

Analyzing and Summarizing

Name _____

1. Read the Summary. Circle and connect the parts of the poem and the summary. Underline anything in the poem not mentioned in the summary.
2. Read the Analysis Circle anything that's an inference. Underline anything directly from the text. Analyze it for Schaffer completeness

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
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,
two measures of tenderness
he laid against my face,
the flames of discipline
he raised above my head.

Had you entered that afternoon
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,
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
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,
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.
I kissed my father.

Summary

The poem "The Gift" tells the story of a young boy whose father is removing a splinter from his hand. The boy watches the father's face as he pulls the splinter out, and then the father puts the splinter in his son's hand as a gift. The boy also thinks about his father's hands and how they could show both tenderness and discipline. Finally, the boy takes a splinter from his wife's hand. He shaves her thumbnail down and pulls the splinter out.

Analysis

The poem "The Gift" tells the story of a young boy whose father is removing a splinter from his hand. It is a poem about the fact that everyday events like pulling a splinter out can be in fact gifts, and the poem accomplishes this by highlighting apparent opposites. To begin with, the act of pulling a splinter out of the hand is inherently violent, but the poem creates a tenderness about it. The speaker tells us that instead of focusing on the painful act of pulling the splinter out, he "watched his [father's] lovely face" and listened as his father "recited a story in a low voice." His father's face and voice were calming, and this was undoubtedly helped turn the situation into a calm memory later in life. In fact, instead of being a violent act, this is only a tender moment.