

Literary Reading Work Sample (Grades 7-8)*

Introduction

Please read the following poem and answer the questions below. Be sure to re-read carefully and to restate the questions in your answers. Use correct conventions (spelling, capitalization, punctuation) and clear word choice. Prove your explanations and answers by quoting the text of the poem.

[William Stafford](#) (1914-1993) lived in Kansas and then moved to Oregon where he taught for many years. This is one of his most famous poems and it always generates controversy. Use the words on the page to get to what you think it means while you read and write about the questions below.

Traveling through the Dark

Traveling through the dark I found a deer
dead on the edge of the [Wilson River](#) road.

It is usually best to roll them into the canyon:
that road is narrow; to [swerve](#) might make more dead.

By glow of the tail-light I stumbled back of the car
and stood by the [heap](#), a [doe](#), a recent killing;
she had [stiffened](#) already, almost cold.
I dragged her off; she was large in the belly.

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My fingers touching her side brought me the reason—
her side was warm; her [fawn](#) lay there waiting,

10
alive, still, never to be born.
Beside that mountain road I [hesitated](#).

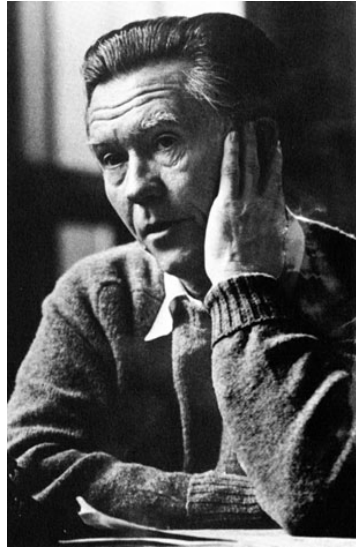
The car aimed ahead its lowered parking lights;
under the hood purred the steady engine.
I stood in the [glare](#) of the warm [exhaust](#) turning red;
around our group I could hear the [wilderness](#) listen.

15

I thought hard for us all—my only swerving—,
then pushed her over the edge into the river.

William E. Stafford

Source: *The Way It Is: New and Selected Poems* (Graywolf Press, 1998).



William Stafford [Image Citation](#) Oregon [Image Citation](#)

Directions: Please make a copy (File>Make a Copy . . .) of this document and re-title it with your name and "Traveling" (ex. SharonTraveling). Answer each question thoughtfully and completely. You may use online references as well as your own vocabulary list. Good luck and have some fun with it!

Demonstrate Understanding • Getting the Gist (Comprehension)

1. Write a summary of this poem. What are the main ideas and events? Be sure to describe them using evidence from the poem.
2. Getting the gist includes thoughts and feelings of characters, or, in this case, the speaker. Describe how you think the speaker feels throughout the poem. Refer to specific words and passages to support your opinions.
3. Did this poem end like you expected it to? Explain why you think the author ended the poem this way.

Develop an Interpretation • Reading between the Lines (Extending Understanding)

1. Explain what you think the main idea, or theme, of this poem is. What overall message about life do you get from this poem?

2. Make connections between the events and/or themes in this poem to another experience you have had or seen, read, or heard about (this can be something that happened to you, or something from a book, movie, television show, play, etc.). Be sure to refer to the differences and similarities between the other experience and the one in the poem.

Insert 2 images in your response: one that represents something in the poem and one that represents the experience you chose.

3. Explain what you think people should do in situations like the one the speaker faces? Explain why you think as you do.

Analyze Text • Looking at the Author's Craft (Text Analysis)

1. Copy down a line of personification in this poem. Explain how the author made something not alive come to life.

2. Read the poem and its title again. Explain why you think the author chose that title for this poem.

3. Choose an example of imagery in this poem and explain it. How does it add to the overall meaning, theme, of the poem.

Almost finished? Please, go back and PROOFREAD! Also, use a checklist to make sure you have fully demonstrated your understanding of the poem--and that you tried your best.

Be sure to **SHARE your Google doc** with me. Thanks.

*This sample may be adapted for grades 6,7,8. The intent is for this to be the culmination of a unit about poetry including literary analysis or a year-end writing. Students should have had practice with figurative language and writing their own opinions using supporting details.

This is formatted for sharing through Google docs.