The Night Dances

SUMMARY

iThe speaker begins by saying that a smile has slipped down into the grass and is now gone for good.

This prompts the speaker to wonder when their child's playful evening antics will slip away. Will they be lost, the speaker wonders, to the world of numbers and figures?

The child's perfect jumps and twirls certainly must echo endlessly across the earth.

The speaker won't be entirely drained of "beauties" when this happens (perhaps referring to what will happen after their child grows up and away from them, or perhaps referring to the sense of being "emptied" by pregnancy).

Instead, the speaker will still have the blessing that is their child's breath and the scent of their sleeping body, which the speaker associates with wet grass and lilies.

These lilies, however, aren't really anything like the child. The calla lily is austere and self-important.

The tiger lily, meanwhile, is flashy and exuberant, its dotted, bright orange petals opening seductively.

Switching gears, the speaker then zooms out to describe comets flying across the enormous expanse of space.

Space is immensely cold and empty, devoid of memory. In light of this, the child's little movements seem to chip away.

These gestures, filled with human warmth, soon lose their rosy glow, their light bleeding and peeling away amid the dark oblivion of the universe (much like a comet's reddish light seems to leave streaks across the sky behind it and then disappear).

With this in mind, the speaker asks why they've been blessed with such bright moments of joy with their child, which the speaker compares to lamps or planets.

Such blessings settle like crystals of snow on every part of the speaker's body.

Upon making contact, they dissolve and disappear.

THEMES

THE FLEETING NATURE OF LIFE

"The Night Dances" explores the relationship between humanity and the universe, contrasting finite human lives with the cold, infinite space of the cosmos. Addressing a beloved baby, the speaker thinks about how the child will one day stop performing the wiggly "night dances" that the speaker so enjoys. (Plath's husband, fellow poet Ted Hughes, said that the poem was inspired by their baby son's movements in his crib.) Imagining this loss, the speaker can't help but reflect that all human "gestures" are temporary, and they mourn the fact that an individual life is fleeting and insignificant within the vast "forgetfulness" of space. The speaker thus struggles to reconcile the "blessing" of the beautiful moments they are experiencing with the fact that these moments—and all such blessings—so quickly end.

The poem begins with an image of loss, saying that a "smile fell in the grass" and is now "[i]rretrievable." It's not clear whose smile this is, but this image immediately suggests that moments of happiness are fleeting. Indeed, no sooner has the speaker mentioned this lost smile that they wonder how their child's delightful "night dances [will] / Lose themselves." In other words, the speaker knows that someday their child will no longer perform these cute nighttime wiggles. Like everything else, this little habit will be lost. And that will be only the first of many losses: the speaker and the child themselves, the poem implies, will also someday die.

At first, the speaker suggests that moments of joy and beauty can outlast their creators. They imagine the child's "night dances" carrying on through "pure leaps and spirals," "travel[ing] / the world forever." This implies that something of the child's "dances" will live on after the child has ceased to perform them—even if only in memory.

Yet the speaker then zooms out, contrasting human timescales with the icy "forgetfulness" of outer space. Life seems very fleeting indeed compared to the vast, unfeeling emptiness that surrounds it. In comparison to "the black amnesias of heaven"—a reference to both space and, it seems, the oblivion of death—the speaker says, the child's small, "warm," and "human" "gestures" are completely ephemeral.

In light of this contrast between the human and the infinite, the speaker struggles to understand what the point of all this beauty and happiness is when it will so soon be gone. The speaker asks "why" they've been "given / [t]hese lamps, these planets," or the sweet moments that light up the "black" forgetfulness of space, when they can't last. The speaker compares such moments to "flakes" of snow: unique and beautiful yet short-lived. Just as snow "melts" the second it touches one's skin, so too are these precious moments in life over before one has the chance to fully appreciate them.

In the end, it's ambiguous whether the speaker finds such moments of beauty all the more precious because they're fleeting or despairs at receiving such gifts in the first place, knowing they'll be taken away.

Where this theme appears in the poem:

- Lines 1-10
- Lines 15-28

THE JOY OF PARENTHOOD

"The Night Dances" speaks to the joy and poignancy of parenthood (and, if readers take the speaker to be a representation of Plath, motherhood in particular). Watching their baby's playful antics at bedtime, the speaker reflects that, sadly, their child will inevitably grow out of these "night dances." Yet in spite of the ephemerality of babyhood, the speaker still thinks of it as a "blessing." The poem suggests that the shared, tender bond between parents and their children offers beauty, respite, and hope in a world full of loss.

Watching their baby play, the speaker delights in their child's innocence and silliness: children, the poem suggests, can give their parents deep joy. The baby's "pure leaps and spirals" suggest that speaker and baby share an innocent glee in just being alive. The speaker also calls their child's "breath" a "gift," and says that the child's "sleep" has a "drenched grass / smell" that reminds them of "lilies." All of this loving imagery suggests the tender bond between parent and child.

These precious moments of parental connection, according to the speaker, are "lamps" and "planets"—lights of hope in an otherwise dark universe. The speaker also refers to these moments as "[snow]flakes," suggesting that each of these tiny moments of joy is utterly unique and precious. This again speaks to the powerful bond between parents and children, and perhaps to the power of love itself.

But of course, snowflakes also melt: even while soaking up this moment, the speaker is aware that the joys of babyhood (and all joys!) are temporary. The poem opens with an image of a "smile" (a metaphor for the child or parent's happiness, perhaps) that has fallen "in the grass." The speaker then asks the child how their "night dances" will eventually "lose themselves." Both the fallen smile and the stopping of the dances might suggest a loss of innocence and the end of childhood—the child growing up and away from the speaker, less prone to the adorable antics of youth. Eventually, the child's sweet "gestures" will "flake off."

What's more, even the memories of these *times* will fade. "The comets / Have such a space to cross," the speaker says, perhaps suggesting the distance that will someday open up between the speaker and their child, or between the speaker and their memories. In other words, time and distance will eat away at these moments until there's nothing left.

Yet even as the speaker wonders why she's been given these moments if they cannot last, the poem still insists that such moments are great "blessings." The poem's metaphorical snowflakes—the common yet still beautiful and unique moments that the speaker shares with their child—will all eventually "melt" and end up "nowhere." Even so, the speaker finds them remarkable. After all, before these moments "melt," they first land on the speaker's "eyes," "lips," and "hair," suggesting that every part of the speaker is affected by the experience of parenthood. Perhaps, then, it doesn't really matter if these moments are ephemeral; they "touch[]" the speaker anyway, giving them poignant joy. Just because babyhood ends, the poem suggests, doesn't mean it's not a great "blessing" to a loving parent.

Where this theme appears in the poem:

- Lines 5-10
- Lines 22-28

LINE-BY-LINE ANALYSIS

LINES 1-2

A smile fell ...
... Irretrievable!

The poem begins with a rather strange, even surreal image. The speaker says,

> A smile fell in the grass.
> Irretrievable!

The "smile" here is metaphorical; a smile can't actually "f[a]ll in the grass." Smiles, of course, are signs of happiness and pleasure. The fact that this smile is "[i]rretrievable" thus implies that some happiness or pleasure has been lost for good.

It's not clear whose smile, whose happiness, this is. The speaker might be talking about their child's joy, their own, or both. But readers don't know, in these opening lines, that the poem is being told from the perspective of a parent. As such, this opening metaphor seems to speak to the idea that *all* happiness, all joy, will eventually be lost.

Note the ambiguity of the poem's title as well. "The Night Dances" could be read two ways: either the "Night" itself is dancing, or somebody's "Dances" happen at "Night." This uncertainty reflects the tension at the heart of the poem, as the speaker grapples with two different perspectives: the cosmic and the human.

The poem establishes its form right away: it's composed entirely of couplets. These two-line stanzas hint at the intimacy between parent and child and also at the conflict that is central to the poem: the significance (or lack thereof) of small, human moments (those little couplets) against the backdrop of an infinite universe (the poem as a whole).

LINES 3-4

And how will ...

... themselves. In mathematics?

The image of a lost smile prompts the speaker to pose a rhetorical question:

> And how will your night dances
> Lose themselves. In mathematics?

It still isn't clear whom the speaker is addressing, although the poem will later imply that these "night dances" belong to the speaker's child. (Again, Plath's husband, Ted Hughes, said that the poem was inspired by their son Nicholas's twirling movements in his crib.)

This question isn't actually meant to be answered; rather, it's meant to illustrate the speaker's understanding that this current happiness, like the "smile" in the first stanza, will eventually be lost. Note that there is no question mark after this statement ("And how will your night dances / lose themselves.") Instead, the line comes to a full stop caesura in the middle of line 4. The flatness of this initial question suggests the speaker's certainty that the "dances" will one day end.

The speaker then wonders if the child's buoyant bedtime "dances" will someday give way to "mathematics"—an ambiguous phrase open to a few interpretations:

- The speaker might be juxtaposing the cold, calculating world of numbers and figures with the imagination and playfulness of childhood.
- Or, maybe, the speaker is contrasting the individuality of the child with the anonymity of numbers.
- The speaker might simply be wondering if the child will grow up and out of their "dances" and become fascinated by the field of "mathematics" instead, growing into a serious and thoughtful adult!
- Then again, "mathematics" might imply the way that this child, too, may someday grow up and have children of their own, their uniqueness divided up by children and grandchildren and great-grandchildren until their memory is lost.

LINES 5-10

Such pure leaps ...
... sleeps, lilies, lilies.

The speaker goes on to describe their child's "night dances" as "pure leaps and spirals." This description perhaps speaks to the child's innocence; their movements are "pure," untainted by the world.

Also note how the plosive /p/ consonance of "pure leaps and spirals" evokes the playfulness of these "dances," while lilting /l/ consonance and soft, whispery sibilance (of both /s/ and /sh/ sounds) throughout the next few stanzas suggests gentleness and tenderness ("such," "leaps," "spirals," "surely," "shall," "sit," "small," "grass," "smell," "sleeps," etc.)

Note, too, that a "spiral" moves farther and farther away from its center point, implying that the child's dances will get farther away from the child themselves—and the speaker—as the child grows up and time passes. Yet the speaker, for the moment at least, believes that these "dances"—their unique, joyous movements—won't entirely disappear: these "leaps and spirals," the speaker continues, will "Surely [] travel / The world forever."

The speaker might be saying that these "dances" will live on in the speaker's memories, or that they will create an echo of joy in the world that never ends. As long as they are able to remember this moment, they will never "Sit emptied of beauties"—even when their child leaves them.

- If readers take the speaker to be a woman, it's also possible that these lines and the next refer to pregnancy and birth; the speaker may be "emptied" of her child, but she retains the "beauties" of that child's sweet presence in the world.

Notice how the parallelism/anaphora in lines 8-10 makes it clear that the "beauties" the speaker holds onto are the sounds and scents of their sleeping child:

> [...] the gift
> Of your small breath, the drenched grass
> Smell of your sleeps, [...]

The imagery here is lovely and soothing: the scent of fresh, dewy grass and fragrant flowers. Note, too, how the speaker calls these things a "gift"; the child is a blessing (an idea that the poem will return to later on).

The asyndeton of this passage (the omission of a coordinating conjunction between "small breath" and "the drenched grass") suggests breathlessness, as though the speaker is being carried away with love for their child. Likewise, enjambment across both lines and stanzas speeds up the poem, allowing it to gain momentum as it barrels forward:

> [...] travel
> The world forever, I shall not entirely
> Sit emptied of beauties, the gift
> Of your small breath, the drenched grass
> Smell [...]

The poem's speed here suggests the speaker's joy and excitement, but it also might reflect the fact that such moments of beauty are ultimately fleeting; the poem moves too quickly, perhaps, slipping through the speaker's fingers.

And all this crescendoing emotion culminates in the epizeuxis at the end of line 10, which is then end-stopped by a firm

period:

> Smell of your sleeps, lilies, lilies.

Epizeuxis emphasizes the importance of "lilies," which the speaker associates with their child's "sleeps." These lilies perhaps symbolize the child's purity and innocence, as well as the beauty and love the speaker experiences watching this little nighttime ritual. Notice, too, the intensity of feeling created by all the /l/ consonance and sibilance:

> Smell of your sleeps, lilies, lilies.

LINES 11-14

Their flesh bears ...
... of hot petals.

Having just compared their child's "sleeps" to fragrant "lilies," the speaker seems to revise their statement here. The speaker says that the "flesh" (or petals/physical form) of these "lilies" actually "bears no relation" to (or does not resemble) the sleeping child.

The speaker then describes two specific kinds of "lilies": "the calla" and "the tiger":

- The calla lily has a long, almost tubular shape; its petals fold inward (take a look here). The speaker describes the flower's petals as "Cold folds of ego," or hubris/pride/self-importance. In other words, the calla is all wrapped up in itself!
- The tiger lily, meanwhile, has a bunch of bright orange petals covered with black spots (take a look here). The speaker personifies this flower as well, saying that it's essentially showing off with its "spread of" bright ("hot") petals covered with flashy "Spots."

The personification of these "lilies" highlights their symbolism. Although the speaker is describing actual varieties of lilies, they might also be describing traditional male and female gender roles or even the contrast between Plath and her husband Ted Hughes:

- The "calla" with its "cold folds of ego" might represent the masculine realm of "mathematics" and intellectual or material ambition.
- The "tiger," on the other hand, gestures towards domesticity and self-adornment (i.e., "embellishing" or decorating the home or the self), sexuality and childbirth (the "spread of hot petals"), and fierce emotion (again, that "hot," or fiery, temperament).
- The speaker may be saying that the child, in all their sweet, undeveloped innocence, is nothing like either of their parents. Perhaps the speaker fears the day the child loses this innocence and wonders who they will become more like, the "calla" or "tiger," as they grow up and into social expectations and adult responsibilities.

Notice, too, how this contrast is emphasized by the use of consonance, sibilance, alliteration, and assonance. The long /o/, liquid /l/, and pounding /d/ sounds in "Cold folds of ego" feel very different, for example, than the lively /s/, /p/, and /t/, short /aw/, and smooth /s/ sounds in "Spots, and a spread of hot petals."

LINES 15-18

The comets ...
... gestures flake off—

The speaker switches gears here, zooming out from the world of flowers to outer space. The "comets" up above have "such a space to cross," the speaker says, before describing space (and/or the comet's journey) as marked by "coldness" and "forgetfulness."

The speaker is implicitly juxtaposing the smallness of individual human lives—and of these beautiful, shared moments between the speaker and their child—against the backdrop of infinite time and distance. The child's twirls might "spiral" across the world, but the world is still just a blimp in the cosmos. No matter how meaningful the "beauties" of the child's breath and movements are to the speaker, the speaker knows that, eventually, they'll be lost.

The speaker envisions the child's "gestures" "flak[ing] off," just as pieces of comets fall away over the course of their seemingly endless journey through cold, dark space.

Listen to the hushed sibilance of these lines, which evokes the silence of space:

> The comets
> Have such a space to cross,
> Such coldness, forgetfulness,
> So your gestures flake off—

At the same time, crisp /k/ alliteration and consonance ("comets," "cross," "coldness," "flake") add a sharpness to the lines that perhaps evokes the speaker's existential anxiety. Indeed, the dash at the end of line 18 (after "off") suggests not only the disintegrating "gestures" of the child but also of the difficulty the speaker has expressing this realization that nothing can last.

LINES 19-23

Warm and human, ...
... lamps, these planets

The speaker describes their child's "gestures" (their movements, those "dances" mentioned earlier in the poem) as

"Warm and human." The muted /m/ consonance here evokes the speaker's tenderness. This human warmth and vitality, of course, also stands in stark contrast to the "coldness" of outer space mentioned just two lines back.

The speaker then continues by saying that these warm, human gestures metaphorically emit a "pink light" that —a rosy glow that again suggests the sweetness of the child's movements. Yet this light is soon enough dwarfed by the darkness around it.

The speaker specifically pictures the light of the child's gestures "Bleeding and peeling" away, a gruesome description that suggests this process of disintegration is intensely painful, like layers of skin being torn off. The long /ee/ assonance and /l/ consonance in "Bleeding and peeling" reflect the speaker's visceral discomfort. Perhaps the speaker is saying that memories don't just disappear all at once; forgetting is a long, uncomfortable process.

This description also calls to mind the comets from line 15, whose reddish light streaks across the sky in their wake. Chunks of the comet chip off on its journey through space, and that light eventually fades, gobbled up by "the black amnesias of heaven."

The child and the child's movements are like that comet, a fleeting flash of light in the night sky that soon enough disintegrates, disappearing to the point that even all *memory* of the child is forgotten. Indeed, the word "amnesias" refers to memory loss, while the word "heaven" connotes not just outer space but also death. The speaker thus seems to be pointing out how the child and all memories of the child will eventually be lost in the utter oblivion of both outer space and the utter oblivion of death. (The plural "amnesias" also suggests that this process happens to everyone and everything; there are endless forgettings.)

What was once "Warm" and "pink" and "light" will someday be "cold[]" and "black[]." Despite—or in light of—this eventuality, the speaker asks "Why" they've been "given / These lamps, these planets." This is another rhetorical question, but unlike the one at the beginning of the poem, it doesn't appear to address the child—in fact, it doesn't seem to be directed at anyone at all. Instead, the speaker's question feels like true bewilderment: what is the point of all this happiness, all this beauty, when it will eventually be stripped away and forgotten?

Notice the parallelism in line 23, which emphasizes the relationship between the words "lamps" and "planets." Both of these words are metaphors for the beautiful moments the speaker experiences with their child, and more generally, *any* beautiful moment that can't last. Like "lamps" and "planets," these moments light up the darkness time and space, but also like "lamps" and "planets," their light reaches only so far. Despite all their beauty and significance, the speaker knows that they change nothing—death, and the "amnesias" of oblivion—are still inevitable.

LINES 24-28

Falling like blessings, ...
... Nowhere.

The speaker says that these metaphorical "lamps" and "planets" (i.e., their child and the beautiful moments they share) "Fall[]" on them "like blessings, like flakes." These similes recall the word "gift" from earlier in the poem; again, the speaker conceives of the child as something precious that's been given to them, even if the speaker can't understand *why*.

It's not clear *who* these blessings/gifts come from, either; the word "blessings" might imply that these moments feel like favors from a benevolent God. Yet the speaker never suggests an actual belief in a higher power (instead deeming the universe cold and empty).

In another simile, the speaker compares the moments to "flakes" of snow—"[s]ix sided, white," love, delicate, and utterly unique. This suggests that parenthood is made up of many poignant, beautiful moments, each a little different from the last.

- Note, too, that the speaker *already used* the word "flake" in the poem, to refer to the way that the child's "gestures flake off"—seem to get chipped away, piece by piece, over time.
- The repetition here again reminds readers that these moments are finite and fleeting.

Yet more sibilance ("blessings," "flakes," "Six sided") adds to the hushed, almost reverent tone as the speaker tries to make sense of these "gifts"/"flakes," which land on the speaker's "eyes," "lips," and "hair." Asyndeton, or the lack of coordinating conjunction, between "lips" and "hair" in line 26 adds to the momentum of these final lines; it's as though snow is falling quick and fast, all over the speaker's body. This imagery evokes the speaker's wonder as all this happiness and joy seems to touch every part of them.

Yet even as the speaker is describing this bounty of goodness, they are already describing its absence: these "blessings" are "Touching and melting. / Nowhere." Like snowflakes, as soon as they "touch," they "melt" away. The speaker hardly has time to appreciate them before they're gone, becoming "[i]rretrievable" like the "smile" in the poem's opening line.

Like the rhetorical question posed earlier in the poem, this one ends with a period rather than a question mark. The speaker's sense of wonder and curiosity seems to get cut off by their feelings of insignificance. No matter how miraculous these moments may *seem*, the speaker knows they will be completely forgotten in time.

The tension between the poem's syntax (or phrasing), which implies a question, and the punctuation, which implies a statement, evokes the speaker's struggle between hope and

despair. It also points to a larger struggle: human beings wanting to remember and be remembered in a universe that will eventually erase all evidence of them.

SYMBOLS

THE NATURAL WORLD

The speaker draws on imagery related to the natural world—namely, grass and flowers—to represent the link between the *beauty* and the *fleeting nature* of human experience.

In the poem's opening, the speaker says that a "smile fell in the grass"—an ambiguous line that takes on more meaning later on, when the speaker mentions "the drenched grass / Smell of" their child's "sleeps."

- To the speaker, the child's sleep conjures the soothing, refreshing scent of wet grass (perhaps after a rainfall, or simply when soaked with morning dew). This is usually considered a pleasant, comforting scent, and it thus speaks to the tenderness and joy that the speaker derives from watching the sleeping child.
- The scent of fresh grass also suggests lushness and vitality, a world teeming with life. In linking the child's "sleeps" to grass, the poem suggests that the child themselves is tied to the earth; this sleep is part of a deep, natural cycle.

The *joy* of watching the child's sleep and the *loss* of that joy are thus both connected to grass—something that, like any living thing, will someday die. The beauty of this moment is linked to something ephemeral, suggesting that this beauty, too, is by its very nature ephemeral.

Notably, the speaker also links the child to "lilies," fragrant flowers that, like grass, don't last forever; their beauty is fleeting. Again, the beauty of life is inextricable from its loss.

Where this symbol appears in the poem:

- **Lines 1-2:** "A smile fell in the grass. / Irretrievable!"
- **Lines 9-10:** "Of your small breath, the drenched grass / Smell of your sleeps, lilies, lilies."

LILIES

On one level, the "lilies" mentioned in lines 10-14 symbolize the fleeting beauty, purity, and innocence of the speaker's child. The sleeping child evokes the scent of wet grass and fragrant flowers, sensory imagery that links the child to the ephemeral loveliness of the natural world.

Yet this symbol gains complexity as the speaker goes on to describe two different kinds of lilies—the "calla" and the "tiger"—in detail:

- The first, the "calla" lily, is made up of "[c]old folds of ego," while the second, the "tiger" lily, is marked by vibrant "[s]pots" and "a spread of hot petals."
- These individual lilies, then, might represent the *dichotomy* between traditionally masculine traits ("cold" stoicism and ambition) and the passion/emotion traditionally linked with femininity (the "spread of hot petals" seems suggestive of female sexuality in particular).

The speaker says that the "flesh" of these lilies actually "bears no relation" (or does not resemble) the child at all! The speaker, then, might be subtly saying that the child resembles neither their mother nor father.

Where this symbol appears in the poem:

- **Lines 10-14:** "Smell of your sleeps, lilies, lilies. / Their flesh bears no relation. / Cold folds of ego, the calla, / And the tiger, embellishing itself— / Spots, and a spread of hot petals."

POETIC DEVICES

IMAGERY

The poem's imagery helps to highlight the contrast between fleeting human experiences and the cold indifference of the universe.

In lines 9-10, for example, the speaker describes "the drenched grass / Smell" of their child's "sleeps." The sleeping child brings to mind the soothing scent of wet grass (perhaps after heavy rainfall). The lush imagery ties the child to the natural world; this scent is a distinctly earthy one and evokes freshness and vitality.

Similarly, the speaker describes their child's "gestures" as "[w]arm and human," marked by "pink light" that ultimately "[b]leed[s]" and "peel[s]" away. That warmth recalls the warmth of the human body, while the pinkness suggests the color of the child's flesh. The imagery of bleeding and peeling, meanwhile, creates a gruesome sensation of flesh being stripped away. Again, this imagery highlights the child's *physicality*, in turn reminding readers that the child's body will one day decay. By contrast, space is "cold" and "black," a place devoid of warmth, blood, flesh, and so forth.

Finally, the speaker compares the "gift" of moments with their child to snowflakes, "[s]ix sided, white," that descend on their "eyes," "lips," and "hair." Readers can envision the chilly "flakes"

fluttering down onto the speaker like a gentle snowfall, only to immediately melt when coming into contact with the warmth of the speaker's skin. Again, the imagery foregrounds physicality; being human—having a warm body—means being unable to hold onto experiences.

Where Imagery appears in the poem:

- **Lines 9-10:** "the drenched grass / Smell of your sleeps,"
- **Line 14:** "Spots, and a spread of hot petals."
- **Line 19:** "Warm and human, then "
- **Lines 19-20:** "their pink light / Bleeding and peeling"
- **Lines 24-26:** "like flakes / Six sided, white / On my eyes, my lips, my hair"

SIMILE

The speaker uses two back-to-back similes towards its end. Beginning with line 22, the speaker says,

> Why am I given
> These lamps, these planets
> Falling like blessings, like flakes

Those "lamps" and "planets" are metaphors—either for the speaker's children or for precious moments with those children (or both things!). In any case, this metaphor presents such moments as lights in a vast expanse of darkness. They break up the cold emptiness of space.

The speaker then goes on to say that these moments are "[f]alling like blessings." This simile compares these metaphorical lamps/planets to gifts from up above—presumably, from a higher power of some sort. The speaker doesn't necessarily *believe* in God; indeed, the poem's emphasis on the insignificance of human life would suggest that there is no divine plan. Yet this image of falling blessings suggests that these moments make the speaker feel, however briefly, that there's some force up above sending gifts down to human beings.

The second simile in line 24 then compares these moments to "flakes" of snow. These are "[s]ix sided, white" and land all over the speaker's "eyes," "lips," and "hair." This simile illustrates the magical beauty of these moments, which feel as delicate, unique, and fleeting as snowfall.

Where Simile appears in the poem:

- **Lines 22-25:** "Why am I given / These lamps, these planets / Falling like blessings, like flakes / Six sided, white"

METAPHOR

The speaker uses multiple metaphors to illustrate their ideas about the finite nature of human life and the expansiveness of the universe.

For instance, the first two lines of the poem can be read as a metaphor for the ephemeral nature of happiness. The speaker says,

> A smile fell in the grass.
> Irretrievable!

The idea of a smile "falling" (i.e., its upturned corners "falling" down) is a common one, but here the speaker takes the image a step further: the speaker envisions this smile as a physical object separate from its wearer, capable of tumbling down into "the grass." This metaphor conveys the idea that this fallen joy can never be recovered; once a moment has passed, it's gone for good.

Many of the poem's metaphors dovetail with its evocative imagery and foreground the physicality of the speaker and their child. Take line 18, where the speaker metaphorically describes their child's "gestures" as physical objects capable of "flak[ing] off." The speaker goes on to grant those gestures human warmth, glowing pink light, and the ability to bleed and peel. This figurative language emphasizes the fact that the child's "dances" come from a mortal body, one subject to decay. The specific metaphors here also link the child with those "comets" disintegrating as they through cold space, leaving trails of light and fragments of rock behind them.

Then, in line 21, the speaker calls space "the black amnesias of heaven." This metaphor presents the universe as utterly empty—a place without light or memory. The word "amnesias" hammers home the idea that all things will be forgotten in the grand scheme of the cosmos, while calling space "heaven: also brings to mind the eventual oblivion of death.

Contrasting with all this darkness are the moments the speaker shares with their child, metaphorically described as "lamps" and "planets." On the one hand, this suggests that these moments are lights in an otherwise dark universe; they provide solid ground and relief from all that emptiness. At the same time, however, "lamps" can only light up the area directly surrounding them and don't burn forever; likewise, "planets" are few and far between, ultimately nothing more than specks within the vast universe. Perhaps even these lovely, precious moments are not enough to save the speaker from the "black amnesias of heaven."

In the final stanza, the speaker says these moments, which they have compared to "flakes" of snow, end up "Touching and melting." In other words, while there is tenderness in these brief moments of connection, they disappear as soon as they happen, ultimately ending up "Nowhere."

Where Metaphor appears in the poem:

- **Lines 1-2:** "A smile fell in the grass. / Irretrievable!"
- **Lines 18-21:** "So your gestures flake off— / Warm and human, then their pink light / Bleeding and peeling / Through the black amnesias of heaven."
- **Lines 22-23:** "Why am I given / These lamps, these planets"
- **Lines 27-28:** "Touching and melting. / Nowhere."

PERSONIFICATION

The speaker frequently turns to personification in the poem. This personification, like the poem's imagery and metaphors, highlights the contrast between the living, human world and the vast emptiness that surrounds it.

In lines 3-4, for example, the speaker personifies the child's "night dances," wondering how they will "[l]ose themselves." These dances, personification suggests, ultimately exist independently of the child performing them. They seem to have a life of their own, one that will "travel // The world forever." In separating the dances from the child themselves, the speaker allows for these happy moments to live on in their own memory after they cease to exist.

The speaker also personifies both kinds of "lilies" mentioned in lines 12-13:

> Cold folds of ego, the calla,
> And the tiger, embellishing itself—

These personifications suggest that the "lilies" are meant to represent something quite human. Both, notably, share a sense of self-importance—much like human beings themselves! But people are no more important than these little flowers, the speaker implies; both are insignificant on a cosmic scale. The speaker perhaps wants to believe those joyful moments with their child matter, yet it seems these moments make the speaker think of the "ego" and "embellish[ments]" of flowers: misplaced pride and hubris.

Where Personification appears in the poem:

- **Lines 3-4:** "And how will your night dances / Lose themselves."
- **Lines 6-7:** "Surely they travel / The world forever,"
- **Lines 12-13:** "Cold folds of ego, the calla, / And the tiger, embellishing itself—"

EPIZEUXIS

There's one example of epizeuxis in "The Night Dances," appearing in line 10:

> Smell of your sleeps, lilies, lilies.

The repetition of "lilies" adds intensity to this passage. The speaker seems deeply moved by their child's precious innocence, and the reader can almost feel the speaker's breath being caught in their throat as they describe the beauty of this moment.

Epizeuxis also signals the importance of the repeated word, "lilies," which takes on symbolic significance in the poem. Lilies are often associated with purity, and their mention here is thus a subtle nod back to the "pure leaps and spirals" of the child's happy movements.

Lilies are also associated with death and funerals, however, and so perhaps the repetition hints at the inevitable loss of these childish games as the child grows older.

Where Epizeuxis appears in the poem:

- **Line 10:** "lilies, lilies"

ASYNDETON

Asyndeton appears a couple of times in the poem, adding bursts of momentum, emotion, and urgency. For example, in lines 9-10, the speaker says:

> Of your small breath, the drenched grass
> Smell of your sleeps, lilies, lilies.

The speaker omits a coordinating conjunction ("and") between "breath" and "the drenched grass" in line 9. Likewise, in line 10, there's no conjunction between "sleeps" and "lilies, lilies." This asyndeton speeds up the poem, making this passage feels breathless and passionate. The asyndeton also suggests that "sleeps" and "lilies" aren't two separate things: the speaker thinks of the child's "sleep" *as* "lilies," as beautiful, fragrant flowers.

There are more examples of asyndeton lines 25-26:

> Six sided, white
> On my eyes, my lips, my hair

Once again, asyndeton adds momentum to each of these lines. It also creates a sense of intimacy and immediacy; the reader feels like they are right there inside the speaker's mind as they jump from one part of the image to the other. Consider how different the passage would feel were it to use coordinating conjunctions:

> Six sided and white
> On my eyes, my lips, and my hair

Without asyndeton, the rhythm changes noticeably, and the poem loses a little bit of its urgency. It feels more like someone describing a scene to someone else rather than actually being

fully immersed in it themselves.

Where Asyndeton appears in the poem:

- **Lines 7-10:** "The world forever, I shall not entirely / Sit emptied of beauties, the gift / Of your small breath, the drenched grass / Smell of your sleeps, lilies, lilies."
- **Lines 16-17:** "Have such a space to cross, / Such coldness, forgetfulness."
- **Lines 23-24:** "These lamps, these planets / Falling like blessings, like flakes"
- **Lines 25-26:** "Six sided, white / On my eyes, my lips, my hair"

ENJAMBMENT

The poem uses a fair amount of enjambment, which helps to create moments of anticipation and intensity. Take lines 6-10, where the speaker is describing the echoing spiral of these "dances":

> Surely they travel
> The world forever, I shall not entirely
> Sit emptied of beauties, the gift
> Of your small breath, the drenched grass
> Smell [...]

Thanks to a string of enjambments between lines and between stanzas, the poem gains momentum as it moves down the page. These lines aren't syntactically complete in and of themselves, and, as such, the reader has to continue onto the next line in order to make sense of anything. The poem thus pulls readers along, evoking the movement of those traveling "spirals" and the speaker's breathless excitement.

When the reader then eventually *does* reach an end-stopped line, that pause feels all the more weighty because it comes on the heels of so much movement. Line 10 ("Smell of your sleeps, lilies, lilies.") lingers in the readers' ear; the reader has a chance to land and let the previous enjambed lines all sink in.

The rush of enjambment from lines 19-21 likewise thrusts readers forward, in doing so mirroring the endless movement of a comet through space:

> Warm and human, then their pink light
> Bleeding and peeling
> Through the black amnesias of heaven.

The firm period after "heaven" then again halts the reader, suggesting the firm finality of these "amnesias."

There's yet another long string of enjambments starting in line 22 ("Why am I given"), which continues until the poem's final two lines. This swift movement highlights the urgency and emotion behind the speaker's final rhetorical question. They might even evoke the "[f]alling" motion of the snowflakes the speaker envisions.

The enjambments propel the reader forward only to end with two abrupt end-stops in the final stanza:

> Touching and melting.
> Nowhere.

These sudden full stops seem to cut the speaker (and the poem) off right in the middle of a moment of deep gratitude and happiness. This, in turn, echoes the speaker's point: these moments never last. One hardly gets to enjoy them before already they're over.

Where Enjambment appears in the poem:

- **Lines 3-4:** "dances / Lose"
- **Lines 6-7:** "travel / The"
- **Lines 7-8:** "entirely / Sit"
- **Lines 8-9:** "gift / Of"
- **Lines 9-10:** "grass / Smell"
- **Lines 15-16:** "comets / Have"
- **Lines 19-20:** "light / Bleeding"
- **Lines 20-21:** "peeling / Through"
- **Lines 22-23:** "given / These"
- **Lines 23-24:** "planets / Falling"
- **Lines 24-25:** "flakes / Six"
- **Lines 25-26:** "white / On"
- **Lines 26-27:** "hair / Touching"

CONSONANCE

Plentiful consonance adds rhythm, musicality, and intensity to the poem's language.

For instance, listen to at all crisp /p/, liquid /l/, and hissing /s/ sounds (a.k.a. sibilance) in line 5:

> Such pure leaps and spirals—

This consonance makes the speaker's description sound all the more elevated and poetic, in turn suggesting just how profoundly the child's nighttime antics affect the speaker. The bright, plosive /p/ sounds also seem to evoke the child's playfulness jumping and spinning, while the long, drawn-out /l/ sounds suggest the elegance of these dances.

These sounds are thick throughout the poem, in fact, lending a feeling of cohesion to the language as a whole: "spots [...] spread of hot petals," "such space to cross," "lamps, these planets," "pink light / Bleeding and peeling," etc.

Also listen to lines 9-10, for example, which adds some /sm/ alliteration to the mix:

> Of your small breath, the drenched grass

Smell of your sleeps, lilies, lilies.

The language here is soft and gentle, in turn mirroring the silence of the sleeping child as well as the tenderness of the speaker looking on.

Later, in lines 15-18, intense sibilance evokes the eerie silence and emptiness of outer space:

The comets
Have such a space to cross,
Such coldness, forgetfulness,
So your gestures flake off—

Consonance also often combines with assonance to create moments of rhyme. Listen to the internal rhyme of "Cold folds," in line 12, for example, or the slant rhyme between "given" and "heaven" later on. And in the poem's final lines, the rhyme between "hair" and "Nowhere" makes the poem's ending feel firm and conclusive.

Where Consonance appears in the poem:

- **Line 1:** "smile fell"
- **Line 5:** "Such pure leaps," "spirals"
- **Line 7:** "entirely"
- **Line 8:** "Sit emptied," "beauties"
- **Line 10:** "Smell," "sleeps, lilies, lilies"
- **Line 12:** "Cold folds," "calla"
- **Line 13:** "embellishing itself"
- **Line 14:** "Spots," "spread," "hot petals"
- **Line 15:** "comets"
- **Line 16:** "such," "space," "cross"
- **Line 17:** "Such coldness, forgetfulness"
- **Line 18:** "So," "gestures flake off"
- **Line 19:** "Warm," "human," "pink," "light"
- **Line 20:** "Bleeding," "peeling"
- **Line 21:** "heaven"
- **Line 22:** "given"
- **Line 23:** "lamps," "planets"
- **Line 24:** "Falling like blessings, like flakes"
- **Line 25:** "Six sided"
- **Line 26:** "hair"
- **Line 28:** "Nowhere"

ASSONANCE

Like consonance, assonance adds musicality and intensity to the poem's language.

In lines 9-10, for example, the short /eh/ sounds of "breath," "drenched," and "smell" add gentle rhythm to the line. And listen to the mixture of internal rhyme and round, long /o/ assonance of "Cold folds of ego" in line 12: these broad, extravagant sounds evoke the puffed-up self-importance of the "calla" lily, which the speaker says is quite different from the sweet, sleeping child.

The speaker's description of the showy tiger lily is similarly, and appropriately, flashy: there are the short /eh/ sounds of "embellishing itself," "spread," and "petals"; as well as the /aw/ of "spots" and "hot." Again, consonance and alliteration (/s/, /p/, /l/, and /t/ sounds) combine with the assonance here to add to the language's intensity:

And the tiger, embellishing itself—
Spots, and a spread of hot petals.

Later, long /ee/ sounds in "Bleeding and peeling" draw out these words—and the painful disintegration that they describe. That sound then gets echoed by "amnesias" in the next line, linking the oblivion of space with this pain.

For another example, listen to the combined /la/ consonance/assonance in "lamps" and "planets." These shared sounds call attention to and reflect the closeness of these two words, which are both metaphors for the beauty of moments with the speaker's beloved child.

Where Assonance appears in the poem:

- **Line 9:** "breath," "drenched"
- **Line 10:** "Smell"
- **Line 12:** "Cold folds," "ego"
- **Line 13:** "embellishing itself"
- **Line 14:** "Spots," "spread," "hot," "petals"
- **Line 15:** "comets"
- **Line 16:** "cross"
- **Line 18:** "off"
- **Line 20:** "Bleeding," "peeling"
- **Line 21:** "amnesias," "heaven"
- **Line 22:** "given"
- **Line 23:** "lamps," "planets"
- **Line 25:** "sided, white"
- **Line 26:** "my eyes, my," "my," "hair"
- **Line 28:** "Nowhere"

PARALLELISM

Parallelism (including the more specific device anaphora) helps to create rhythm and momentum in the poem.

For instance, take a look at the parallel phrasing in lines 8-10:

Sit emptied of beauties, the gift
Of your small breath, the drenched grass
Smell of your sleeps, lilies, lilies.

The parallel grammatical structures ("the _____ of your _____") create the sensation of a building list. They also simply add a gentle rhythm to the poem. Note that this parallelism overlaps with the use of asyndeton (the lack of coordinating

conjunctions), which speeds up the poem and also suggests that these examples are just two of many "beauties" that the speaker holds. The lines feel intense and urgent.

The speaker again turns to parallelism in lines 23-24, imbuing the poem with an urgent, driving rhythm:

> These lamps, these planets
> Falling like blessings, like flakes

In each line here, the speaker follows up one comparison with another, as though searching for the right words to best capture the beauty of these moments with their child. These moments are compared first to "lamps" and "planets" and then to "blessings" and flakes." The parallelism highlights the similarities between these comparisons, emphasizing that they're all pointing in the same direction: the speaker's child brings goodness, light, and hope into their life.

Similarly, in line 26, parallelism adds rhythm and emphasis to the imagery of snow falling on the speaker's "eyes," "lips," and "hair":

> On my eyes, my lips, my hair

The parallel clauses suggest that the metaphorical snow "flakes" are falling everywhere at once, indiscriminately. This, in turn, implies that every part of the speaker is moved by their time with their child; they are almost overwhelmed with love and wonder. And again, the parallelism here overlaps with asyndeton, adding speed and urgency to this moment of fleeting beauty.

Where Parallelism appears in the poem:

- **Lines 8-10:** "the gift / Of your small breath, the drenched grass / Smell of your sleeps"
- **Lines 23-24:** "These lamps, these planets / Falling like blessings, like flakes"
- **Line 26:** "On my eyes, my lips, my hair"

RHETORICAL QUESTION

The speaker poses multiple rhetorical questions throughout the poem, each of which reflects their deep sense of awe and bewilderment as they try to make sense of life's "blessings."

First, the speaker asks their child:

> And how will your night dances
> Lose themselves. In mathematics?

In other words, the speaker wonders how these "dances"—sweet, innocent gestures of childhood—will come to an end. The speaker evokes the specific possibility of these "dances" disappearing into numbers and figures, perhaps implying that they'll be "lost" to the cold world of logic and calculation (which stands in contrast to the imaginative realm of childhood).

Note that the question mark doesn't actually appear until after the second part of the question, however. The *initial* question—"And how will your night dances / Lose themselves."—ends with a period, despite the syntax implying that it is, indeed, a question. This suggests that although the speaker wonders "how" their child's childhood will end, they have no doubt that it *will* end. And while they seem to be asking this question of their child, it is obviously a question that no one, not even the child themselves, can answer.

This gets at an important tension in the poem between the importance of individual human moments to people themselves and the utter insignificance of these moments on a cosmic scale:

- On the one hand, people's individual lives and futures seem utterly unknowable, filled with possibility.
- At the same time, this sense of mystery is at odds with the certainty that those futures will one day end.

In lines 22-27, the speaker poses another rhetorical question: they wonder why they've been "given" these metaphorical "lamps"/"planets" in an otherwise dark and empty universe. In other words, they're struggling to reconcile the joyous moments with the child with the knowledge that these moments can't last (and, in fact, each passing moment brings the speaker and child closer to their own ends).

This question also ends in a period. The tension between the *syntax* (the phrasing implying that this is a *question*) and the punctuation (the period implying that this is a *statement*) again suggests the speaker's confusion and conflicted feelings about these happy moments with their child. The firm period perhaps suggests that the speaker thinks the answer to this question—to this "why"—doesn't really matter in the end; regardless of *why* these "flakes" of beuaty and joy are falling, they will inevitably "melt[]" and disappear.

Where Rhetorical Question appears in the poem:

- **Lines 3-4:** "And how will your night dances / Lose themselves. In mathematics?"
- **Lines 22-27:** "Why am I given / These lamps, these planets / Falling like blessings, like flakes / Six sided, white / On my eyes, my lips, my hair / Touching and melting."

VOCABULARY

Irretrievable (Line 2) - Unable to be recovered or returned; lost for good.

Spirals (Line 5) - Swirls or twirls. In mathematics, the term refers to a curve that revolves farther and farther away from a central point.

Drenched (Line 9) - Soaked with water or moisture.

Ego (Line 12) - Self-importance, pride; consciousness.

The calla (Line 12) - A kind of lily that has a single spathe (or sheath) rather than numerous petals.

Embellishing (Line 13) - Making more appealing through decoration.

The tiger (Line 13) - The tiger lily is an extremely bright and flashy lily, intensely orange with dark spots all over it.

Black amnesias (Line 21) - *Amnesia* means a loss of memory, so this is a poetic way of describing the darkness and emptiness of the cosmos.

FORM, METER, & RHYME

FORM

"The Night Dances" is made up of 28 lines of free verse, which are broken into 14 couplets (two-line stanzas).

On the one hand, these couplets seem to gesture toward the intimacy between the speaker and their child. Each couplet is a pair, like partners in a dance.

These steady couplets also give the poem some regularity and predictability. This, in turn, might subtly echo the "coldness" and "forgetfulness" of outer space, which carries on "mathematic[ally]" regardless of whatever tender moments are occurring in the speaker's life. At the same time, this regular form is in tension with the poem's widely-varying line lengths. There's thus a push and pull between predictability and seeming randomness.

There are also simply a *lot* of couplets here! Breaking each stanza into just two lines drags the poem out, making it appear longer on the page. In a way, this might subtly reflect the conflict that is playing out inside the speaker: they're moved by the tenderness of one small, "human" moment that will nevertheless be lost in the grand scheme of the universe—just as any individual couplet in the poem might be overwhelmed by the poem as a whole.

METER

The poem is written in free verse, so it doesn't use any regular meter. While this is true for the bulk of contemporary poetry (including most of Plath's work), it makes particular sense for this poem. In "The Night Dances," the speaker is grappling with a sense of cosmic insignificance. A steady meter perhaps would have given the poem a soothingly predictable rhythm. The *lack* of meter, by contrast, highlights the essential meaninglessness of the universe—the idea that human "gestures" (like meter) simply do not matter in the grand scheme of things.

RHYME SCHEME

As a free verse poem, "The Night Dances" doesn't use a set rhyme scheme. There are moments of musicality in the poem, of course; for example, there's the internal rhyme/assonance of "Cold folds of ego" and the end rhyme between "hair" and "[n]owhere" in the poem's final moments. But these sonic echoes are unpredictable blips of music rather than part of a regular pattern of rhyme. In a way, their randomness reflects the speaker's argument: that moments of human joy are fleeting in the grand, cosmic scheme of things.

SPEAKER

The speaker of this poem is watching their child's "night dances"—the "pure leaps and spirals" the child makes in the evening. The speaker clearly feels a great deal of tenderness toward their child and toward this moment in particular, relishing its sweetness while also acknowledging that it, like all moments, cannot last forever.

It's ultimately ambiguous whether the ephemeral nature of precious "beauties" like this makes them more or less meaningful to the speaker. They feel this moment is as special as a snowflake, as joyous and hopeful as a "lamp[]" lighting up the darkness of existence. Even as the speaker deems the universe cold and empty, they declare such interactions with their child to be "blessings" and "gift[s]" (from where/whom, it's not clear). And yet, the speaker also insists that time and space will eventually gobble up all memory of this moment along with the speaker and child themselves. All will be lost in the "black amnesias of heaven."

Do note that the poem only *implies* this is a parent-child relationship, and it's certainly possible to interpret it otherwise. Unlike some of Plath's more obviously autobiographical poems, this one contains no direct allusions to her life, though her husband, Ted Hughes, has said that the poem was inspired by their own son's little "night dance[]" in his crib.

SETTING

The poem doesn't have much of a physical setting. It presumably takes place at "night," as the speaker looks over their sleeping child. The speaker zooms out to imagine "comets" journeying across the cold, dark expanse of the universe, but this image is one created by the speaker's mind

(they haven't literally traveled to outer space!). Indeed, the poem is an introspective one, more concerned with the speaker's inner world and anxieties than with any external setting.

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 "The Night Dances" 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. "The Night Dances," with its consideration of the fleeting nature of human life alongside the joys of parenthood, is a good example of the kind of complexity found within Plath's work.

According to Plath's husband, Ted Hughes, the poem was inspired by their son Nicholas, whose movements in his crib at night resembled a little dance. And "The Night Dances" is far from the only poem inspired by Plath's two children: "Nick and the Candlestick," which is also about her son, explores the surreal combination of wonder, tenderness, exhaustion, and disorientation of new motherhood. Similar themes appear in "Morning Song," written after the birth of Plath's first child, Frieda.

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, 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, may explain the poem's bleak sentiments. Overall, this poem acknowledges both the beauty and joy of parenthood while also hinting at the growing despair that would ultimately result in Plath's death by suicide in February of 1963.

MORE RESOURCES

EXTERNAL RESOURCES

- The Poet's Life and Work — A biography of Plath from the Poetry Foundation. (https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poets/sylvia-plath)
- An Essay About "The Night Dances" — A 2012 essay by Emma Komlos-Hrobsky that discusses the poem, published by Tin House Magazine. (https://tinhouse.com/touching-and-melting-nowhere-sylvia-plaths-the-night-dances/)
- 50 Years of Ariel — An episode of Poetry Off the Shelf, a podcast about contemporary poetry, which discusses the impact of Ariel, the collection in which "The Night Dances" first appeared. (https://www.poetryfoundation.org/podcasts/89210/50-years-of-ariel)
- Forward to the Restored Edition of Ariel — An introduction to the 2010 Restored Edition of Plath's Ariel collection, written by her daughter, Frieda Hughes. (https://www.bl.uk/20th-century-literature/articles/foreword-to-ariel-the-restored-edition)

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
- Words
- You're

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