

“Growing Older: Writers Examine Aging”

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A Study Guide

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INTRODUCTION:

Perhaps because it is the common fate of humanity, the themes of aging and the passage of time have captured the imagination of writers from William Shakespeare to Grace Paley. While medicine has sought to explain and deter the effects of aging, literature has served as a creative vehicle for exploring the inevitability of aging. The physical, psychological, and interpersonal changes that accompany the passage of time affect both author and characters alike, creating a literary dynamic that is an integral part of understanding the drama of human existence.

These stories, essays, and poems from the *Bellevue Literary Review* provide a way to discuss and dissect the effects of aging on patients, caregivers, and society at large. This guide also serves as a way for the reader to further examine the implications of style, voice, and content in creative writing. The study guide is useful for teachers, social workers, health care professionals, adult continuing education courses, and general reading groups that want to learn, inform, and teach about aging from a literary standpoint. The study guide is free, and is available online at www.BLReview.org.

We welcome your questions and comments. Please contact us at info@BLReview.org.

PROSE

Eggs by Susi Wyss (Fiction, page 8)

1. Discuss the relationship between Grace and her new friend Solange.
2. What is the significance of the motif of eggs in the story?
3. How does Grace feel about losing her mother and father? How does the loss affect her behavior?
4. In what ways is Grace a child? a young woman? a mature adult?
5. How does Grace's desire and perception of being an adult change from the beginning to the end of the story?
6. What is Grace's reaction when she is given a condom by her friend Solange before they enter Bar Etoile?
7. How does the setting of the story (in Bangui, the capital of the Central African Republic) and the references to specific African items (cassava, *kangoya*, *pagne* cloth, *mishwi* stand) add to the depth of the piece?
8. Is Grace a *ngangou mali* (strong woman)?
9. From the description and setting of the story, what is the disease Grace's mother most likely passed away from?
10. Why is Alexi so angry when Grace gives him the condom?
11. Discuss the relationship between Alexi and Grace. In what ways are they similar? In what ways are they different?
12. How does the description of Grace's first sexual experience with Alexi make the reader feel?

Taking care of a sick/dying parent
Loss of a parent/parents
Loss of family unit
Parental separation
Coming of age/Becoming an adult
Independence

Women's health
Birth control
Friendship
Loneliness
Responsibility

“Sex in the Starless Universe” by Adam Tamashasky (Fiction, page 16)

1. Min has known for a long time that he will die. What about the suit causes Min to finally break?
2. “Min had gotten used to having to act like a grown-up for adults, who so often seemed to steal his rightful role from him...” What *is* Min's rightful role? What does this statement say about the role of the sick in our society? How does the role of a sick young person differ from the role of a sick adult? How do we maintain relationships between healthy and sick people, and are we succeeding at it?
3. Discuss the significance of the title.
4. How does Min deal with the fact that he is going to die? Compare his appeals to God and his appeals to philosophy. Why does this say about the kind of person he is? Is this part of the grieving process? If so, what does it say about human nature and the grieving process as a whole?

5. Why does Min want to have sex before he dies? What is the significance of supposed landmark experiences when facing death? How does the fact that Min is a teenager factor into this?
6. Why does Min tell Ms. Hollings not to come back the following day? Why does he suddenly not need the experience of sex anymore?
7. Min thinks that the services of True Wishes are either “very wrong, or very right.” Which do you think it is? Discuss this in relation to question #4.
8. Discuss the appearance and demeanor of Ms. Hollings. How is it expected, and how is it unexpected? Is this what Min wants and/or needs?
9. Discuss Min’s time with Kevyn Johnson. Which roles do they assume? What does the visit do for Kevyn, and what does it do for Min? Compare it to his time with Ms. Hollings, asking yourself the same questions.

Cancer
Death
Grieving
Relationships

Societal Norms and Roles
Sex and Sexuality
Youth

“Room 503” by Ivan Prashker (Fiction, page 27)

1. Bobby’s mother said of Dr. Gerrin: “while he was a good doctor, he wasn’t her kind of doctor.” What did she mean? What makes a doctor the “right” kind of doctor for someone? What does this say about the complex and specific relationship between patient and doctor?
2. What does the range of customers to “The Fabulous Jolly Sisters” do for Bobby, and for the story? What is the author implying with this range? What does it mean when considered in the entire context of the story, and of society?
3. What does the nightmare say about Bobby and his relationship to his grandfather?
4. What is the significant of that fact that the story is set in 1949? Which themes are more modern, and which are indicative of the time period? What does this tell us about society?
5. Discuss the anonymous note the Bobby wrote Dr. Felder. Do you think he should have signed his name?
6. Bobby reaches out to the reader at the end of the story by saying, “What can I tell you?” What is the purpose of the use of second-person narrative at the end? What was the author trying to accomplish, and did he succeed?

Dealing with loss
Infidelity

Sex and Sexuality
Doctoring

“Casualties” by Alok A. Khorana (Fiction, page 36)

1. Vivek highly values his skills; he went to medical school in order to use them to relieve patients’ suffering. What role do skills play in the story, and in doctoring in general? Are they the most important aspect of the job? How can skills be used and misused?

2. Is Vivek a good doctor? What makes a good doctor? Think about this in relation to the previous question about skill.
3. Discuss Vivek's prewritten histories. What are the implications of this? Are the histories justifiable? Discuss the tension between morality and pragmatism involved in the histories, and in the larger picture of doctoring. How do we determine what to sacrifice?
4. Discuss the roles of hierarchy and class between the patients and the residents in this piece. Think about the reactions of the two patients' loved ones.
5. Discuss the significance of the fact that Ramsinh's friend bowing to Vivek after Ramsinh has died. Discuss the residents' relationships with each other. What does this do for the practice of doctoring?
6. Who is to blame for Ramsinh's death? Is there ever a single person to blame for the death of a patient? How does this relate to the practice of doctoring?
7. Discuss Vivek's treatment of and thoughts towards his patients, especially in relation to the statement, "[A]nother six months, and he would be no different than his senior residents, with their soul-sapping contempt for patients." How could a doctor or resident get to this point? Where does Vivek find his motivation, if not from his patients?
8. Discuss the pressures of a residency program in relation to the seemingly careless and insensitive actions taken in this piece.
9. Discuss the role of culture in this piece. How would this story unfolded differently if it had taken place in the United States?
10. Vivek ends up back in the United States. What does this indicate about subsequent events following the death of Ramsinh? What does it tell us about Vivek's character?
11. Did you expect Vivek to refuse the bribe from Chand Singh's family? Why do you think he refused it? Did it change your perspective of him? What does his refusal say about Vivek's character?
12. Discuss Raj, who has his own set of skills. What is the larger significance of this?

Doctoring

Culture

Morality

Reality

Regret

Relationships

Class and Hierarchy

Determining importance

“Looking at Aquaman” by Kim Foster (Fiction, page 53)

1. Discuss the various relationships between Sharon and her family. How does disease affect relationships? What is the best way to deal with the changes? Is there a “best” way?
2. Discuss the motif of superheroes. How does this relate to Sharon and Mark?
3. Consider the juxtaposition of young and old in this piece. What implications come with each identity? How do they relate to each other in the face of disease?
4. Discuss Sharon's observation that sick people are “already half-dead” to loved ones who are “waiting for you to do something poignant they can mention in your eulogy.” Do you think this is an accurate statement? Discuss in relation to questions #1.
5. Sharon says, “Human nature can't help itself; [loved ones] need to plan how to remember when you're gone.” What is the “human nature” Sharon is referencing? What does this say about our culture, and the role of illness and death in it? What is the significance of

remembrance? Is the process of illness therefore more significant to the sick person, or to the loved ones?

6. Discuss Mark and Amanda's reactions to Sharon's illness, as opposed to Peyton's. What does this tell us about youth? How does Sharon react to this? Is her reaction fair?
7. Sharon compares "younger people surrendering to death" to when she and Mark "used to want to have sex." What does this comparison reveal? Is it an accurate comparison? How does it link youth and aging?
8. Sharon says that waiting for her beeper to go off is the same as hoping for a young and healthy person to die. Is this true? How does this complicate the process of illness and healing? Discuss ways of coming to terms with this.
9. Mark congratulates himself for "[getting] through the day without coming unglued on [Sharon]." Discuss this comment in light of the way he handles Sharon's illness. What does this comment reveal about Mark?
10. What does responsibility in the face of illness explain?
11. Discuss the recurring lyrics that Sharon and Mark sing throughout the piece. What do their choices reveal?

Illness

Responsibility

Family

Death

Relationships

Coping

Youth and Aging

"The Father of Joan of Arc" by Ron Rindo (Fiction, page 66)

1. The narrator says that when he gets to the site of Joan of Arc's execution, he cannot understand why he is there. Why do you think he travelled to France?
2. Discuss the parallels between the narrator and his imagined portrait of Joan of Arc's father.
3. The narrator imagines scenarios throughout the piece. He considers the instances during which he himself could have died, how Paul's death could have been avoided, Joan of Arc's father during and after her execution, etc. What role does imagination play in the aftermath of a tragedy? Can imagination be part of the grieving process?
4. What role do geography and culture play in this piece? How do they contribute to the previous question about imagination?
5. Discuss the fact that the narrator calls his wife "Mother," even after the death of Paul. What does this say about their relationship? Why does she tell the narrator that he shouldn't have stopped calling her by her name, and that it's too late to change? Do you think it's too late?
6. The narrator tells his wife that he forgives her for being mean to him. How do you interpret his comment? Are you able to sympathize with the wife? Why do you think she refuses to speak with the narrator?
7. Why does the wife break her silence when the narrator decides to go to France?
8. Discuss the narrator's relationship with both his priest and his therapist. Is he comfortable with them? What is he looking for with him? Discuss the narrator's admission that he is the "only man in [his] family to need such a thing, ever."
9. Which details make this piece striking? What is so important about these details?
10. Discuss the motif of trees in the piece.

11. “Over time, he will build a bridge of patience and silence to his wife, a bridge that she will one day allow him to cross over.” Why do you think the author chose to end the piece with a focus on the man’s relationship with his wife? How does this sentence alter the lens through which you read the story?

Grieving

Love and Loss

Relationships

Parenting

Accidents

Guilt and Forgiveness

Imagination

“Mourning Dove” by Susan J Newell (Fiction, page 96)

1. Why do you think Ginny decides not to tell her husband about her whole dream?
2. Ginny says that most mothers would be happy that their daughters will not have a large amount of lovers in their lifetimes. How does she seem to feel about this for her daughter?
3. What is the significance of the book, *Forgotten Pathways*, that appears periodically throughout the piece?
4. What is the significance of the scene with the mourning doves?
5. Why do you think the men in Ginny’s dreams turn into birds? How do you think the type of bird each man turns into represents his personality?
6. What do you think of Ginny’s commentary on “what the changed art of communicating has done to love”?
7. What is the significance of the scene in the airport bar with the man who offers Ginny a drink?

Love

Monogamy

Marriage

Sexual promiscuity

Memory

“Getting in Trouble” by Ed Meek (Fiction, page 106)

1. How is Mr. Wilkens characterized through the way he talks in the opening paragraphs?
2. Why does Mr. Wilkens get so frustrated with himself when he realizes he’s left the emergency brake on while driving the car?
3. How does Mr. Wilkens declaration that he “remembers things” after he recalls the name of a bird contrast his forgetting why he is in the parking lot a minute later?
4. How does the use of humor throughout the story contrast what is actually going on?
5. Do you sympathize with Mr. Wilkens as much as you did at the beginning of the story once it is revealed that he doesn’t have a license? Why or why not?
6. What is the significance of Mr. Wilkens’s consistent comparisons between himself and birds?
7. Does Mr. Wilkens seem to have progressed or learned anything from the beginning to the end of the story? Why or why not?

Memory loss

Confusion

Marriage

Shame

Aging

“Winter Light” by Mary Lee McNeal (Fiction, page 114)

1. How well do Amanda’s children really seem to know her? How do they misinterpret her actions throughout the story?
2. How is the generational gap defined through the scene where Amanda is being driven to Christmas dinner by one of her grandsons?
3. How does Amanda look back on her marriage? Does she seem happy with her memories or somewhat resentful?
4. What is the significance of Amanda being able to remember many of the characters in the books she reads, but not the names of her own grandchildren? What does this say about her?
5. How is the ignorance of youth to the trials of old age exemplified when Amanda’s grandson asks her what it’s like to be ninety-three?
6. Why do Lynn and Amanda seem to butt heads more often than anyone else in the story?
7. Why do you think Amanda is so dead set against showing any weakness that might entice her children to make her move back to the ranch?
8. How does Amanda’s obvious intelligence, evidenced by her expansive vocabulary and her friend Mae’s declaration that Amanda is “the smartest woman she’d ever known,” contrast the way her family treats her?
9. Explain the significance of the scene with the baby and the candle.

Family relationships

Aging

Generational differences

Memory

Youth/ age

Children/ Grandchildren

Lack of understanding

“Waiting” by Billy O’Callaghan (Fiction, page 133)

1. What does Pádraig mean when he says he knew the meanings of his grandmother’s songs “by their flavours if not exactly their meaning”?
2. What is the significance of the description of the archivist as compared to the setting of the grandmother’s house?
3. How does the consistent reappearance of the snow reflect the themes of the story?
4. How do stories and legends help our understanding of some of the characters?
5. Why do you think Pádraig is so accepting of what he considers to be inevitable (i.e. his grandmother’s death, the family’s eventually selling their house)?
6. Why do you think Pádraig talks at length about his grandmother and grandfather, but only mentions in passing his actual parents?
7. How does talking about his grandmother’s songs help Pádraig to characterize her?
8. Why do you think Pádraig goes back and forth between wanting to be home when his grandmother dies and wanting to be on the oil rig? Which do you think he actually wants?

Aging

Death

Song

Legends

Family relationships

Tradition vs. modernization

Preservation of the past

“A Brutal Sweetness” by Abby Nance (Fiction, page 142)

1. Why are the two women who care for Mr. Connolly so sharply contrasted throughout the story?
2. Mr. Connolly discusses how some people prefer to die with “beautiful girls” around them, while others prefer “someone more ordinary.” Which do you think he prefers? Why?
3. Why does Mr. Connolly’s perspective shift back and forth from the present to the past?
4. Why does the boy go back to look for the girl’s coat button, even though she makes it clear it isn’t very important to her?
5. Why do you think Lita says “I know, me too” when Mr. Connolly says “Sugar Baby?”
6. Why does Mr. Connolly mix his vision of Delphine in the laundry room with what is going on in his room, instead of keeping them completely separate like he does in the beginning?
7. What is the significance of Mr. Connolly’s description of the flowers Julia brings for him?
8. What is the significance of the two last conversations Mr. Connolly mentions he has with Lita and Julia? How do they differ to match the character Mr. Connolly is talking to?
9. Why does Mr. Connolly leave the story about the peach he shared with his wife as the last image of the piece?

Aging

Disability

Death

Marriage

Loss of love

Illness

“Bridge” by Jane Ashley (Nonfiction, page 46)

1. Discuss the author’s use of flashbacks in this piece. What is their purpose? Are they effective? If so, how?
2. The author says she doesn’t know why she continued climbing up the ladder on the bridge. Do you have any ideas?
3. Discuss the many uses of bridges in this piece. In what ways are they effective?
4. Discuss the juxtaposition of the bridges and rivers that the authors experienced as a child against the ones she experienced as an adult.
5. What roles do setting and place play in the essay?
6. The essay has an untraditional structure. What was the author trying to do with it? What did she want the reader to feel? What sort of effect does it have on the reader?
7. Why does the narrator say that only when her father tells her everything will she be able to know and love him? Do you agree with this philosophy?
8. Why does the author open the essay with the scene on the middle of the bridge? How does it set up the rest of the piece?
9. What kind of impression of the father does the reader get? How does it compare the feelings the author says she has about her father? Why do you think the author guided the reader to these impressions?
10. Discuss the two different ways that the sisters deal with grief.

Forgiveness

Family

Grief

Love

Loss

Coping Mechanisms

“Saturday, First Call” by David Farris (Nonfiction, page 78)

1. What does the author mean when he says he still catches himself thinking of disease as an “interesting abstraction” ?
2. What is the significance of the three cases on which the author focuses?
3. What kinds of feelings does the reader experience by reading one case after the other? What do you think the author is trying to accomplish by guiding the reader through these feelings?
4. What does the author’s restless and unpleasant scene at home reveal about him?
5. Discuss the author’s assertion that medical successes “are not the product of any individual’s talent or hard work, but the current state of medicine, built on 2000 years of experience...” Do you agree or disagree? Why? Why might the author make this statement, and what does it mean for the essay?
6. Discuss the tone that the narrator uses, and how it affects the piece. Is it what you would expect?
7. Do you agree with the author’s statement that “To take credit for saving a life would imply, in the converse, that the death of John Walter Patterson should confine us straight to hell, as killers”? Is this a fair statement?

Guilt
Cycle
Death

Doctoring
Uncertainty

“The Best That Love Could” by Scott Oglesby (Nonfiction, page 90)

1. Is this piece more about the author or his late wife, Helene? How do you think the author would answer this question, and how do you think he would feel about it?
2. How does the author paint a picture of Helene, and of his relationship with her? In what ways is it effective?
3. Discuss how the author deals with his grief, and this essay’s role in the process.
4. Discuss the author’s brief mention of spirituality. What does he mean when he writes “I guess my faith is in that mystery”? What role, if any, does faith play in grieving?
5. How and why does the author identify with the man who dressed up as Superman?
6. What does the author mean when he says that”...this was about more than losing my wife; it was about finding *my* life”?

Death
Marriage
Grieving
Disease

Spirituality
Loneliness
Love

“Solitude” by Joan Kip (Nonfiction, 127)

1. The author seems to suggest that the want and need for solitude increases with age. Do you agree? Why do you think that is?
2. The author introduces the piece with a quote from Wordsworth that says, “The world is too much with us.” Do you agree? Is this a fair statement?
3. How does the author deal with the world being “too much with [her]”? Is her method effective?
4. What is so good about silence and solitude? Why should we, as the author suggests, strive for it?
5. Discuss the difference between aloneness and solitude. How does the author distinguish between the two?
6. The author writes, “[M]oving into self is not always a gentle voyage.” What is the connection between “moving into self” and solitude? Why is it not a “gentle voyage”?

Aging
Solitude

Loneliness
Past, Present, Future

POETRY

“For Their Second Childhood” by David Wagoner (page 15)

1. How does the author’s use of parental clichés underscore the poignancy of the “second childhood” described in the poem?
2. What sorts of losses are enumerated in the poetic catalogue of commands? How are these losses contrasted with childhood and adolescent lessons?
3. The poem is composed as one long sentence with line breaks that halt the natural flow of the clauses. What do the forced hesitations at the end of each line suggest about the frailties of old age?
4. How do the last two stanzas about the “future” link past and present and suggest life’s transience?

Parenting
Loss
Transience

Parent/child relationships
Memory

“After the Seizure” by Sandra M. Castillo (page 26)

1. How do the extended lines in this prose poem help suggest the blurry constraints of the speaker’s memory? Would the voice be altered if the lines were broken into stanzas? Characterize the tone in the poem.
2. What is the effect of contrasting the concrete “grocery store” images with the images of illness?
3. What does the speaker suggest about memory, loss, and identity in her culminating assertion: “...I have come to believe that what we do not remember never actually happened.”

Isolation
Loss
Perception

Communication
Identity

“Green Threshold Orange” by Peter Cooley (page 52)

1. How does the impressionistic use of color in the title and in the poem evoke a sense of dream-like imprecision?
2. How do the questions the speaker asks add to the sense of indefiniteness in the poem?
3. What kind of windows is the speaker referring to in the first stanza’s last line?
4. What is the significance of the poem’s final line? What is it that “the dead miss most”?

Vision

Death

“The Name” by David Wagoner (page 65)

1. How does the speaker tell us that a name is considered powerful in the community described in the poem? What does the name signify?
2. Why does the birth of “the right one” lift the taboo about speaking a name aloud?
3. How does the poem offer insight into the sacred rituals that bind the people described?

Continuity

Ceremony

“Lachrymal” by Ellen Steinbaum (page 76)

1. How does the physical ailment described in the poem serve as a metaphor?
2. Compare the story about the Roman women’s ritual, described in Part 2, with the Part 1 description of “diminished” and “old” tears.
3. What do the final lines of the poem signify? What is meant by “the blur” and “the crumbling”?

Grief

Endurance

“In the Hospital Coffee Shop” by Susanna Rich (page 89)

1. To what ends does the speaker contrast the coffee shop merchandise with what is happening in the “basement” in this poem?
2. How is “thirst” used metaphorically here?

Powerlessness

Forbearance

“The Old Man Washes His Boat, Ballycotton” by Elizabeth Biller Chapman (page 95)

1. How do the images of the natural world and the spring-time setting contrast with the illness that is suggested in the second stanza?
2. Discuss the images of time in the poem. What do these images suggest about the speaker’s relationship with her husband?
3. In the second stanza, the speaker’s attention is turned to the “old man” laboring to clean his boat. How does this exhausting, steady effort link with the theme of constancy in marriage? What does the speaker mean in the final lines when she says, “[i]s labor prayer?” Why is the poem titled as it is?
4. Discuss the ending lines in the poem: “Our arms around each other and/ the noonday tide, its brightening and dimming.” To what ends does the poet use this image of light and darkness and how is this image connected with the marriage described in the poem?

Natural World

Time

Marriage

Love

“On Finding One Grey Pubic Hair Four Days Before My 48th Birthday” by Alison Townsend (page 104)

1. Is the personal intimacy in this poem more universally suggestive of being surprised by aging?
2. What fears does the speaker evoke in the poem?
3. What does the final image of tossing out the hair suggest about continuity and acceptance?

Sexuality

Identity

“Tough Guy” by John Kay (page 112)

1. Describe the tone of the poem. How does the tone help suggest and sustain the themes of self-irony and resilience?
2. Why is the lost baseball cap of yesteryear contrasted with the image of the speaker “gripping the brim” of his hat?
3. How does the speaker’s description of himself in the fifth couplet suggest old age? Why is the adjective “strange” used here and what does this imply about how old age is viewed in our society?
4. How does the image of the languorous nap in the fourth couplet contrast with the image of stubborn striving in the final lines? Contrast the images of frailty with the “tough guy” resolve of the speaker.

Resilience

Self-irony

“A Brief History” by David Wagoner (page 113)

1. What relation does the quotation from Thoreau’s Journal have to the rest of the poem?
2. What is the effect of referring to the body as “it” throughout the poem? Why does the poet use this impersonal pronoun to tell the “history of his body”?
3. What are the main events in this history? How does the poet characterize what’s happened to his body?
4. The poem is written as one long sentence. How does this influence the tone of the poem and help deliver its themes?
5. What is the significance of distinguishing “why” from “how” in the poem’s closing lines?

The Body
Time

Purpose
Writing

“Neither Do They Work Nor Do They Weep” by Lois Marie Harrod (page 125)

1. How do the food images in this poem tell the story of intergenerational conflict between mothers and daughters?
2. How do the images of thrift convey the emotional lives of the women in the poem?

3. How does the Biblical suggestiveness of the title influence the poem's themes?
4. In the last four couplets, the garlic odor conjures memories and the poem becomes a kind of requiem for the passing of the speaker's family. Discuss the ambiguity of the last line. Does "without weeping" refer to "them" or to the father? What role has the speaker's father played in the household?

Family *Generational Conflict and Continuity*
Mothers and Daughters *Death*

"Telephone" by Judy Katz (page 126)

1. How is the telephone used metaphorically in the poem?
2. Characterize the conversation the speaker has with her grandmother in the poem. What is the significance of the present tense immediacy melding into "the litany" of memories? How does this deepen the pathos in the poem?
3. What is meant by "the summary/ before the close"? Why is this line followed by the shift to the final evocative childhood image? How does the introduction of "Did you know" increase the poignancy of these final lines? Would the ending be the same if this question were omitted?

Dying *Illness and Care*
Family

"Back of the Envelope" by Greg McBride (page 130)

1. How does the poet make plain that he is describing a long-term relationship? What images are used to indicate the passing of time?
2. How is winter used symbolically in the poem?
3. What does the poems' title and its images of household routine suggest about the relationship that the speaker describes?

Sexuality *Romantic love*
Long-term relationship *Time*

"Love on Death's Doorstep" by Alice Wirth Gray (page 132)

1. Characterize the tone of the poem. What is the speaker's attitude toward the grandmother's late-life love affair?
2. Why is the relationship between the nursing home patients described as a "French farce"? How is humor used in the poem?
3. How does the poet make an implicit contrast between old age and youth and/or middle age? How does this contrast highlight the theme of evanescence?

Sexuality *Love*
Time/evanescence

“Autumn Crickets” by Barry Sternlieb (page 148)

1. Discuss the interplay between the indoor and outdoor settings in the poem. How do images of the natural world reflect and seem to solemnize what is happening in the farmhouse?
2. What is meant by “hearts failing like beauty/on the path to itself”? What else does the speaker see as beautiful or transfiguring?
3. How does the poet convey the speaker’s fear and grief?
4. What is the “unexpected gift” the speaker refers to in the closing lines of the poem?

Filial Love
Beauty

Dying/Absence