

“Abilities and Disabilities: The Range of Human Function”

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A Study Guide

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INTRODUCTION:

The Fall 2008 issue of the *Bellevue Literary Review* includes poetry, fiction, and non-fiction that delve into both the humanistic and medical sides of disability. In order to tackle disability in a literary form, one must also be willing to consider the stereotypes and taboo nature that comes along with disability itself. This may be an uncomfortable experience for some readers; however, writings presented here attempt to confront these stereotypes by addressing, explaining, and embracing disability. This study guide probes the literary aspects of these works, with the goal of providing a setting in which disability can be openly talked about from a learning standpoint. This *BLR* issue asks the reader to mentally explore the concept of living with disabilities and interacting with those affected by disabilities. The study guide gives readers the chance to involve themselves in a discussion of these themes.

These readings provide a framework for considering disabilities in individuals and how they are coped with and viewed by others. The study guide is useful for teachers of literature, ethics, medical/nursing students, social workers, as well as for health care professionals, adult continuing education courses, and general reading groups that want to discuss disabilities through a literary lens. The study guide is free, and is available online at www.BLReview.org

“Plazoleta” by Eric Stener Carlson (Fiction, page 8)

1. In this short story, the natural world (insects, birds, wind, rain) and the urban world (graffiti, cell phones, a plaza) intersect. Where is the natural world portrayed as cruel? Where is it portrayed as beautiful?
2. What relationship does the woman on the bench have to Macedonio and to Fabrice?
3. What kind of relationship does Fabrice have with Macedonio?
4. Does the author ever tell us why Macedonio is in a wheelchair? What could be his reasons for leaving out this information?
5. Does the author tell us what Macedonio understands? In your opinion, do you think he does or does not understand what is happening around him?
6. What is the effect of the one-sided dialogue that the woman on the phone has?

Marriage

Family relationships

Disability

Financial trouble

Siblings

“My Friend Paul Says” by Dominika Bednarska (Poetry, page 11)

1. This poem is framed as a dialogue between “friends.” In what way is the term “friends” used ironically?
2. How would this poem be different if it were framed as a Socratic dialogue or something more logical?
3. How does the speaker see herself? How does she identify with other people who are disabled?
4. Why does the speaker disagree with her friend?
5. While the speaker does disagree with her friend, she does not say everything that’s on her mind. What else is she thinking about?

Disability

Abortion

Pregnancy

Genetics

“Chromosome Four” by Chris Drew (Fiction, page 12)

1. How does geography affect the characters and plot in this story?
2. How would you characterize the relationship between Scott and Amy? Are they emotionally close or emotionally distant?
3. By the end of the story, do you think that Amy and Scott have made peace with their respective decisions?
4. How do you think Scott’s job possibly impacted his decision not to be tested for Huntington’s disease?

5. In what way does Amy's mother avoid the implications of the news Amy and Scott have received? In what way does Scott avoid the news? How do you think that effected Amy's decision to research the disease?
6. What are the limits of medicine and technology in this story?
7. What are the limits of God and religion in this story?

Genetics

Pregnancy

Marriage

Huntington's Disease

Adoption

Death

Illness

Spirituality

Accidents

Spousal relationships

“Reunion” by Susan Sindall (Poetry, page 21)

1. What brings the “he and she” together in this poem? In what way do they transcend the scene where they meet?
2. The author of this poem writes, “Two sons smile from the night / behind the parents.” Do you think that “smile” is meant to be ironic or reassuring?
3. In the beginning of the poem, the man and the woman are described as having “disguise[d] faces.” When and how do they begin to show their true selves?
4. What are the “eight arms” that combine at the end of the poem?
5. Comment on the image of the oak and on the image of moonlight at the beginning and the end of the poem.

Children

Family

Seizures

Encephalitis

Adolescents

“The White Hospital” by Jan Steckel (Poetry, page 22)

1. What do we learn about belonging from this poem? Where does the son belong? Where do the parents belong?
2. What miscommunications do you find in this poem?
3. Where do you picture this taking place? Why?
4. What significance do you find that at the end, Ruben refers to Rosalina as “La Morenita”?
5. Think of some of the symbolic meanings that “white” can hold. Which do you find in this poem?

Children

Family

Language

Infants

Hospital

“Pounding Basil” by Katy Giebenhaim (Fiction, page 24)

1. Does the narrator in this story think that his life is anything other than ordinary?
2. Where does the narrator find joy or magic in Basil’s treatments?
3. Where does the narrator talk about death? How would you characterize his view on it?
4. How does the immediate family adapt to Basil’s illness?
5. How does the grandfather adapt to Basil’s illness?
6. The narrator is very precocious and imaginative. How do his games both make him independent, as well as include his brother?
7. Why does the narrator cry when the dog dies? What does this say about his personality and ability to observe others?
8. What is the relationship like between the grandfather and the father? What hints in the story help the reader understand why that is?

Children
Family
Siblings
Cystic Fibrosis

Illness
Imagination
Animal and Human Relationships
Death

“In a Greenhouse” by David Wagoner (Poetry, page 29)

1. This poem reads like a deeper understanding of “that which does not kill us makes us stronger.” What details does the poem give to back up that idea?
2. Do you find the tree to be an effective metaphor for life and the challenges people face? Why or why not?

Nature
Challenges
Injury

“The Girl with the Mechanical Leg” by Loreen Niewenhuis (Fiction, page 30)

1. The story starts with the narrator observing a family. Throughout the story, are there points at which he strikes you at times as judgmental, or too eager to conjecture the thoughts of people he barely knows?
2. How does the author keep the language both scientifically specific and something that the lay reader can understand?
3. Why does the narrator think of himself as a “con man”? Did he deceive the patient or her family?
4. Why do the patient and her family choose such a risky surgery? Do they seem aware of the possibility that it will not beat the cancer?
5. Throughout the story, the smell of garlic is a metaphor for death – something present, sensed by all, but not spoken about. Contrast this with blueberry picking, which “bookends” the story.

6. The patient, Bobbie, is rarely referred to by name; the other characters are never given a name. What effect does this have on a person reading the story? What might this say about the roles the characters are playing?
7. Comment on the structure of the story. Rather than beginning with the patient who dies, the story begins with another girl who has lost a leg. The story then returns to that original scene. Does this give an optimistic spin on the story, or does it show how little control the narrator really has over issues of life and death?
8. Discuss the line “A certain number of cases must fail—people must die—to make absolutely sure the treatment does not work.” Does the narrator really believe in this? What about the oncologist?

Childhood

Families

Cancer

Disfigurement

Youth/Age

Uncertainty

Denial

Empathy

“Cripple’s Kid” by David Milofsky (Nonfiction, page 40)

1. How does illness shape the narrator’s world, both inside and outside of his immediate family?
2. The narrator says that his father’s reasoning and acceptance of his illness “seemed like denial.” Do you agree or disagree with this assessment? Why?
3. Why is the narrator uncomfortable meeting with his colleague’s friend? Why does he feel a “sense of dread”?
4. Why don’t some people want to receive the Multiple Sclerosis Society newsletter? What is the reaction that the narrator has to this?
5. How does the surrounding community react to the narrator’s family? What are the positive reactions and what are the negative reactions?
6. What did the narrator’s father do before being debilitated by MS? Does his father view his career differently than his son?
7. What did the narrator’s mother do before the father fell ill?
8. Where is the family from originally? What part does that play in this essay?
9. How do art, writing, and music play into this essay? What role do they have in the characters’ lives? What is implied about the limits of art?

Multiple Sclerosis

Father/son relationships

Disability

Family

Music

Youth/Age

Empathy

Writing

“Galaxy Formation” by Alan Shapiro (Poetry, page 48)

1. The different images in the poem are tied together by a deep sense of loss. Why do you think the speaker waits until the second page to describe his grandmother?
2. What is meant by “the dark matter their bodies had become”?

3. What is the parallel between the woman on a cell phone and the exchange between the speaker's mother and the speaker's grandmother?

Grandparents
Aging
Astronomy

Parents and Parenting
Nursing Home
Memory Loss

“Tethered to the Body” by Jane Korkernak (Nonfiction, page 51)

1. Why does the pump make the narrator “feel fragile and ... obsessed with doubts about [herself] as a woman?”
2. How is humor used throughout this piece?
3. Why doesn't the narrator talk to the nurse educator or Mike, the sales rep, about what to do with the insulin pump during sex?
4. Comment on the “two kinds of naked” described in this essay. In one, we “locate our ideal selves in the sexual.” In the other, we are “undefended,” and require “sympathy, acceptance, and often help.” Do you find her characterization to be apt? Why or why not?
5. In this essay, Jane Korkernak writes that her husband, Jimmy, used humor to turn the low-battery crisis into something they could cope with. Comment on how she does that throughout the essay. Where does it help them? On the other hand, where is this coping not enough?
6. The narrator finds erotic fiction written by a paraplegic man. How does this affect her views on being tethered to a pump?

Diabetes
Sex
Marriage
Long-term Illness

Body Image
Desire
Intimacy
Spousal Relationships

“The Head is a Canvas” by Dana Koster (Poetry, page 57)

1. What images are juxtaposed in this poem?
2. In this poem, the “you” bares her teeth; a few lines later, the speaker says “How much we refuse to bare.” Comment on the difference in meaning in the two phrases.
3. Comment also on the difference in meaning between “losing our bearings” “baring teeth” “bearing a burden” and the “breeness” of a bald scalp.
4. A tension exists in this poem between the desire to hide things about ourselves (our bellies, our shame) and the desire to expose ourselves honestly to another person. Is this tension resolved? Why or why not?
5. What is meant by the phrase “the head is a canvas”?
6. What do you think the relationship is between the speaker and the “you”? Does the “you” come across as a friend, relative, or lover – or are we even given enough information to characterize their relationship? What reason could the author have had for leaving this vague?
7. Does the poem strike you as bitter? Hopeful? Tender? Stoic? What are some adjectives that you would use to describe the poem and the voice in it?

Cancer
Appearance
Shame
Illness

“Breaking Point” by M. Eileen Cronin (Nonfiction, page 58)

1. How does the narrator draw us into the setting? What importance does the setting play in the rest of the story?
2. How does the setting affect the narrator’s view of herself?
3. In what way is the narrator a one-in-a-million girl?
4. Where is humor used in this essay? Does it make the events that follow seem more serious or less serious?
5. The kindness of the couple that helps the narrator find her leg is contrasted with the obliviousness of the “sandy blonde” and the narrator’s so-called friends, Krista and Sharon. What does this seem to say about human kindness, and human indifference?
6. What conclusion does the narrator come to about herself? What has she lost that night, and what has she gained?
7. This story is a non-fiction essay. How might it read differently if it were revised into a short story? How do you think readers’ reactions would differ if it were rewritten and presented as fiction?

Disability
Loss of Limb
Alcohol
College

Sex and Sexuality
Thalidomide
Loss
Truth

Honesty
Friendship
Music

“Hemiplegia” by Ona Gritz (Poetry, page 62)

1. This poem uses a mix of lyrical and medical language. Which descriptive words from the poem do you think you would find in a dictionary definition of “hemiplegia”? Which details are more original to the poem?
2. How would you characterize the relationship between the speaker and the person she or he is touching?
3. How does the speaker in this poem deal with the loss of sensation in his or her right side?

Disability
Loss of sensation
Love
Sensuality
Hemiplegic

“The Wife’s Friend” by Paola Peroni (Fiction, page 63)

1. Why do you think the wife, the narrator, the daughter, and the husband are never named? What effect does this have on the story?
2. The narrator says that of the husband that “we had nothing in common but a craving for desire and a need for diversion.” Is she avoiding responsibility for her actions? Is she being honest about their feelings towards each other?
3. What is the narrator’s day job? What effect do you think it might have on her detachment from her life and her actions?
4. The narrator says that she felt no guilt, and that the wife “was better off with me in her life.” What reasons does the story give that this may be true?
5. What do you think the significance is that the wife waits for the friend before she passes away, while the dog waits for the friend to leave the room? What significance does the friend see?

Cancer

Adultery

Spousal relationships

Family

Animals

Hospice

Sex and sexuality

“Guinea Pig” by Sally Bliumis-Dunn (Poetry, page 68)

1. Why does the speaker find herself unable to move Fanny, the guinea pig?
2. In what way does the guinea pig’s “mourning” seem to be like the mourning of humans for a lost loved one?
3. How does the speaker of the poem relate to these animals?
4. Comment on how emotions and grief are or are not related to intelligence.
5. Comment on the significance of guinea pigs as test animals.

Grief

Mourning

Death

Family

Animals

Motherhood

Loss

“Hal-9000, Bach, and the Personal Physics of Going Deaf” by Laura Hope-Gill
(Nonfiction, page 69)

1. What were the initial emotional and social effects of deafness on the author?
2. Comment on the use of Kubrick’s “2001: A Space Odyssey”. What effect does the use of pop culture have in this essay?

3. Why do you think the author does not reveal the reason for her deafness? Why does she withhold this information?
4. How does the author weave in scientific information on sound waves? How do they complete our understanding of her deafness?
5. What are some of the images that the author uses to describe her deafness to the reader?
6. How does the author adapt to the social effects of being deaf?

Disability
Deafness
Culture

Music
Friendship
Social

“The Sleepy Beauties of Sound” by Jane O. Wayne (Poetry, page 75)

1. What effect do the short, and sometimes indented, lines have?
2. Paraphrase each stanza. How do they link together?
3. Where is time referenced in this poem?
4. “Terra incognita” is Latin for “unknown land.” In what way is the speaker prepared to enter the “unknown land” of deafness? In what way is he or she not?
5. Where are maps and land referenced in this poem? Comment on the way the writer relates sound waves to something more physical.
6. What are some of the sounds the speaker is not prepared to leave behind?
7. In what way is the speaker’s perspective different from someone who was born deaf?
8. Comment on the use of sound in this poem. Where are rhymes and slant rhymes used? How do the sounds of the words contribute to the meaning of the poem?

Disability
Deafness
Time

Memory
Nature
Loss

“Your Quiet Affair” by Christine Caya (Fiction, page 76)

1. What does the protagonist learn about Delia as a result of her deafness?
2. What is the protagonist’s relationship with his daughter, Taylor? Does it change over the course of the story?
3. Why isn’t Taylor close with her father? How does she view him? How does she view his relationship with her mother?
4. What role does sex play in how the protagonist views his life and human connections?
5. Contrast the physician’s understanding of Delia’s injury with the protagonist’s understanding of Delia’s injury.
6. Contrast the protagonist’s life at home with his life at school. How does he see himself differently? How are the two environments different?
7. When does the protagonist start feeling guilt over his affair with Connie? What reasons does he give for feeling guilty?
8. Throughout the course of the story, much attention is paid to what is spoken and what is unspoken. What is the power of saying what one feels? What reasons did the characters have for leaving things unspoken or outright deceiving each other?

Desire
Sex
Intimacy
Deafness

Injury
Family Relationships
Workplace Relationships
Adultery

“Blind Choreography” by Susan Buis (Poetry, page 88)

1. How does the title related to one of the central metaphors in the poem?
2. The narrator is blind, but she was told that other senses would “rush in.” In which way does she demonstrate that this is true, and in which way does she demonstrate that it’s not?
3. Synesthesia is defined as “an experience in which a stimulus in one sensory modality involuntarily elicits a response in another sensory modality.” Comment on how the senses are often mixed and crossed in this poem in order to create strong imagery.
4. Relating to question #3, what are the other senses that have “rushed in”?
5. How has the speaker’s blindness hurt her, both physically and emotionally? How does she cope with that difficulty?

Blindness
Senses
Dancing

Disability
Synesthesia
Imagery

“Almost Dancing” by Paul Hostovsky (Poetry, page 89)

1. This poem as well as the previous poem relates blindness to dancing. Comment on the different perspectives that each has – who is the speaker in “Blind Choreography” and who is the speaker in “Almost Dancing?”
2. What distance does the speaker have from the couple? How might the poem be different if it were from the perspective of the blind man or from the perspective of the woman?
3. Why is the woman in “Almost Dancing” excited by the blind man? What about him interests her?
4. At one point, the blind man is referred to as a “disabled / locomotive trailing / at her elbow,” which makes him sound dependent on the woman. However, later in the poem, an image is given of the two of them “navigat[ing] together.” Is it possible for both images to be accurate? Which one seems more real?
5. At the end of “Almost Dancing” it seems as though the world has opened up to the couple. What are some of the images that describe this happening?

Blindness
Dancing
Disability
Relationships
Sex and sexuality
Braille
Independence

“Bad Acts” by Martha Cooley (Fiction, page 90)

1. How would you characterize the relationship between Diana and the judge? In what ways are they emotionally close, and in what ways are they distant?
2. What role does Diana see herself playing in her husband Arthur’s life? How does the idea of having a child challenge that?
3. Do you agree with Arthur, that Diana does not know how his parents feel? Or do you think that Diana was right in her characterization of Arthur’s parents, and her desire for Arthur not to speak to them about what happened?
4. How do Diana and Arthur deal with the potential awkwardness of seeing each other at the funeral?
5. How does Diana feel about Arthur’s new wife and his newly-born child? Is she jealous? Distant? Relieved?
6. What does the judge finally say to Diana? What does this say about how he views what has happened to him?
7. What role does money and wealth play in this story? To what extent and in what way does it affect the characters?
8. What are the “Bad Acts” of the title?

Memory Loss
Aging
Family
Divorce

Infertility
Parent/Child
Relationships
Silence

Spousal Relationships
Accidents

“Slow, Boat” by Andrea Cohen (Poetry, page 98)

1. How is the poem organized? Is this an effective utilization of form?
2. What is the first sign in the poem that indicated the man the author is talking about is mentally ill? Why?
3. What are some examples the author gives of the man’s apparent illness? How are they effective in this poem?
4. By the end of the poem has the title gained more meaning for the reader? Why or why not?
5. What is the literal and metaphorical meaning of this excerpt: “He’s not slow, but rapidly/rowing a boat we can’t see/in a sea invisible to us,/though we sense from his urgency,/the waves, the water rising.”?

Aging
Belief
Fear
Imaginary
Time

“Learning New Words” by Hal Sirowitz (Poetry, page 99)

1. How does the author of this poem use humor? Where is the humor most effective?
2. Comment on the mix of colloquial and scientific/medical speech in this poem.

3. What is the main metaphor in this poem? How is that metaphor used in different ways?
4. What do you think the author means by the last line – “I just pray the window won’t get stuck?” What are some different interpretations for it?

Parkinson’s
Illness
Medication
Language
Humor

“The Speed of Mice” by Hal Sirowitz (Poetry, page 99)

1. How does this poem relate to the other poem by Hal Sirowitz, “Learning New Words”?
2. Why do you think the author chose to separate them into two poems rather than one?
3. What is the effect of the short lines and short sentences?
4. This poem uses very plainspoken language and few metaphors. Does that challenge your expectations of a poem? Why or why not?
5. Comment on the juxtaposition of “Cinderella” and “Parkinson’s”.
6. Do you find the poem, and its title, to be humorous? Why or why not?

Parkinson’s
Illness
Medication

Humor
Fairy tales
Sound

“The Ladies’ Table” by Louise Farmer Smith (Fiction, page 100)

1. The narrator writes that she was moved “for a less obvious loss of capacity.” Are we given a hint of that loss in this story?
2. Who are the characters in this story?
3. Define each of the characters in a short sentence or less.
4. How do the characters in this story resemble children? Where does the author state that parallel?
5. Do you think that Mrs. Wordell is at the same mental capacity as her table mates? Why or why not?
6. Comment on the title. Do you find it ironic? Sad? Funny?
7. How do the descriptions of what the characters are wearing and how they do their hair give us insight into their inner emotional lives?
8. What role does the narrator fill at the table? Why doesn’t she speak up more?

Aging
Death
War
Religion
Eating

Food
Memory
Friendship
Social relationships
Time

“The Rudeness” by Rick Kempa (Nonfiction, page 102)

1. Who is the mother addressing in the first line?
2. Though this piece is nonfiction, it uses elements of fiction in order to tell its story. What fictional techniques do you see used? Are they used effectively?
3. What figurative language is used in this piece? What is the figurative language used to describe in particular?
4. How does the son relate what his mother is feeling to her own life experiences?
5. Do you think the words that the son is referring to are symbolic of a greater struggle? Why or why not?
6. At the end of the piece, the deeper meaning behind the title is revealed. What is it?

Discontent
Child/Parent Relationships
Language
Memory
Struggle
Words
Aging

“Fix Me Fine” by Idious Buguise (Fiction, page 103)

1. How does the poet use different pronouns throughout the poem? Why do you think she does this?
2. What are some of the literary devices used in this poem?
3. How does this poem offer different perspectives of one story? How do you interpret these different perspectives?
4. Is this poem different from others you have read? Why or why not?

Broken
Helpless
Longing
Perspective
Speak
Woman

“That Which Remains” by Kathleen Fortin (Nonfiction, page 104)

1. What is the main theme of this story?
2. From what perspective or voice is this non-fiction piece told? How does the language indicate this certain perspective?
3. Give one example of imagery used.
4. Why do you think the husband calls his “shrine” a library? Why does “the name fit”?
5. By the end of the story what has become of the widowed man?

Aging
Confusion
Loss
Love
Memories
Obsession
Photographs
Time

“Monodrama” by Rachel Hadas (Poetry, page 106)

1. How does the poet use voice in this poem?
2. In what different ways does the poet analyze the definition of “monodrama”?
3. How is the poem organized? How does this organization affect what the poem tries to convey?
4. How does this author use historical context?

Application
Definition
Drama

Silence
Voice
Words

“Speech” by Laurie Klein (Poetry, page 107)

1. How does the poet utilize different punctuation? Is this effective? Why or why not?
2. What is the therapist attempting to do? How does the poet convey this?
3. What figurative language is used?
4. How does the title gain significance, if at all, by the end of the poem?
5. How is auditory imagery used in this poem?

Ability
Help
Perseverance
Sound
Try

“A Brief Disclaimer to Whom It May Concern On the Chapter You Are About To Read” by Simon Eskow (Fiction, page 108)

1. How is humor used in this narrative?
2. How does the author utilize characters in this piece?
3. What perspective or point of view does the author try to convey to the reader?
4. How does the author use verisimilitude in his work?
5. How is the contrast between Angela and Princess Ugmo developed? Why are their names themselves significant?
6. What purpose does Mr. Patient’s writing serve for the author? Why?
7. What sort of identity issues are developed throughout the story? How does the author convey these issues?
8. Why is the line “I’m sorry. I only write fiction” both humorous and significant?

Dedication
Fame
Identity
Infatuation

Medication
Relationships
Religion
Writing

“Looking Out the Window of Dunkin’ Donuts, Contemplating McLean Hospital’s Research” by Jessica Harman (Poetry, page 118)

1. How is the poem organized? How does this organization change how the poem is read?
2. How is anthropomorphism used in this poem? Why do you think the poet chose these instances to use this literary device?
3. What does the title tell you about the poem initially? How does this title differ from others you have seen?
4. What does the narrator of the poem tell you about his/her medical condition from the imagery in the poem? Where is this imagery?
5. What can be gathered about the setting from this poem?

Hallucinations
Hospital
Landscape

Misunderstanding
Testing
Treatment

“Evacuation Instructions” by Elliott Holt (Fiction, page 119)

1. How do the section breaks affect the organization of the story?
2. How does the author compare and contrast the husband and wife?
3. In the first scene it is apparent that the husband has a nervous disposition. How is this characteristic of his carried throughout the rest of the narrative?
4. What is the significance of the phrase: “There are few things more comforting than other people’s chaos”? How does this tie into the story’s theme? Is this statement ironic? Why or why not?
5. Find two examples of figurative language.
6. How does the title have both a literal and metaphorical meaning in terms of the story?

Adjusting
Competition
Illness
Living

Love
Marriage
Travel
Understanding

“The Afterlife” by Theresa Burns (Poetry, page 130)

1. How is the character of Ann portrayed in the poem? What words hint to this characterization?
2. How is place used in this poem?
3. From what point of view is the story of Ann being told in the poem? How can you tell?
4. How does the first stanza change how you feel towards Ann throughout the rest of the poem? Does it change your opinion of her at all? Why?
5. What type of question does the poet pose at the end of the poem?

Death
Grief
Living

Memories
Mourning
Routine

Surprise

“Pernicious Anemia” by Willa Elizabeth Schmidt (Nonfiction, page 132)

1. What image does the author give the reader in the first two paragraphs? What effect does this have on the rest of the narrative?
2. How does the writer describe the setting? What is meant by “A line on the face of the prairie, forecast of suburb sprawl”?
3. Why does the term “Ooh la la” catch the young girl’s attention?
4. How does the death of the girl’s mother affect her father? How can you tell by the language used?
5. Why do you think the narrator find it impossible to picture Harriet Green living in their house? (page 136)
6. Why is Harriet classified as “A born misfit?”
7. What thought is the reader left with by the end of the story?

Disappearing
Foreign
Friends
Hardship

Illness
Loneliness
Mystery
Visiting

“On the Watch” by Ian G. Dorward (Fiction, page 138)

1. From what point of view is the story being told? How can you tell?
2. How is the wound described? What language is used?
3. What was your reaction to the story? Why do you think you reacted this way?
4. How is the title a play on words?
5. How is the timeline of the story set up? How does this change the way the story is formed?

Blood
Family
Hospital
Operation

Stress
Numbness
Time
Wound

“Gathering Maple” by Nora Delaney (Poetry, page 140)

1. What is being referred to as “they” in the opening line? How can you tell this from what follows?
2. What is significant about the title of this poem? What extra information does it give the reader?
3. How is setting described in this poem?
4. Describe the tone of the poem.
5. Why is color an integral part of the poem?

Blindness
Color
Reminiscing
Seasons

Tradition
Trees
Wonder

“Where God Must Sleep” by Patrick Carrington (Poetry, page 141)

1. How does setting play an important role in this poem?
2. What is this poem about?
3. What type of figurative language is used?
4. What is meant by “but [it’s] the mandate of the city that soaks them, its bias against bad luck”?
5. How is the poem organized?
6. What point of view is the poem being told from? How can you tell?
7. Why does the narrator feel “relief when they wake”?
8. Why do you think the title is “Where God Must Sleep”?

Familiarity

Religion

Sleep

Thankfulness

Weather

“Symptoms” by Louise Aronson (Fiction, page 142)

1. What relationship is being discussed and analyzed in the story? How can you tell? How would you describe this relationship?
2. Describe the reason behind the husband and wife’s competition.
3. How is the couple’s daughter described?
4. From what point of view is the story being told?
5. What is suggested when the husband describes the difference between a man and woman quitting their job?
6. How is the husband portrayed throughout this story? Why is the wife referred to as “the wife of the psychiatrist”? How does this affect how their relationship is described?
7. How do the lists contribute to the narrative structure of the story? What purpose do they serve?
8. What purpose do the two anecdotes of the art openings serve? What deeper meaning do they have in connection to the story, if any?
9. How are the paragraphs split up? What effect does this have on the story?
10. How is the setting described and how is it important to this story?
11. Why does “the wife of the psychiatrist” need to be a doctor?
12. What is the symbolism of the “ebony” man’s scar? What is meant when the wife wants to have a scar for the world to see?
13. How does the story end?

Adolescence

Alcoholism

Awards

Delusional

Diagnosing

Profession

Vacation

Work