

Name: _____

Period: 2 3 4 5 7 8

Reading - March 20, 2013

Rhythm

My Papa's Waltz - Theodore Roethke

The whiskey on your breath
Could make a small boy dizzy;
But I hung on like death:
Such waltzing was not easy.

We romped until the pans
Slid from the kitchen shelf;
My mother's countenance
Could not unfrown itself.

The hand that held my wrist
Was battered on one knuckle;
At every step you missed
My right ear scraped a buckle.

You beat time on my head
With a palm caked hard by dirt,
Then waltzed me off to bed
Still clinging to your shirt.

1. Summarize the poem in your own words.
2. Find an example of enjambment in the poem.
3. Find a simile in the poem.
4. What do you think this poem is really about?
5. Describe the speaker of the poem; describe their age, gender, and emotional state.

6. The structure of this poem is very interesting. Describe the syllabic structure of each stanza.

7. Count the stresses in each line. How does this contribute to the poem?

8. Critics argue about this poem and have conflicting views about what it actually means. Some believe it is an innocent waltz between father and child; others think it is about an abusive relationship. Find evidence that this poem is about dancing. Then, find evidence that suggests this poem is about abuse.

9. Which interpretation do you side with? Positive or negative?

10. If you could pick the song that would best play in the background for this waltz (or “waltz”), which song would you pick? Why?