

A Blessing

By James Wright

Just off the highway to Rochester, Minnesota,
Twilight bounds softly forth on the grass.
And the eyes of those two Indian ponies
Darken with kindness.
They have come gladly out of the willows
To welcome my friend and me.

In these first 6 lines, identify two good examples of imagery or showing. With your partner, use what you have learned about showing and be ready to justify how you know what you have identified are examples of showing and not telling.

We step over the barbed wire into the pasture
Where they have been grazing all day, alone.
They ripple tensely, they can hardly contain their happiness
That we have come.
They bow shyly as wet swans. They love each other.
There is no loneliness like theirs.

The poet comes right out tells us here that the ponies are happy.
One good example of showing in this group of lines, however, is when the poet writes, "They bow shyly as wet swans." With your partner, answer the following questions: 1) What picture does this image create for you? 2) And what do you think we are supposed to know and feel about these ponies here?

At home once more,
They begin munching the young tufts of spring in the darkness.
I would like to hold the slenderer one in my arms,
For she has walked over to me
And nuzzled my left hand.
She is black and white,
Her mane falls wild on her forehead,
And the light breeze moves me to caress her long ear
That is delicate as the skin over a girl's wrist.

With your partner, identify two good examples of showing. Remember that when poets show, they appeal to one or more of our five senses (seeing, hearing, tasting, smelling, touching). Be prepared to explain what senses the poet appeals to here and how we are supposed to think and feel about the ponies at this point in the poem.

Suddenly I realize
That if I stepped out of my body I would break
Into blossom.

We know that people cannot really "break into blossom." The poet is using figurative—not literal—language here. With your partner, talk about what you see in these final lines and what you think this means. In other words, how are readers supposed to feel and think about the experience that the narrator has with the ponies?

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