



POETRY COLLECTION

Hanging Fire

Translating Grandfather's House

Concept Vocabulary

As you perform your first read of “Hanging Fire” and “Translating Grandfather’s House,” you will encounter these words.

horizon awakenings beaming

Context Clues If these words are unfamiliar to you, try using context clues—other words and phrases that appear in a text—to help you determine their meanings. Here are three types of context clues that might help you as you read.

Synonym Gregory has one **sibling**, his brother Anthony.

Contrast of Ideas: The winner was **elated**, but the loser was filled with sadness.

Explanation: The **cupola** on the roof looked like a little dog house.

Apply your knowledge of context clues and other vocabulary strategies to determine the meanings of unfamiliar words you encounter during your first read.

First Read POETRY

Apply these strategies as you conduct your first read. You will have an opportunity to complete a close read after your first read.

STANDARDS

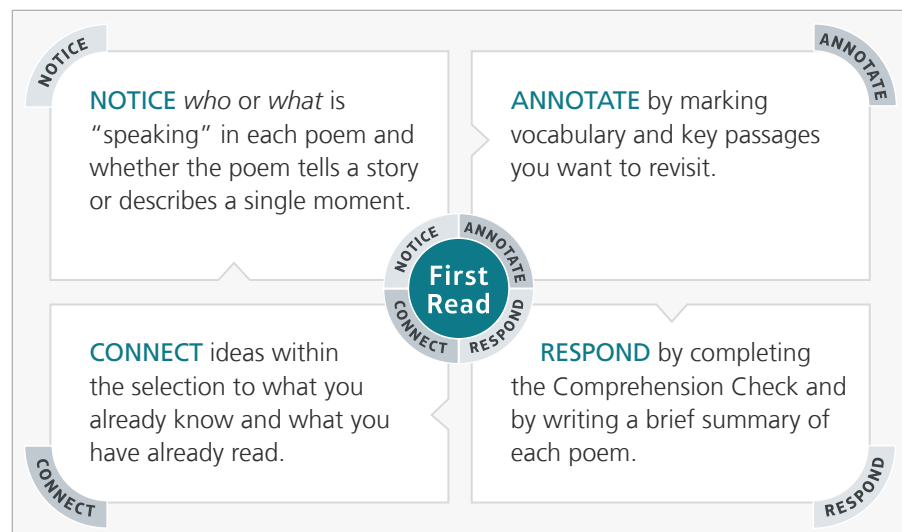
Reading Literature

By the end of the year, read and comprehend literature, including stories, dramas, and poems, at the high end of grades 6–8 text complexity band independently and proficiently.

Language

Determine or clarify the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning words or phrases based on *grade 8 reading and content*, choosing flexibly from a range of strategies.

- Use context as a clue to the meaning of a word or phrase.



Meet the Poets



Audre Lorde (1934–1992) was a Caribbean American poet and civil rights activist. Her poetry and writing addresses social prejudices and injustices. She was the Poet Laureate of New York from 1991 until her death.



E.J. Vega (b. 1961) is an award-winning poet, novelist, and journalist. He was born in Cuba and worked as a sailor on tugboats and ocean barges. He has degrees in writing, literature, and journalism from Brooklyn College and Columbia University. He lives in New York City.

Backgrounds

Hanging Fire

Adolescence can be a challenging stage of life, with childhood left behind but adulthood not yet achieved. In “Hanging Fire,” Audre Lorde explores the frustrating feelings that can arise from the contradictions of being a “young adult.”

Translating Grandfather’s House

In the poem, E.J. Vega mentions Zorro, a popular fictional character, originally created in 1919 by writer Johnston McCulley. In McCulley’s novel, Zorro is a heroic outlaw and a skilled sword fighter who wears a mask to hide his true identity—he is actually a wealthy noble named Diego de la Vega.

Hanging Fire

Audre Lorde

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I am fourteen
and my skin has betrayed me
the boy I cannot live without
still sucks his thumb
5 in secret
how come my knees are
always so ashy
what if I die
before morning
10 and momma's in the bedroom
with the door closed.

I have to learn how to dance
in time for the next party
my room is too small for me
15 suppose I die before graduation
they will sing sad melodies
but finally
tell the truth about me
There is nothing I want to do
20 and too much
that has to be done
and momma's in the bedroom
with the door closed.

Nobody even stops to think
25 about my side of it
I should have been on Math Team
my marks were better than his
why do I have to be
the one
30 wearing braces
I have nothing to wear tomorrow
will I live long enough
to grow up
and momma's in the bedroom
35 with the door closed.

Translating Grandfather's House

E. J. Vega



According to my sketch,
 Rows of lemon & mango
 Trees frame the courtyard
 Of Grandfather's stone
 5 And clapboard home;
 The shadow of a palomino¹
 Gallops on the lip
 Of the **horizon**.

The teacher says
 10 The house is from
 Some Zorro
 Movie I've seen.

"Ask my mom," I protest.
 "She was born there—
 15 Right there on the second floor!"

Crossing her arms she moves on.

Memories once certain as rivets
 Become confused as **awakenings**
 In strange places and I question
 20 The house, the horse, the wrens
 Perched on the slate roof—
 The roof Oscar Jartín
 Tumbled from one hot Tuesday,
 Installing a new weather vane;
 25 (He broke a shin and two fingers).
 Classmates finish drawings of New York City
 Housing projects² on Navy Street.
 I draw one too, with wildgrass
 Rising from sidewalk cracks like widows.
 30 In big round letters I title it:

GRANDFATHER'S HOUSE

Beaming, the teacher scrawls
 An A+ in the corner and tapes
 It to the green blackboard.

To the green blackboard.

1. **palomino** (pal uh MEE noh) *n.* horse with a light golden coat and a white mane and tail.
 2. **housing projects** *n.* apartment buildings subsidized by the government, usually for low-income households.

NOTES

Mark context clues or indicate another strategy you used that helped you determine meaning.

horizon (huh RY zuhn) *n.*

MEANING:

awakenings

(uh WAY kuhn ihngz) *n.*

MEANING:

beaming (BEEM ihng) *v.*

MEANING:

Comprehension Check

Complete the following items after you finish your first read. Review and clarify details with your group.

HANGING FIRE

1. In the first stanza, what is the speaker unhappy about?
2. Where is momma in the poem?
3. What does the speaker have to learn before the next party?

TRANSLATING GRANDFATHER'S HOUSE

4. What is the subject of the speaker's first drawing?
5. What is the teacher's reaction to the speaker's first drawing?

6. What grade does the speaker receive on the second drawing?

7.  **Notebook** Confirm your understanding by writing a short summary of each poem.

RESEARCH

Research to Clarify Choose one unfamiliar detail from one of the poems. Briefly research that detail. In what way does the information you learned shed light on an aspect of the poem?

Research to Explore Choose something that interests you from the texts, and perform research on it. Share your findings with your group.



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TIP

GROUP DISCUSSION

Allow each member of the group to share reactions to the poems. Discuss the similarities and differences in group members' reactions.

WORD NETWORK

Add interesting words related to rites of passage from the text to your Word Network.

STANDARDS

Reading Literature

- Determine a theme or central idea of a text and analyze its development over the course of the text, including its relationship to the characters, setting, and plot; provide an objective summary of the text.

- Compare and contrast the structure of two or more texts and analyze how the differing structure of each text contributes to its meaning and style.

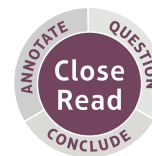
Language

Determine or clarify the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning words or phrases based on *grade 8 reading and content*, choosing flexibly from a range of strategies.

b. Use common, grade-appropriate Greek or Latin affixes and roots as clues to the meaning of a word.

Close Read the Text

With your group, revisit sections of the text you marked during your first read. **Annotate** what you notice. What **questions** do you have? What can you **conclude**?



Analyze the Text

CITE TEXTUAL EVIDENCE to support your answers.

 **Notebook** Complete the activities.

- 1. Review and Clarify** With your group, reread "Hanging Fire." Identify the lines that are repeated throughout the poem. What does this repetition suggest about the relationship between the speaker and the mother?
- 2. Present and Discuss** Now, work with your group to share the passages from the poems that you found especially important. Take turns presenting your passages. Discuss what you noticed in the text, what questions you asked, and what conclusions you reached.
- 3. Essential Question:** *What are some milestones on the path to growing up?* What have you learned about growing up by reading these poems? Discuss with your group.

LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT

Concept Vocabulary


horizon

awakenings

beaming

Why These Words? The concept vocabulary words from the text are related. With your group, determine what the words have in common. Write your ideas, and add another word that fits the category.

Practice

 **Notebook** Confirm your understanding of these words from the text by using them in sentences. Provide context clues for each word.

Word Study

Etymology: horizon In "Translating Grandfather's House," the author uses the word *horizon*. The etymology, or word origin, of *horizon* can be traced back to the Greek word *horos*, meaning "boundary marker." The related Greek word *horizon* means "limiting" or "creating a boundary." How does understanding the origin of the word *horizon* help you to better understand its meaning? How does this knowledge enhance your appreciation of the poem?

Analyze Craft and Structure

Forms of Poetry Two major **forms of poetry** are lyric poetry and narrative poetry. Understanding a poem's structure and style will help you to analyze the meaning of a poem and identify a **theme**, or insight about life that it conveys.

- The purpose of **lyric poetry** is to create a single, vivid impression of an object, person, or moment in time. Lyric poems are generally short. They may be rhymed or unrhymed, but most lyric poems contain musical qualities that help to convey meaning. These musical effects are created through the repetition of words and sounds as well as the rhythm created by the strong and weak stresses a reader naturally places on words.
- A **narrative poem** tells a story and includes the main elements of a short story—characters, setting, conflict, and plot. A narrative poem may also include musical effects, but generally not to the same degree that a lyric poem does.

Practice

CITE TEXTUAL EVIDENCE
to support your answers.

Analyze the poems and fill in the charts with your findings. Then, answer the questions that follow. Share your responses with your group.

HANGING FIRE	
ELEMENTS OF LYRIC POETRY	EXAMPLES/EVIDENCE
musical effects (repetition of words and sounds; rhythms)	
expresses thoughts and feelings	
details create a single, vivid impression	

TRANSLATING GRANDFATHER'S HOUSE	
ELEMENTS OF NARRATIVE POETRY	EXAMPLES/EVIDENCE
characters	
setting	
conflict	

1. **(a)** What overall impression does "Hanging Fire" create? **(b)** What theme is conveyed by the poem?
2. **(a)** How is the conflict resolved in "Translating Grandfather's House"? **(b)** What theme does the poem suggest?



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Author's Style

Word Choice Writers carefully choose words to create meaning. The poems you have just read are carefully crafted to convey each speaker's personality, situation, and attitude. When you analyze poetry, pay attention to word choice and ask the following:

- Has the poet used figurative language, like similes or metaphors, or more straightforward descriptions?
- Has the poet used slang, informal language, or formal language?
- Has the poet repeated ideas, words, or phrases?

Once you have examined the word choices, draw conclusions about how the word choices help to build the speaker's character and enhance the overall meaning of the poem.

Read It

In the chart, mark words from each passage that are descriptive or interesting in some way. Describe how the word choice helps reveal the speaker's personality and situation. Then, find one more passage from each poem that reveals something about the speaker, and share it with your group.

STANDARDS

Reading Literature

Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone, including analogies or allusions to other texts.

Speaking and Listening

Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions with diverse partners on grade 8 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.

- Come to discussions prepared, having read or researched material under study; explicitly draw on that preparation by referring to evidence on the topic, text, or issue to probe and reflect on ideas under discussion.
- Pose questions that connect the ideas of several speakers and respond to others' questions and comments with relevant evidence, observations, and ideas.
- Acknowledge new information expressed by others, and, when warranted, qualify or justify their own views in light of the evidence presented.

PASSAGE FROM THE TEXT	WHAT WORD CHOICE REVEALS ABOUT THE SPEAKER
<i>I am fourteen / and my skin has betrayed me / the boy I cannot live without / still sucks his thumb / in secret . . .</i> ("Hanging Fire," lines 1–5)	
<i>Memories once certain as rivets / Become confused as awakenings / In strange places and I question / The house, the horse, the wrens / Perched on the slate roof— . . .</i> ("Translating Grandfather's House," lines 17–21)	

Write It

Choose one stanza from either "Hanging Fire" or "Translating Grandfather's House." Rewrite the stanza as if it were spoken by a different speaker. Choose words that help to reveal your speaker's distinct personality. Then, share your stanzas with the group, and discuss how your versions create a new tone that fits the speakers you created.



Speaking and Listening

Assignment

Conduct a **group discussion** about “Hanging Fire” and “Translating Grandfather’s House.” Draw on the texts to explore and reflect on ideas. Choose one of the following topics.

- ☐ Explore the **aspects of growing up** that are described in each poem. Are these experiences specific to the speakers or more universal in nature? Support your ideas with details from the poems as well as your own experiences.
- ☐ **Compare and contrast the speakers** in the two poems. In what ways are they similar? How do they differ? Would the two become friends if they were to meet? Use details from the poems to support your analysis.

Discussion Preparation Identify examples from the text that support your ideas. Record the examples in the chart, and write notes and ideas related to the discussion topic. Then, join with others in your group and compare notes:

HANGING FIRE	TRANSLATING GRANDFATHER’S HOUSE

Holding the Discussion As your group discusses the information in the chart, take turns asking each other questions. Look for connections among the various ideas. Listen carefully to other group members and clarify anything you do not understand. Be open to changing your opinions, and at all times be respectful of others’ ideas.

EVIDENCE LOG

Before moving on to a new selection, record what you learned from “Hanging Fire” and “Translating Grandfather’s House” in your Evidence Log.