

The Gift

Poem by Li-Young Lee

Those Winter Sundays

Poem by Robert Hayden

How do you show you **CARE?**

COMMON CORE

RL1 Cite evidence to support inferences drawn from the text.
RL10 Read and comprehend poems.

Sometimes the most vivid memories are of ordinary events—for example, a relative tying your shoelaces when you were a child or cooking a favorite meal. What makes such moments special are the feelings you associate with them. In “The Gift” and “Those Winter Sundays,” the speakers recall how their fathers showed love through simple acts of caring.

QUICKWRITE Make a list of ordinary events or routines that you remember from childhood. Then write a paragraph about one item on the list, explaining why the memory is meaningful to you.

Childhood Memories

1. Visiting grandparents
2. Setting the dinner table
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.



TEXT ANALYSIS: CHARACTERS IN POETRY

Characters in poetry are often created with **imagery**—words and phrases that appeal to the reader’s senses. By using imagery, poets can create a vivid character in just a few words. For example, in “Those Winter Sundays,” the speaker offers the following image of his father:

*... cracked hands that ached
from labor in the weekday weather...*

This phrase not only suggests the father’s physical appearance but also hints at his personality and the hardship he endures.

As you read the two poems, notice the imagery each poet uses to create a character. Look for words that describe the character’s

- appearance
- feelings or thoughts
- actions or behavior
- character traits

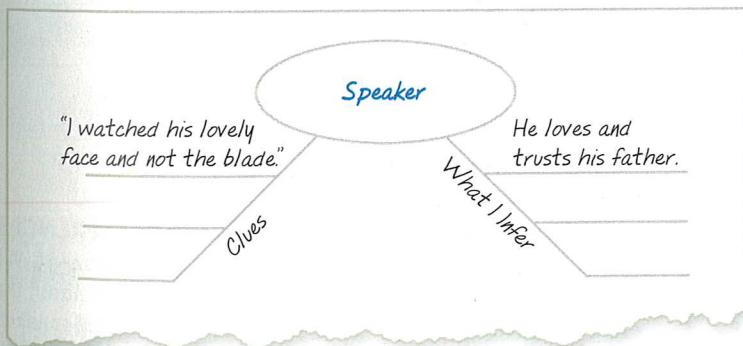
READING SKILL: MAKE INFERENCES ABOUT THE SPEAKER


To learn more about the speaker of a poem, readers can **make inferences**, or logical guesses based on clues in the text. For example, in “The Gift” the speaker describes how he reacted when his father began to remove a splinter from his palm.

*To pull the metal splinter from my palm
my father recited a story in a low voice.
I watched his lovely face and not the blade.*

You may infer from details in these lines that the speaker trusts his father and that they have a loving relationship.

As you read each poem, use a diagram like the one shown to help you organize inferences about the speaker.



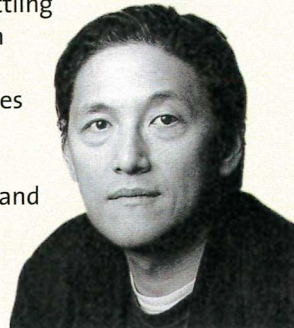
 Complete the activities in your Reader/Writer Notebook.

Li-Young Lee

born 1957

A Search for Identity

Li-Young Lee (lē-yŭng lē) was born in Indonesia, where his parents took refuge after fleeing from China. The Indonesian government imprisoned Lee’s father in 1958 during a period of anti-Chinese persecution. After his release, the family lived in several Asian countries before settling in the United States when Lee was seven years old. Lee’s childhood experiences have a strong influence on his poetry. He often writes about immigrants and examines the role that family and memory play in shaping identity.

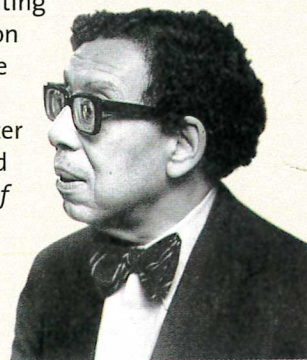


Robert Hayden

1913–1980

Poetry as Refuge

Robert Hayden grew up in a poor neighborhood in Detroit, Michigan. He was raised by neighbors from an early age after his biological parents separated. Although Hayden’s foster parents made sacrifices for his education, their troubled marriage fueled spells of depression in him. Hayden sought escape from his “dark nights of the soul” by reading and writing poetry. His first collection came out in 1940 to little fanfare. However, by 1962, when “Those Winter Sundays” was published in the volume *A Ballad of Remembrance*, Hayden was on his way to becoming a prominent poet.



Authors Online

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The Gift

LI-YOUNG LEE

To pull the metal splinter from my palm
my father recited a story in a low voice.
I watched his lovely face and not the blade.
Before the story ended, he'd removed
5 the iron sliver I thought I'd die from.

I can't remember the tale,
but hear his voice still, a well
of dark water, a prayer.
And I recall his hands,
10 two measures of tenderness
he laid against my face,
the flames of discipline
he raised above my head. **A**

Had you entered that afternoon
15 you would have thought you saw a man
planting something in a boy's palm,
a silver tear, a tiny flame.
Had you followed that boy
you would have arrived here,
20 where I bend over my wife's right hand.

Look how I shave her thumbnail down
so carefully she feels no pain.
Watch as I lift the splinter out.
I was seven when my father
25 took my hand like this,
and I did not hold that shard
between my fingers and think,
Metal that will bury me,
christen it Little Assassin,
30 Ore Going Deep for My Heart.
And I did not lift up my wound and cry,
Death visited here!
I did what a child does
when he's given something to keep.
35 I kissed my father. **B**

Analyze Visuals ▶

How does this painting reflect the **mood** of the poem?

A CHARACTERS IN POETRY

What do you learn about the father from **images** in this stanza?

B MAKE INFERENCES

Reread lines 24–35. What can you infer about the feelings of the **speaker** after his father removes the splinter?

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Those Winter Sundays

ROBERT HAYDEN

Sundays too my father got up early
and put his clothes on in the blueblack cold,
then with cracked hands that ached
from labor in the weekday weather made
5 banked fires blaze. No one ever thanked him.

I'd wake and hear the cold splintering, breaking.
When the rooms were warm, he'd call,
and slowly I would rise and dress,
fearing the chronic angers of that house, **C**

- 10 Speaking indifferently to him,
who had driven out the cold
and polished my good shoes as well.
What did I know, what did I know
of love's austere and lonely offices?



Vigour, Martine Levy. Musée d'Art Moderne, Troyes, France. Photo © Gerard Blot/
Réunion des Musées Nationaux/Art Resource, New York.

C MAKE INFERENCES

What can you infer about the **speaker's** attitude toward his family from clues in lines 1–9? Which details did you use to make this inference?

Comprehension

1. **Recall** What two incidents are described in “The Gift”?
2. **Recall** What does the speaker recall his father doing in “Those Winter Sundays”?
3. **Summarize** How does each speaker react to his father’s act of caring?

COMMON CORE

RL.1 Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support inferences drawn from the text.
 RL.10 Read and comprehend poems.

Text Analysis

- 4. **Examine Characters in Poetry** Fill in a chart like the one shown with details that suggest the traits of the father in each poem. Then write a sentence describing each of these characters.

<i>Father's Traits</i>	<i>“The Gift”</i>	<i>“Those Winter Sundays”</i>
<i>Physical traits</i>		
<i>Personality traits</i>		

- 5. **Analyze Title** Why might Li-Young Lee have chosen to call his poem “The Gift”?
- 6. **Interpret** Reread the last two lines of “Those Winter Sundays.” What does the speaker mean when he refers to “love’s austere and lonely offices”?
- 7. **Make Inferences** Review the charts you created as you read. Based on your inferences, how would you characterize the father-son relationship in each poem?
- 8. **Compare and Contrast Speakers** Compare and contrast the attitudes of the speakers toward the experiences they describe in the poems.
- 9. **Analyze Author’s Perspective** Both of the speakers are adults who look back on experiences from their childhood. How does this perspective influence the way each speaker views his experience?

Text Criticism

- 10. **Critical Interpretations** The poet Gerald Stern has spoken of “the large vision, the deep seriousness and the almost heroic ideal” in Li-Young Lee’s poetry. How well does this phrase describe Lee’s poem “The Gift”? Cite evidence from the text to support your opinion.

How do you show you CARE?

How could you show your feelings for someone who took care of you in childhood?