "Anthem for Doomed Youth" [this chapter] the auditory images first suggest loudness and harshness, but later auditory images describe quietness and sorrow)? Are the images appropriate, granted the nature and apparent intent of the work? Do they assist in making the ideas seem convincing? If any images seem inappropriate, is the inappropriateness intentional or inadvertent? What is the effect of the inappropriate imagery?

3. *Systems of images.* Here the emphasis should be on the areas from which the images are drawn. This is another way of considering the appropriateness of the imagery: Is there a pattern of similar or consistent images, such as dark and dreary urban scenes (Eliot's "Preludes" [this chapter]) or color and activity (Hopkins's "Spring" [this chapter])? Do all the images adhere consistently to a particular frame of reference, such as a sunlit garden (Lowell's "Patterns" [Chapter 22]), an extensive recreational forest and garden (Coleridge's "Kubla Khan"), a front stair (Levertov's "A Time Past"), or a forest at night (Blake's "The Tyger" [Chapter 15])? What is unusual or unique about the set of images? What unexpected or new responses do they produce?

Your conclusion, in addition to restating your major points, is the place for additional insights. It would not be proper to go too far in new directions here, but you might briefly take up one or more of the ideas that you have not developed in the body. In short, what have you learned from your study of imagery in the poem?

Illustrative Student Essay

Although underlined sentences are not recommended by MLA style, they are used in this illustrative essay as teaching tools to emphasize the central idea, thesis sentence, and topic sentences.

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Mike Pugh

Professor Skaggs

English 101

14 January 2011

The Images of Masefield's "Cargoes"°

[1] In the three-stanza poem "Cargoes," John Masefield develops contrasting imagery to create a negative impression of modern commercial life.* He does not explicitly state that modern commercialism is ugly and drab and that it affects modern human beings negatively, but he creates his word pictures to make this point for him. His first two stanzas contain idealized images of ships from ancient and Renaissance times, and his contrasting third stanza includes realistic images of a gritty and grimy modern "coaster." Masefield's images are thus both positive and lush, on the one hand, and negative and stark, on the other.†

[2] The most evocative and pleasant images in the poem are in the first stanza. The speaker asks that we imagine a "Quinquereme of Nineveh from distant Ophir" (line 1), an oceangoing, many-oared vessel loaded with treasure at the time of the biblical King Solomon. As Masefield identifies the cargo, the visual images are lush and romantic:

> With a cargo of ivory,
> And apes and peacocks,
> Sandalwood, cedarwood, and sweet white wine. (3–5)

Ivory suggests richness, which is augmented by the exotic "apes and peacocks" in all their exciting strangeness. The "sandalwood, cedarwood, and sweet white

°This poem appears on page 753.
*Central idea.
†Thesis sentence.

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wine" evoke pungent smells and tastes. The "sunny" light of ancient Palestine (2) not only illuminates the imaginative scene (visual) but invites readers to imagine the sun's warming touch (tactile). The references to animals and birds also suggest the sounds made by these creatures (auditory). Thus, in this rich first stanza, images derived from all the senses evoke impressions of an ideal, romantic past.

[3] Almost equally lush are the images of the second stanza, which completes the poem's first part. Here the visual imagery evokes the regal splendor of a tall-masted, full-sailed galleon (6) at the height of Spain's commercial power in the sixteenth century. The galleon's cargo suggests wealth, with sparkling diamonds and amethysts, and Portuguese "gold moidores" gleaming in open chests (10). With cinnamon in the second stanza's bill of lading (10), Masefield includes the image of an exotic, pleasant-tasting spice.

[4] The negative images of the third stanza contrast starkly with those in the first two stanzas. The poem asks us to imagine a modern "Dirty British coaster" (11), which draws attention to the griminess and suffocation of modern civilization. This spray-swept ship is loaded with materials that pollute the earth with noise and smoke. The smoke stack of the coaster (11) and the firewood it is carrying suggest choking smog. The Tyne coal (13) and road rails (14) suggest the noise and smoke of puffing railroad engines. As if this were not enough, the "pig-lead" (14) to be used in various industrial processes indicates not just more unpleasantness but also something poisonous and deadly. In contrast to the lush and stately imagery of the first two stanzas, the images in the third stanza invite the conclusion that people now, when the "Dirty British coaster" butts through the English Channel, are surrounded and threatened by visual, olfactory, and auditory pollution.

[5] The poem thus establishes a romantic past and ugly present through images of sight, smell, and sound. The images of motion also emphasize this view: In the first two stanzas the quinquereme is "rowing" and the galleon is "dipping." These kinetic images suggest dignity and lightness. The British coaster, however, is "butting," an image indicating bull-like hostility and stupid

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force. These, together with all the other images, focus the poem's negative views of modern life. The facts that existence for both ancient Palestinians and Renaissance Spaniards included slavery (of those men rowing the quinquereme) and piracy (by those Spanish "explorers" who robbed and killed the natives of the isthmus) should probably not be emphasized as a protest against Masefield's otherwise valid contrasts in images. His final commentary may hence be thought of as the banging of his "cheap tin trays" (15), which makes a percussive climax of the oppressive images filling too large a portion of modern lives.

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Work Cited

Masefield, John. "Cargoes." *Literature: An Introduction to Reading and Writing*. Ed. Edgar V. Roberts and Robert Zweig. 10th ed. New York: Pearson Longman, 2012. 753–54. Print.

Commentary on the Essay

This essay illustrates strategy 1 for writing about imagery (p. 781), using images to develop ideas and moods. All the examples—derived directly from the poem—emphasize the qualities of Masefield's images. This method permits the introduction of imagery drawn from all the senses in order to demonstrate Masefield's ideas about the past and the present. Other approaches might have concentrated exclusively on Masefield's visual images or on his images drawn from trade and commerce. Because Masefield uses auditory and gustatory images but does not develop them extensively, sound or taste might be appropriately treated in short, paragraph-length essays.

The introductory paragraph of the essay presents the central idea that Masefield uses his images contrastingly to lead to his negative view of modern commercialism. The thesis sentence indicates that the topics to be developed are those of (1) lushness and (2) starkness.

Paragraphs 2 and 3 form a unit stressing the lushness and exoticism of the first stanza and the wealth and colorfulness of the second stanza. In particular, paragraph 2 uses the words "lush," "evoke," "rich," "exotic," "pungent," "exciting," and "romantic to characterize the pleasing mental pictures prompted by the images. Although the paragraph indicates enthusiastic responses to the images, it does not go beyond the limits of the images themselves.

Paragraph 4 stresses the contrast of Masefield's images in the third stanza with those of the first two stanzas. To this end the paragraph illustrates the imaginative reconstruction needed to develop an understanding of this contrast. The unpleasantness, annoyance, and even danger of the cargoes mentioned in the third stanza are therefore emphasized as the qualities evoked by the images.

The last paragraph demonstrates that the imagery of motion—not much stressed in the poem—is in agreement with the rest of Masefield's imagery. As a demonstration of the need for fair, impartial judgment, the conclusion introduces the possible objection that Masefield may be slanting his images by including not a full but rather a partial view of their respective historical periods. Thus the concluding paragraph adds balance to the analysis illustrated in paragraphs 2, 3, and 4.

Writing Topics About Imagery in Poetry

Writing Paragraphs

1. In a paragraph compare the images of war in Owen's "Anthem for Doomed Youth" and Hardy's "Channel Firing" (both in this chapter). Describe the differing effects of the images. How are the images used? How effectively do these images aid in the development of the attitudes toward war expressed in each poem?
2. In a paragraph write a comparison of the imagery in Elizabeth Browning's "If Thou Must Love Me" and Rückert's "If You Love for the Sake of Beauty" (pp. 759, 776). Even though the poems are on virtually identical subjects, how does the selection of images contribute toward making each poem distinct?

Essay Writing

1. Basing your work on the poems in this chapter by Coleridge, Griffin, and Hopkins, write an essay discussing the poetic use of images drawn from the natural world. What sorts of references do the poets make? What attitudes do they express about the details they select? What is the relationship between the images and religious views? What judgments about topics such as nature, God, humanity, and friendship do the poets show by their images?
2. Considering the imagery of Tate's "Dream On" (this chapter) write an essay explaining the nature and use of imagery in poetry. As you develop your thoughts, be sure to consider the different characteristics of Tate's images and to account for the impressions and ideas that they create. You may also wish to introduce references to images from other poems that are relevant to your points.
3. Study the reproduction of Herkomer's painting *Hard Times* (p. I-6); then write an essay comparing and contrasting Herkomer's artistic techniques with

Hopkins's poem "Spring" and Pound's "In a Station of the Metro," along with other poems that you may wish to include. What similarities and differences do you find in subject matter, treatment, arrangement, and general idea? On the basis of your comparison, what relationships do you perceive between poetic and painterly technique

Creative Writing Assignment

1. Write a poem describing one of these:
   a. Athletes who have just completed an exhausting run.
   b. Children getting out of school for the day.
   c. Your recollection of having been lost as a child.
   d. A cat that always sits down right on your schoolwork.
   e. A particularly good meal you had recently.
   f. The best concert you ever attended.
   g. Driving to work or school on a rainy or snowy day.

   Write an analysis of the images you selected for your poem, and explain your choices. What details stand out in your mind? What do you recall best—sight, smell, sound, action? What is the relationship between your images and the ideas you express in your poem?

Library Assignment

1. Use the retrieval system in your library or go online to research the topic of imagery in Shakespeare (see *imagery* or *style and imagery*). How many titles do you find? Over how many years have these works been published? Take out one of the books or articles, and write a brief report on your findings. What topics are discussed? What types of imagery are introduced? What relationship does the author make between imagery and content?

Chapter 15

Figures of Speech, or Metaphorical Language: A Source of Depth and Range in Poetry

Figures of speech, metaphorical language, figurative language, figurative devices, and **rhetorical figures** are terms describing organized patterns of comparison that deepen, broaden, extend, illuminate, and emphasize meaning. First and foremost, the use of figures of speech is a major characteristic by which great literature provides us with fresh and original ways of thinking, feeling, and understanding. Although figurative language is sometimes called "ornate," as though it were unnecessarily decorative, it is not uncommon in conversational speech, and it is essential in literary thought and expression. Unlike the writing of the social and "hard" sciences, imaginative literature is not direct and unambiguous, offering exact correspondences of words and things. Yes, literature presents specific and accurate descriptions and explanations, but it also moves in areas of implication and suggestiveness through the use of **figurative language,** which enables writers to amplify their ideas while still employing relatively small numbers of words. Such language is therefore a sine qua non in imaginative literature, particularly poetry, where it compresses thought, deepens understanding, and shapes response.

The two most important figures of speech, and the most easily recognized, are *metaphors* and *similes.* There are also many other metaphorical figures, some of which are *paradox, anaphora, apostrophe, personification, synecdoche* and *metonymy, pun* (or *paronomasia*), *synesthesia, overstatement,* and *understatement.* All these figures are modes of comparison, and they may be expressed in single words, phrases, clauses, or entire structures.

Metaphors and Similes: The Major Figures of Speech

A Metaphor Shows That Something Unknown Is Identical to Something Known

A **metaphor** (a "carrying out a change") equates known objects or actions with something that is unknown or to be explained (e.g., "Your words are music to my ears," "You are the sunshine of my life," "My life is a squirrel cage"). The equation of the metaphor not only explains and illuminates the thing—let us choose Judith Minty's concept of marital inseparability in "Conjoined"—but also offers distinctive and original and often startling ways of seeing it and thinking about it. Thus Minty draws her metaphor of a married couple from the joining of two onions