

College Guild
PO Box 6448 Brunswick, Maine 04011

Families

Unit 5 of 5: Poetry

Remember: Some of the questions may ask you to put yourself in the place of another gender (for example, asking you how a mother or father would feel in a certain situation). Please answer these questions regardless of your gender - just try to put yourself in their shoes!

* If there are any questions about family, friends, or anything else that you feel uncomfortable answering - just make up fictional characters for these questions. *

Now that you've come to your last Unit, you've explored how families can be biological, connected by marriage, friends, immediate, extended, supportive, distant, good or bad influences, and much more. Have a look at some of the following quotations about families.

"My family is my strength and my weakness" - Aishwarya Rai Bachchan

1. What does this quote mean to you?

"The bond that links your true family is not one of blood, but of respect and joy in each other's life." - Richard Bach

2. Do you think if a family has not fostered respect and joy, they are still worth being around? Why or why not?

"Family quarrels are bitter things. They don't go according to any rules. They're not like aches or wounds, they're more like splits in the skin that won't heal because there's not enough material." - F. Scott Fitzgerald

3. What suggestions do you have for overcoming a family quarrel?

4. Write your own piece of wisdom or adage about family.



5. Write a short story about the characters in the image above.

Poems

'You Could've Waitin 'Til I Was Old Enough...'
To have taken my first tentative steps
To warn me that I'd someday follow in yours
Steps that would take me away from
My own two sons, knowing just what
It feels like to sit on front steps
Hoping to hear a key at the back door
Or to save up questions like quarters in
We'd go to the arcade, you'd teach
Me how to play this game called life.
I wouldn've even settled for every other weekend.

Dan Grote

6. Explain whom you think the poet is speaking to in this poem: his father? his sons? himself? Which lines in the poem did you base your answer on?

7. Which is the greater kindness, to tell a child his father has left for good, or to let him have hope? Why? Does the voice in the poem agree with you?



To: Arie yana, my stepdaughter

I awake to snow. Winter's breath finds me
alone but loved. If you were here we could

pretend certain things never happened. The towers
never collapsed leaving Afghanistan uninvaded.

Man never sought sources for energy outside
of the sun and the wind, thereby imprisoning

global warming to the realms of science fiction.
I would have never sat on the sidelines

watching as your mother ran past giggling.
I would have reached out, gently grabbed her hand.

You would have been born my daughter,
and I would have known no greater happiness.

Carlos Bellamy

The Job

Somehow it got to be my job
to go get him every night
from the bar
before all the money was gone.
Sitting alone
hunched over a glass
he'd sling an arm at me
when I'd try to stand him up.
That gave me something
to hang onto.
A kid needs something
to hang onto.

John Yarbrough

Carlos Bellamy dedicates his poem to his stepdaughter, but also imagines a better past for the country and the planet.

8. Which events would you choose to never have occurred in our world's history?

9. Write a story about a special family relationship.

10. How do you think the child feels about his "job" in John Yarbrough's poem?

11. Why do you think it became the child's job to bring his father home from the bar?

12. Write your own poem about a particular family or families in general.

Story

In past Units, we've read excerpts from Russell, Diane, Willie, and Blake in *Frontiers of Justice, Volume 3: The Crime Zone*. In our last Unit, we'll be reading from a story written by Arthur, who talks about what it was like to be released from prison and return to his family.

"The property officer dressed me out in my street clothes and all that remained was to sign my release papers. I sat in a plastic chair in the booking area waiting for the guards to process me out, and through the tall glass windows that looked out on the visiting lobby, I saw Dawn come in. Only the width of the shatter-proof glass separated us and we were all smiles and anticipation."

"The June morning was ripe with the promise of a hot summer day as Dawn and I strolled the length of the parking lot to her car - so many emotions running rampant in my mind. I was free. Like Lazarus, I too had just risen from the dead. For the first time in longer than my body could recall, I was on the other side of the wall and no chains or manacles weighed down my limbs or my soul. Freedom. I wanted to dance crazy on the asphalt, shout out my excitement and my joy, grab Dawn up in my arms and devour her lips with my mouth. I was free."

"How quickly sunlight can turn to darkness. How short the time between bliss and ruin. No Oracle I, but had I the power of prophecy, I would have seen the future in the first act of that day. In less than nine months, I would be so different from that happy, laughing person. In less than nine months, I would not laugh about something so innocent, something so humorous. In that time, I would become cold, hard, mean spirited and cruel. Such an error then would lead to a tantrum, a rage, an abusive verbal assault or a cold silent contempt."

"I didn't drink for almost the first five months of my freedom. I didn't smoke and even kept up with my running and writing for a time. But everything inside me was still there, all that suppressed rage from years and years of confinement and isolation, all the paranoia, the secretiveness, the hatred, the violence, the alcoholism, the addictions. I wasn't tending to my soul. I knew in my heart that I needed to address these issues, but my arrogance over-rode my understanding."

"Not long after I began to drink, I also started smoking cigarettes once more. For three years I had gone without a cigarette and was extremely proud of this accomplishment. When I picked them up again, I decided to blame Dawn rather than taking responsibility and admitting the role of the alcohol. Soon after, I started playing with drugs again. In no time, I blew up to over 200 pounds. I rarely, if ever, sat down to write. Self-loathing was a constant companion and the worse I felt, the more I took my pain out on my wife and my family."

"I might well have died at this point and, in fact, had very little desire left to live. My saving grace, however, was still my wife."

Despite everything, she still cared. She witnessed my deterioration and refused to allow me to destroy myself. Following a car wreck in which I totaled my vehicle, she convinced me to seek help. I entered rehab, sought out a counselor and for the first time in my life talked to professionals in the psychiatric field who were truly interested in helping me rather than just being tools for various prison administrations."

13. What could have happened to make Arthur realize sooner that he needed help? What could he have then done about it?

Arthur says he blamed Dawn "rather than taking responsibility and admitting the role of the alcohol."

14. Write a 10 line dialog between Arthur and Dawn, showing how they might each express themselves.

**15. Write a letter a month before Arthur's release:
from Arthur to Dawn, or
from Dawn to Arthur.**

16. In a similar relationship, if the woman were the alcoholic rather than the man, do you think the story would be different?

Later in the story, Arthur talks about the help of the psychiatrist and how his diagnosis of severe depression helped him recover his life.

17. What can prison administration do to make life after prison easier?

We've come to the end of Families!

18. Has your definition of "family" changed after taking this Course? If so, how?

Since this is your final Unit, we'd appreciate any feedback or suggestions you have for improving the Course!

Remember: First names only & please let us know if your address changes