**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?***