

Before Reading

There Will Come Soft Rains

Poem by Sara Teasdale

Meeting at Night

Poem by Robert Browning

The Sound of Night

Poem by Maxine Kumin

What is our place in NATURE?

COMMON CORE

RL 4 Analyze the cumulative impact of specific word choices on meaning. **RL 5** Analyze an author's choices concerning how to structure a text. **RL 10** Read and comprehend poems.

L 4b Identify and correctly use patterns of word changes that indicate different meanings or parts of speech.

Are humans more powerful than nature? Think of how we change landscapes, drive other species to extinction, and otherwise use nature for our own ends. Or are humans insignificant in the face of nature's power?

DISCUSS Think about a recent encounter you had with nature. What attitude did you express—admiration? indifference? In a small group, discuss your overall attitudes toward nature.

Meet the Authors

TEXT ANALYSIS: SOUND DEVICES

One common sound device used in poetry is **rhyme**, the repetition of sounds at the ends of words. **End rhyme** is rhyme at the ends of lines, as in this excerpt:

*Whose woods these are I think I know.
His house is in the village though.*

Another sound device is **alliteration**, the repetition of consonant sounds at the beginnings of words, as in *Droning a drowsy syncopated tune*.

Still another sound device is **onomatopoeia**, the use of words that imitate sounds, as in *The buzz saw snarled and rattled in the yard*. As you read the following poems about nature, notice their sound devices. Record examples on a chart.

Title	End Rhyme	Alliteration	Onomatopoeia
"There Will Come Soft Rains"	ground / sound (lines 1 and 2)		

READING STRATEGY: READING POETRY

Reading poetry requires paying attention not only to the meaning of the words but to the way they look and sound. The following strategies will help you.

- Notice how the lines are arranged on the page. Are they long lines, or short? Are they grouped into regular **stanzas** or irregular stanzas, or are they not divided into stanzas at all? Stanza breaks usually signal the start of a new idea.
- Pause in your reading where punctuation marks appear, just as you would when reading prose. Note that in poetry, punctuation does not always occur at the end of a line; a thought may continue for several lines.
- Read a poem aloud several times. As you read, notice whether the rhythm is regular or varied. Is there a **rhyme scheme**, or regular pattern of end rhyme? For example, you'll notice that "There Will Come Soft Rains" is written in **couplets**, two-line units with an *aa* rhyme scheme. Regular patterns of rhythm and rhyme give a musical quality to poems.

Review: Make Inferences



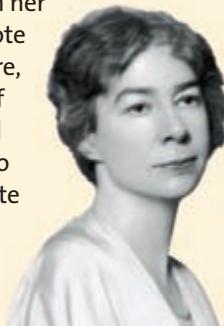
Complete the activities in your Reader/Writer Notebook.

Sara Teasdale

1884–1933

Love and War

Sara Teasdale explored the topic of love in all of its aspects. Drawing on her own experiences, she wrote about the beauty, pleasure, fragility, and heartache of love in exquisitely crafted lyric poems. In reaction to World War I, she also wrote antiwar poems, such as "There Will Come Soft Rains."

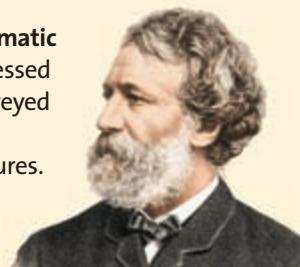


Robert Browning

1812–1889

Painter of Portraits

Robert Browning was a master at capturing psychological complexity. Using the **dramatic monologue**, a poem addressed to a silent listener, he conveyed the personalities of both fictional and historical figures. "Meeting at Night" is one of his shorter lyric poems.



Maxine Kumin

born 1925

Poet of Place

The poetry of Maxine Kumin is rooted in New England rural life. Using traditional verse forms, Kumin explores changes in nature, people's relationship to the land and its creatures, and human mortality, loss, and survival.



Authors Online

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There Will Come Soft Rains

Sara Teasdale

There will come soft rains and the smell of the ground,
And swallows circling with their shimmering sound; **A**

And frogs in the pools singing at night,
And wild plum-trees in tremulous white;

5 Robins will wear their feathery fire
Whistling their whims on a low fence-wire; **B**

And not one will know of the war, not one
Will care at last when it is done.

Not one would mind, neither bird nor tree
10 If mankind perished utterly;

And Spring herself, when she woke at dawn,
Would scarcely know that we were gone.

A READING POETRY

Read the first stanza aloud. Notice that it is a rhymed **couplet**. What expectations are set up by this **end rhyme**?

B SOUND DEVICES

What examples of **alliteration** can you identify in lines 1–6?

Analyze
Visuals ▶

What overall feeling do you get from this landscape?

Spring Landscape (1909),
Constant Permeke. Constant
Permeke Museum, Jabbeke, Belgium.
© 2008 Artists Rights Society (ARS),
New York/SABAM, Brussels.





Moonrise (1906), Guillermo Gomez y Gil. Oil on canvas. Musée des Beaux-Arts, Pau, France. Photo © Giraudon/Bridgeman Art Library.

Meeting at Night

Robert Browning

1

The gray sea and the long black land;
And the yellow half-moon large and low;
And the startled little waves that leap
In fiery ringlets from their sleep,
5 As I gain the cove¹ with pushing prow,²
And quench its speed i' the slushy sand. **C**

2

Then a mile of warm sea-scented beach;
Three fields to cross till a farm appears;
A tap at the pane, the quick sharp scratch
10 And blue spurt of a lighted match,
And a voice less loud, through its joys and fears,
Than the two hearts beating each to each! **D**

C READING POETRY

Read the first stanza aloud. What **rhyme scheme** do you notice?

D MAKE INFERENCES

Where does the speaker arrive, and what happens once he is there?

1. **cove**: a small, partly enclosed body of water.

2. **prow** (prou): the front part of a boat.

The Sound of Night

Maxine Kumin

And now the dark comes on, all full of chitter noise.
Birds huggermugger¹ crowd the trees,
the air thick with their vesper² cries,
and bats, snub seven-pointed kites,
5 skitter across the lake, swing out,
squeak, chirp, dip, and skim on skates
of air, and the fat frogs wake and prink
wide-lipped, noisy as ducks, drunk
on the boozy black, gloating chink-chunk. E

10 And now on the narrow beach we defend ourselves from dark.
The cooking done, we build our firework
bright and hot and less for outlook
than for magic, and lie in our blankets
while night nickers around us. Crickets
15 chorus hallelujahs; paws, quiet
and quick as raindrops, play on the stones
expertly soft, run past and are gone;
fish pulse in the lake; the frogs hoarsen.

Now every voice of the hour—the known, the supposed, the strange,
20 the mindless, the witted, the never seen—
sing, thrum, impinge,³ and rearrange
endlessly; and debarred⁴ from sleep we wait
for the birds, importantly silent,
for the crease of first eye-licking light,
25 for the sun, lost long ago and sweet.
By the lake, locked black away and tight,
we lie, day creatures, overhearing night.



Trees at Night (c. 1900), Thomas Meteyard. Berry Hill Gallery, New York. Photo © Edward Owen/Art Resource, New York.

SOUND DEVICES

What examples of **onomatopoeia** can you identify in the first stanza? What do they add to the poem?

COMMON CORE L 4b

Language Coach

Affixes An affix at the end of a word is a **suffix**. The suffix **-en**, meaning “to become,” makes a verb when added to an adjective. In line 18, **hoarsen** is made from **-en** and what adjective? What does this new verb mean?

1. **huggermugger:** disorderly.

2. **vesper:** pertaining to the evening; a type of swallow that sings in the evening.

3. **impinge** (im-pīng'): to strike or push upon.

4. **debarred:** prevented or hindered.

Comprehension

COMMON CORE

- Clarify** According to the speaker in Teasdale's poem, how would the natural world react if "mankind perished utterly"?
- Clarify** Whom does the speaker in Browning's poem meet when he arrives at his destination?
- Clarify** What time and place are described in Kumin's poem?

RL 4 Analyze the cumulative impact of specific word choices on meaning. RL 5 Analyze an author's choices concerning how to structure a text. RL 10 Read and comprehend poems.

Text Analysis

- 4. **Reading Poetry** Which poem did you appreciate most when read aloud? Explain the qualities that were brought out in an oral reading.
- 5. **Analyze Rhyme** Describe how **end rhyme** is used in each poem. Which poems employ a regular **rhyme scheme**? What ideas are emphasized through end rhyme? Use a chart like the one shown to plan your answer.

	Rhyme Scheme	Important Rhyming Words
"There Will Come Soft Rains"		
"Meeting at Night"		
"The Sound of Night"		

6. **Recognize Alliteration** Which poem makes the most obvious use of alliteration? What feelings or ideas are suggested by these repeated consonant sounds?
7. **Relate Theme and Sound Devices** Describe the qualities of nature conveyed in each poem. How are sound devices used to suggest these qualities? Refer to your sound devices chart to plan your answer.
8. **Draw Conclusions** What does each poem suggest about humans and nature?

Text Criticism

9. **Critical Interpretations** According to one critic, Teasdale's poetry "expresses the fragility of human life where the only real certainty comes from nature." How does this comment apply to "There Will Come Soft Rains"?

What is our place in NATURE?

Do you think humans are part of nature? Why or why not?

Language

◆ GRAMMAR AND STYLE: Use Precise Language

It is important for writers to choose words that effectively express the rhythm, sound, and imagery they wish to convey to their audience. Notice how Maxine Kumin's use of **precise verbs** in "The Sound of Night" makes the description livelier and more specific than if she had used verbs such as "fly" or "communicate."

*and bats, snub seven-pointed kites,
skitter across the lake, swing out,
squeak, chirp, dip, and skim on skates
of air . . . (lines 4–7)*

Careful consideration of word choice can be given to all types of writing, not just poetry. Notice that the revisions in blue are precise verbs that enhance the description in this first draft. Revise your response to the prompt by changing any dull, general verbs to more precise ones.

STUDENT MODEL

In "There Will Come Soft Rains," Sara Teasdale ~~asks~~^{urges} us to consider that ~~annihilated~~ nature will go on long after humans have ~~done away with~~ themselves.

COMMON CORE

W 9a (RL 2) Draw evidence from literary texts to support analysis; determine a theme and how it is refined by specific details.

L3 Apply knowledge of language to make effective choices for meaning or style.

READING-WRITING CONNECTION



Broaden your understanding of the poems by responding to this prompt. Then use the **revising tip** to improve your writing.

WRITING PROMPT

Extended Constructed Response: Interpret
Write three-to-five paragraphs comparing and contrasting the themes of each poem. In your response, consider the figurative language used in each poem. How does the figurative language reflect the time and place in which the poem was written and help illustrate its theme?

REVISING TIP

Review your response. Did you use precise language to enhance your comparisons? If not, revise your essay to include precise verbs.

Interactive Revision

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