**Anecdote of the Jar**

Wallace Stevens

I placed a jar in Tennessee,

And round it was, upon a hill.

It made the slovenly wilderness

Surround that hill.

The wilderness rose up to it,

And sprawled around, no longer wild.

The jar was round upon the ground

And tall and of a port in air.

It took dominion everywhere.

The jar was gray and bare.

It did not give of bird or bush,

Like nothing else in Tennessee.

**Disillusionment of Ten o'clock**

Wallace Stevens

The houses are haunted

By white night-gowns.

None are green,

Or purple with green rings,

Or green with yellow rings,

Or yellow with blue rings.

None of them are strange,

With socks of lace

And beaded ceintures.°

People are not going

To dream of baboons and periwinkles.°

Only, here and there, an old sailor,

Drunk and asleep in his boots,

Catches tigers

In red weather.

**Making Meanings**

**Anecdote of the Jar / Disillusionment of Ten o'clock**

1. Read “Anecdote of the Jar” and “Disillusionment of Ten O’Clock” at least twice. After each reading, write down what you think each poem is about. Exchange your ideas with a partner. How similar are your statements about the poems?

**Anecdote of the Jar**

2. Describe what the speaker does in the first stanza. What adjective does the speaker use to describe the jar? How does he describe the wilderness in which he places the jar?

3. In the second stanza, what effect does the jar have on the wilderness?

4. What does the jar “not give” in the last stanza?

5. Some critics say that the jar is a metaphor for the poet’s act of imagination in creating this poem, or for the poem itself. Do you agree with either interpretation? Why or why not? What else could the jar stand for?

6. If the jar stands for the poet’s art (or for any kind of art), what is the “wilderness” that the jar has “dominion” or control over?

7. Some other critics think the jar is a metaphor for human interference with nature. Reread the poem and see if you could justify this interpretation.

**Disillusionment of Ten o'clock**

8. Describe the nightgowns that do not haunt the houses.

9. What won’t the people in these houses dream about?

10. Why do you suppose the poet says that the houses are “haunted” by white nightgowns?

11. What is the speaker implying about the old sailor, based on the sailor's dream? How does the sailor contrast with the other people?

12. What could the “disillusionment” of the title refer to? (What does the speaker expect? What does he discover?)

13. List other fantastic things that these people will never dream about.

Choices

1. Collecting Ideas for an Interpretive Essay

Use the following questions to analyze any poem in this collection. then, freewrite a paragraph explaining how literary elements work together to help create the poem's meaning.

1. What is the subject of the poem?
2. What is the tone of the poem?
3. What images does the poet use?
4. What figures of speech does the poem contain?
5. What symbols does the poem contain?
6. How does the poem use rhyme, meter, and other sound effects?
7. Which elements are most important in the poem? Which are least important?
8. What does the poem's title mean?
9. What is the poem's theme?
10. What is your emotional response to the text?

2. Imagination: Necessary?

Write an essay about people's imaginative lives today. Where is imagination needed? How can imagination be nourished? How do children lose their imaginations? If you wish, refer to Stevens's poems to make your point.

**Poetry**

Marianne Moore

I, too, dislike it: there are things that are important beyond all this fiddle.°

Reading it, however, with a perfect contempt for it, one discovers in

it after all, a place for the genuine.

Hands that can grasp, eyes

that can dilate, hair that can rise

if it must, these things are important not because a

high-sounding interpretation can be put upon them but because they are

useful. When they become so derivative° as to become unintelligible,

the same thing may be said for all of us, that we

do not admire what

we cannot understand: the bat

holding on upside down or in quest of something to

eat, elephants pushing, a wild horse taking a roll, a tireless wolf under

a tree, the immovable critic twitching his skin like a horse that feels a flea, the base

ball fan, the statistician—

nor is it valid

to discriminate against “business documents and

school-books”; all these phenomena are important. One must make a distinction

however: when dragged into prominence by half poets, the result is not poetry,

nor till the poets among us can be

‘literalists of

the imagination’—above

insolence and triviality and can present

for inspection, “imaginary gardens with real toads in them,” shall we have

it. In the meantime, if you demand on the one hand,

the raw material of poetry in

all its rawness and

that which is on the other hand

genuine, then you are interested in poetry.

**Making Meanings**

**Poetry**

1. How do you feel about poetry? Do you agree with Moore about what “real” poetry is? Review the notes you made in your Quickwrite.

2. Whom do you think Moore is addressing in this poem?

3. What kind of poetry does Moore dislike?

4. What elements does Moore think useful poetry should contain?

5. Moore says “literalists of the imagination” are necessary for true poetry. What do you think she means? How is this idea related to those “imaginary gardens with real toads in them”?

6. Identify the end rhymes of the fourth and fifth lines of stanzas 1, 2, 4, and 5. Which are exact rhymes, and which are slant rhymes?

7. List five experiences from your life that Moore would consider the “raw material of poetry.”

Choices

1. Collecting Ideas for an Interpretive Essay

In your own words, paraphrase Moore's criteria for good poetry as stated in her poem. Which of these criteria would you apply to your own interpretation of a poem? Which of the criteria would you change or expand?

2. Poems about Poetry

In a brief essay, compare Marianne Moore's ideas about poetry with Archibald MacLeish's ideas in "Ars Poetica" (page 789) or with Wallace Stevens's in "Of Modern Poetry" (page 790). What does each poet require in a poem? What do their descriptions of poetry have in common? For another poem on poetry, try Dickinson's "Tell all the Truth..." on page 386.

3. Letter to a Poet

Write a letter to Marianne Moore, describing your response to "Poetry." Cite specific passages from her poem.

4. Poetry Is...

The most famous line in this poem is the one that says poetry should show us "imaginary gardens with real toads in them." Write your own list of what poetry is. Start with the words "Poetry is."

5. Moore's Method

Marianne Moore often used information that she took from science and nature publications. Look through nature magazines or journals, and find an article that includes illustrations of animals, insects, birds, or fish that interest you. Write a poem about your chosen subject. Incorporate questions from the article into your poem.

6. "Poetry" Reading

With a partner, take turns reading "Poetry" aloud. Pay attention to line and stanza breaks and to the alternation of long and short lines. Note also the punctuation: Where would you read quickly, and where would you slow down for emphasis?

**Chicago**

Carl Sandburg

Hog Butcher for the World,

Tool Maker, Stacker of Wheat,

Player with Railroads and the Nation’s Freight Handler;

Stormy, husky, brawling,

City of the Big Shoulders:

They tell me you are wicked and I believe them, for I have

seen your painted women under the gas lamps luring the

farm boys.

And they tell me you are crooked and I answer: Yes, it is true I

have seen the gunman kill and go free to kill again.

And they tell me you are brutal and my reply is: On the faces

of women and children I have seen the marks of wanton

hunger.

And having answered so I turn once more to those who sneer

at this my city, and I give them back the sneer and say to

them:

Come and show me another city with lifted head singing so

proud to be alive and coarse and strong and cunning.

Flinging magnetic curses amid the toil of piling job on job,

here is a tall bold slugger set vivid against the little soft

cities;

Fierce as a dog with tongue lapping for action, cunning as a

savage pitted against the wilderness,

Bareheaded,

Shoveling,

Wrecking,

Planning,

Building, breaking, rebuilding.

Under the smoke, dust all over his mouth, laughing with white

teeth,

Under the terrible burden of destiny laughing as a young man

laughs,

Laughing even as an ignorant fighter laughs who has never lost

a battle,

Bragging and laughing that under his wrist is the pulse, and

under his ribs the heart of the people,

Laughing!

Laughing the stormy, husky, brawling laughter of Youth, half-

naked, sweating, proud to be Hog Butcher, Tool Maker,

Stacker of Wheat, Player with Railroads and Freight Handler

to the Nation.

**Making Meanings**

**Chicago**

1. How does Sandburg make you feel about the city he describes?

2. Sandburg opens with a series of epithets, or descriptive phrases, about Chicago. What does each of these epithets reveal about the city and the various activities that make up its economy?

3. What do “they” tell the speaker about Chicago? What is the speaker’s answer to each of these comments about the city?

4. Many different images contribute to this portrait of Chicago, but its central image is never named. To what is Chicago really being compared? How is this image introduced and extended?

5. What are the city’s main strengths and main weaknesses, according to Sandburg? What seems to be the poet’s attitude toward the city?

6. Which features of Chicago do you think have changed since this poem was written in 1914?

7. What would you say to those critics who have claimed that Sandburg’s poetry is full of bluster and proclamation at the expense of thought?

Choices

1. Collecting Ideas for an Interpretive Essay

Reread Walt Whitman's "I Hear America Singing" (page 352). Then, write some notes comparing and contrasting Whitman's poem with Sandburg's "Chicago." Gather your data in a chart (subject, imagery, figures of speech, rhythm, catalogs of details, slang and colloquial language, and tone).

2. Apt Epithets

Review the epithets Sandburg uses in addressing Chicago in the opening stanza. Then choose a city, town, or other area you know well. Write an apostrophe - a direct address to an inanimate object - using at least five epithets about the place you have chose.

3. Sing It Out

Prepare this famous poem for a group performance. Your first task will be to decide how many speakers you will need and whether you will use a group of voices to recite some passages. You will also want to decide whether you will use sound effects, even music. Perform the poem for your class.

4. Chicago Illustrated

Using pictures from magazines and newspapers, create a collage to illustrate Sandburg's "Chicago." Look for references to specific images in the poem as you select drawings and photographs for the collage.