

Person & Place Poems

Name: _____

Date: _____ Pd: _____

My Papa's Waltz

Notes (Annotate!)

- 1 The whiskey on your breath
Could make a small boy dizzy;
But I hung on like death:
Such waltzing was not easy.
- 5 We romped until the pans
Slid from the kitchen shelf;
My mother's countenance
Could not unfrown itself.
- 9 The hand that held my wrist
Was battered on one knuckle;
At every step you missed
My right ear scraped a buckle.
- 13 You beat time on my head
With a palm caked hard by dirt,
Then waltzed me off to bed
Still clinging to your shirt.

Theodore Roethke

Speaker: Who is the speaker? What can you deduce about him from the text of the poem?

Story: What is literally happening in this poem? Describe the moment—focus on the detailed images in the poem. Who is involved?

Tone: How does the speaker feel about his father? (go deep—not a simple black/white answer) How do you know? (support below)

Vehicles: How does Roethke use language (**MIDSST**) to communicate tone and affect mood? Write and discuss each example. Use line numbers to document quoted words/passage.

Metaphor: What examples of figurative language does Roethke use? What two things is he comparing in each? So? (How are they significant?)

Imagery: What specific, concrete images does Roethke use? To what sense/s does each appeal? What effects does each have on the poem's meaning?

Diction: What particular word choices draw attention to the speaker's tone? Why?

Structure/Syntax: How does the organization of stanzas communicate meaning? How does Roethke's syntax in line 8 affect the poem?

Title: How does the title affect the meaning of the poem?

Daddy

You do not do, you do not do
Any more, black shoe
In which I have lived like a foot
For thirty years, poor and white,
Barely daring to breathe or Achoo.

Daddy, I have had to kill you.
You died before I had time—
Marble-heavy, a bag full of God,
Ghastly statue with one gray toe
Big as a Frisco seal

And a head in the freakish Atlantic
Where it pours bean green over blue
In the waters off beautiful Nauset.
I used to pray to recover you.
Ach, du.

In the German tongue, in the Polish town
Scraped flat by the roller
Of wars, wars, wars.
But the name of the town is common.
My Polack friend

Says there are a dozen or two.
So I never could tell where you
Put your foot, your root,
I never could talk to you.
The tongue stuck in my jaw.

It stuck in a barb wire snare.
Ich, ich, ich, ich,
I could hardly speak.
I thought every German was you.
And the language obscene

An engine, an engine
Chuffing me off like a Jew.
A Jew to Dachau, Auschwitz, Belsen.
I began to talk like a Jew.
I think I may well be a Jew.

The snows of the Tyrol, the clear beer of
Vienna
Are not very pure or true.
With my gipsy ancestress and my weird luck
And my Taroc pack and my Taroc pack
I may be a bit of a Jew.

I have always been scared of *you*,
With your Luftwaffe, your gobbledygoo.
And your neat mustache
And your Aryan eye, bright blue.
Panzer-man, panzer-man, O You—

Not God but a swastika
So black no sky could squeak through.
Every woman adores a Fascist,
The boot in the face, the brute
Brute heart of a brute like you.

You stand at the blackboard, daddy,
In the picture I have of you,
A cleft in your chin instead of your foot
But no less a devil for that, no not
Any less the black man who

Bit my pretty red heart in two.
I was ten when they buried you.
At twenty I tried to die
And get back, back, back to you.
I thought even the bones would do.

But they pulled me out of the sack,
And they stuck me together with glue.
And then I knew what to do.
I made a model of you,
A man in black with a Meinkampf look

And a love of the rack and the screw.
And I said I do, I do.
So daddy, I'm finally through.
The black telephone's off at the root,
The voices just can't worm through.

If I've killed one man, I've killed two—
The vampire who said he was you
And drank my blood for a year,
Seven years, if you want to know.
Daddy, you can lie back now.

There's a stake in your fat black heart
And the villagers never liked you.
They are dancing and stamping on you.
They always *knew* it was you.
Daddy, daddy, you bastard, I'm through.

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