



Without Title

for my Father who lived without ceremony

Poem by Diane Glancy

AS YOU READ Think about how Diane Glancy, a poet of Native American descent, portrays the life of the speaker’s father. In what ways is it different from the traditional life of his people

It’s hard you know without the buffalo,
 the shaman,¹ the arrow,
 but my father went out each day to hunt
 as though he had them.

5 He worked in the stockyards.
 All his life he brought us meat.
 No one marked his first kill,
 no one sang his buffalo song.

10 Without a vision² he had migrated to the city
 and went to work in the packing house.
 When he brought home his horns and hides
 my mother said
 get rid of them.

15 I remember the animal tracks of his car
 backing out the drive in snow and mud,
 the aerial³ on his old car waving
 like a bow string.

I remember the silence of his lost power,
 the red buffalo painted on his chest.

20 Oh, I couldn’t see it
 but it was there, and in the night I heard
 his buffalo grunt like a snore.

Glancy uses **repetition**, or repeated sounds, words, phrases, or line, to emphasize an important idea and create unity in the poem.

1. **RL1,2,4,5:** Identify details in the title and subtitle that may provide clues to the theme.

2. **RL1,4,5:** Identify the repetition and explain what it may suggest about the theme.

¹ **shaman:** a person who interacts with the spiritual world
² **vision:** a guiding experience that often comes in a dream or a trance
³ **aerial:** a thin, metal antenna

3. **COLLABORATIVE DISCUSSION:** What is the meaning of the subtitle, “for my Father who lived without ceremony”? With a partner, discuss what is missing from the father’s life, citing evidence from the poem.

The **theme** of a poem is a message about life or about human nature that the poet wishes to communicate to readers. Usually, the theme is not stated directly. Readers must **infer** the theme, or draw a conclusion based on details in the text. A theme can be stated in a sentence, such as “Honesty is the sign of a true friendship.”

Follow these steps to determine theme in a poem:

- ◆ Develop an objective summary of the poem. In a sentence or two, state the most important ideas and details that the poet presents.
- ◆ Ask yourself what message about life or about people the poem conveys. A poem may have more than one theme, but all themes must be supported by textual evidence.
- ◆ Write a sentence that states the theme. Check to make sure there are enough details in the poem to support your theme. The evidence must be both strong and thorough.

4. **Identify** What details does the speaker use to contrast life in her father’s original culture and life in the city?

5. **Infer** What can you infer about the speaker’s feelings toward her father? Why doesn’t she try to intervene in the conflict between her parents? Cite evidence from the text to support your answer.

6. **Analyze** What theme about tradition and community does this poem convey? Draft an objective summary, and then cite key details that help develop the theme over the course of the poem.

7. **Speaking Activity: Oral Narrative:** Plan and present a spoken narrative about one day in the life of the speaker’s family. Use a separate sheet to plan and write your narrative; then present it to a partner.

- ◆ Decide who will be the narrator: the speaker, the speaker’s father or mother, or a third-person narrator outside the poem.
- ◆ Describe the events of one day through your narrator’s voice, incorporating details from the poem.
- ◆ Make sure your narrative builds to a logical conclusion that reflects what the characters experience in the poem.
- ◆ Speak using conventions of English that are appropriate to the narrator and context.