What Have You Lost? Study Guide

What Have You Lost? by Naomi Shihab Nye

BOOKRAGS

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Section 1: Introduction, Dedication, pages 1-7

Section 1: Introduction, Dedication, pages 1-7 Summary

In the Introduction by Naomi Shihab Nye, San Antonio, Texas, Nye leaves her beloved grey neck pillow on a plane. She has lost many things throughout her lifetime, causing her to be attracted to words like immortal, eternal and forever. "Losing makes us miserable, startles us awake. It's also inevitable" (p. xi). Nye considers whether there is anything good about losing and thinks that perhaps it makes people momentarily take better care of what they still have. Perhaps, these petty losses are so bothersome because they remind people of the larger, inevitable losses that can never be reclaimed, the people and eras of life. Losing is never any easier to comprehend, regardless of how much has already been lost.

"Dedication" by Jim Natal is to poems that get lost in the dark, flutter out of reach or are camouflaged by their surroundings.

In Robert Dana's "What the Stones Knew," fire talks of the flesh, water speaks of the air, and the air mentions feathers in a field of wheat, while the earth urges "sweat." As clouds' shadows dazzle the morning, he tells his son to write his name on everything that belongs to him.

"Years of Solitude" by Dionisio D. Martinez is to the one who sets a second place at the table anyway, who is at the back of the empty bus; it is "to anyone convinced that a monologue is a conversation with the past...to us" (p. 2).

In "Orange Juice" by Lisa Ruth Shulman, it was dark when her father crept down the hallway to the refrigerator, and longing to know his sweetness, she rose to meet him, her feet bare on the cold kitchen floor, and listened for clues.

In Barbara McCauley's "The Wren," he was small and frantic under the hedge, but she caught him and took him home. Her father was not sure because they had tried many times with wild birds, but the bird ate what they made and could fly around the living room within three days. Her father said it was time to let him go. Outside, the bird sat on her shoulder, and when she shook him off, he flew to a maple branch, perched and looked at her. A child, she called him back, and he came to stand on her finger for a moment and then was gone.

In "My Father's Coat" by Susie Mee, her father's coat was made of the finest muscle and lined with fish-scales from which waterfalls glistened. Her father was invisible inside this coat; he became the smell of wet leaves and the smoke of camp fires, and when he wrapped her in his sleeves, she stepped into the dark forest.

In William I. Elliott's "David," David threw the softball into the gutter just as Dad called them into dinner last fall. It is still there, as is the old cat's cradle in the apple tree and a grubby balsam glider wing in the rot of the roof's shingles. "If what we do is what we are, you're all over the place... If what we do is who we are, you're still home with us, more than underground" (p. 6).

In "My Father in the Stacks" by David Hassler, his father would disappear into the privacy of a story in his study for hours. If the author's hands were clean, his father would hand him a book sometimes. He grew tall like his father and wasted many hours reading. He walks through the seventh floor of the library at the university where his father teaches without a call number in mind. His father is there as he turns the aisle. They do not know what to say in the silence of so many books, but he forgives his father for their "unwritten lives, the years [they] haven't read" (p. 7). His hands are clean as they pass one another.

Section 1: Introduction, Dedication, pages 1-7 Analysis

In the Introduction, Nye talks about how she began looking for poems about the experience of loss and kept a file of them for years with poems coming to her in various ways. It is harder to find poems about the things people would like to lose, such as regret, worry, envy, weight, fear, or self-consciousness. Nye suggests the reader may find them; maybe the reader is writing one now. The Introduction contains allusions to Peter Heitkamp, Tom Clark and Elizabeth Bishop.

In "Dedication," the poems can only be seen when they move, but to grab them is to crush them, so they are tossed away on old papers, leaving the writer sticky with the first line of their first poem which struggled free. This poem uses a simile to compare old papers to whispers of spider webs, and it also personifies the poems it describes.

"What the Stones Knew" personifies fire, water, air and earth which each speak to the author. Additionally, these are the four elements which lead the author to tell his son to write his name on everything he owns.

"Years of Solitude" lists the people to whom the poem is dedicated which is basically all of mankind.

"Orange Juice" explores a daughter's curiosity about her father's late night obsession with the sweetness of orange juice, because she does not see him as a sweet man.

"The Wren" discusses a child's sadness when a baby bird she nursed is able to leave her.

In "My Father's Coat," rainbow trout swim in the coat's pockets among twigs and polished stones.

"David" claims that the author's brother is not really dead because he still lives in the hearts and home of his family. One line of this poem contains alliteration.

In "My Father in the Stacks," the author talks about his father and their relationship which is not a very close one. At the end of the poem, he forgives his father for the years they have not read, comparing their relationship to the books his father loves.

Section 2: pages 8-21

Section 2: pages 8-21 Summary

In "Battleground State Park" by Martha Christina, as her mom and dad sit on opposite sides of the picnic table, he serves potato salad, while she stares impassively. Though the pitch of her mother's voice frightens her even in song, the author wants her to sing some ancient Shawnee chant now. She wants to vanish into the woods with her mother, her father calling after them to go. Their lives play out a different story, but she still believes "we could have been happy" (p. 9). In Amy Adams' "Nine," Benjamin sits in the top bunk late at night, wide awake, and begs the author to sleep in the bottom bunk. Last thing at night, he kisses Hannah good night and hugs the author. Benjamin lingers in Christine's doorway because she is older now and "has seen a world he will never know, and he can't compete with her fearless wisdom" (p. 11). He asks why Chrissy will not kiss him.

In "Emergency Situation" by Hal Sirowitz, Mom threw out his blue underwear because they had a hole in them and that makes her look bad, though no one can see it. If he broke his leg and went to the hospital, the nurse might see it, and then the doctor may not even put a cast on his leg because he would think her son came from a poor family.

In "The Ants Are Using Sticks For Walls" by Sandra Gail Teichmann, ten-year-old girls wants to be fourteen, and when she was ten, her mother gave her silk stockings and a garter belt which she wore daily because they were grown-up things. One day, she took the stockings off and buried them, waiting for dark to feel her way by yucca plants aligned with the constellations.

In Siv Cedering's "The Changeling," one day, a child sees clearly that he cannot really be his parents' child, and his parents would also know it if they could look inside of him. Meanwhile, he waits, prepares, studies his chosen subject and writes poems, feeding the flame inside of him because he knows that it is the only way he will be able to live the life meant to be his.

In "The Father, Who Could Not Swim" by Bill Meissner, he first learned of death when Kaufman's dad tipped the boat while fishing, and his own father's skin is numbed by whatever kills another man's flesh. Hearing Dad's deep breaths behind him, the author knows he wants to rest his palm on his shoulder, but he watches his father's reflection turn and the screen door close behind him.

In "Son, Skating" by Judith Kitchen, he could be anyone's son as he spins on the ice, and she is only a voice; his skates are more than wings as "he slips into the envelope of his body, tall and silent, no more mine than he ever was" (p. 17).

In Anzar Hitoshi's "The New Blade", his son clumsily uses a razor for the first time, looking a bit afraid as he cuts himself during the ritual, and he does not seem to hear the birds singing in unison, nor does he seem to see the sea rolling in the mirror.

In "Teenagers" by Pat Mora, they disappear into their rooms one day, doors and mouths shut, and their parents become strangers in their own houses. Years later, the door opens, and she sees a face she once held and familiar skin stretched on long bodies which move past her.

In "Devotion" by Chris Pealer, one gets used to being alone with no one with whom to argue or ask questions. The days are monotonous, and Mother does not mention the absence in the house, instead finding a thousand tasks to keep her busy.

In Jan Bailey's "Custody," with the bargaining over, the house is divided into separate camps. She waits for the girl who rages in her closet, steals her clothes and lures her to the mirror. She would surrender were the girl only here.

Section 2: pages 8-21 Analysis

"Battleground State Park" contains a simile which compares the author's mother to the monolith in regards to her stillness. It also alludes to the Native American, Tecumseh, as the author compares her mother's physical features to what she imagines the man to have looked like.

In "Emergency Situation," the author's mother claims that she did not bring him up to embarrass her. When he was little, she dressed him up like a girl, but now, he is no longer cute and he is too old to get away with anything.

In "The Ants Are Using Sticks for Walls," the author walked around the room and watched for the people her mother worried about, wondering what could possibly happen to her if she went to school with bare legs.

In "The Changeling," the boy in the poem tries to hide the fact that he is different from his parents at first because he is glad to have been taken in, but he soon no longer wants the charity. He knows he is not meant to do what his parents do, and he wishes his real parents would come and embrace him.

"The Father, Who Could Not Swim" uses a metaphor to compare the morning to a mouthful of water and similes to compare a knife to barracuda and the screen door which shuts likes an eyelid.

"Son, Skating" uses a simile to compare the boys' swiftness to knives, and it also contains a metaphor in which the author claims to be a red car, a voice, and a yes or no.

"The New Blade" compares the son's moist back to a tree trunk with the bark peeled off though the use of a simile, and "Teenagers" also utilizes a simile to compare the glow of the teenagers' skin to pearls.

In "Devotion," a simile compares the colors dripping to rain, and a metaphor claims that "sadness is a moat of dark water a tangle of briars no one can cross sadness a habit of sackcloth you wear in devotion to the god of loss" (p. 20).

In "Custody," she grows smaller for this girl, lending her bones to solder her shape and her skin to cast her beauty, wishing there were more to give. Similes compare her gleam to a missile and the narrator's face being splintered like shrapnel. The narrative contains an analogy to war and truce, and the repetition of the phrase "were she here" emphasizes her absence.

Section 3: pages 22-32

Section 3: pages 22-32 Summary

In "Mother's Day" by Daisy Zamora, the author does not doubt her child would have liked a pretty, happy mother from the ads, but ever since she was small, she has always wanted to be herself which is hard for a woman; even her Guardian Angel refused to watch over the author when she heard. The author often loses her way and life has been painful, but she continues with the hope that her children will pull her into some distant shore after she has been lost at sea.

In Emma Mellon's "Waking Instructions," one should crawl ashore to the start of the day, forgetting past and future and allowing oneself to be different, but it will feel like falling attached to waiting.

In "Simple Song of Being Oneself" by Vittorio Bodini, ivy, wind and sea tell him he is not what they are. So do the river, dawn, dream, and many other things. The mirror only gives back his own image. These things tell him to be himself and spare himself from loving them. He flees, trying to stay alone, and finds death and fear.

In "I Myself" by Angel Gonzales, he comes face to face with himself at a crossroads, but his enemy falls on him, leaving him weak and defeated in a ditch. He could never reach that place so his body walks along, gets lost and distorts whatever plans he makes.

In "and sometimes i hear this song in my head" by Harriet Jacobs, they have always heard music which smoothes the edges of madness. Though some say there is no hope in the darkness, they spend the whole time standing in the middle of trees, singing that they cannot be touched.

In Harryette Mullen's "Shedding Skin", she pulls out of her old skin, a rough thing she leaves behind because she no longer needs it. She rubs against a rock to make herself tender again.

In "Song of the Prodigal Son" by Herberto Padilla, he wants the sun's din back, and he wants to let the summer blaze into his eyes. He walked much with zeal and snow stinging his eyes, but he misses the rustle of green trees and the sea of always.

In "Aqueducts" by Brittney Corrigan, the author imagines the aqueducts in Northern Italy which were created by her family, and her grandmother's hands are like her mother's hands which are like her own hands which she uses to carry water and hold it to her lips night after night.

In "Invisibility" by Renato Rosaldo, they celebrate the days of the others, but the others think they are meant to serve them, looking at them without seeing them; however, "we see ourselves clearly, know ourselves precisely" (p. 32).

Section 3: pages 22-32 Analysis

"Mother's Day" contains an analogy to the author being lost at sea and her desire that her children will rescue her.

"Waking Instructions" touches on the difficulty of just being oneself, and "Simple Song of Being Oneself" reiterates this theme as many things in nature urge the author to be himself rather than trying to be like them.

In "I Myself", the author sees a stubborn man who would stop at nothing when he sees himself. When the road narrows, he asks himself to let him pass because he has somewhere to be, but he cannot reach this place. This poem touches on the separation of identity.

In "and sometimes I hear this song in my head", they heard stretched voices at sea, and they listened to blues in the songs of slavery. They have always been a music people. Sometimes, they get lost in tears, but they always find their way back to the clearing at the center of themselves where the trees still talk to them and their tongues remember the words they forgot on the backs on buses or in hot kitchens. They find hope though others say it is hopeless.

In "Shedding Skin", the author uses an analogy to a snake shedding its skin to describe redefining herself and making herself tender again.

"Song of the Prodigal Son" alludes to the Bible with the assumption that the reader understands the meaning of the term prodigal son.

In "Aqueducts", the author has carried water to bed since she was big enough to carry a cup because it kept watch over the night. Her grandmother's ancestors built the aqueducts in Turin, Italy two hundred years ago, but all she knows of them, her Audo lineage, is sunk by the weight of her great-grandfather's name, Grosso. She knows very little about that part of her heritage since her grandmother refuses to talk about her life before marriage. This poem contains a simile in which stories come slowly like water trying to pass through a dam, and it also personifies the aqueducts which climb and reach.

In "Invisibility, though they are ignored, they must survive. The author is one of the invisible who lives among the notable, and he daily bumps into the man who nods in agreement but is not really listening.

Section 4: pages 33-44

Section 4: pages 33-44 Summary

In David Williams' "Breath," his ancestors were thrown away as if they were nothing, and everything they said became stone, except for the songs; he is thirsty to join their song.

In "Almost Evenly Divided" by Emma Suarez-Baez, her life is nearly evenly divided between being Puerto-Rican and a New Yorker, but half is lost.

In "At Home" by Linda Gregg, far is where she is near, where she lives, where her house is, and though the lamp keeps the stars away, they are still there if she goes outside.

In "Child Proof" by Lisa Brandenburg, the baby walks after the rain, arms batting at the air. "Child is proof We come from somewhere else Where everyone flies" (p. 36).

In William Trowbridge's "Taking My Son to His First Day of Kindergarten," the father hesitates as he leads his son to his classroom, but the son pulls him forward, already gone.

In "Bittersweet" by Lavonne J. Adams, the author laid out school supplies each August and, in class, struggled to form himself by pressing crayon to paper. Now, many of the colors he once loved have been replaced by new tints, but Bittersweet still remains.

In "First Grade" by Roger Jones, he cannot remember the names of any of the children from his first grade class, though he sees their faces clearly.

In Sandra Larson's "The New World," the author stared at the sculpture on the front lawn of the Montclair Art Museum, realizing that his genitals were like what all the males she knew had. Mrs. Lowe, her teacher, hurried her inside to see many wonderful pictures, and though she dutifully looked at all of them, she was thinking about what was outside and how she had just been divided in half.

In "The Forest of My Hair" by James Tolan, though he is now twenty-eight, he sees a five-year-old boy in the mirror, wondering what happened to his hair after his first crew cut. His grandfather took him to the woods, and saying they once belonged to him, he gave them to his grandson because it is right the woods should belong to the boy now. Most of the author's life, he lived in the absence of his grandfather's voice, and those woods were cut down years ago; however, he wears his hair long in honor of his grandfather.

In "Returning to the West: Mountain Legend" by Denise Overfield, the mountain voice rises, channels into the valleys and between them. The Papagos say "the mountain comes from the ocean, parts the water and turns around" (p. 44), and the Papago

woman claims her heart stands with the sea. The author could be that woman since the language of the air is in this wind; she once knew the words, but now she only knows the wind.

Section 4: pages 33-44 Analysis

"Breath" contains a metaphor which compares the rain to both a living jewel and a clear lens.

In "Almost Evenly Divided", the author discusses the difficulty of identifying herself as both Puerto Rican and a New Yorker, indicating that half of her identity is lost in the process. This poem utilizes repetition to stress the importance of her situation, and she alternates between English and Spanish to indicate the division of self she experiences.

In "Child Proof," the author cites the child batting its arms at the air, in a motion that appears like a bird flapping its wings, as proof that man is from somewhere else where everyone flies.

In "Taking My Son to His First Day of Kindergarten," the father is hesitant to let his son go, while his son is fearless in his excitement to begin school. The board that reads "Season of Changes" is ironic since the father is undergoing a great change by being forced to allow his son to gain some independence when he starts school.

"Bittersweet" discusses the changes the author has endured in life, using the colors of crayons in a box as an analogy. Many of the colors have changed, but Bittersweet remains.

At the end of "First Grade", the teacher looks up to ask the author a question; "Did [he] know the answer? And could [he] tell her now?" (p. 41) This indicates the differences and similarities between the author in first grade and in the present. Much has been gained, but much has been lost as well.

In "The New World," the author is confronted with the physiological differences between men and women when she sees a sculpture in the front lawn of the Montclair Art Museum, and this causes her to feel split in half as she looks at the paintings inside the museum.

In "The Forest of My Hair," a young man recalls his first haircut and how his grandfather gave him woods near the barbershop afterward. Though his grandfather died long ago and those woods have since been destroyed, the author wears his hair long in honor of his grandfather.

"Returning to the West" personifies the mountain voice which rises and the language of the air. The author compares herself to a Papago woman, and she also indicates that she now hears only the wind, though she had once understood what the wind was trying to say, suggesting a division between herself and nature.

Section 5: pages 45-57

Section 5: pages 45-57 Summary

In "Drifter, Owl, Mouse" by Ken Fontenot, the mouse prays inside the owl's beak, but when a drifter shoots the owl in the head, the mouse dies a death in a world none of them wanted.

In "Kind" by Leonard Nathan, until death took him outside and left him there, he did not notice how the grass lifts everything dropped so quietly, and everything is dropped.

In "Last-Minute Message for a Time Capsule" by Philip Appleman, the author wanted to write this down so it would not be lost forever. At one time, the world was filled with meadows, blue skies and wildlife that would stagger the heart, but "we also had the righteous ones who worshipped the True Faith, and Holy War" (p. 47).

In "That Was the Summer We Had Animals" by Jack Ridl, everything was a comfort, and they felt the stars were common, though wonderful, but it is a moment lost to memory.

In "Lens" by Kimberly J. Brown, she wonders about the shouting in the house and why Mom must be watched. Dad tells her to "shut it off" when she claims it will be better when she is dead. Ten years later, Mother makes another attempt. Dad tells the nurse at the emergency room that the cut on her arm happened when she fell from a ladder while cleaning the windows with a razor because she begged him not to tell. A car motor thrums in the garage, and when she barely pauses to leave, the author wonders if this is her last glance of Mother.

In "Sudden" by Nick Flynn, the newspaper might have used the word "massive" if it had been a heart attack, but it used "suddenly" instead. If it had been terminal, they could have said goodbye, but it was sudden how they were orphaned overnight.

In "Organdy Curtains, Window, South Bank of the Ohio" by James Baker Hall, he cups his hands to the open eye as light advances, and inside, he is alone, hanging briefly in the light.

In Jennifer Weinblatt's "On the Suicide of a Young Boy I Did Not Know," written for Kaitlin and Jorie, she wonders what to do with this grief that is not hers and with images of a boy she never saw who shot himself with his father's revolver. There is nothing she can do to ease his family's suffering, and she has no place in their sorrow, "but sorrow has no sense of propriety; it lodges where it pleases, needs little to thrive, and takes what it wants" (p. 55).

In Melissa A. Stephenson's "What Grandma Taught Her," she hates being somewhere without something to do. She needs pen and paper to quiet her mind, like her grandmother did during church service when she would repeatedly write her name.

In "Seeing for You" by Linda Allardt, after the leaves left the tops of trees in November, the sparrows play at being leaves, and the leaves pretend to be sparrows. "I play at seeing for you now that you play at being gone" (p. 57).

Section 5: pages 45-57 Analysis

"Drifter, Owl, Mouse" contains a simile in which the author expresses the desire to turn a caterpillar inside out like a sock.

In "Kind," grass is personified as it lifts everything, and death is also personified because it takes the author outside and leaves him there.

In "Last-Minute Message for a Time Capsule," the author decides to write about how beautiful the earth once was, before it was destroyed by the righteous ones, when the ocean pounded on the breakers, the south wind whipped the froth into rainbows and the gull swept down the beach as if flight was all it needed. He warns the reader to learn to beware the righteous ones. Because he tells the reader to report this when they return to their galaxy, this suggests he is talking to an alien life form.

"That Was the Summer We Had Animals" contains a metaphor in which a breeze is compared to a small song.

"Lens" contains a simile when discussing how the author's mother's shrieks hurt her ears like her skin hurt after falling off her bicycle, and a metaphor claims her mother was a mustang trying to get out. The poem occurs in the present, as the author recalls the past while looking at a photo album. The author tries to imagine that the past was only a movie, recalling how she wanted to die too because her mother could not leave without her. The author wishes away the images flashing in her mind, but they persist. New eyes on her photo album say it is great her mom saved this stuff, and she agrees slowly. She hears sounds the photos cannot play. As she traps the photos under a thin veneer, she finds a photo of the three of them when she was a toddler; they look innocent and clean.

"Sudden" investigates the importance of words and the meaning of death, since the author was orphaned when his parent died suddenly.

"Organdy Curtains, Window, South Bank of the Ohio" contains a simile which compares the way the light advanced to a flock of turkeys.

In "On the Suicide of a Young Boy I Did Not Know," the author explores her grief at hearing of a young boy who killed himself. An analogy compares the suicide to baking a cake, and the author utilizes personification to refer to how sorrow has no sense of propriety, lodges where it pleases and takes what it wants.

In "What Grandma Taught Her," her grandma taught her to quiet her mind by writing after her mother died when she was eight years old.

Like the sparrows and trees pretending to be one another, the author pretends to see the addressee when the addressee pretends to be gone in "Seeing for You".

Section 6: pages 58-69

Section 6: pages 58-69 Summary

In "Leaving the Light On" by Jack Myers, the author has no idea who his parents are when he returns home late one night, so he climbs an apple tree and peers into their room, listening to them talk like polite strangers who go on as though they have just met.

In Maggie Anderson's "What We Want," "we all want to be lost, and looked for, and found again and welcomed home in the smoky darkness on any summer night" (p. 55).

In "What Great Grief Has Made the Empress Mute" dedicated to the Empress Michiko and Janice Mirikitani, there is a list of contradictions which includes that no one can imagine the reasons for her grief because her grief required no imagination.

In Peter Sears' "Silence," the author tried to befriend silence when he was young, lost him for years, and now avoids silence when it returns once the author is an adult.

In "What Gets Lost/Lo Que Se Pierde" by Alastair Reid, as he translates the words, he realizes the problem is what gets lost between the event and their description in words; it is what gets lost in language itself, rather than what is lost in translation.

In "Naming" by Nancy Mairs, she has lost the meaning of words, but she still knows the meaning of sugar and pine needle; however, the meaning of love is completely gone so now it is safe for her to say "I love you," and now it is true.

In Bruce Bennett's "The Higher Reaches," a man has less to say but says it better, and he gloats that soon he will have nothing to say and will say it perfectly.

In "here yet be dragons" by Lucille Clifton, many languages fall off the edge of the world and into the dragon's mouth.

In "Learning Persian" by Reza Shirazi, a hibernating language slowly awakes from the dark corners of the mind after a ten year sleep.

In Haas H. Mroue's "Driving," nothing again will ever smell like his grandfather's Opel Coupe which swirled dust in the hills near Beirut. When the author was a child, his grandfather changed gears, bought him thyme pies and drove to Jordan.

In "The Sparrow and the Crumb" by Nathan Spoon, a sparrow wings a crumb of bread to a place the reader will never know. The reader nearly believes the sparrow will return to share the crumb, but the other voice remembers it will not happen.

Section 6: pages 58-69 Analysis

"Leaving the Light On" contains a simile in which the author compares the way his parents speak to one another to the way strangers might offer one another directions.

In "What We Want," which is dedicated to Paul, they search the small town for a baby as the people on their porches peer and whisper about responsibility. The nine-year-old returns at 10 P.M., and being gone for twelve hours is not very long, so they sit on the porch, laughing until very late. This contains alliteration as the author states "people on porches peer."

"What Great Grief Has Made the Empress Mute," dedicated to the Empress Michiko and Janice Mirikitani, explains what made the empress sad in a list of contradictions in couplets. The author uses repetition to emphasize certain reasons that are listed.

In "Silence," the author spends time with friends, wanting them to feel alive, in an attempt to avoid going home alone to face the silence which he eventually is forced to return to anyway.

"What Gets Lost/Lo Que Se Pierde" alternates between Spanish and English, repeating itself in a translation to emphasize and verify the truth of what the author claims about translation in the poem itself.

In "Naming," she lost them when the words fell into the cracked ground, and though she tried for weeks, she could not dig up meaning. Not everything is gone. She still knows the meaning of some simple words, but more difficult concepts have been lost which is why she can truthfully say I love you.

"The Higher Reaches" indicates that the less one says, the more perfectly it is said, suggesting that words distort meaning.

In "here yet be dragons," the author asks "who among us can imagine ourselves unimagined? Who among us can speak with so fragile tongue and remain proud?" (p. 66) In this and the next poem, language is personified; it falls, hibernates and awakes.

The language ventures onto a wave of words, and the world waits to be sung as it lies before the language in "Learning Persian".

Section 7: pages 70-71

Section 7: pages 70-71 Summary

In "Other Lives" by Vern Rutsala, the single face looking up can be seen from train windows and in small towns. Their lives are so brief that the reader feels immortal and feeds on a hope that people somewhere are as they were.

In Jimmy Santiago Baca's "Hitchhiker," the author sees a hitchhiker on the edge of town, and the headlights flash against his outline of loneliness and sad wisdom; he is a pupil who stayed late after school to write loneliness and love on the chalkboard with his heart.

"The Family Car" by Tom Absher was always big when the author was a child. Father drove, Mother watched the road, and their two sons pressed their faces against the windows in the backseat, watching the world go by.

Donna Leed's untitled poem talks of how she never saw the road between her house and her grandmother's house because she always fell asleep quickly in the car. Sometimes, she feels she'll wake nearly at her grandmother's house if she dozes in the car in the present.

In "So Far" by Naomi Shihab Nye, the notices on the telephone poles flutter until they fade. The author thinks of her pets and imagines them on the sidewalk all night, but she cannot know what they are thinking so far from home. She asks anyone who sees them to call her.

In Kirst Simons Uri's "Travelling Light," the author wants "nothing more anymore only wind stroking waves onto a distant shore" (p. 76).

`In "Legend" by Craig Czury, the author addresses someone he loves, saying she was always far away even if she was looking directly at him. When he turned his attention to his surroundings, she spoke to him, and her warm, sweet breath took him to a place far inside himself.

In "Stranded" by Jenny Browne, the beloved's name drips from the author's eyelashes. She stops pretending because she has been waiting so long, and she thinks of the moment when her beloved decided to keep going.

In "Today I'll Sit Still" by Ernesto Trejo, the author will sit still today and say no to everything, even to "this preposterous accident who speaks of the 'self'" (p. 80).

In Chris Mahon's "This Isn't Fair," the author's beloved leaves the room when he asks if she loves him, but he calls her back frantically to give her a poem he has been writing since last December. She slowly reads it and mumbles something he cannot hear before sitting back down in her rocking chair and smiling strangely at him.

In Ernesto Cardenal's untitled poem, when someone told the author the woman he loved was in love with another man, he returned to his room and wrote an article against the government for which they put him in jail.

Section 7: pages 70-71 Analysis

"Other Lives" contains a simile in which the stillness of the faces is compared to the stillness of photographs, and it also contains a simile in which people in the small towns are compared to actors in high school plays. The author of "The Hitchhiker" claims that the hitchhiker's life unravels because it is a loose thread, using a metaphor to compare the two ideas. Another metaphor states that the hitchhiker is a pupil who stayed late after school to write loneliness and love on the chalkboard with his heart.

In "The Family Car," the author recalls riding in the family car with his family as a child. He describes the car and compares the environment inside the car to that outside the car in the Texas heat.

Donna Leed's untitled poem compares the way the candy wrapper melted to the way the trees melted away on the ride to Grandma's house, using a simile to do so.

In "So Far," Naomi Shihab Nye expresses her worry for her pets that have been lost.

The author expresses his desire to be on a beach in "Travelling Light," and "Legend" discusses how the author's beloved ignored him until he ignored her.

"Stranded" contains a metaphor which compares the author's name to the eyes of a kitten stuck in a tree, and it also personifies the beloved's name which drips from the author's eyelashes. Additionally, this poem alludes to the Great Wall of China.

In "Today I'll Sit Still," a simile compares the sad tale on the tip of the author's tongue to a lukewarm dime and a bone sinking to pebbles in a pond. Personification is also utilized when the author's feet grow roots.

"This Isn't Fair" emphasizes the strange relationship between the author and his beloved who walks away when he asks if he loves her, but she sits and smiles strangely at him after he reads a poem he wrote her. Ernesto Cardenal writes about how he wrote a controversial poem after learning the woman with whom he was in love loved another, and this poem caused the government to throw him in jail.

Section 8: pages 83-95

Section 8: pages 83-95 Summary

In "Insurance" by Vickie Karp, each bird is punctuation in the air, and the light protects people from the unadorned nature and insurance of belief , as well as the diminutions that rouse them. "Love is in the rewrites. Be slow" (p. 83).

In Rosellen Brown's untitled poem, Mother asks what friends are for because someone has just made her bitter with undone duty, and the narrator thinks friends are for nothing; all they do is touch one and fill one with music in the end.

In "Going Home" by Ben Judson, the author sees the addressee in the airport today, or rather a version from ten years ago, and wonders about the possibility of there being two of them in the world. The girl sits next to him on the airplane, and she is silent and iron-willed like the addressee, though she speaks Spanish. When a man comes to talk to her father, the girl moves into his lap, and a woman the author does not know at all sits in the seat next to him.

In "That Kind of Marriage" by John Sangster, he sleeps upstairs while she sleeps downstairs. There are photos of their courtship with their hands touching, but "by the child's time, family love came down in two distinct beams" (p. 86).

Phebe Davidson's poem talks about how "She had thought" it would not always be like this, with everything repeating, and that it might be different, she would smell the coffee, roses and hay. She thought it would be better, that they would not be so needy, and that there would be times when they told her she was the best there is.

In Jack Gilbert's "Divorce," the author wakes suddenly and hears crying, so he rushes through the dark house, but stopping and remembering, he stands and looks at the bright moonlight on the concrete.

In "my lost father" by Lucille Clifton, he leaves a wake of tears when he moves, and banners of regret pave his going. He rises and enters the company of husbands, fathers and sons.

In Rolf Jacobsen's "It Was Here," it was here beside the brook late spring of this year; "we'll set out together in the summer night, silently, toward what isn't" (p. 90).

In "Mindleaving" by Hayan Charara, the son calls the way his father can distinguish between the sink and refrigerator mind leaving. The father sits at the table each morning, grateful for how his cigarettes taste, while his son talks about nothing but the weather. The clouds pass, the willows sway, and the son says it looks like a downpour right before the downpour comes.

In "Shrink-wrapped" by Carla Hartsfield, the author wonders how she arrived at such a little life, doing menial tasks to occupy herself. She obsesses over the invisibility of Saran wrap and how it clings to the skin wordlessly "until she's finally sealed into this silent world, spotless and magical, shrinking forever within her little life" (p. 93).

In "Where on This Earth" by Patricia Kilpatrick, the author wonders where on earth can the ones who are gone be reached. She wonders if anything people do for the departed matters and if people can now comfort those who go terribly, alone or burning. She questions where on earth to reach those who have left.

Section 8: pages 83-95 Analysis

"Insurance" contains a metaphor which claims a bird is punctuation in the air. The author warns the reader to be slow because "love is in the rewrites" (p. 83).

In Rosellen Brown's untitled poem, a simile compares what friends do to how music fills one when the author's mother questions what friends are good for.

In "Going Home," the author sees a girl on an airplane who reminds him of the person he is addressing. He compares the two, bewildered to find someone who looks like a ten-years younger version of the addressee.

"That Kind of Marriage" discusses how a couple once were in love, but now, they are no longer a unit, though they are still married. By the time they have a child, "family love came down in two distinct beams" (p. 86).

"She had thought" investigates the hopes that she had for life which have not been fulfilled, explaining instead how her life is. Her life is repetitive, and her family is needy. She wishes they would tell her she is good enough.

The narrator of "Divorce" wakes and hears crying, but he simply stares at the moonlight on the concrete after he remembers, presumably that he now lives alone.

In "my lost father," the author's father leaves sorrow behind him when he leaves his family and joins the company of other men who have done the same.

In "It Was Here," the author cannot find something that had been beside the brook in late spring, and he wants to "set out together in the summer night, silently, toward what isn't" (p. 90).

"Mindleaving" shows the distance between a man and his son. It also utilizes a simile to compare the children's faces to birch leaves dropping to the sidewalk.

In "Shrink-wrapped," a woman obsesses about menial tasks and objects because she lives such an insignificant life; eventually, she will shrink forever into a silent world.

"Where On This Earth" questions how to contact the deceased. Utilizing a simile, the author compares memory and the morning light to a lullaby, and a metaphor insists that this lullaby is a parting.

Section 9: pages 96-107

Section 9: pages 96-107 Summary

In "Garage Sale" by Brian Andreas, she floats into the sky after that last big garage sale. The author hears her say nothing keeps her here anymore, so he is much more cautious about getting rid of stuff after that.

In "Words My Friend Can't Bring Himself to Say" by Quintin Prout, Miss Betty had shown them how to play hide and seek when they had been children. When the author hears she passed away, he counts backwards from ten and wonders why he had not looked for her sooner.

The author's father looks at the end of his life in "Journey" by Cathy Song. He lightens his load so he will be ready when the time comes.

In "What Came to Me" by Jane Kenyon, she takes the last piece of china from the box and grieves for the one she has lost as never before.

Marissa C. Martinez's "Benavides, Texas, 1906" is a small town where only the grocer lives. Ranchers visit monthly for rice and beans, and a two-month-old newspaper warns ranchers to expect relatives due to the war in Mexico.

In "Letter to an Ancestor" by Dwight Fullingim, he wants to know about his ancestor after finding her in a census book. He would "have looked through a thousand rotten records to find the very mention of your name" (p. 101).

In the poem by Hector Carreto, they demolish "The House at 5 Allende Street," but the house is inhabited at night when the author sees the ghosts of his grandparents in the distance of the house where he spent the first instants of his life in the winter of 1953.

In John Vernon's "Barns Collapsing," the author examines the barns and condemns the fields as the owner sits at the window watching his barn slowly cave in.

In "Dream House" by Margo Solod, the logs and tin roof of someone's dream house from 1910 are placed in a pick-up truck and taken away to become a guesthouse.

In Charles Owsley's "Small Town," the trains do not stop in the town anymore like they did when the author's father waited at the station with his father, excited at the prospect of what the train might bring.

Section 9: pages 96-107 Analysis

In "Garage Sale," the author is more cautious about getting rid of stuff when a woman he knows, possibly his mother or wife, dies after her last big garage sale because there is nothing keeping her here anymore.

In "Words My Friend Can't Bring Himself to Say," Miss Betty teaches the author and other children to play hide and seek, and when she dies, he wonders why he did not look for her sooner, referring to the game she used to play with him.

The author's father in "Journey" prepares for death because he is getting old.

In "What Came to Me," the author is finally confronted with the death of a loved one when she unpacks the last piece of china from a box she inherited, causing her to grieve as never before.

In "Benavides, Texas, 1906," a photographer takes pictures of families on their yards or front porches. One man even takes a picture with his prize watermelon. This emphasizes the smallness of the town.

In "Letter to an Ancestor," the author is excited to learn about an ancestor when he finds her name in a census book, but he wonders why she never contacted him or his family since he would have liked to ask her many questions about her life. He would "have looked through a thousand rotten records to find the very mention of [her] name" (p. 101).

In "The House at 5 Allende Street," though they are building a Banco de Comercio, the author still stands at the foot of the staircase of the house where his grandparents lived, feeling their ghosts in the wreckage of his former home. This poem uses metaphors to compare the house's breath to water over the bathtub drain and to compare the night to a black angel.

The farmer in "Barns Collapsing" watches his barn collapse as the author condemns a barn a mile down the road; this poem seems to insinuate the destruction of the rural lifestyle that was once such a large part of America.

In "Dream House," the railroad tie steps leading to the house are as shrunken as the author's memory of them, and she wonders "How do I reconstruct these damaged scraps of memory? And if we're moving back the clock, can the door to my room, this time, lock?" (p. 105).

In "Small Town," the author wonders if the train will stop and share its stories with the small town if everyone stands where the station once stood.

Section 10: pages 108-119

Section 10: pages 108-119 Summary

In "What Was Once Reached For" by Jeffrey Shotts, the quiet house is cold for the first time, and the only noise is their breath; the only movement is their eyes shifting over the objects as though they had not seen them before and did not own them now.

In "Father, Herald Me Home" by Teresa Palomo Acosta, the author asks her father to sing her home, and though she has no key or magic to take him, she asks him to "reach across and pull me over the ravine" (p. 109).

In Nuala Archer's "The Lost Glove Is Happy," the author loses her glove made in Taiwan when she is on her way to Lubbock, Texas to visit her mother who is in the midst of desolation. They go to the mall and are as lost as any two mismatched gloves in desolation, but for a few minutes, they relax and are happy.

In "A Serenade" by Sekine Hiroshi, the night taps the author on the back and tells him to go look for what he lost yesterday which resembles what he had lost every day before that and vanishes each time he searches for it.

In "A Game Nobody Won" by Yamanoguchi Baku, the author's wallet is stolen on a crowded train, and though he is angry at the loss at first, he laughs at himself since there had not been much money in the wallet.

In "My Grandmother Told Us Jokes" by Richard Beban, the author always wonders about the moment of turning in the story his grandmother tells about a man who turned into a drugstore. One day, his grandmother becomes a madwoman, and his sister never comes back from a fever and stops being. He wants to tell them not to make that turn, and he wants to freeze each moment of turning to see the callous change in slow motion.

In Memye Curtis Tucker's "The Mentalist Leaves the Stage," he palms the cards smiling as huge applause resounds, but shaking his head as if something is wrong, he looks around as if to be rid of the gift. He's already old news as the audience watches the next performer.

In "Part" by Steve Wilson, to Tiberiu Rus, it is easy to say someone is always leaving for good because someone is always on the way out.

In Alison Seevak's "Plum Trees," there are no seasons in California, and plum trees are in her backyard. Later, she turns the pages of magazines, searching for recipes to make good use of the plums.

Section 10: pages 108-119 Analysis

In "What Was Once Reached For," a simile compares the umbrella hanging from the door knob to a dormant bat. The author, and possibly siblings or his spouse, are looking at the house where his parents lived as though they had never seen the objects inside before, though they have now inherited these items because his parents are deceased.

In "Father, Herald Me Home," the author uses repetition to ask her father to pull her across the ravine to where he is, presumably the afterlife.

In "The Lost Glove Is Happy," the author loses her glove on the flight to visit her mother in Lubbock, Texas, and she later utilizes this anecdote to compare her mother and herself to two mismatched gloves who, though desolate, are happy for a few moments together.

In "A Serenade," a complete stranger looks for the same article the author lost, indicating it is not a physical object, especially since the author claims he loses this object day after day. Night is personified in this poem when it taps the author on the back.

In "A Game Nobody Won," the pickpocket is probably angry to find business cards in the wallet he stole instead of money and, perhaps, he tosses the wallet out of the train window over the railroad bridge.

In "My Grandmother Told Us Jokes," the author wonders if the secret of changing is in the intention; or maybe, they all sit at a soda fountain and laugh at the rest of the people who take it all so seriously.

In "The Mentalist Leaves the Stage,"', the mentalist performs and is applauded, but he frowns as he searches the crowd, as though looking for someone to whom he can give his gift; unfortunately, he is already old news since the audience is now watching the next performer, so he finds a taxi, noting the sprung seat and the battery running low.

"Part" uses a simile to compare the simplicity of someone leaving to water running on glass.

In "Plum Trees," the plum trees in the author's backyard are bare and knotted all winter, but they bloom in the spring like the daughters the author may never have. In June, they throw temper tantrums, throwing fruit, but she picks up after them, and searches for recipes in which to use the plums. The author uses simile to compare the trees being bare and knotted in winter to her mother's hands, and she compares her own reaction to their June temper tantrum to that of an exasperated housewife. A metaphor claims the trees bloom into teenaged girls in the spring, and the entire poem personifies the plum trees as they exhibit human characteristics and actions.

Section 11: pages 120-132

Section 11: pages 120-132 Summary

In "Work" by Geoff Rips, the cashier, Angel, at the hardware store stands glumly behind the checkout counter because his register is jammed as customers watch him impatiently. He thinks of how his immigrant grandfather and great uncle pulled nails from boards with their teeth. Now, work means sad-faced Angel waiting for the register to un-jam.

In Andy Young's "Sister," she will realize she has been missing from most of her life, and she will search her body to find the pieces that fit and those that are missing. The author will help her find herself.

In "The Question" by Tony Hoagland, some questions hang in the mind because they have no answer.

In "My Valhalla" by Robert Phillips, the author wants to wander in a collection he calls the Valhalla of Lost Things, rather than any other museum. This collection is always free, and there is neither a closing time nor a guard.

In "The Colors of Another Home" by Cyrus Cassells, a voice tells the author to sink deeper into the world. His soul whispers that he is Japanese as the mountain blues and mute cool greens remind him of the colors of another home.

In Nicanor Parra's "Fame," fame does not care who wants it. In the author's youth, fame eluded him repeatedly when he wanted it so he could be loved by a woman, but it comes to him now that he is old and it does him no good.

In "Tutu on the Curb" by Erick Chock, Tutu looks nice standing on the curb, with her hair in a bun and a flower hanging over her ear. It is possible to see her shrink a bit more, and soon she will disappear from the curb forever.

In Camille Domangue's "Passing Necessity," the author is humbled by hearing the first few bars of Vivaldi's Mandolin Concerto, and the noises of nature are her concerti.

In "Any Morning" by William Stafford, lying on the couch is being happy when trouble is busy elsewhere because it has much to do in the world.

Section 11: pages 120-132 Analysis

In "Work," the author recalls working with Fred Sims during the summer as a young man which, along with the image of his grandfather and great uncle, serves to compare and contrast with the image of Angel working behind the counter at the hardware store. The author thinks about how Angel probably has a family at home, works two jobs and never

sleeps enough. "The nature of work is so diminished" (p. 120). No longer is there any depth or wilderness inside of man that needs to be worn down by hard labor; there is nothing left to tame. A simile compares the way Angel grips the sides of the register to how someone might grip a child's shoulders.

In "Sister," in May, they will dig a hole, bury the pieces she has and those that are missing, and he will lie on the ground next to her until she grows. A simile claims that the author's sister's childhood erodes like paint.

In "The Question," the body, imagining the soul, looks ugly to itself, and man does not understand the world, so he refuses to come down from his high place because he is ashamed of all he does not know. This poem personifies the body which imagines the soul and sees itself as ugly. It also emphasizes man's lack of wisdom and resulting shame.

In "My Valhalla," the author can see artifacts from Atlantis, the arms which belong to Venus de Milo and other lost things which are so lost no one knows they are lost. "Here I can see what no one living has seen, I satisfy that within me which is not whole. Here I am curator not of what is, but of what should have been, and what should be" (p. 127).

In "The Colors of Another Home," the author sees himself under regression as a woman bent over a pond in the fifteenth century and as a feudal lord drowning in a boat. Presumably, the author is viewing himself in his past lives. This poem uses a simile to compare the crunch of gravel under the author's feet to the noise of pond ice when one walks across it.

"Fame" utilizes a simile to compare how fame was thrown into the author's face in his old age, once he no longer desired it, like a shovelful of dirt.

In "Tutu on the Curb," Tutu stands on the corner, and as she shrinks a bit more as one looks at her, the author claims that she will soon disappear from the curb forever.

In "Passing Necessity," the author recalls one summer when she met a man who loved Concerti Madrigalesco when it was "as though the notes lived on inside us, as though our half and fractured songs had been made whole" (p. 131), but their Saint failed them. A simile compares the author's humility to that of women on their knees at the Cathedral.

In "Any Morning," those who judge are mostly asleep, allowing one to get up and act busy when dawn flows over the hedge. The little pieces of Heaven left lying around can be picked up and saved, and people will not know about them because they are so easy to hide. One can act like the others late in the day, shaking their head and frowning.

Section 12: pages 133-141

Section 12: pages 133-141 Summary

In "Tough Ride" by Mary Ann Wehler, the author recalls her husband smacking their five-year-old son, David, on the head and insisting he eat. The author recalls her husband smashing all of the dishes when she challenged his behavior one day, and she is glad he is dead.

In "Unveiling the Vietnam Memorial" by Fran Castan, while survivors find the name for which they search engraved in stone, the author watches on television, far away from the addressee's grave. With each warrior's body that is placed in the earth, mankind becomes a history which murders its own.

In "Thinking of What the Jury is Deliberating" by Mick Hatten, the author thinks about the jury deliberating, and his verdict is that he wants the man to spend the rest of his life in a cell with the faces of those he killed on the wall.

In Joy Harjo's "I Give You Back," the author releases her fear because she no longer knows it as herself. She had given fear the power to hurt her, but now, she takes herself back and will no longer let fear live in her heart; however, she invites fear to come to her because she is alive, and fear is so afraid of dying.

In "Food. Music. Memory" by Susan Marie Scavo, she mentions cupcakes, singing and sports, asking the author to remember the positive things, but the author recalls shouting, Scotch, and belts because she was also there and remembers the negative aspects as well.

In "The Memory Prayer" by John Phillip Santos, the author learns to breathe in a certain way when he leaves his body made of ashes, and the infinite miles of stars light the earth.

Section 12: pages 133-141 Analysis

In "Tough Ride," David still chokes on his food at the age of forty and blames his father for smacking him in the head when he was eating.

In "Unveiling the Vietnam Memorial," the author is a victim in his own body, but he will never forget the one he loves if he does nothing to release the pain. He asks "how did we learn to make a monument to some and to call others enemy, to conceal our species from itself?" (p. 135). This poem contains a simile in which the author describes the way people stroke the stone as being how they would stroke a person.

In "Thinking of What the Jury is Deliberating," it would be easier to understand if the murderer had not been close to his mother and grandmother, and it would be easier to understand if he had not wanted to be the best.

In "I Give You Back," the author gives fear back "so you can no longer keep me naked and frozen in the winter, or smothered under blankets in the summer" (p. 138). She is no longer afraid to be angry, happy, black, white, hungry, full, hated or loved. This poem personifies fear whom the author addresses. Repetition is used to emphasize that she is releasing her fear.

In "Food. Music. Memory," the author is addressed by someone who reminds her of all the positive things for which she has been present, but the author rebuts by reminding this person of all the negative aspects for which she was also there. In "The Memory Prayer", the author remembers those he has lost, and the lightning weaves a net of forgetting across the lands for five hundred years of impossible weather. A simile compares a feather's size to that of a palm frond, and a metaphor claims that a breath is a feather.

Section 13: pages 142-151

Section 13: pages 142-151 Summary

In Jack Brannon's "Raised Violence," the author is glad when his sister calls because her voice spreads across the years they did not talk. The author's body had changed the year she left, but the silence had remained the same for six more years. They finally talk, and he is so glad when she calls because they "were raised in the same silence" (p. 143).

In "Lament" by Catherine Bowman, the author asks someone to sing to her, if they can, through the darkened sky.

In "Model of the Heart at the Franklin Institute" by Kasey Jueds, the author, missing her deceased friend, recalls walking through the huge model heart as a child, tocuhing its walls as the beating sound pulsed in her head. She did not know at the time that she would live carefully and forget her friend, instead remembering the way she stood inside the heart, listening to the pulsing sound and seeing those colors that looked like kindergarten art they might have drawn.

In Jay Bremyer's "Each Night," images in dreams flash and fade in these darkened walls, and the author wants to climb into the story and remember.

In Zymunt Frankel's "Waking Up in the Morning," the author, waking up in the morning, brushes his unshaven cheek against the back of his hand as though time has left crumbs on his face after it had eaten another twenty-four hours of his life.

In "Truth" by Leroy V. Quintana, the author's world has always been silent so words have not been easy, and words have been as easy as words are. He has lied and denied, reinventing himself many times so others would think he is who they believe him to be and for no particular reason at all.

In "Regrets on the Way to an Airport" by Ali Abunimah, the author has never filled his suitcase with remnants of the sky nor raised a thousand voices with the stillness of his sigh.

In Joan Colby's "Processes," the author has written brief poems ten years ago because she had been younger and more certain then. All of her short poems have knotted into a final word, and she has lost the brevity and arrogance of what is what. Now, her poems span line after line, and she keeps writing and writing because she does not know what to give them as they are still famished and caw terribly in her mind.

Section 13: pages 142-151 Analysis

In Jack Brannon's "Raised Violence," they avoided words that were not nice in their home. He whispered to the flowers while she went off with boys in blue jeans who drove Chevrolet trucks. Their parents gave her a phone because she cried, and after that, her stories were for her unseen friends.

"Lament" lists different natural events during which the author wants someone to sing to her of different things, such as cornstalks, and how she wants them to sing, such as like the sparrow. All of this is predicated upon their ability to sing through a sky gone dark.

In "Model of the Heart at the Franklin Institute," the author had missed the company of her friend, so she had paid attention to the details of the model heart so she could tell her that this is what is inside of them. She had not known her friend would die much later, her own heart shuddering. She compares the sound of the model heart to beating like waves in a simile, and another simile compares the colors of the model heart to that of kindergarten art. She claims her friend's heart would eventually shudder like a landscape after the rain.

The author of "Each Night" wants to remember his dreams.

"Waking Up in the Morning" uses a simile to compare the author's unshaven cheek to crumbs as it personifies time which has left crumbs on the author's face after eating another twenty-four hours.

"Truth" uses contradictions to emphasize that words are not easy and are easy. The author also contradicts himself by claiming he has lied and that is the truth.

In "Regrets on the Way to an Airport," the author recalls all of the things he has not done, "not because I couldn't but because I didn't try" (p. 149).

"Processes" personifies the poems which knot into a final word and caw terribly in her mind, and the author also uses similes to compare the brevity of her poems to bird tracks and the final word to being like a crow shot from a tree. This poem utilizes imagery based on birds to describe how the author wrote poems in the past and the present, as well as what her poems were and are like.

Section 14: pages 152-160

Section 14: pages 152-160 Summary

In "Ghazal (For William Stafford)" by David Keefe, the author will follow his master and become a morning poet in the soft quiet, listening to the world and all its questions. Though the road ahead embraces him, he can still be lost in his own life.

In Jane Hirshfield's "Autumn Quince," the promises that are never returned to are sad, leading lives of their own.

In "Cannon Beach" by Susan V. Meyers, the author pauses and listens for what she thinks she should hear in the ocean beating against the sand. It stands beside her like it has been waiting to be found all this time.

In "Christmas" by Lan Se, the author worries about everything that might go wrong, but he asks why a mature man should bear such heavy burdens on his shoulders.

In "Avalanche" by David B. Prather, the snow falls fretfully where people ache along the road in their vehicles and curse the road crew. The snow creates the belief that everything has a purpose, even the pain from the cold which creeps into their toes.

In Ted Kooser's "Year's End," the seasons close, and someone loved falls from their thoughts, making a small splash. "Otherwise, not much has happened; we fell in love again, finding that one red feather on the wind" (p. 158).

In "How Forgetting Works in Late Winter" by Robert Hill Long, there is fog over the house and the pines, and mounds of snow exhale under the pines. The author rubs his head while sitting at the frosty window and thinks that his father is stationed at a window as cold as this, on a hill of frost and briar behind his father's house where doves hunch on the iron spears facing the family graves. The author runs at them, waving hard.

In "Secret of Life" by Diana Der-Hovanessian, a navy yard worker tells the narrator the secret of life on a bus to Portsmouth. The secret which cannot be passed down between generations, is hunger which makes an open hand, is money but only the small coins, and is love because one becomes what one loses. "The secret of life... is circumstance. If you catch the right bus at the right time you will sit next to the secret teller who will whisper it in your ear" (p. 160).

Section 14: pages 152-160 Analysis

"Ghazal (For William Stafford)" suggests that, maybe, people offer to guide him because his father could not reach him. This poem personifies the road, causing it to embrace the author.

"Autumn Quince" personifies promises which are sad and lead lives of their own. Additionally, the author claims that "the world is a blurred version of itself- marred, lovely and flawed. It is enough" (p. 153).

The author compares the addressee to the sea in "Cannon Beach," using a simile to compare the sea's motion to a hand reaching out and drawing in the things it leaves. A simile also compares a sea gull flying overhead to a comma. In "Christmas," the author considers all of his mundane concerns, but he does not think he should worry about such things any longer. In "Avalanche," the pin oak shivers in the front lawn, and they hope the rain will wait until they make it home. There is a joy in the stillness and a sadness in the solitude. The snow is personified in this poem, and a simile compares the snow falling fretfully to the way a person's eyes flicker as they dream.

"Year's End" personifies the season which closes around them, and a simile compares the splash of a loved one falling from the author's thoughts to the splash a bicycle makes when it is pushed by the breeze.

"How Forgetting Works in Late Winter" personifies the snow, claiming it exhales, while a simile compares the way the author runs his hand through his hair to the way his son runs outside.

In "Secret of Life," a man tells the author the secret of life. He lists several odd things as the secret of life, ending with "the secret of life... is circumstance. If you catch the right bus at the right time you will sit next to the secret teller who will whisper it in your ear" (p. 160).

Section 15: pages 161-170

Section 15: pages 161-170 Summary

In Frances Richard's "Tune," he goes from them into the silence, and they play the martial overture he loves, joking about how he would cry. He reclines on the porch to listen to the windchime in the breeze, and they carry lunch to him, squatting to kiss his hands. During his last years, he had not laughed or written, but now, they open drawers to find his midnight writings. They listen for the faint sound of his typewriter from the upstairs room.

In "Something I Remember" by Linda Elkin, the author lives on the eighteenth floor of an apartment building on the Lower East Side. Her father is still up there, watering his plants, and he wants her to "tell him something I remember that would prove his goodness" (p. 162). Maybe, she can tell him about his plants, and maybe he will not notice that he is not in the picture, that he is not there.

In "The Moment for Which There Is No Name" by Morton Marcus, the apartment on the sixteenth floor of the old building in the north end of the city is empty except for the chalk circle on the living room floor which marks the spot where an armchair once stood in which an old man regularly sat, watching the smokestacks on the harbor. His grandson had drawn the circle while his parents supervised the movers, but tomorrow, the new occupants will arrive and clean the apartment, erasing the chalk. "That is the moment for which there is no name" (p. 163).

In Abbot Cutler's "Letter to Terry Dobson," the author thinks about death sometimes, and he remembers when he was with his loved one who has died, Terry. Everyone wonders what death is like, but no one waits long to find out. The author misses Terry today, claiming he was not here long enough.

In Eric Zuckerman's "Obituaries," the author scans the obituaries daily for names he knows even obscurely. He wants to transport from his chair to wherever the deceased go and to steep in the knowledge of those who have left this realm.

In "The Black and the Dazzle" by Tom Rea, the winter dawn is a wild light that finds and blesses everything with itself, while the cold air holds only a transparent possibility. As the author and her daughter pass a snowplow, they have nothing but one another for a panicked second. Her father writes that he is steadily and painlessly deteriorating. The road reappears.

In Robert Funge's "Valencia Street," a person finds themself on an unfamiliar street in the town where they grew up. The scents remind them of a dish they want to try at their favorite restaurant, so they go to the restaurant and find that the dish is delicious. At a bookstore, they buy a book by a poet of whom they have heard but never read. This

person finds themself, freed from something that they did not even know had hold of them.

In John Brandi's "Wilderness Poem," the author walks, and the trail stops. He follows the deer tracks beyond the clouds and gets lost again where the world begins.

In "Dreaming Them Into the World Again" by Tina Letcher, the author and her beloved walk down by the spring together. They can go anywhere, and she carries everyone. They hurry from place to place, touching each place with their lips which causes green shoots to sprout. "I am larger than the earth, two steps and I've circled the globe" (p. 170).

Section 15: pages 161-170 Analysis

"Tune" describes the death of someone the author loved, seemingly an older father or grandfather. She recalls how he loved to sit on the front porch and listen to the windchime, and though he did not write during his last years, they find midnight writings hidden in the drawers, causing them to listen for his typewriter from an upstairs room. A simile compares the circles of flaked shell on the windchime to his bones.

In "Something I Remember", the author recalls growing up in an apartment building on the Lower East Side, and how she liked the buses and subways best because they took her anywhere she wanted to go. Her father wants her to remember something that will prove his goodness, but all she can think of to do so is how he cares for his plants; she hopes that he will not realize he is not in the picture.

In "The Moment for Which There Is No Name," a boy draws a chalk circle around the spot where his grandfather's armchair once stood in the living room, but this mark will be erased when the new occupants arrive. In essence, his grandfather's place in the apartment, and in this world, will be vanquished.

In "Letter to Terry Dobson," the author remembers when Terry had to stop to catch his breath while walking from the house to the car because his breath was already leaving his body. A simile compares Terry's heart to a tea-cup.

The author of "Obituaries" wonders where the dead go when they leave this world, and he desires to attain their wisdom.

"The Black and the Dazzle" uses personification to describe how the dawn finds and blesses everything, and "Wilderness Poem" uses metaphors to compare the body to a petroglyph and the universe to a fragile empire dissolved on the tongue.

"Valencia Street" uses a metaphor to describe the street as a gift one has never opened, and a simile compares feeling free of something one did not know had hold of them to being released from being haunted by a ghost with which they have lived and just found.

"Dreaming Them Into the World Again" uses a simile to compare his height to that of a tree, and the author compares holding her children and grandchildren to falling leaves.

Characters

First-person Narrator (I)appears in Several Poems

The first-person narrator is the narrator of nearly three-quarters of the poems in this collection. The narrator uses the pronoun "I," which presumably refers to the poet, and this allows the poet to take possession of their work. In the Introduction, Naomi Shihab Nye writes in the first person as she explains why she compiled this collection of poetry.

In Lisa Ruth Shulman's "Orange Juice," it is dark when her father creeps down the hallway to the refrigerator, and longing to know his sweetness, she rises to meet him, her feet bare on the cold kitchen floor, and listens for clues.

In David Williams' "Breath," his ancestors are thrown away as if they were nothing, and everything they said becomes stone, except for the songs; he is thirsty to join their song.

In "I Myself" by Angel Gonzales, the author comes face to face with himself at a crossroads, but his enemy falls on him, leaving him weak and defeated in a ditch. He could never reach that place so his body walks along, gets lost and distorts whatever plans he makes.

In "Lens" by Kimberly J. Brown, the author wonders about the shouting in the house and why Mom must be watched. Dad tells her to "shut it off" when she claims it will be better when she is dead. Ten years later, Mother makes another attempt. Dad tells the nurse at the emergency room that the cut on her arm happened when she fell from a ladder while cleaning the windows with a razor because she had begged him not to tell. A car motor thrums in the garage, and when she barely pauses to leave, the author wonders if this is her last glance of Mother.

In "Leaving the Light On" by Jack Myers, the author has no idea who his parents are when he returns home late one night, so he climbs an apple tree and peers into their room, listening to them talk like polite strangers who go on as though they have just met.

In "Stranded" by Jenny Browne, the beloved's name drips from the author's eyelashes. She stops pretending because she has been waiting so long, and she thinks of the moment when her beloved decided to keep going.

In "Today I'll Sit Still" by Ernesto Trejo, the author will sit still today and say no to everything, even to "this preposterous accident who speaks of the 'self'" (p. 80).

In "Going Home" by Ben Judson, the author sees the addressee in the airport today, or rather a version from ten years ago, and wonders about the possibility of there being two of them in the world. The girl sits next to him on the airplane, and she is silent and iron-willed like the addressee, though she speaks Spanish. When a man comes to talk

to her father, the girl moves into his lap, and a woman the author does not know at all sits in the seat next to him.

In "What Came to Me" by Jane Kenyon, the author takes the last piece of china from the box and grieves for the one she has lost as never before.

In Nuala Archer's "The Lost Glove Is Happy," the author loses her glove made in Taiwan when she is on her way to Lubbock, Texas to visit her mother who is in the midst of desolation. They go to the mall and are as lost as any two mismatched gloves in desolation, but for a few minutes, they relax and are happy.

Addressee (You)appears in Several Poems

Many of the poems in this collection are addressed to a second-person "you." Most of these refer to an unspecified person, likely a reader or some person somewhere; however, other times, the authors address a specific person. For example, in "David," the author addresses his dead brother, David, while in "Mother's Day," a mother addresses her children about her desire to be herself.

Some of the poems address someone whom the poet loved, though the person is not identified, including "Seeing For You," "Legend," "Stranded," "This Isn't Fair," Ernesto Cardenal's untitled poem, and "Going Home." "What We Want" addresses a child; "Letter to an Ancestor" is written to an ancestor whom the author found in a census book, and "Sister" and "Raised Voices" refer to the poets' sisters. In "Tough Ride", the author writes to her deceased husband, claiming she is glad he is dead. The author of "Unveiling the Vietnam Memorial" speaks to someone he loved who was killed during the Vietnam War, and the author of "Thinking of What the Jury Is Deliberating" addresses a murderer on trial, likely who killed someone the poet loved. In "I Give You Back," Joy Harjo addresses fear, and Abbot Cutler speaks to Terry Dobson in "Letter to Terry Dobson".

The generic "you" refers to the reader or the author's conception of mankind as a whole. Because this form of addressee is not specified, it could be anyone, anywhere. Some poems that utilize this form of the second person are "The Changeling," "Devotion," "Last-Minute Message for a Time Capsule," "Naming," "The Sparrow and the Crumb," "Other Lives," "The Question," "Any Morning," and "Valencia Street."

Naomi Shihab Nyeappears in What Have You Lost?

Naomi Shihab Nye selects the poems which are included in this collection. She spends years compiling a collection of poems about loss and publishes them in this collection, "What Have You Lost?" She writes the Introduction, as well as "So Far," a poem about lost pets and her desire to retrieve them.

Father

The author's father would disappear into the privacy of stories in his study for hours, and if his son's hands were clean, he might pass a book to his son. Father teaches at the university and appears when his son turns the corner on the seventh floor of the university library. The author forgives his father for their unwritten lives and the years they have not read as they silently pass one another.

Mother

The author's mother stares impassively from the picnic table, opposite of the side where her husband serves potato salad. Her high cheekbones and straight black hair make the author think she could be Tecumseh's sister. The pitch of Mother's voice frightens her daughter who still wants to vanish into the woods with her. The author believes Mother could have been Tecumseh's great-granddaughter, and they could have been happy.

Grandfather

Grandfather promised the author his hair would grow back after his first crew cut at the age of five. He unwrapped sourballs for each of them and walked to the woods with his grandson, telling him "these woods are yours. They were mine, but I give them to you. I am old, and it is only right they should now belong to you" (p. 43). Though the author lives most of his life in the absence of his grandfather's gentle voice, he wears his hair long in honor of Grandfather.

Man

A man had less and less to say but said it better and better. He gloated that soon he would have nothing to say and would say it perfectly.

She

She thought it would not always be like this, that things would be better and less repetitive. She thought the world would be different, and she would be able to enjoy the little things. She hoped they would not all be so needy and there would be times that they would tell her she is the best there is.

Miss Betty

Miss Betty showed children how to play hide and seek, covering her eyes while they hid and singing a riddle while she searched for them. When she passes away in a tiny house on the vineyard, the author wonders why he did not look for her sooner.

Mentalist

Palming his cards during the applause, the mentalist smiles but frowns a little too. He shakes his head like something is wrong, seeing the cards already cut and nothing left. He looks around as if to be rid of his gift, willing to wish it on anyone, but he is old news and the audience is already watching the next performer. He sees the taxi waiting, noticing its sprung seat and the battery running low.

Tutu

Tutu stands on the corner, looking nice. Her grey hair is pinned up in a bun, and a huge, red hibiscus hangs over her right ear. She wears a blue Hawaiian-print muumuu which blows in the wind. She squints and wiggles her nose at a bus' fumes. It is possible to see her shrivel up and shrink a bit more, and soon, she will disappear from the curb forever.

Objects/Places

Father's Coat

The author's father's coat is made of the finest muscle and lined with fish scales from which rainbows glisten. Trout swim in the pockets among twigs and stones. Her father becomes invisible in his coat.

Battleground State Park

Battleground State Park is the setting of the poem by the same name. The author's parents sit on opposite sides of the picnic table, and the author wishes to vanish into the woods with her mother.

Aqueducts

All the author knows about her grandmother's lineage is that her Audo ancestors built the aqueducts in Turin, Italy two hundred years ago.

Montclair Art Museum

The author's class takes a field trip to the Montclair Art Museum where the author first learns the difference between male and female genitalia from a sculpture on the front lawn.

Hospital

When the author's mother is taken to the hospital after a suicide attempt, the family lies to a nurse claiming that the mother fell from a ladder while trying to clean windows with a razor.

Family Car

The family car was always big when the author was a child. The bodies stayed the same, but the grills got meaner looking. Father drove, Mother watched the road, and their two sons watched the world go by from the back seat.

Benavides, Texas

No one lives in Benavides, Texas, except the grocer. Ranchers visit the town monthly to buy corn and beans.

5 Allende Street

The colonial house at 5 Allende Street is knocked down. The author feels his grandparents' ghosts at night. This is where he spent the first instants of his life in the winter of 1953. A Banco de Comercio is going to be built in its stead.

Lubbock, Texasappears in

The author flies to Lubbock, Texas to visit her mother who is in the midst of desolation. They are happy together for a few moments in the mall.

Plum Trees

Plum trees grow in the author's backyard. They are bare and knotted in the winter, but they bloom into teenage girls in the spring. They throw plums in a temper tantrum in June. The plum trees are the closest things to daughters the author may ever have.

Valhalla of Lost Things

The Valhalla of Lost Things is a collection in which the author wants to wander. It contains Venus de Milo's arms, the Alexandrian library, and artifacts from Atlantis, among other things that should have been and should be. The Valhalla of Lost Things has no closing time and is always free. Here, the author can see what no one living person has seen and satisfy that within which is not whole.

Model Heart

As a child, the author wanders inside the model heart which is painted the colors of kindergarten art. She touches the walls and is surrounded by the sound of a heartbeat.

Secret of Life

On a bus to Portsmouth, a navy yard worker tells the author the secret of life. It cannot be passed from generation to generation. Hunger makes an open hand, one becomes what one loses, and the world will end in flood. The secret of life is circumstance; if one takes the right bus at the right time, the secret teller will whisper it in one's ear.

Chalk Circle

A child draws a chalk circle on the living room floor around the spot where his grandfather's armchair used to stand. The new occupant will erase the chalk circle tomorrow when they clean the apartment before moving in.

Valencia Street

Valencia Street is a street never walked on in a town one grew up in. It is a ribbon on a gift never opened which allows one to find oneself.

Themes

Death

One of the recurring themes throughout this collection of poetry is the theme of death. Since this collection focuses on loss, many poems address the issue of losing someone who is loved through death. This theme takes several different methods, such as sadness, denial, remembrance, and happiness. In William I. Elliott's "David," David threw the softball into the gutter just as Dad called them into dinner last fall. It is still there, as is the old cat's cradle in the apple tree and a grubby balsam glider wing in the rot of the roof's shingles. "If what we do is what we are, you're all over the place... If what we do is who we are, you're still home with us, more than underground" (p. 6). "David" claims that the author's brother is not really dead because he still lives in the hearts and home of his family.

In "The Forest of My Hair," a young man recalls his first haircut and how his grandfather had given him woods near the barbershop afterward. Though his grandfather died long ago and those woods have since been destroyed, the author wears his hair long in honor of his grandfather.

In "Sudden" by Nick Flynn, the newspaper might have used the word "massive" if it had been a heart attack, but it used "suddenly" instead. If it had been terminal, they could have said goodbye, but it was sudden how they had been orphaned overnight. "Sudden" investigates the importance of words and the means of death, since the author was orphaned when his parent died suddenly.

In Jennifer Weinblatt's "On the Suicide of a Young Boy I Did Not Know," written for Kaitlin and Jorie, she wonders what to do with grief that is not hers and with images of a boy she never saw who shot himself with his father's revolver. There is nothing she can do to ease his family's suffering, and she has no place in their sorrow, "but sorrow has no sense of propriety; it lodges where it pleases, needs little to thrive, and takes what it wants" (p. 55).

In "Where on This Earth" by Patricia Kilpatrick, the author wonders where on earth can the ones who are gone be reached. She wonders if anything people do for the departed matters and if people can now comfort those who go terribly, alone or burning. She questions where on earth to reach those who have left. In "Tough Ride" by Mary Ann Wehler, the author recalls her husband smacking their five-year-old son, David, on the head and insisting he eat. The author recalls her husband smashing all of the dishes when she challenged his behavior one day, and she is glad he is dead.

Self-Discovery

One theme in this collection of poems is self-discovery, though it is not as apparent as some of the other themes. This theme explores finding oneself in several of the poems.

In Siv Cedering's "The Changeling," one day, a child sees clearly that he cannot really be his parents' child, and his parents would also know it if they could look inside of him. Meanwhile, he waits, prepares, studies his chosen subject and writes poems, feeding the flame inside of him because he knows that it is the only way he will be able to live the life meant to be his. The boy also tries to hide the fact that he is different from his parents at first because he is glad to have been taken in, but he soon no longer wants the charity. He knows he is not meant to do what his parents do, and he wishes his real parents would come and embrace him.

In "Mother's Day" by Daisy Zamora, the author does not doubt her child would have liked a pretty, happy mother from the ads, but ever since she was small, she has always wanted to be herself which is hard for a woman; even her Guardian Angel had refused to watch over the author when she heard. The author often loses her way and life has been painful, but she continues with the hope that her children will pull her into some distant shore after she has been lost at sea.

In "Simple Song of Being Oneself" by Vittorio Bodini, ivy, wind and sea tell him he is not what they are. So do the river, dawn, dream, and many other things. The mirror only gives back his own image. These things tell him to be himself and spare himself from loving them. He flees, trying to stay alone, and finds death and fear. "Simple Song of Being Oneself" reiterates this theme as many things in nature urge the author to be himself rather than trying to be like them.

In "I Myself" by Angel Gonzales, he comes face to face with himself at a crossroads, but his enemy falls on him, leaving him weak and defeated in a ditch. He could never reach that place so his body walks along, gets lost and distorts whatever plans he makes. In "I Myself," the author sees a stubborn man who would stop at nothing when he sees himself. When the road narrows, he asks himself to let him pass because he has somewhere to be, but he cannot reach this place. This poem touches on the separation of identity.

In Harryette Mullen's "Shedding Skin," she pulls out of her old skin, a rough thing she leaves behind because she no longer needs it. She rubs against a rock to make herself tender again. The author uses an analogy to a snake shedding its skin to describe redefining herself and making herself tender again.

In "The Colors of Another Home" by Cyrus Cassells, a voice tells the author to sink deeper into the world. His soul whispers that he is Japanese as the mountain blues and mute cool greens remind him of the colors of another home. The author sees himself under regression as a woman bent over a pond in the fifteenth century and as a feudal lord drowning in a boat. Presumably, the author is viewing himself in his past lives.

Loss

The overall theme of this collection of poems is loss. Sometimes, loss refers to a death, but at other times, it is an object that is lost. Some loss pertains to relationships, others

to negative emotions, such as fear, and still other poems allude to a type of loss that is somewhat more obscure. In Jennifer Weinblatt's "On the Suicide of a Young Boy I Did Not Know," written for Kaitlin and Jorie, she wonders what to do with this grief that is not hers and with images of a boy she never saw who shot himself with his father's revolver. There is nothing she can do to ease his family's suffering, and she has no place in their sorrow, "but sorrow has no sense of propriety; it lodges where it pleases, needs little to thrive, and takes what it wants" (p. 55). Weinblatt explores her grief at hearing of a young boy who killed himself.

In "Tough Ride" by Mary Ann Wehler, the author recalls her husband smacking their five-year-old son, David, on the head and insisting he eat. The author recalls her husband smashing all of the dishes when she challenged his behavior one day, and she is glad he is dead. In the Introduction by Naomi Shihab Nye, "San Antonio, Texas," Nye leaves her beloved grey neck pillow on a plane. She has lost many things throughout her lifetime, causing her to be attracted to words like immortal, eternal and forever. "Losing makes us miserable, startles us awake. It's also inevitable" (p. xi). Nye considers whether there is anything good about losing and thinks that perhaps it makes people momentarily take better care of what they still have. Perhaps, these petty losses are so bothersome because they remind people of the larger, inevitable losses that can never be reclaimed, the people and eras of life. Losing is never any easier to comprehend, regardless of how much has already been lost. In the Introduction, Nye says she began looking for poems about the experience of loss and had kept a file of them for years with poems coming to her in various ways. It is harder to find poems about the things people would like to lose, such as regret, worry, envy, weight, fear, or self-consciousness. Nye suggests the reader may find them; maybe the reader is writing one now.

In Nuala Archer's "The Lost Glove Is Happy," the author loses her glove made in Taiwan when she is on her way to Lubbock, Texas to visit her mother who is in the midst of desolation. They go to the mall and are as lost as any two mismatched gloves in desolation, but for a few minutes, they relax and are happy. to visit her Archer later utilizes this anecdote to compare her mother and herself to two mismatched gloves who, though desolate, are happy for a few moments together.

In "That Kind of Marriage" by John Sangster, he slept upstairs while she slept downstairs. There are photos of their courtship with their hands touching, but "by the child's time, family love came down in two distinct beams". The poem discusses how a couple once were in love, but now, they are no longer a unit, though they are still married.

In Joy Harjo's "I Give You Back," the author releases her fear because she no longer knows it as herself. She had given fear the power to hurt her, but now, she takes herself back and will no longer let fear live in her heart; however, she invites fear to come to her because she is alive, and fear is so afraid of dying. In the poem, the author gives fear back "so you can no longer keep me naked and frozen in the winter, or smothered under blankets in the summer" (p. 138). She is no longer afraid to be angry, happy, black, white, hungry, full, hated or loved.

In "Last-Minute Message for a Time Capsule" by Philip Appleman, the author wanted to write this down so it would not be lost forever. At one time, the world was filled with meadows, blue skies and wildlife that would stagger the heart, but "we also had the righteous ones who worshipped the True Faith, and Holy War" (p. 47).

In "My Valhalla" by Robert Phillips, the author wants to wander in a collection he calls the Valhalla of Lost Things, rather than any other museum. This collection is always free, and there is neither a closing time nor a guard.

In "Thinking of What the Jury is Deliberating" by Mick Hatten, the author thinks about the jury deliberating, and his verdict is that he wants the man to spend the rest of his life in a cell with the faces of those he killed on the wall.

Style

Point of View

Most of the poems in "What Have You Lost?" are written from a first-person point of view. The few that are written from a third-person point of view are as follows: "What Grandma Taught Her," "The Higher Reaches," "That Kind of Marriage," "She had thought," "my lost father," "Mindleaving," "Shrink-wrapped," "Benavides, Texas, 1906," "The Mentalist Leaves the Stage," "Tutu on the Curb," and "The Moment for Which There Is No Name.". The point of view is limited and reliable which is proven by the fact that each poem is limited to the author's experiences, feelings and beliefs. This is important because, as a collection of poems, it is imperative that the reader understand the thoughts and feelings of each author in order to fully comprehend the poems, and this would not be possible if the authors did not utilize this point of view.

The poems are written mostly through exposition, but a few poems utilize dialogue, such as "What the Stones Know," "Nine," "Devotion," "The New World," "The Forest of My Hair," "Lens," "A Serenade," "Food. Music. Memory.," and "Secret of Life." This distribution is effective as a means of reflecting a certain aspect of the poet's life or experiences. The viewpoint of most of the poems is that of the poet, which varies from poem to poem; however, a few poems are written from the viewpoint of others, usually an undefined "you", and these are "The Changeling," "Devotion," "What Great Grief Has Made the Empress Mute," "The Higher Reaches," "The Sparrow and the Crumb," "Other Lives," "That Kind of Marriage," "She had thought," "Mindleaving," "Shrink-wrapped," "The Mentalist Leaves the Stage," "Any Morning," and "Valencia Street."

Setting

The poems are generally set in the real world, mostly in America. The people in the poems are people the poets have known during their lives, and because this collection is focused on the concept of loss, many of these people are deceased loved ones about whom the poet is thinking. Some of these poems also occur in the individual poet's mind and imagination.

Battleground State Park is the setting of the poem by the same name. The author's parents sit on opposite sides of the picnic table, and the author wishes to vanish into the woods with her mother.

In "Aqueducts," all the author knows about her grandmother's lineage is that her Audo ancestors built the aqueducts in Turin, Italy two hundred years ago.

In "The New World," the author's class takes a field trip to the Montclair Art Museum where the author first learns the difference between male and female genitalia from a sculpture on the front lawn.

When the author's mother is taken to the hospital after a suicide attempt in "Lens," the family lies to a nurse saying that the mother fell from a ladder while trying to clean windows with a razor.

In "Benavides, Texas, 1906," no one lives in Benavides, Texas, except the grocer. Ranchers visit the town monthly to buy corn and beans.

"The House at 5 Allende Street" is knocked down. The author feels his grandparents' ghosts at night. This is where he spent the first instants of his life in the winter of 1953. A Banco de Comercio is going to be built in its stead.

In "The Lost Glove Is Happy," the author flies to Lubbock, Texas to visit her mother who is in the midst of desolation. They are happy together for a few moments in the mall.

In "My Valhalla," the Valhalla of Lost Things is a collection in which the author wants to wander. It contains Venus de Milo's arms, the Alexandrian library, and artifacts from Atlantis, among other things that should have been and should be. The Valhalla of Lost Things has no closing time and is always free. Here, the author can see what no one living has seen and satisfy that within which is not whole.

In "Model of the Heart at the Franklin Institute," the author, as a child, wanders inside the model heart at the Franklin Institute which is painted the colors of kindergarten art. She touches the walls and is surrounded by the sound of a heartbeat. "Valencia Street" is a street never walked on in a town where one grew up. It is a ribbon on a gift never opened which allows one to find oneself.

Language and Meaning

The language of these poems is generally casual and informal. Some are structured according to grammatical properness, while others use a stream-of-consciousness style of writing. The language aids comprehension by being particular to each poet's style of writing. Sometimes, these poets use their poetic license to diverge from the path of grammatical accuracy, yet for the most part these poems retain their fluidity and ease in reading.

The language characterizes each poet and their feelings about the particular subject about which they are writing. The poems are mostly written through exposition with few exceptions that feature dialogue, and these poems are "What the Stones Know," "Nine," "Devotion," "The New World," "The Forest of My Hair," "Lens," "A Serenade," "Food. Music. Memory.", and "Secret of Life." The language used in this collection is important because it allows the reader to become familiar with the poets and their feelings about different aspects of the world which their poems discuss. They utilize many literary devices to enhance the quality of the poetry, and among these, similes, metaphors and personification are the most predominant. Alliteration and repetition are also used. Overall, the language used is generally easy to understand, though some of the abstract ideas can be a bit more difficult to comprehend.

Structure

"What Have You Lost?" contains an Introduction, Dedication and one hundred, thirty-nine poems and consists of one hundred, seventy-five pages. Each poem is generally one to two pages long, and they are mostly titled according to the topic of the poem. There is no division of chapters or sections within this collection. The poems are all quite short, the longest one being three pages in length, and they are all detailed.

Each poem has its own plot which it reveals; however, the theme of loss plays a dominant role throughout all of the poems, either in terms of losing an object, relationship or a person through death. All of these poems are quick paced and interesting. Some poems are linear while others recall events in the past. As a whole, this collection is very entertaining and often touching. Though some poems are a bit more difficult to understand, this collection is effective in maintaining its unity by focusing on the all-encompassing theme of loss which pervades the collection.

Quotes

"Losing makes us miserable, startles us awake. It's also inevitable... Losing casts all kinds of shadows on what we thought we knew... Surely losing is one of the most endemic frictions of our journey." Introduction, page xi-xii

"Inside this coat, my father was invisible. He became the smell of wet leaves, the smoke of campfires, and when he wrapped me in his sleeves, I stepped inside the dark forest." My Father's Coat, page 5

"If what we do is what we are, you're all over the place... If what we do is who we are, you're still home here with us; more than underground." David, page 6

"Of course our lives played out a different story, but even now there are things I believe are not impossible; she could have been Tecumseh's great-granddaughter, we could have been happy." Battleground State Park, page 9

"I didn't bring you up to embarrass me. When you were little I dressed you up as a girl. You were gorgeous. You had curls hanging over your face. But let's be honest. You're no longer cute. You're too old to get away with anything." Emergency Situation, page 12

"Meanwhile you wait, preparing. You study your chosen subject. You write your poems. You feed the original flame that burns inside you, because you know that is the only way you will get to live the life that is meant to be yours." The Changeling, page 15

"But since you were born of my womb, I should tell you: ever since I was small like you I wanted to be myself- and for a woman that's hard-(even my Guardian Angel refused to watch over me when she heard)." Mother's Day, page 22

"we carving a heartspace and staring down the darkness some call our future and they saying it be just dope and more dope and no hope and they don't even see we all the time standing in the middle of the trees and steady singing 'you can't you can't you can't touch this' and sometimes i hear this song in my head." page 26-27

"But what is their daily breath against all the ardent, cunning justifications for murder? The stunned drone of grief becomes the fierce, tender undertone that bears up the world." Breath, page 33

"Near 106, a bulletin board declares 'The Season of Changes' above a paper grove of sugar maples. He pulls me on, then runs ahead, fearless, blameless, gone." Taking My Son to His First Day of Kindergarten, page 37

"These woods, [my grandfather] said, are yours. They were mine, but I give them to you. I am old, and it is only right they should now belong to you." The Forest of My Hair, page 43

"Did anyone ever believe only men could love?...What is said is not always what is heard." Drifter, Owl, Mouse, page 45

"I wanted to write this down, so it wouldn't be lost forever- that once upon a time we had meadows here, and astonishing things, swans and frogs and luna moths and blue skies that could stagger your heart. We could have had them still, and welcomed you to earth, but we also had the righteous ones who worshipped the True Faith, and Holy War. When you go home to your shining galaxy, say that what you learned from this dead and barren place is to beware the righteous ones." Last-Minute Message for a Time Capsule, page 47

"If it had been terminal, we could have cradled her as she grew smaller, wiped her mouth, said goodbye. But it was sudden, how overnight we could be orphaned & the world became a bell we'd crawl inside & the ringing all we'd eat." Sudden, page 52

"But sorrow has no sense of propriety; it lodges where it pleases, needs little to thrive, and takes what it wants." On the Suicide of a Young Boy I Did Not Know, page 55

"for lovers or users of words this is the difficulty- what gets lost is not what gets lost in translation but more what gets lost in language itself" What Gets Lost/Lo Que Se Pierde, page 63

"The meaning of flower has gone entirely; so has the meaning of love. Now it is safe to say: I love you. Now it is true." Naming, page 64

"He is the pupil who has stayed after school the rest of his life, to write loneliness and love on the darkness, with the chalky pumice of his heart." Hitchhiker, page 72

"No to me, this preposterous accident who speaks of the 'self'. Today I'll be anti-social. Today I'll grow into myself, be the river of my blood, the sky inside my eyes, the maze of my ribs, the dust that settles on my heart. I'll let my bones sink like pebbles in a pond. I'll let my feet grow roots and be an extra zero on the checks that I'll refuse to write." Today I'll Sit Still, page 80

"To understand chaos, be chaos... We know what can undo us, and we keep it where We can see it, but what of the distance That darkens and fills with the second thoughts of starlight, That hangs over us every night its opulent alternatives... Love is in the rewrites. Be slow." Insurance, page 83

"How did she arrive at such a little life?... Where she tears out page after page in her journal, because there is no one to see, nothing to write." Shrink-wrapped, page 92

"How do I reconstruct these damaged scraps of memory? And if we're moving back the clock, can the door to my room, this time, lock?" Dream House, page 105

"The silence and stillness aren't enough for us to know they're not here. Only our even breathing makes noise, and only our shifting eyes moves- over empty vases, tea cups hanging in a glass cabinet, candlesticks on the mantel flanking a faded portrait- as if we

haven't seen these things before, as if we didn't now own them." What Was Once Reached For, page 108

"Some questions have no answer. Raised, they hang there in the mind Like open mouths, full of something missing. The great Portuguese poet, Pessoa, Said that the idea of happiness Is what makes men permanently sad. The body, imagining the soul, Looks ugly to itself. A man hears a word, and the world Becomes a place that he misunderstands. So he climbs high into his life, Ashamed of all he doesn't know, And refuses to come down." The Question, page 124

"In my museum no guard shushes me for talking, there are no closing times, it's always free. Here I can see what no one living has seen, I satisfy that within me which is not whole. Here I am curator not of what is, but of what should have been, and what should be." My Valhalla, page 127

"Buoyed in imitation- we dipped and rose, resting briefly in each other's L'Inquietudine- as though the notes lived on inside us, as though our half and fractured songs had been made whole. We lived as though the music could restore what we thought we'd lost." Passing Necessity, page 131

"How did we learn to make a monument to some and to call others enemy, to conceal our species from itself? With the body of each warrior we place in the earth, we etch ourselves most truly into the cold memory of stone: the acid history of our kind, which murders its own." Unveiling the Vietnam Memorial, page 135

"I take myself back, fear. You are not my shadow any longer. I won't hold you in my hands. You can't live in my eyes, my ears, my voice my belly, or in my heart my heart my heart my heart But come here, fear I am alive and you are so afraid of dying." I Give You Back, page 139

"We were raised in the same silence and I am so glad when you call." Raised Voices, page 143

"Mine has always been a silent world. So words have not been easy. And words have been easy. As easy as words. As another lie; oh, I have lied. And I have denied. And then denied that I denied. I have invented myself so many times so that others would believe I was who they thought I was, and I suppose, so that I, too, would believe. And also for no particular reason. Oh, I have lied. And that is the truth." Truth, page 148

"But I've lost that brevity, that arrogance of what is what, and my poems flock like blackbirds gleaning word after word, line after line from the waving field. They are still famished, cawing terribly in my mind. I don't know what to give them. I keep on writing. And writing." Processes, page 151

"The grey line of the road ahead embraces us; yet we can still be lost in our own life." Ghazal (For William Stafford), page 152

"The secret of life, he said, is love. You become what you lose... The secret of life, he said, is circumstance. If you catch the right bus at the right time you will sit next to the secret teller who will whisper it in your ear." Secret of Life, page 160

"What I seek to apply is the prefix trans: transport, transbay, from this quilted chair on earth, to wherever go the deceased, and to steep in the queer bridging knowledge of knowing flesh which went and leapt the realm." Obituaries, page 166

"You find yourself. All of a sudden you've bungee jumped into a new life, you want to free fall with nothing holding you back. You're ready to walk that mountain loop you'd always thought too long. You're free of something you didn't know had a hold of you, like a ghost you've lived with and just found, the haunting over." Valencia Street, page 168

Topics for Discussion

Choose two narrative poems to compare and contrast.

Choose a poem about nature, and analyze how it reveals a truth or generalization about humanity.

Investigate the effectiveness of simile and metaphor in at least three of these poems.

Analyze how the theme of loss plays a part in this poetry collection.

Which two poems do you believe are the most similar, and why?

Which poem do you find the most difficult to understand and why? Attempt to analyze it.

Choose your favorite poem from this collection. Why is it your favorite? What makes it better than the other poems? How does it make you feel?