Cut

SUMMARY

The speaker proclaims exhilaration at having cut her thumb while chopping an onion. She says that the tip of the thumb is almost entirely removed, although it hangs on by a thin strip of flesh that she compares to a hat.

The white, lifeless skin gives way to the soft crimson of the wound itself.

The speaker addresses her thumb directly, calling it a "pilgrim" who's had their scalp sliced off by an "Indian." Then she likens it to the red, bumpy flesh that hangs from a turkey's neck.

The blood spreads out on the floor like a rug coming directly from the speaker's own heart. The speaker walks on top of this rug while holding tight to a bottle of pink champange (perhaps a metaphor for her bleeding thumb or for some sort of antiseptic).

The speaker says that this incident is a cause for celebration. Blood pours out of her wound like an endless stream of British soldiers in their red uniforms.

She can't decide who these soldiers are fighting for, however. She addresses her cut thumb as her "little man" and then says she's sick. She has taken medication to stop feeling so frail and flimsy.

Next, she accuses her thumb (or possibly herself) of intentionally ruining itself, comparing it to a suicide bomber.

She says that the splatter of blood on the bandage of her thumb—which she likens to the white hoods that members of the Ku Klux Klan wear and then to a headscarf typically worn by a Russian or Polish grandmother—grows darker and rust-colored.

Seemingly addressing herself now, the speaker describes her heart as if it's been beaten into mush and balled up. That heart now has to face its crushing silence.

The speaker notes that an ambiguous "you" (either her heart, her thumb, or herself) is startled (perhaps a reference to the way her heart beats or her wound throbs). She concludes by calling herself and/or her thumb a soldier who has had their head bored into by a surgical instrument, a soiled young woman, and the remaining part of a tree after it has been cut down.

THEMES

SHOCK, TRAUMA, AND SEPARATION

"Cut" describes a woman's reaction to slicing her thumb while cooking. This experience of literal separation—the severing of "the top" of the "thumb" from the rest of it—leaves the speaker feeling bizarrely detached from, and fascinated by, her own body. Her intensely emotional and imaginative reaction to this "cut" suggests that it's a metaphor for psychological trauma—for some sort of *emotional* shock and/or separation. Through its figurative language, the poem implies that trauma can leave one feeling detached, disoriented, and alienated from parts of one's life and even one's own self.

The speaker calls her cut "a thrill" and her bloody thumb "a celebration," suggesting that she's excited or entertained by this wound. These aren't the feelings that would normally accompany a bad injury, and they suggest the speaker's shock at this unexpected intrusion into a mundane, everyday task (cooking). It's as though this sudden severing prompts her to consider the foreignness of her own body.

Indeed, the speaker's metaphors for her bleeding thumb suggest her growing sense of detachment from that body. For example, she compares her blood to "Redcoats," British soldiers from the American Revolutionary War, "run[ning]" out of her wound. She wonders "Whose side" these soldiers are on, a question implying that her body (including its blood/life force) may no longer be on the same "side" as her mind; one or the other may be experiencing this pain as an irrational "thrill" (and she may even be torn between competing desires to stop the bleeding and live or let it go and die). Through all of this, the speaker calls her injured thumb "you"—again suggesting that she feels a widening gulf between herself and her body.

She goes on to compare her wound to a series of almost cartoonish images: "A flap like a hat," a "turkey wattle" (the red, loose, bumpy skin on a turkey's neck), etc. These playful images suggest that the speaker isn't describing the unpleasant incident literally so much as she is using it as an imaginative jumping-off point. That is, her cut sets her mind spinning, envisioning her thumb as anything but her own thumb.

However outlandish, these images are notably violent, suggesting that the speaker is dealing with underlying feelings of rage or helplessness. For example, she mentions a "pilgrim" whose "scalp" has been "axed" by an "Indian." Because this is a metaphor for her own thumb, which she's cut herself, she may identify with either the attacker or the attacked—or both. Either way, the image suggests that this wound signifies some deeper drama for her. The speaker's literal "cut," in other words,

might also be a metaphor for *emotional* separation, shock, and trauma.

The poem doesn't state what the underlying emotional wound of the speaker might be; instead, it seems to suggest that trauma in general—be it physical or emotional—can leave one feeling completely "cut" off from one's usual reality. Just as the cut causes the speaker to see her thumb as something foreign, so too might a sudden psychological trauma—such as a separation from someone or something you're emotionally attached to—make your whole life feel foreign.

Where this theme appears in the poem:

- Lines 1-28

SELF-HARM AND SELF-HATRED

"Cut" might be read as a portrait of someone who's at war with themselves. Though it's natural to assume that the speaker's "cut" is accidental, she never actually says it is. In fact, many of the poem's metaphors seem to suggest the opposite: that the speaker's mutilation of her thumb was more or less deliberate, and that it resulted from some deep, internal conflict. Consciously or unconsciously, the speaker may have harmed herself in an attempt to get rid of an internal enemy—a source of pain, shame, and self-loathing. Ultimately, the poem suggests that shame and self-loathing can create a kind of war within the psyche and can even lead to acts of self-harm.

Some of the poem's metaphors suggest that the speaker's injury resulted from a deep inner conflict. For instance, she compares her thumb to a "scalp[ed]" "pilgrim," but it's unclear whether she identifies with the injured party or the attacker. It's also unclear who in this historical scenario she sympathizes with: "Indian[s]" did sometimes harm or kill "pilgrim[s]," but settlers wreaked terrible havoc on Indigenous populations first. This ambiguity suggests that the speaker doesn't see herself clearly as a victim or an aggressor, but rather that both sides of this conflict are playing out *within* her.

She also compares her blood to "a million soldiers run[ning]" out of her wound and asks "Whose side are they on?" Her confusion implies that she doesn't know whether to side with her body, which is bleeding, or her mind, which is for some reason "celebrat[ing]" this injury. Again, her confusion suggests that she's at war with *herself*.

By subtly pitting the speaker against her own body, the poem suggests that the severing of the thumb was an act of self-sabotage. In fact, the speaker calls either herself or her thumb a "Saboteur" (someone who purposely sabotages something) and a "Kamikaze man" (a WWII-era Japanese military pilot who would destroy enemy ships by flying into them, thereby killing himself as well). These allusions suggest that the speaker may have *purposely* cut her thumb on a self-destructive impulse.

The poem further suggests that the speaker hurt herself in an attempt to free herself of an almost imperceptible enemy—one that seems to exist inside her. The speaker calls her thumb (or herself) a "Dirty girl," hinting that this inner conflict involves a sense of self-loathing. In a patriarchal society, women are expected to be good and pure, so this loathing may reflect misogynistic cultural beliefs. In any case, the speaker seems to believe there's something wrong with her.

Her reference to the "Ku Klux Klan" (a white supremacist hate group whose members wear white hoods to hide their identities) may further suggest her inability to identify the source of her self-hatred. The speaker also calls her cut thumb a "trepanned veteran." "Trepann[ing]" was a practice in which a doctor would cut a hole in a patient's head to relieve built-up pressure in the skull. This metaphor seems to suggest that the speaker's self-mutilation was an attempted *solution* to an unbearable pressure building inside her. By cutting her thumb, she was trying to "kill" the part of herself that's making her "ill."

The poem thus implies that self-hatred can create an internal battle that leads to self-harm. The speaker invokes a whole cast of warlike characters, but all are, perhaps, just metaphors for the speaker's internal conflict. And since the enemy is within, there's no one for the speaker to fight but herself. In this way, the poem implies that self-hatred can cause people to direct violence at themselves—the only enemy they can locate.

Ultimately, the poem never resolves the question of whether the speaker cut herself on purpose. This ambiguity becomes part of the poem's meaning: the speaker herself is so self-divided that she may not fully know whether the act was intentional.

Where this theme appears in the poem:

- Lines 1-40

LINE-BY-LINE ANALYSIS

LINES 1-2

What a thrill— ...
... of an onion.

The first two lines of "Cut" present what seems, at first, like a pretty straightforward situation: the speaker, attempting to chop "an onion," has accidentally sliced into her "thumb instead." While the poem will go on to describe the speaker's emotional reaction to this cut in vivid detail, the incident itself is really only gestured to in the title and these opening lines.

The speaker's tone at the poem's start seems ironic. Though she calls cutting her thumb a "thrill" she probably isn't *really* deriving any pleasure from this accidental maiming. Her wry humor perhaps suggests that she's attempting to distance

herself from the very real pain that she's in. The word "thrill" also points to the surreal mixture of surprise, confusion, and maybe even excitement that comes with suddenly, accidentally injuring oneself. This reminder of her fragile, mortal body is perhaps thrilling amidst the humdrum of everyday life.

Then again, the poem never actually says that this injury was an accident! The speaker may very well have *intentionally* cut herself, either consciously or unconsciously trying to resolve some inner conflict.

In any case, the speaker appears to be in shock. The /uh/ assonance and muffled /m/ and /n/ sounds in "thumb" and "onion" evoke a stunned numbness, as if the speaker hasn't fully processed what has happened to her. The soft /th/ alliteration in "thrill" and "thumb" also adds immediate intensity to the poem's opening.

Note, too, how the dash at the end of line 1 interrupts the speaker's thought, giving it a truncated feel that subtly mimics the way the speaker's thumb itself has been cut short:

> What a thrill—

Indeed, the poem consists mostly of short lines arranged in neat quatrains (four-line stanzas). These short lines and stanzas grant the poem a choppy (pun intended!) feel that evokes not only the speaker's mangled thumb, but also, perhaps, the sharp abbreviation of her thoughts and feelings.

LINES 3-8

> *The top quite ...*
> *... that red plush.*

The speaker goes on to describe her injury in detail, saying that the "top" of her thumb has been almost entirely removed, "Except for a sort of hinge // of skin." The enjambment in these lines seems to evoke that very "hinge" itself, the phrase begun in line 3 dangling precariously across the white space of a stanza break.

The speaker then says this "hinge / Of skin" is "A flap like a hat." This simile is intentionally light-hearted, casting the speaker's nearly-severed thumb as a tiny person wearing a tiny hat. The dangling piece of skin, here, becomes an inoffensive item of clothing that can be taken on or off rather than a *part* of the speaker. The assonance of "flap" and "hat" sounds light and playful as well. Perhaps the speaker's wit is a coping device—a way to distance herself from the gruesome reality of her wound. Or, perhaps, she's simply in shock.

Next, the speaker juxtaposes the "Dead white" skin that surrounds the wound with the "red plush" of the wound itself, or the *inner* part of her body that's been revealed with this injury. The word "plush" brings to mind a kind of rich, luxurious fabric that's soft to the touch. This imagery thus suggests something alluring about the speaker's wound—and, it follows, about her own pain. She's drawn to the wound as though it were an expensive fabric; she wants to touch it, feel it.

LINES 9-13

> *Little pilgrim, ...*
> *... from the heart.*

In the third stanza, the speaker refers to her thumb as a "Little pilgrim," again casting the thumb as a kind of tiny person. As with the poem's early, detached comparisons to hinges and a hat, the speaker talks to her thumb as though it weren't a part of her own body but rather a separate figure with a mind of its own.

This time, though, the imagery is particularly violent and gruesome: the "Little pilgrim" has been "axed" by an "Indian." Instead of a "hat," the loose "flap" of "skin" becomes a severed "scalp." The speaker is alluding to the historical conflict between European settlers and American Indians. Specifically, she's drawing on lore about the American Indian practice of taking their enemies' scalps as trophies. (It should be noted, however, that white settlers scalped Indians as well and also encouraged the practice between tribes by posting government-sanctioned scalp bounties.)

This metaphor is as ambiguous as it is evocative. It might suggest psychological conflict within the speaker; after all, she is both her "axed" thumb *and* the person who maimed it; she is the victim and the aggressor at the same time.

At this point in the poem, some readers interpret the speaker's cut thumb as a phallic symbol: a representation of the male body and with it, of male violence and oppression.

- The speaker cutting her thumb might be understood as a symbolic castration, an uprising against patriarchal violence.
- In this reading, the speaker doesn't pity the injured thumb/"pilgrim" because the violence committed against it is contextualized by a bigger, oppressive context. Indians *did* harm settlers, but this was generally in response to even greater harms inflicted by settlers against America's indigenous peoples.
- Likewise, in this reading, the speaker's symbolic act of aggression is a response to a history of male oppression and violence against women.

In any case, the violence of the metaphor is jarring, as is the swerving syntax (arrangement of words) and enjambment of the following lines:

> Your turkey wattle
> Carpet rolls
> Straight from the heart.

The reference to a "wattle" (the bright red flap of flesh below a turkey's neck) evokes the gore of the speaker's wounded thumb, while that "carpet" might refer to drops of blood that have fallen to the floor. But the language here is confusing: what feels like a noun ("wattle") becomes an adjective when the reader continues on to the following line. That is, "turkey wattle / Carpet" suggests a carpet *made* of a turkey wattle.

Similarly, "rolls" might be read as a noun until the reader arrives at "Straight from the heart," which suggests that it's meant to be read as a verb; the speaker isn't necessarily talking about "rolls" of carpet but rather a carpet that "rolls" out from within their own body (and notice how the enjambment between the stanzas here seems to enact the rolling motion, the poem's language unfurling smoothly down the page).

The slipperiness of the language evokes the speaker's disorientation. Readers can easily gather that image is a gruesome one, however. It suggests a carpet made of flesh and blood extending from the speaker's emotional core.

LINES 14-17

I step on ...
... celebration, this is.

The speaker goes on to say that she "step[s] on" this metaphorical carpet. In the previous line, she said that this carpet comes straight from her "heart"—her emotional core. As such, this new metaphor suggests that she's walking across her own pain. This image might thus speak to her self-loathing.

The speaker might also be playing with the idea of a "red carpet" (echoing the use of the word "plush" earlier in the poem) across which famous figures walk. Adding to this image of glamor and celebration is the fact that, while stepping on this carpet, she's "Clutching [her] bottle / Of pink fizz"—something that sounds an awful lot like champagne.

This "bottle" could be another metaphor for the speaker's thumb, which is sending up blood just as a bottle of champagne, once popped, will emit "fizz." Then again, she may be using the "pink fizz" to disinfect the cut or drinking it to numb the pain. Either way, the image feels celebratory. And, indeed, the speaker goes on to say that this whole ordeal is in fact a "celebration." This echoes the irony from the opening lines of the poem: once again, it seems the speaker is perhaps being sarcastic in an attempt to make light of her pain. Or, maybe, she really does find her own pain exciting, a break from the monotony of her daily life.

At this point it's becoming increasingly apparent that the poem's imagery can be interpreted in a variety of ways: this isn't a straightforward description of an event, nor are the speaker's emotions clear and easy to follow. Her response to this incident is layered, complex, and at times contradictory.

Notice the use of short /ih/ assonance and /z/ consonance in lines 16-17:

> Of pink fizz.
> A celebration, this is.

End rhymes such as the one between "fizz" and "is" are abundant throughout the poem, despite it lacking an organized rhyme scheme. Such rhymes add intense, unpredictable music to the poem, calling attention to the speaker's heightened emotional state.

LINES 18-21

Out of a ...
... are they on?

In lines 18-20, the speaker uses another imaginative metaphor to describe blood pouring out of the cut in her thumb:

> Out of a gap
> A million soldiers run,
> Redcoats, every one.

"Redcoats" were British soldiers during the American Revolutionary War, when the American colonies fought against and gained independence from England. The color of their uniforms corresponds with the color of the speaker's blood, while the war metaphor again suggests that the speaker is dealing with some internal conflict.

- Note, too, that Plath was an American woman married to a British man, the poet Ted Hughes, and she was living in England when she wrote "Cut." Perhaps, then, this image subtly nods to her homesickness or feelings of disorientation. In becoming a slew of British soldiers, it's almost as though her own blood has become foreign to her—or maybe even betrayed her.
- In describing her blood as "Redcoats," perhaps she's also describing feelings of oppression; she feels held back from freedom by her own body.

In any case, the speaker clearly feels at odds—even at war—with herself, wondering "Whose side" these soldiers are on.

Notice the vigorous, growling /r/ consonance in lines 19-20:

> A million soldiers run,
> Redcoats, every one.

These /r/ sounds are lively, forceful—just like the speaker's blood, her life force. Notice, too, the intensity created by end rhymes—both full and slant—between "run," "one," and "on" in lines 19-21. The sonic intensity of these lines makes the poem feel all the more emotional and impactful.

LINES 22-26

O my ...
... Papery feeling.

The speaker addresses her thumb again, this time directly (an example of apostrophe). That lofty, old-fashioned "O" adds more surreal humor to the poem, as does the academic-sounding "Homunculus" (Latin for "little man"). These fancy words are undercut by the fact that the speaker is talking to her thumb!

Once again, the speaker is treating her thumb as though it were something *separate* from herself rather than a part of her own body. (And the fact that she is quite literally calling it a little *man* supports the idea of the as a symbol of male oppression.)

Her revelation that she is "ill" might imply that the sight of her mangled thumb is making her feel sick, or it might be a confession that she in fact has injured her thumb on purpose, her self-harm a result of a psychological "ill[ness]." She goes on to say that she has

> [...] taken a pill to kill

Thanks to enjambment, there's a moment of suspended anticipation here. A "pill to kill" perhaps suggests a suicide pill, hinting at the speaker's inner turmoil. But the phrase continues into the next stanza, where it becomes apparent that the speaker is probably talking about a painkiller (or perhaps even an antidepressant).

The "feeling" she is trying to get rid of might be the literal pain of her cut or that of her psychological turmoil. The idea of a "thin / Papery feeling" specifically suggests that the speaker feels insubstantial, fragile, easily torn apart. (Then again, it may be that this unbearable "feeling" *preceded* the cutting of her thumb and was maybe even the *cause* of it. Perhaps cutting her thumb was an attempt to feel *real*.)

Notice how insistent rhymes at the ends of lines 23 and 24 ("ill," "pill," "kill") combined with the assonance "thin" and feeling" add to the intensity of this moment, marking it out as an important one in the poem.

LINES 27-32

Saboteur, ...
... tarnishes and when

After the speaker's confession that she's "ill," it is no longer clear whether she is referring to her thumb or to herself when she says

> Saboteur,
> Kamikaze man—

A "saboteur" is someone who intentionally ruins something, while a "Kamikaze man" refers to Japanese military pilots who destroyed enemy ships and supplies by crashing into them. The speaker might just playfully be saying that her thumb jumped in the way of the knife while she was slicing the onion. But it's also possible that the speaker is describing an act of intentional self-harm—that she's calling *herself* a "Saboteur" and a suicide bomber.

She goes on to say that the bloody "stain" on her bandaged thumb "darkens and tarnishes." In other words, the blood gets darker and more rust-colored as it dries (the word "tarnishes" also suggests something getting dirtied or ruined). This bloody stain contrasts with the white "Gauze" of the speaker's bandage. (Note that this echoes the earlier contrast between the "Dead white" of the speaker's "skin" and the "red plush" of her wound.)

The speaker then likens her gauze-wrapped thumb to two vastly different things:

- The gauze is like a hood worn by a member of the "Ku Klux Klan," the infamous white supremacist hate group.
- But this gauze is also like a "Babushka," a headscarf worn by Russian and Polish women and typically associated with grandmothers. ("Babushka" can also refer to these women themselves.)
- The bandaged thumb, then, is at once horrific and sweet—an image of hate and of love and comfort that might once again hint at the speaker's inner turmoil.

The speaker doesn't seem to be saying that the thumb *is* a member of the "Ku Klux Klan" or a "Babushka" so much as it calls these contrasting images to mind. Yet the violent associations of the "Ku Klux Klan" also echo the violence in earlier comparisons of the thumb to a "pilgrim" maimed by an "Indian," the blood as British soldiers, and the thumb or speaker as a Japanese "Kamikaze man."

As these violent comparisons start to pile up, they grant the reader a window into the speaker's mind. The speaker, it seems, associates her personal injury with all kinds of historical injustices. This again hints to the notion that the poem isn't just confronting the speaker's literal cut, but a psychic, internal wound—one that is perhaps not just personal, that is in some way connected to larger issues of war and oppression.

LINES 33-37

The balled ...
... How you jump—

The speaker turns to the "balled / Pulp of your heart," but, again, it's no longer clear whether the speaker is addressing herself or just her thumb (i.e., it's ambiguous who that "your" refers to). In any case, notice all the liquid /l/ consonance in these lines:

The balled
Pulp of your heart
Confronts its small
Mill of silence

This slippery consonance perhaps evokes the blood still leaking out of the thumb, "tarnishing" its dressing. It also emphasizes this otherwise quiet moment, which stands out in a poem full of vibrant, lurid imagery.

These lines suggest that beneath all the speaker's imaginative metaphors for her injured thumb lies the *real* injury: her mangled heart. It has been pulverized; like an orange that has been squeezed for its juice, all that remains is the "pulp." This suggests that the speaker has been completely and utterly drained by her trauma, that she feels wrung out, beaten to a pulp, with nothing left to give. Thus the "small / Mill of silence"—her broken heart has become a machine that pumps out nothing at all.

The "you" of line 37 is once again ambiguous:

How you jump—

Is the speaker talking to her heart (that "jump" referring to its continued beating), her throbbing thumb, or herself in general, jumping as though startled or frightened? It's not clear. Perhaps the sight of her bloody thumb has suddenly snapped the speaker back into her own body, grounding her in her present reality. The initial shock of separation is perhaps beginning to wear off; after having felt completely alienated from her body, the speaker must now "Confront[]" who she is in the aftermath of this trauma.

LINES 38-40

Trepanned veteran, ...
... Thumb stump.

In the poem's final three lines, the speaker calls attention to who she is in the wake of this injury.

First, she calls herself/her thumb a "Trepanned veteran":

- "Trepann[ing]" is a procedure in which a doctor drills into the skull of a patient to relieve built-up pressure in the brain. This perhaps suggests that the speaker had been under immense pressure, and this small act of violence against herself (whether consciously or unconsciously committed) was a way of releasing it.
- A "veteran," meanwhile, can refer to someone who has been in a particular field or career for a long time. This word might suggest the speaker is more than a little familiar with hurting herself. Then again, a "veteran" can also be someone who served in the military but no longer does—so maybe it is an old trauma that is resurfacing, a trauma from some metaphorical war.

The speaker goes on to call herself a "Dirty girl":

- This phrase feels more direct than many of the names she has called herself or her thumb. It suggests that the speaker feels like there's something wrong about her, something impure or sullied (she's "tarnished," perhaps—the word she used to refer to the stain her bloody thumb left on its gauzy bandage).
- Much like her earlier statement of "ill[ness]," It isn't clear whether she is "dirty" as a *result* of the cut she's sustained or whether the cut is the result of her own impure mind (that is, that she cut herself because she's "dirty").

Finally, the speaker calls herself "Thumb stump." She's likening herself to the remaining portion of her thumb, which, like a tree (and like the "pilgrim") has been "axed." This perhaps implies that the speaker's life has been cut short, that her entire being has been cut down to the base. Perhaps she feels stunted, unable to reach her full potential. Note, too, how "stump" rhymes perfectly with "jump" from the first line of this stanza, closing things out on a musical, emphatic note.

Once again, though the reader is not privy to the details of the speaker's emotional wound, it seems clear enough that this physical "cut" that prompted the poem can be taken as a metaphor for, or manifestation of, some deep psychological trauma. Whatever happened, it seems to have left the speaker only a small portion of her former self.

SYMBOLS

THE SPEAKER'S THUMB

The speaker has literally cut her thumb in the poem, but it's also possible to take this thumb as a symbol. Many readers specifically interpret the speaker's thumb as a *phallic* symbol—that is, as representative of male genitalia and masculinity in general. The speaker's thumb, in other words, might symbolize an oppressive, patriarchal society. The speaker's cutting of her thumb, in this reading, represents an attack on patriarchal oppression.

There are many hints throughout the poem that, in talking to her thumb, the speaker is symbolically addressing a *patriarchal* power—be it the colonialism of early "pilgrim[s]," the "soldiers" of various wars, or the terrorism of the "Ku Klux Klan." Indeed, the speaker even calls her thumb "Homunculus," which is Latin for "little man." She also refers to her thumb as a "Kamikaze man" and a "veteran" (who would traditionally have been male

at the time Plath was writing). The poem's abundant war metaphors and imagery point to a long tradition of oppressive, masculine power.

The fact that the speaker is "thrill[ed]" by her cut thumb might suggest that the act of cutting it was an act of empowerment. By cutting her thumb, the speaker performs a symbolic castration; she's broken the oppressive hold that patriarchy has had over her life. The speaker then "step[s] on" the "turkey wattle / Carpet" (i.e., the blood) that "rolls" out from the wound, suggesting that the cut has reversed the previous power dynamic. Now *she's* the one in control.

The thumb goes from being "Dead white" to emitting a "red plush" of blood. This outpouring evokes menstruation and fertility, as if the speaker is suddenly empowered with flowing creativity. Likewise, the speaker says that "Out of a gap" (representing not only the cut thumb/castration but also, perhaps, the vagina) come "a million [Redcoat] soldiers." The "red[]" color again suggests female vitality and fertility, both of which carry associations of creativity (i.e., the ability to create a human being). Basically, cutting the masculine thumb down to size has created space for the speaker's feminine energies.

(Note, however, that this is just one possible reading of a complex, ambiguous poem!)

Where this symbol appears in the poem:

- Lines 2-16
- Lines 18-20
- Lines 22-23
- Lines 27-40

POETIC DEVICES

IMAGERY

The poem uses vivid and provocative imagery throughout to describe the speaker's cut thumb. This imagery illustrates the speaker's feelings of simultaneous shock, detachment, and excited fascination. At times, it also seems to evoke the speaker's internal battle with herself.

For example, the speaker juxtaposes the "Dead white" skin around her wound to the "red plush" of the wound itself, suggesting that there's something beautiful or sensuous about this cut. However painful, this lush, soft wound is perhaps an exciting, alluring reminder of the speaker's vitality.

This image of a red wound surrounded by white skin then makes the speaker think of a "[l]ittle pilgrim" whose scalp has been sliced off by an "Indian." This image is at once cutesy (a diminutive "pilgrim") and brutal. It suggests that the speaker doesn't just feel one way about her injury; she's making light of it one moment and getting darkly dramatic the next. Here and elsewhere, the speaker's description of blood and gore might also make the reader squirm.

She goes on to compare the wound to a "turkey wattle," once again combining a comic image with her cut's gruesomeness. She then steps on a "[c]arpet" (presumably of dribbled blood) while "[c]lutching" a "bottle / Of pink fizz." Readers can envision the speaker walking across a bloody floor while holding tightly to her wound, blood "fizzing" to the top. This image also, however, calls to mind a bottle of rose champagne popped in celebration. The imagery of the speaker stumbling around with a "bottle" of bubbly while her severed thumb "flaps" and bleeds is both humorous and alarming.

Towards the end of the poem, the speaker describes the "Gauze" of her bandaged thumb as a "Ku Klux Klan / Babushka." Again, the speaker imagines her thumb as its own little person, the white gauze of its bandage making it look like a hooded terrorist or a grandma wearing a headscarf. The tension between the violent associations of the "Ku Klux Klan" and the more playful "Babushka" continue to suggest the speaker's inner conflict. Her wound is painful, comforting, shocking, and thrilling all at once.

Where Imagery appears in the poem:

- **Lines 3-8:** "The top quite gone / Except for a sort of hinge / Of skin, / A flap like a hat, / Dead white. / Then that red plush."
- **Lines 9-16:** "Little pilgrim, / The Indian's axed your scalp. / Your turkey wattle / Carpet rolls / Straight from the heart. / I step on it, / Clutching my bottle / Of pink fizz."
- **Lines 18-20:** "Out of a gap / A million soldiers run, / Redcoats, every one."
- **Lines 25-26:** "The thin / Papery feeling."
- **Lines 29-34:** "The stain on your / Gauze Ku Klux Klan / Babushka / Darkens and tarnishes and when / The balled / Pulp of your heart"

SIMILE

Despite being filled with vivid figurative language, the poem only uses a single simile. In line 6, the speaker compares the severed skin of her "thumb" to a "flap like a hat":

> Except for a sort of hinge
> Of skin,
> A flap like a hat,

This comparison is both precise and humorous. On the one hand, it helps the reader visualize the way that the top of her thumb is now connected by a mere "flap" of "skin." This "hinge" means the skin flap can move up and down. There's something absurd about this simile, the speaker comparing her own mangled thumb to a little person lifting a hat off of their head. This cartoonish image adds to the sense that the speaker is

feeling detached from her own body; her own flesh here becomes a small article of clothing that can be taken off and put back on.

Where Simile appears in the poem:

- **Line 6:** "A flap like a hat,"

METAPHOR

While the poem has only a single simile, it's brimming with metaphors. In addition to simply describing what the speaker's injury looks like, these vivid, striking comparisons also imply the speaker's conflicted feelings about her sudden wound. The fact that she turns to so many metaphors in the first place also reflects her sense of detachment; her thumb becomes anything *but* a thumb, a slew of different people and objects that are separate from the speaker's own body.

For instance, in the third stanza, the speaker calls her thumb a "[l]ittle pilgrim" whose "scalp" has been "axed" by an "Indian." The brazen violence of this metaphor, with all its associations of historical oppression and conflict, adds another dimension to the speaker's relationship with herself. It's unclear which character the speaker identifies with here: does she feel like the "pilgrim" who's been "axed" or is she the "Indian" doing the axing? Is she the victim or the aggressor who, perhaps purposely, sliced open their own "thumb"?

In lines 11-14, the speaker goes on to say,

> Your turkey wattle
> Carpet rolls
> Straight from the heart.
> I step on it,

A "wattle" refers to the loose, bumpy, red skin that hangs from a turkey's neck. This metaphor may subtly recall the "pilgrim"/"Indian" conflict, seeing as turkeys are associated with Thanksgiving, a holiday that supposedly celebrates the peace made between white settlers and Indians. (In reality, of course, the history between settlers and indigenous peoples is much more fraught, and though it is the "Indian" who inflicts damage in the above metaphor, settlers did unspeakable violence to Indians as well.)

Of course, the speaker might just be saying that her grisly wound looks like a "turkey wattle." While the metaphor is rather ambiguous, the fact that the speaker "step[s]" on this "Carpet" of "turkey wattle" (probably a metaphor for the speaker stepping on the blood dripping from her cut) is more proof that the speaker feels alienated from her body. This gruesome carpet unfurls "[s]traight from the heart," which usually represents a person's emotional core. The speaker, then, seems to be callously stepping all over her own feelings.

In lines 18-20, the speaker uses another metaphor drawn from history:

> Out of a gap
> A million soldiers run,
> Redcoats, every one.

Again, it's unclear whether the speaker identifies with these "Redcoats" (i.e., British soldiers during the American Revolutionary War). She even asks "Whose side are they on?" This suggests a conflict within the speaker, as if she's at war with *herself*.

Where Metaphor appears in the poem:

- **Lines 9-16:** "Little pilgrim, / The Indian's axed your scalp. / Your turkey wattle / Carpet rolls / Straight from the heart. / I step on it, / Clutching my bottle / Of pink fizz."
- **Lines 18-20:** "Out of a gap / A million soldiers run, / Redcoats, every one."
- **Lines 27-31:** "Saboteur, / Kamikaze man— / The stain on your / Gauze Ku Klux Klan / Babushka"
- **Lines 33-36:** "The balled / Pulp of your heart / Confronts its small / Mill of silence"
- **Line 38:** "Trepanned veteran,"
- **Line 40:** "Thumb stump."

IRONY

There are a couple of places in the poem that might be read ironically rather than earnestly. In the opening lines, for instance, the speaker says:

> What a thrill—
> My thumb instead of an onion.

On the one hand, this statement *could* be taken at face value—the speaker may very well find this unexpected accident somehow stimulating and fascinating, a "thrilling" break from daily life. And it's certainly possible to associate that "thrill" with the part of the speaker that is filled with self-loathing, who thinks of herself as a "Dirty girl."

But it's also possible that the speaker is using a bit of wry, sarcastic humor to describe what happened. In this reading, she isn't *really* excited about having cut her thumb—just as people generally aren't excited about any sudden and painful separation. Be it physical or emotional, sudden separations are difficult and can result in trauma, shock, and alienation from the self. The speaker's strange declaration here may only be proof that she's been blindsided by this incident.

In line 17, the speaker says that this incident is a "celebration." This again rings of sarcasm; the speaker, perhaps, is making light of her situation by trying to find the humor in it. At the very least, this is a strange, unexpected way to describe nearly

cutting one's thumb off. This speaks to the difficulty of processing trauma. Humor, perhaps, is the speaker's way of distancing herself from her pain.

Where Irony appears in the poem:

- **Lines 1-2:** "What a thrill— / My thumb instead of an onion."
- **Line 17:** "A celebration, this is."

ASSONANCE

Despite not having a steady meter or rhyme scheme, "Cut" is a very musical poem. This is thanks largely to its frequent assonance, which adds intensity and rhythm to the speaker's words. Listen to lines 2-6, for instance, where pairs of /uh/, /aw/, /ih/, and /ah/ sounds propel the reader forward:

> My thumb instead of an onion.
> The top quite gone
> Except for a sort of hinge
> Of skin,
> A flap like a hat,

These sounds also add to the poem's casual, light-hearted tone—a tone rather at odds with the grisly subject at hand! The flat /ah/s of "A flap like a hat," for example, highlight this already darkly funny image, making it fun to say aloud despite describing something that's actually quite gruesome (a hanging flap of skin).

Specific sounds can evoke or emphasize certain feelings as well. The drawn-out /uh/s of "thumb" and "onion," for instance, subtly highlight the dull numbness of the speaker's shock, while the clipped /aw/ sounds in "top" and "gone" suggest the swiftness with which the speaker's body has been changed.

Assonance also combines with consonance to create moments of rhyme: "pink fizz"/"this is" and "run"/"one," for example. And listen to lines 23-24:

> Homunculus, I am ill.
> I have taken a pill to kill

The combined /ill/ assonance/consonance in "ill," "pill," and "kill" make this moment stand out all the more clearly to the reader's ear.

Likewise, the poem's final stanza is brimming with assonance and consonance. This flurry of sound makes the whole stanza feel emotionally charged and final: "Trepanned veteran," "Dirty girl." The blunt /uh/ and muffled /m/ sounds of "jump" and "Thumb stump" stand out in particular, perhaps evoking the thumping of the speaker's heart or the throbbing of her wound.

Where Assonance appears in the poem:

- **Line 2:** "thumb," "onion"
- **Line 3:** "top," "gone"
- **Line 4:** "hinge"
- **Line 5:** "skin"
- **Line 6:** "flap," "hat"
- **Line 7:** "Dead"
- **Line 8:** "red"
- **Line 9:** "Little," "pilgrim"
- **Line 16:** "pink," "fizz"
- **Line 17:** "this," "is"
- **Line 19:** "run"
- **Line 20:** "one"
- **Line 23:** "ill"
- **Line 24:** "pill," "kill"
- **Line 25:** "thin"
- **Line 28:** "man"
- **Line 30:** "Klan"
- **Line 32:** "Darkens," "tarnishes"
- **Line 33:** "balled"
- **Line 35:** "small"
- **Line 37:** "jump"
- **Line 38:** "Trepanned," "veteran"
- **Line 39:** "Dirty," "girl"
- **Line 40:** "Thumb," "stump"

CONSONANCE

Consonance works alongside (and often overlaps with) the poem's frequent assonance, adding music and intensity to the speaker's language.

Some of this consonance is more specifically alliteration, as at the very top of the poem: "thrill" and "thumb." This lends intensity to the poem's opening, the soft, muffled /th/ sounds perhaps evoking the speaker's numb detachment from what's happening to her body.

For another example of consonance in action, listen to the mixture of sounds in lines 9-10:

> Then that red plush.
> Little pilgrim,
> The Indian's axed your scalp.

There's also assonance here: the short /ih/ sounds of "Little pilgrim" and the /ah/ sounds of "axed"/"scalp." Altogether, the lines sound both smooth and sharp, the luxuriousness /l/ sounds mixing with sharp /k/, plosive /p/, and hissing /s/ sounds.

Here and elsewhere, the poem's sounds help to evoke its imagery. Take a look at lines 19-20, for instance:

> A million soldiers run,
> Redcoats, every one.

Liquid /l/ consonance must subtly call to mind the blood pouring out of the speaker's cut. She compares this blood to a torrent of soldiers, and the many rough, growling /r/ sounds here perhaps evoke the vigor of this blood/army. And /n/ consonance combined with /uh/ assonance creates an end rhyme between the two lines ("run"/"one"), calling readers' attention to this vivid metaphor.

Later, the whispery sibilance and gentle /l/ sounds of lines 35-36 mirror the "silence" being described:

> Confronts its small
> Mill of silence

The poem's last stanza, meanwhile, contains a rush of consonance and assonance that adds rhythm and intensity to these final moments:

> How you jump—
> Trepanned veteran,
> Dirty girl,
> Thumb stump.

Where Consonance appears in the poem:

- **Line 1:** "thrill"
- **Line 2:** "thumb," "instead," "an onion"
- **Line 3:** "gone"
- **Line 4:** "hinge"
- **Line 5:** "skin"
- **Line 8:** "plush"
- **Line 9:** "Little pilgrim"
- **Line 10:** "axed," "scalp"
- **Lines 11-12:** "turkey wattle / Carpet rolls"
- **Line 13:** "Straight," "heart"
- **Line 14:** "step"
- **Line 15:** "Clutching"
- **Line 16:** "pink fizz"
- **Line 17:** "celebration, this is"
- **Lines 19-20:** "soldiers run, / Redcoats, every one"
- **Lines 22-23:** "my / Homunculus"
- **Line 23:** "am ill"
- **Line 24:** "pill," "kill"
- **Line 28:** "Kamikaze man"
- **Line 29:** "stain"
- **Lines 30-32:** "Ku Klux Klan / Babushka / Darkens"
- **Line 32:** "tarnishes"
- **Lines 33-34:** "balled / Pulp"
- **Lines 35-36:** "Confronts its small / Mill"
- **Line 36:** "silence"
- **Line 37:** "jump"
- **Line 38:** "Trepanned veteran"
- **Line 39:** "Dirty girl"
- **Line 40:** "Thumb stump"

ENJAMBMENT

The poem uses both enjambed and end-stopped lines to control its pacing, alternately creating momentum or slowing the reader down.

The opening stanza, for example, uses two end-stopped lines followed by two enjambed lines:

> What a thrill—
> My thumb instead of an onion.
> The top quite gone
> Except for a sort of hinge
> Of skin,

The first line, end-stopped by a dash, seems rather abrupt. That dash feels like an interruption and therefore imitates what has happened to the speaker: she, too, has been stopped short by the knife slicing into her "thumb." The next line is also end-stopped, this time more conventionally by a period. The end stops create a tonal flatness which suggests that the speaker is in shock as she confronts her injured thumb.

But where end-stopping halts readers' momentum, enjambment encourages swift movement down the page. Lines 3 and 4, for example, are both enjambed, pushing the reader smoothly across the stanza break. The enjambment between "hinge" and "Of skin" also enacts what's being described: the line itself is like a flap of skin "hinged" across two stanzas.

The enjambment between lines 11-13 works similarly, creating movement that mimics that metaphorical carpet unfurling:

> Your turkey wattle
> Carpet rolls
> Straight from the heart.

Notice how different these lines feel in comparison to the second stanza, which is entirely end-stopped:

> Of skin,
> A flap like a hat,
> Dead white.
> Then that red plush.

This series of end-stopped lines again suggests how stunned the speaker is. They also break the speaker's observations up into small chunks, perhaps evoking the way that the speaker is unable to see the big picture in her surprise—all she can do is zoom in on minute details such as the "white[ness]" of the skin around the wound and the "red plush" of the wound itself.

In contrast, near the end of the poem, there are nearly two full stanzas of *enjambed* lines. Without punctuation to slow things down, lines 29-36 (" The stan on your [...] Mill of silence") gain increasing momentum and intensity, suggesting the way that

the speaker's response to her injury is reaching a kind of emotional climax. All of this acceleration culminates in the final stanza ("How you jump [...] stump."), which again uses only end-stopped lines.

Where Enjambment appears in the poem:

- **Lines 3-4:** "gone / Except"
- **Lines 4-5:** "hinge / Of"
- **Lines 11-12:** "wattle / Carpet"
- **Lines 12-13:** "rolls / Straight"
- **Lines 15-16:** "bottle / Of"
- **Lines 18-19:** "gap / A"
- **Lines 22-23:** "my / Homunculus"
- **Lines 24-25:** "kill / The"
- **Lines 25-26:** "thin / Papery"
- **Lines 29-30:** "your / Gauze"
- **Lines 30-32:** "Klan / Babushka / Darkens"
- **Lines 32-33:** "when / The"
- **Lines 33-34:** "balled / Pulp"
- **Lines 34-35:** "heart / Confronts"
- **Lines 35-36:** "small / Mill"

VOCABULARY

Hinge (Lines 4-5) - A device attached to a door or gate that allows them to swing open or shut.

Plush (Line 8) - Softness, luxuriousness (often used in reference to a fabric).

Turkey wattle (Lines 11-13) - The loose, red skin that hangs from a turkey's neck.

Bottle of pink fizz (Lines 15-16) - The speaker is probably referring to some sort of bubbly drink, such as rose champagne.

Redcoats (Lines 19-20) - A name for British soldiers during the American Revolutionary War.

Homunculus (Lines 22-23) - A Latin word meaning "little man."

Saboteur (Line 27) - Someone who intentionally sabotages, or ruins, something.

Kamikaze man (Line 28) - A reference to World War II Japanese military pilots who would destroy enemy vessels and supplies by flying into them, killing themselves in the process.

Gauze (Lines 29-30) - A soft, white fabric used for wrapping wounds.

Ku Klux Klan (Lines 29-30) - A white supremacist hate group whose members wear white hoods over their heads to obscure their identities.

Tarnishes (Lines 29-32) - Grows rusty or dull. The word also suggests a loss of value or respect.

Babushka (Lines 29-31) - This can refer either to a headscarf worn by many Russian and Polish women or to an old woman or grandmother.

Pulp (Lines 33-34) - A soft, squishy mass (like the *pulp* left behind when you juice an orange).

Mill (Line 36) - A machine that pulverizes solid materials into pulp or powder.

Trepanned (Line 38) - This word could mean two different things here:

- "Trepanning" is a surgical procedure in which a doctor bores into the patient's skull to relieve built-up pressure. Therefore, someone who has been *trepanned* has gone through this process.
- "Trepan" is an archaic term for someone who cheats, traps, or ensnares someone else. According to this definition, someone who has been *trepanned* would have been cheated, trapped, or ensnared.

Veteran (Line 38) - Anyone who has had a lot of experience in a particular field or occupation is considered a *veteran* of that field or occupation. More specifically, *veteran* is the word for someone who once served in the military but no longer does.

FORM, METER, & RHYME

FORM

"Cut" consists of 40 lines of free verse, spread out over 10 quatrains (a.k.a four-line stanzas). Most of the poem's lines are also quite brief, often consisting of just two syllables ("Of skin," "O my," etc.). Visually, these short stanzas made up of short lines might call to mind the "stump" of the speaker's cut "thumb." It's almost as though the speaker has sliced the page in half.

There are a few long lines, of course, which keeps the poem from becoming overly predictable. Overall, however, the poem uses lots of short lines, enjambment, and frequent stanza breaks to create a sense of perpetual motion. The reader can never get really settled within the poem, instead getting pushed forward down the page just as the speaker's blood spews up and dribbles onto the floor below.

METER

The poem is written in free verse and, as such, doesn't use a set meter. Free verse is the norm for most contemporary poems, including the majority of Plath's work. The poem's *lack* of meter adds to its pared-down, almost jagged feel and it also keeps things from ever becoming too stiff or predictable. Instead, the poem's language feels free and perpetually surprising, perhaps even evoking the speaker's own shock.

RHYME SCHEME

As a free verse poem, "Cut" doesn't use a rhyme scheme. It does actually contain quite a lot of end rhymes—some full (i.e.,

"ill"/"kill"), some slant (i.e., "gone"/"onion") —but these rhymes are unpredictable. Readers don't know where or when a rhyme will show up, which makes sense for a poem that's describing a sudden, shocking accident. While a steady rhyme scheme might have provided the poem with soothing, consistent music, the *lack* of a rhyme scheme does the opposite: it keeps things surprising and, at times, even jarring.

SPEAKER

The poem's speaker is someone who has just sliced into her "thumb" while chopping onions. The sight of blood welling up and a flap of skin hanging off conjures all sorts of surreal images in the speaker's mind: she compares her wound to everything from a little man in a "hat" to a scalped "pilgrim." The speaker's images range from the funny, to the gruesome, to the downright disturbing. And they all present the speaker's thumb and blood as entities that seem to exist separately from the speaker herself.

It's possible that this cut was accidental and that the speaker is expressing the simultaneous fascination, horror, and dissociation that can accompany an injury—the strange feeling of seeing your own body opened up before you. But the poem's violent imagery also suggests that the speaker is someone who's deeply at odds with herself, and there's the possibility that this cut was intentional. Either way, the speaker's response to the incident suggests that she's responding not just to the shock of this *physical* wound, but also to some sort of deep emotional trauma.

While the speaker doesn't necessarily need to be interpreted as Plath herself, the poem was inspired by a real event that resulted in the poet having to go to the hospital and get stitches. The poem makes no mention of this, however, focusing instead on the thoughts and emotions that arise in the moments after the injury.

SETTING

The poem presumably takes place in the speaker's kitchen, where she's slicing an "onion." Other than that, the poem contains no clues as to when or where this scene is occurring. Instead, everything unfolds in the speaker's mind as she observes her bleeding thumb. The poem's *lack* of setting helps to evoke the disorientation and detachment of the speaker, who is addressing her thumb as if it weren't a part of herself.

CONTEXT

LITERARY CONTEXT

Sylvia Plath was one of the foremost poets of the 20th century. Famous for her intense, personal verse, Plath is usually grouped in with the Confessionalist movement of the 1950s and '60s.

Confessionalist writers wanted to drop the barrier between themselves and "the speaker" of their poems and to examine aspects of life that a conformist post-war society deemed too indelicate to talk about. Treating all of Plath's work as autobiographical would be an over-simplification, of course, and the term "Confessionalist" risks denying the subtly and imaginative possibilities of her poetry.

That said, the collection in which "Cut" appears, *Ariel*, was indeed highly personal, informed by Plath's complicated relationship to marriage, motherhood, family, and gender expectations, as well her lifelong struggle with mental illness. Throughout the collection, Plath is able to turn seemingly mundane moments into highly charged, psychologically intense confrontations with her own darkest impulses.

In fact, Plath spoke on this in a 1962 (the year she wrote "Cut") interview for the BBC, in which she said that her poems

> come out of the sensuous and emotional experiences I have, but I must say I cannot sympathise with these cries from the heart that are informed by nothing except a needle or a knife, or whatever it is. [...] I think that personal experience is very important, but certainly it shouldn't be a kind of shut-box and mirror looking, narcissistic experience. I believe it should be relevant, and relevant to the larger things, the bigger things such as Hiroshima and Dachau and so on.

"Cut" (which was inspired by a real-life incident in which Plath early sliced her thumb off) is a good example of this philosophy, with the speaker's accident resulting in a descent into the darkest parts of her psyche that speak not only to her own pain but also to broader issues of oppression and violence.

"Cut" is also often compared to one of Plath's earlier poems, "Contusion," which similarly uses a physical injury to explore psychological distress.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

The years after World War II (1939-1945) saw a renewed focus on family life. As men returned home from war, birthrates ballooned during a “baby boom” that persisted into the 1960s. American society promoted an idealized vision of family life that emphasized traditional gender roles, and women were defined in relation to their husbands and children—that is, as wives and mothers first. As a writer and academic, Plath found many of these stereotyped expectations oppressive. At the same time, she often found great joy and fulfillment in motherhood.

From adolescence onward, Plath also suffered from recurring bouts of suicidal depression. When she wrote this poem in

1962, she was living in England and dealing with a sudden split from her husband, Ted Hughes, who had left her for another woman. Though Hughes visited periodically, Plath was generally isolated, overwhelmed, and depressed throughout a cold English winter.

This situation, coupled with Plath's lifelong battle with mental illness, offers insight into the poem's themes of alienation and self-hatred. It was part of Plath's original *Ariel* manuscript, which she was struggling to find a publisher for—the poems were unlike anything else being written at the time. Writer and critic Meghan O'Rourke writes that "[i]t's easy to forget now how radical Plath's poetry—with its elemental female anger, its sexual voracity, its self-loathing knowingness—was in 1963." "Cut" showcases these qualities at once, and thus is often considered one of Plath's most important poems. It was published posthumously in 1965, two years after Plath's death by suicide.

MORE RESOURCES

EXTERNAL RESOURCES

- A Recording of the Poem — Listen to a recording of Plath reading "Cut." (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i2RDiB4pb84)
- A Look at the Poet's Life — A biography of Plath, and additional poems, from the Poetry Foundation. (https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poets/sylvia-plath)
- Two Versions of Plath's Ariel — A 2004 Slate article discussing the controversy surrounding the ordering and re-ordering of Plath's Ariel manuscript, in which "Cut" was first published. (https://slate.com/news-and-politics/2004/12/sylvia-plath-s-ariel.html)
- An Introduction to Confessional Poetry — The Poetry Foundation breaks down what made confessional poetry—the mode Plath's work is most often grouped with—so fresh and compelling. (https://www.poetryfoundation.org/collections/151109/an-introduction-to-confessional-poetry)
- The Poet's Process and Influences — A 1962 interview with the BBC in which Plath talks about what interests her as a poet. (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g2lMsVpRh5c&t=11s)

LITCHARTS ON OTHER SYLVIA PLATH POEMS

- Ariel
- Daddy
- Fever 103°
- Kindness
- Lady Lazarus
- Mad Girl's Love Song
- Metaphors
- Mirror
- Morning Song
- Nick and the Candlestick
- Poppies in October
- Sheep in Fog
- The Applicant
- The Arrival of the Bee Box
- The Moon and the Yew Tree
- The Munich Mannequins
- The Night Dances
- Words
- You're

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