**Those Winter Sundays**

*Robert Hayden (1913-1980)*

Sundays too my father got up early  
And put his clothes on in the blueback cold,  
then with cracked hands that ached  
from labor in the weekday weather made  
banked fires blaze. No one ever thanked him.  
  
I'd wake and hear the cold splintering, breaking.  
When the rooms were warm, he'd call,  
and slowly I would rise and dress,  
fearing the chronic angers of that house,  
  
Speaking indifferently to him,  
who had driven out the cold  
and polished my good shoes as well.  
What did I know, what did I know  
of love's austere and lonely offices?

**The Whipping**

*by Robert Hayden*

  The old woman across the way  
     is whipping the boy again  
and shouting to the neighborhood  
     her goodness and his wrongs.  
  
Wildly he crashes through elephant ears,  
     pleads in dusty zinnias,  
while she in spite of crippling fat  
     pursues and corners him.  
  
She strikes and strikes the shrilly circling  
     boy till the stick breaks  
in her hand. His tears are rainy weather  
     to woundlike memories:  
  
My head gripped in bony vise  
     of knees, the writhing struggle  
to wrench free, the blows, the fear  
     worse than blows that hateful  
Words could bring, the face that I  
     no longer knew or loved . . .  
Well, it is over now, it is over,  
     and the boy sobs in his room,  
  
And the woman leans muttering against  
     a tree, exhausted, purged--  
avenged in part for lifelong hidings  
     she has had to bear.

**Digging**

*Seamus Heaney (Ireland, born 1939)*

Between my finger and my thumb  
The squat pen rests; as snug as a gun.  
  
Under my window a clean rasping sound  
When the spade sinks into gravelly ground:  
My father, digging. I look down  
  
Till his straining rump among the flowerbeds  
Bends low, comes up twenty years away  
Stooping in rhythm through potato drills  
Where he was digging.  
  
The coarse boot nestled on the lug, the shaft  
Against the inside knee was levered firmly.  
He rooted out tall tops, buried the bright edge deep  
To scatter new potatoes that we picked  
Loving their cool hardness in our hands.  
  
By God, the old man could handle a spade,  
Just like his old man.  
  
My grandfather could cut more turf in a day  
Than any other man on Toner's bog.  
Once I carried him milk in a bottle  
Corked sloppily with paper. He straightened up  
To drink it, then fell to right away  
Nicking and slicing neatly, heaving sods  
Over his shoulder, digging down and down  
For the good turf. Digging.

The cold smell of potato mold, the squelch and slap  
Of soggy peat, the curt cuts of an edge  
Through living roots awaken in my head.  
But I've no spade to follow men like them.  
  
Between my finger and my thumb  
The squat pen rests.  
I'll dig with it.

**My Papa's Waltz**

*Theodore Roethke (1908-1963)*

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](http://www.poemhunter.com/poem/my-papa-s-waltz/) 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.

**Hanging Fire**

*Audre Lorde (1934-1992)*

I am fourteen

and my skin has betrayed me

the boy I cannot live without

still sucks his thumb

in secret

how come my knees are

always so ashy

what if I die

before the morning comes

and momma's in the bedroom

with the door closed.

I have to learn how to dance

in time for the next party

my room is too small for me

suppose I die before graduation

they will sing sad melodies

but finally

tell the truth about me

There is nothing I want to do

and too much

that has to be done

and momma's in the bedroom

with the door closed.

Nobody even stops to think

about my side of it

I should have been on Math Team

my marks were better than his

why do I have to be

the one

wearing braces

I have nothing to wear tomorrow

will I live long enough

to grow up

and momma's in the bedroom

with the door closed.

For one of the poems:

1. Summarize in a short sentence the main idea of ***the poem***.
2. Characterize the speaker in ***the poem***. How old is the speaker? Can you distinguish different time periods in the poem or different ages in the speaker?
3. Explain how ***the poet*** conveys the perceptions of a child. How does this control the setting of the poem?
4. What childhood emotions are portrayed in ***the poem***?
5. How does ***the poet*** convey adult reflections? How does this affect the form of the poem?
6. List what adult thoughts about childhood are communicated in the poem you read.

***Compare yourself to the child the poem. Explain what you have in common? What not? How would you feel if you were him or her?***