**An August Night**

His hands were warm and small and knowledgeable.
When I saw them again last night, they were two ferrets,
Playing all by themselves in a moonlit field.

by **Seamus Heaney**

1. ***What are some poetic techniques and devices you like in this poem?***

Assignment Objective: to practice and identify the numerous instances of figurative language that appears in poetry as well as reflect on elements of diction, syntax, and tone.

Criteria: You must mimic Charles Simic’s poem, “Bestiary of my Hand” and format in the following ways:

1. You must have multiple stanzas or sections, one devoted to each of your five fingers (or five things, people, topics, etc.).
2. You must use *apostrophe*, and address the fingers/things/people one by one.
3. You must use multiple poetic elements including: figurative language, diction, syntax, and tone.

*You can draw inspiration in the following ways:*

* Make the poem about yourself or a certain talent you have.
* Make the poem about a fictional character, like a child, or person of different culture, or even an animal.
* Make the poem about your hand taking a certain action, like throwing a baseball, or painting a picture.
* Other: just run it by me first.

Logistics: You will need to label your figurative language/writing techniques using a color chart and/or annotations. The purpose of the annotation/color codes is to clearly identify the figurative language and poetic elements you are using for the instructor and yourself to prove what you have learned about poetry from this first unit.

You will also need to include a reflection explaining your persona and some of your strongest poetic elements; this reflection is a chance to celebrate what you created.

**\*\*\*You need to present a 1st completed draft for my comments by \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. I will review and give you feedback so you can work on revising it in class during a workshop day.**

*As we review the hand images, write down the number and your thoughts/or what the hands symbolize specifically in the image.*

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*Note the poetic structure, layout, and format of Simic’s piece—the five stanzas—because your apostrophe hand poem will also need to have five stanzas…what those stanzas are about, how they are labeled, etc., is up to you, but there needs to be five!*

**Bestiary for the Fingers of My Right Hand**

*By Charles Simic*

1.
Thumb, loose tooth of a horse.
Rooster to his hens.
Horn of a devil.  Fat worm
They have attached to my flesh
At the time of my birth.
It takes four to hold him down,
Bend him in half, until the bone
Begins to whimper.
Cut him off.  He can take care
Of himself.  Take root in the earth,
Or go hunting with wolves.

2.
The second points the way.
True way.  The path crosses the earth,
The moon and some stars.
Watch, he points further.
He points to himself.

3.
The middle one has backache.
Stiff, still unaccustomed to this life:
An old man at birth.  It's about something
That he had and lost,
That he looks for within my hand,
The way a dog looks
For fleas
With a sharp tooth.

4.
The fourth is mystery.
Sometimes as my hand
Rests on the table
He jumps by himself
As though someone called his name.

After each bone, finger,
I come to him, troubled.

5.
Something stirs in the fifth
Something perpetually at the point
Of birth.  Weak and submissive,
His touch is gentle.
It weighs a tear.
It takes the mote out of the eye.

*Notice my identifying vocabulary annotations in the margins!*

Alliteration, diction

Metaphor for avoiding the blame/lying.

Alliteration

Tactile imagery

Diction

Lots of valuable grammar tehcniques

*Sample: A Child’s Hand*

1. Oh my little pinkie; my Mama calls you my titter-tot.

You are smaller than most, much like another on the playground.

The way the others can jump, and bend, and frolic so limberly, and yet:

You remain slower than the rest.

Diction

Onomatopoeia

Short Syntax

Simile, imagery--gustatory

1. My next finger stands wearing a trophy bauble from Susie.

She gave it to me because it had a green monster on it.

Dino—RooAAARR—I would chase her. She howled.

Before came the cracker jacks.

The sweet caramel like crunchy slivers of glass on my tongue.

Irony

Short Syntax and Auditory Imagery.

Dialogue

Imagery and juxtaposition

1. My uh-oh finger. The one Mama says no, and yet—

Pops likes to use it in the cars. Screaming.

Hollering. Me—giggling.

“Don’t tell your Mama.”

A secret and sometimes, I raise the finger,

because I know.

It takes like chocolate before bedtime.

1. The wicked finger, you take control and

Personification

Alliteration, diction

Metaphor for avoiding the blame/lying.

make me say bad things.

“He did it.” I call out.

The finger jabs and slices the sky.

The pivotal poke and blame—

but I can never turn you around towards me.

1. My thumb is my bashful desire.

A dark shade covers the window of the day and I have but one—

Tone Shift—the thumb is more peaceful, innocent

Diction

Personification

Placate.

I am too old, my Mama says.

I still find him to be my best friend.

He tells me hush.

Someday I will say goodbye—but not tonight.

My poem takes on the persona of a small child, and his life experiences with each finger. I chose to go backwards from the pinkie to the thumb to show the rising action of the boy’s daily adventures to end of his day—and sleeping. I universally use the dashes to draw emphasis and create pauses throughout all the stanzas.

1. My first stanza—devoted to my pinkie—is a metaphor for the young boy’s experiences in the real world. I include some kinesthetic imagery with the jumping and motion of the “fingers,” which are actually the other kids on the playground the boy is excluded from because he is the “small” kid on the block (just like the pinkie is the smallest finger on your hand).
2. My second stanza is an example of childish love and play. I choose a subject of childish nostalgia—cracker jack popcorn boxes—and used this stanza to push imagery, especially tactile and gustatory with the last line. I also used some onomatopoeia ( “RooAARR”) to help show how kids like to play and run around, and I really like my two word sentence, “she howled,” to show how the boy’s games were a little violent, just like the caramel being compared to slivers of glass.
3. The third stanza is meant to be humorous and paradoxical. The mother condemns the use of the middle finger, but the boy watches his Dad use it during fits of road rage. There is a lot of short, one sentence auditory imagery (“screaming, hollering, giggling”) to capture the moment as well. My favorite line of the whole poem is the last line in this stanza, which captures the idea of how kids like to break the rules, and know it is sinful fun, much like eating chocolate before bedtime is a no-no for a young child.
4. This stanza, the fourth, is the most serious of the bunch, and shows a change in tone for the persona. This is about hidden guilt as the persona’s pointer finger becomes a tool for blame. We are all guilty of it, and as children we do it more than we should. The irony is the young boy knows what he is doing is wrong and he can’t naturally turn the finger towards himself—the true instigator.
5. The final stanza is—in my opinion—the sweetest of them all, because it shows that despite the boy’s faults: his weakness, his tormenting of girls, and his inability to take responsibly for his misdeeds: he is a thumb-sucker. He finds his greatest comfort in his thumb, and for the time being, he uses it to help him sleep. The thumb becomes a personified comfort, and the irony is someday he needs to grow out of his habit.

Rubric: **staple this rubric to the very front of your final draft or lose points!**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Score: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_/60pts

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|  | **4-Awesome!** | **3-Got It!** | **2-Almost** | **1-Not Quite** |
| **P****O****E****M** | I have a creative title (5pts).\_\_\_\_I have all the required stanzas and “apostrophes” represented; my poem is creative, inventive, and cohesive throughout (10pts).\_\_\_\_I have several/many inventive poetic elements; my poem shows originality and outstanding creativity (10pts). | I have a solid title (4pts).\_\_\_\_I have all the required stanzas and “apostrophes” solidly represented; my poem is clear and has some moments of creativity and mediocrity (8-9pts).\_\_\_\_I have several solid and clear poetic elements including: diction, syntax, tone, and figurative language (8-9pts) | I have a title, but it is just the label of the task (3pts).\_\_\_\_I have all the required stanzas and may represent the “apostrophes,” but my poem is overall basic, mediocre, and simple (6-7pts).\_\_\_\_I have some poetic elements, but they are minimal, basic, and simple (6-7pts) | I fail to include a title, or it is confusing andunclear. (0-2pts).\_\_\_\_I fail to include all the required stanzas, or the “apostrophes” are unclear, confusing, or missing; my poem is confusing/poor (0-5pts).\_\_\_\_I have few, if any poetic elements, and they may be confusing or inappropriate (0-5pts). |
| **R****E****F****L****E****C****T****I****O****N** | I thoroughly and thoughtfully explain each of my stanzas (10pts).\_\_\_\_I use the class vocabulary, and sophisticated diction throughout the poem and reflection (10pts) | I clearly explain each of my stanzas (8-9pts).\_\_\_\_I use the solid class vocabulary (8-9pts). | I may explain each of my stanzas, but they are basic and simple (6-7pts).\_\_\_\_I use the class vocabulary vaguely or sparingly (6-7pts) | I fail to explain each of my stanzas and/or the explanation is too short, confusing, not detailed enough (0-5pts).\_\_\_\_I fail to use class vocabulary and/or there are major errors, including spelling (0-5pts) |
| **C****O****N****V****E****N****T****I****O****N****S** | I present a professional, and well organized second or third (final) draft (5pts)\_\_\_\_I use proper MLA formatting (5pts)\_\_\_\_I have inventive mechanics (5pts) | I present a neat, solid, and clear second (final) draft (4pts)I have solid mechanics (4pts) | I present a simple and basic second (final) draft (3pts)\_\_\_\_I use some proper MLA formatting (3pts)\_\_\_\_I have basic mechanics (3pts) | I present a messy, incomplete and/or unrevised second (final) draft (0-2pts)\_\_\_\_I fail to use proper MLA formatting (0-2pts)\_\_\_I have weak mechanics (0-2pts) |

*Comments:*