

NAME _____ DATE: _____
PERIOD _____ TEACHER _____

Lesson 2: POETRY and HOME

A poem’s urgency grabs your attention with the very first line, then leaves you breathless by the time you reach the ending. A poem arrives with authority.

A poem has a particular point of view. Many poets write in the first person singular (from the “I”) point of view.

A poem does not have to be “true,” but it must always seek truth. In other words, the facts of the poem can be made up, but the human experience must be real. A poet is always in search of our shared humanity, of what makes us human.

EXERCISE No. 1: Review

What three types of artists does a poet need to be?

What does a poem reveal? What three elements does a poet use to reveal this?

What kind of language is poetry?

What do you call a paragraph in poetry? What do you call each unit of language in a poem?

What do you call the use of words that begin with the same letter in the same line?

EXERCISE No. 2: Vocabulary and Definitions

vocation: 1. A regular occupation or profession, especially one for which a person is particularly suited or qualified. 2. An urge to undertake a certain kind of work; a calling.

groove: 1. A long, narrow furrow or channel. 2. A situation or activity to which one is especially well suited; niche.

meadowlarks: Any bird of the genus *Sturnella* noted for its song.

Write the definition of any other words you don’t recognize.

Vocation

By: William Stafford
from *Traveling Through the Dark*

This dream the world is having about itself
includes a trace on the plains of the Oregon trail,
a groove in the grass my father showed us all
one day while meadowlarks were trying to tell
something better about to happen.

I dreamed the trace to the mountains, over the hills,
and there a girl who belonged wherever she was.
But then my mother called us back to the car:
She was afraid; she always blamed the place,
the time, anything my father planned.

Now both of my parents, the long line through the plain,
the meadowlarks, the sky, the world's whole dream
remain, and I hear him say while I stand between the two,
helpless, both of them part of me:
"Your job is to find what the word is trying to be."

EXERCISE No. 3: Point of View, Imagery, and Endings

In “Vocation” by William Stafford, who is speaking in this poem? What point of view is this? Is this an autobiographical poem? Is this poem true? What is the difference between the two?

How does this poem begin? How does it end? What is the relationship between the poem’s opening and closing? How does the poem arrive at its ending?

How does Stafford grab your attention as the poem opens? What other images (or “word-pictures”) does Stafford “paint” to keep your attention?

How are the dreams in the poem related? How do they shape the poem?

What does it mean to belong? What does it mean to feel at home? What does Stafford mean by “a girl who belonged wherever she was”? When do you feel at home?

What does author mean? What does authority mean? What is the relationship between author and authority? Does this poem end with authority? Whose?

Why do you think William Stafford’s poem is called “Vocation”?

EXERCISE No. 4

Fill in the blanks below with information about belonging and family.

List 3 places where you belong and feel at home:

- 1) _____
- 2) _____
- 3) _____

Choose one place and describe how it looks, smells, feels, sounds, tastes:

Write 3 things you believe strongly about this place.

- 1) _____
- 2) _____
- 3) _____

Imagine being in this place with your family. What would you be doing? What would they be doing?

Write one thing you would like to say *with authority* to your family about this place where you belong.
