

## Notes for Rangefinder Set 1 (L–R)

L (9)

The response offers a persuasive analysis of how Lee develops the complex relationship utilizing specific literary elements. The writer notes, for instance, it is ironic the father cannot recall a new story for his five-year-old despite sitting “in a room full of books in a world of stories.” Perceptively, the writer argues that the father—fully aware of the irony—realizes his “role and criticisms as a parent” and projects this particular instance of failure as precursor to many more instances of failure in the future. Also perceptive is the writer’s claim that from the father’s point of view, the experience of storytelling is more about intimate bonding than entertainment; this thought puts even more pressure on him to create a new story, and when he cannot, he is thrown “into a panic of losing his son.” The writer notes in the conclusion how comparisons in stanza six (a stanza it appears many writers will skirt) reflect the juxtaposition we see in the scene: a child requesting a simple story; a father superimposing upon the request his fears of inadequacy.

Though there are some lapses (conclusion), persuasive analysis, varied sentence structure, general facility with language, and textual references that are properly integrated into the writer’s own prose earn the response a score of 9.

P (8)

The response presents a mostly convincing analysis of how Lee uses point of view and structure to develop the complex relationship. Though the discussion of point of view on page one is largely summary, the writer on page two does speculate on the disappointment the child must feel and notes the father’s painful recognition of himself as a failure given that “he is an example, almost like a ‘god,’ to his child.” More persuasive is the writer’s discussion of structure. The writer indicates—perceptively—that the shift in time from present to future comes exactly when “the father starts to come to terms with the implications of his inability to connect with his son”; it is at this time that he panics, realizing “their eventual physical distance will parallel their emotional disconnection.” Also perceptive is the writer’s statement that after the poem transitions back to the room in the final stanza, the reader *and* the father now realize the father has an opportunity “to change—to satisfy the boy’s desire to hear a story.”

While assertions are not always accurate (“The reader is given insight to the thoughts of the child”) and language is not always precise (“the poet implements a series of literary devices”), the response on the whole offers a mostly persuasive analysis of the poem and earns a score of 8.

M (7)

The response presents a competent discussion of how Lee uses point of view and structure to develop the complex relationship. The introduction nicely captures the essence of the poem and makes astute observations about the father's dilemma. While analysis in the paragraph on point of view is thin, the writer does point out that the speaker casts the father in such a way that readers are able to identify with his plight; further, the writer points out that the speaker is effective in showing how a simple request for a story "turns into a source of worry for the father." The writer's synopsis of the poem at the end of the section (through point of view, the poet tells the story of man "who was too filled with love and fright to tell his son a story.") is apt. The discussion of structure is more focused and the writer's insights more profound: the writer says, for instance, "The fourth stanza notably jumps from the present to the future tense to demonstrate that the father's fears reach beyond the present to the time when his son is grown." The writer concludes with the editorial comment that children put their parents on such high pedestals that parents and children are hurt when parents make mistakes and the observation that in the final stanza, the poem "returns to the present—to the expectant little boy" and silence.

The response offers analysis that—while not thorough—is at least reasonably developed. Though language is not always precise ("to the expectant little boy"), ideas are mostly clear. On the whole, then, the response earns a score of 7.

Q (6)

While the response gets off to a promising start (sentences three and four), it presents only a generally competent discussion of how Lee uses literary devices to create the complex relationship. Evidence for assertions in the long paragraph on point of view is generally slight ("The italicized sentences throughout the poem represent both thought and actual dialogue. With this, the author is able to make the father's fears of his little boy leaving come to life."), but the writer does offer some insight: "The fact that the father plays this scenario out in his head, makes it come to life for the reader and allows them to see how traumatizing this experience would be for the father." The rest of the paragraph is repetitive and merely retells the story, though the writer offers more insight in the last sentence. The pattern is repeated in paragraph three: there is little evidence for the claim that the scene shifting from present to future and back to present is symbolic, and there is more repetition and retelling. The writer says in the conclusion the author does an excellent job of "including the reader in these tormenting issues," but the proof the writer provides is only marginally convincing.

Given the thin analysis and some imprecision in writing ("... allows for the characters thoughts, and even fears to be heard"; "he will finally contain stories to please his boy"), the response earns a score of 6.

N (5)

The response represents mostly a paraphrase of the poem. Though the writer repeatedly claims that “The author’s use of omniscient point of view lets the father’s thoughts and feelings be known,” the writer never shows *how* the author manipulates point of view to convey the relationship; instead, retelling the story serves as the writer’s primary evidence for the claim. While there is a hint of analysis at the bottom of page two (“The father believes the son has unreasonable expectations of him, however the truth is that father has the same expectations of himself”), the point is more the writer’s assessment of how the father creates the dilemma within himself than it is proof of how Lee makes use of the omniscient narrator. The start of the next line (“Using the metaphor of himself being a god) has promise, but, again, the writer reverts to telling (“the father angrily questions his son’s expectations”).

Outside of some odd phrasing (“Parents are worried to disappoint their children”) and some lapses in mechanics, there is general control of language.

While the response offers a credible explanation of what happens in the poem, it offers very little evidence for and analysis of the writer’s premise and should be scored a 5.

R (4)

The response presents unconvincing analysis of how devices are used to convey the complex relationship. In discussing how the author makes use of diction, for instance, the writer relies on two words (*give up*, *disappoint*) to prove the claim. Support for the claim that syntax is used to convey the relationship is similarly anemic. While the discussion of structure shows promise (“By writing in free verse, Lee juxtaposes the care-free and light-hearted nature of the young boy, with the worrisome and regretful attitude of the father”), the point is dismissed in favor of a puzzling discussion of the poem’s *lack* of rhyme scheme.

While writing is generally controlled and the response does attempt to engage the devices, sparse support for claims leads to inadequate development of ideas and a score of 4.

K (3)

The response presents feeble analysis of how the devices are used to convey the relationship. In support of the claim that the author uses diction (or tone) to create within the father a feeling of helplessness, the writer relies on a few words to make the case: *sad, silence, disappoint, don't go*. Even less convincing is the proof the writer provides for the claim that the author uses dialogue to convey the father's fears and the proof the writer provides for the claim that Lee uses imagery to convey the father's everlasting love for his son: "Li Young-Lee creates images of a young boy in his father's lap while the father struggles to please his son . . . ." The best evidence of analysis comes in one sentence at the very end when the writer infers that the way the poem is structured "conveys the message that the father and son still have time for one another and their relationship will remain strong . . . ."

Though writing is generally controlled, anemic development earns the response a 3.

O (2)

Actually, the response gets off to a promising start as the writer asserts that Lee uses point of view and symbolism "to illustrate the irrational concerns of a father." However, support for the thesis is a one-paragraph summary of the poem in which there is slight mention of point of view and no mention of symbolism. The response is unacceptably brief and earns a score of 2.

J (1)

While the response offers an overview of the poem and an opinion on what makes father-son relationships work, it fails to engage the task. It earns the score of 1.

The relationship between a father and his son is very special and unique. In Li-Yung Lee's 1990 poem "A Story" the speaker, the father, struggles to "come up with" (2) a story for his young son. Although seemingly a trivial event, the significance of this plea is amplified by the father's desire to be admired by his boy <sup>yet</sup> and fear that he will only be a disappointment. Lee uses sentimental and painful imagery, a first-person point-of-view and a parallel structure of the poem to convey this complex and trying relationship between parent and child.

It is ironic that the father is so preoccupied with ~~being a good role~~ in creating a new story for his <sup>only</sup> son "five-year-old son" (3). ~~when the boy~~ Not only does the boy's age make it <sup>easy</sup> ~~simple~~ for the father to tell an <sup>simple</sup> entertaining story, but this irony is emphasized by the fact that the two are "In a room full of books in a world of stories" (6-7) and that "he can recall not one" (7-8). The father is pressed to please his son and come up with "A new one" (4) and not stories that he has repeated for his child such as the alligator, angel or spider stories (13-14). His role and criticisms as a parent come to light as he realizes he cannot live up to his son's wishes. The father becomes blinded by the impending future and the apparent inevitability of "the day this boy will go" (11). The father loves his son dearly and sees



his inability to fabricate a new story as a precursor to many more disappointments in the future.

As important as this tradition of storytelling is to the young child, this act of love and affection is actually more meaningful <sup>to the speaker</sup> and indicative of the father's capabilities. As he imagines watching his son packing up to leave their house <sup>the father</sup> ~~he~~ cries, "Don't go!", tries to entice him to stay by offering to repeat some favorite stories that his son both loved and laughed at (11-13). The concluding line in the stanza, however, is most <sup>revealing</sup> ~~important~~, signifying the importance of telling stories to his son; "let me tell it!" (14). This experience of storytelling goes far beyond the superficial purpose of keeping the boy entertained, and acts as an intimate bonding experience between the father and his son. The son's fawning love and adoration fill a much-needed hole in the father's heart, and when this feeling is jeopardized, the father is thrown into a panic of losing his son. The images of the son and father as gods relate to the speaker's desire to be idolized by the boy. ~~However~~, Nevertheless, it is important to note that with a reputation so great, any shortcomings will be hard felt, a reference to the question the father asks himself, "Am I a god that I should never disappoint?" (18).

The speaker finally escapes his nightmare through and returns to the present moment, his son sitting on his



lap a story for a new story. ~~for~~ The boy addresses his father endearingly with "Baba" (4, 19), signifying the love and strength of their relationship. The poem both begins and ends with a somber tone and the father fully aware of his own shortcomings. He realizes though the comparisons between his relationship to his son and his ability to tell a story as "an emotional rather than logical equation," (20) and one that is in reach and within his control, "rather than heavenly" (21). The first-person perspective and narrative style of the poem make the meaning more personal. Though there is not too much structure in the poem, other than that the length of each stanza varies with two, three, four, five, and then four and five lines, the poet ends mathematically. He cannot find the emotional strength within him to create a new story, and sadly, can only conclude that "a boy's supplications, and a father's love add up to silence" (22-23).



In Li-Young Lee's poem "A Story," the reader learns about the complexity and frustrated emotions behind the relationship of a father and a son. The focus of the poem revolves around a story, and the father's struggle to connect with his beloved son. The poet implements a series of literary devices that permeate the poem. It is through these devices that the reader comes to clearly understand and relate to the complex nature of the characters' relationship. The transitions in the point of view and the chronological structure of the poem are essential in the development of the story, as well as the theme of silencing, fleeting love and life.

The point of view provided throughout the poem is instrumental in understanding the emotions of the father and son. The speaker recounts the interactions of the two characters, but also provides insight to the dialogue and thoughts. For example, in the second stanza, the speaker delineates a son as he "waits" on his father's lap. The father cannot seem to come up with a story to relate to his son. The child is clearly frustrated by his father's inability to entertain. In itavits remarking, "not the same story, Baba. A new one." The reader is given insight to the thoughts of the child, which are highlighted and distinguished





by being italicized. Later in the poem, the thoughts of the father are presented—again in italicized font. He seems to recognize his failure, and begs his child to stay. "let me tell it!" the father exclaims, expressing his true desire to connect with his son as well as his remorse over the fact that he cannot seem to bring himself to do so. More insight to the father's thoughts are provided in the fifth stanza. Equally frustrated, he ~~asks~~ reflects on the disappointment his son must feel. As a father, he is an example, almost like "a god," to his child. He is painfully recognizing his failure and his position as an ineffective father figure. The transitions of point of view are integral in the exposure of the complexity of the emotions felt by the father and son. As a result of these insights, the poet is able to successfully convey the complexity of the relationship and the genuine nature of the father's struggle.

Structure is also another key part in developing the scope of the father and son relationship <sup>and</sup> the implications of the father's failures. The poem begins with the image of a father and his son as a child. As the father <sup>starts to</sup> comes to terms with the implications of his inability to connect



with his son, the setting of the poem changes to the future. The father "sees the day this boy will go," and panics. The relationship between a father and a son lasts a lifetime, and if failures to connect manifest early on, then ~~a distant~~ that distance will permeate their lifetimes. "The boy is packing his shirts," preparing to leave and move on. The father ~~hopes~~<sup>must</sup> realize that their <sup>eventual</sup> physical distance will parallel their emotional disconnection. The poem transitions back in the final stanza to the boy in the room, waiting for his father's story. The reader and the father now realize, after viewing the consequences of the father's inaction, that he has the opportunity to change - to satisfy the boy's desire to hear a story. Because of the complex structure of the poem, the reader understands the complex nature of the father and son's relationship.

In this poem, the ~~author~~<sup>poet</sup> makes great use of point of view and structure to convey the central topic. The father and son are clearly facing struggles, ~~that~~ which are delineated effectively through the italicized representations of the father and son's most intimate thoughts and the ~~fast~~ for brief insight to their relationship's future. The effectiveness and clarity of the poem as a whole <sup>can</sup> ~~is~~ be credited with the literary devices Li-Young Lee employs.

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In his poem, "A Story," Li-Young Lee addresses the complex relationship between a father's love and a son's expectations. A young child makes a simple request for a story, but the child's father ~~sees~~ feels the pressure of trying to be a great father in not just this simple situation. Rather than seeing this moment at face value, the father recognizes that this is only the start of his role, and he is scared that he ~~will~~ will not live up to his son's expectations. This fear prevents the father from acting, and will possibly even lead him to failure. Lee conveys this idea through his choice of point of view and the structure.

By using the third person omniscient point of view, Lee is presenting the reader with the father's dilemma rather than explaining it. The reader can see that the <sup>scene</sup> ~~setting~~ is a simple: a little boy is sitting on his father's lap, anxiously awaiting ~~for~~ a story. Yet the father acts nervous. He "rubs his chin" and "scratches his ears." One can see that he is over-complicating the scenario, yet when the <sup>speaker</sup> ~~poet~~

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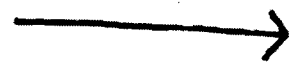
Q. 1

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M<sub>2</sub>

jumps into his thoughts, ~~then father~~ the reader is able to identify with the father's plight. He loves his son, and he wants to be the best father, but he is unsure of himself. ~~§~~ Thus rather than a simple story time, the situation turns into a source of worry for the father: "will [the boy] give up on his father" if he cannot think of a story? ~~an addition~~ Thus by using third person omniscient, the poet is in effect telling the reader the story of a man who was too filled with love and fright to tell his son a ~~poem~~ story.

In a ~~§~~ addition to the point of view, the ~~poem's~~ poem's structure leads to the reader's understanding of the poem's meaning. The first line of the poem makes a general statement that explains the ~~basics of~~ action of the poem: sadness comes to those who cannot think of a story. In the second stanza, Lee is ~~is~~ lays out the specifics of the scene, but in the third stanza, he enlightens the reader with the concerns



of the father. The fourth stanza notably jumps from the present to the future tense to demonstrate that the father's fears reach beyond ~~the~~ the present to the time when his son is grown. The father sees himself pleading for the love his son is demonstrating now by asking for a story. Yet this future son has ~~been~~ lost that love. He is leaving, and his father is broken hearted. In the lines that the father screams at the future son - "Are you a god? that I sit mute before you? Am I a God that I should never disappoint?" - ~~the~~ the reader can see that the father acknowledges that it is because of his love that he is afraid, but he also points out that it is unfair that he is held at too high a standard to fail. This is ~~noted~~ a dilemma for all fathers. Children put their parents so high on a pedestal, that it hurts both of them when parents make a mistake. In the final stanza, the poem returns to the present - to the expectant little boy. See



Q.1

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M4

acknowledges that the coningling of  
"a son's expecta boys' supplications  
and a father's love" create "silence."  
Thus, through the complex shifts  
in structure, the reader is able  
to understand the father's dilemma.  
~~That a father's own love can  
lead to an enormous fear.~~

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Question 1 Q1

In the poem "A Story," the topic of coming of age is ~~beav~~ heavily present. With this being present, the relationship between the father and the son instantly becomes complex. While the author never directly states the complexity of the relationship, it is clearly presented through techniques such as point of view and symbolic structure. From beginning to end, the reader is able to infer all of the issues that are present, along with the deep feelings, through the above techniques.

The story is told from a third person point of view, ~~which~~ automatically creating a scenario for the reader to evaluate, rather than having it told to them through first person. A very important aspect of the third person point of view is that it is omniscient and allows for the characters' thoughts, and even fears to be heard. The italicized sentences throughout the poem represent both thought and actual dialogue. With this, the author is able to make the father's fears of his little boy leaving come to life. For example, "Don't go! / Hear the alligator story! . . . Let me kill it!" primarily shows a scenario in which one day his son will no longer wish to hear stories and will be leaving his side. The fact that the father plays this scenario out in his head, makes it come to life for the reader and allows them to see how traumatizing this experience would be for the father. Through this simple action of writing the characters' thoughts and dialogue, the writer reveals the deep love the father contains for his boy, but also



The nagging fear that one day he will ~~not~~ no longer have his little boy. "But the boy is packing his shirts, / he is looking for keys." This is a typical description of when a child, now an adult, is preparing to adventure into adulthood and leave their parents' side. It is very apparent that the man fears this frightful scene with every fiber of his being because he knows he will not be wanted by his son any longer. At the moment, he has his son and his son wants, and even needs, him, and this means the world to the father. Unfortunately, though, he is failing to do the one thing his son yearns for him to do, tell him a story. As the boy sits in his lap and begs for a story, the man cannot help but sit with fear as thoughts and scenarios run through his head of his biggest fear becoming reality, the day his son leaves. The author's ability to share the father's thoughts and even create images from the future make this fear apparent to the reader and truly bring out the troubles that the father is having within his own mind.

As the reader can tell, the poem contains a very symbolic structure, starting with the present situation, then going into a future scenario of the boy leaving when he is grown up, and finally coming back to the present and reflecting upon what is happening now. As previously stated, the poem does contain a central theme of coming





of age and reveals the father's fear of coping with this issue when the time comes. Fortunately the son is only five years old at the moment, but this does not keep the father from dwelling on the day in the future. At the moment, the father is unable to come up with a story to please his son. This simple action leads the father into fearful thoughts of the day his son leaves, and then he will finally contain stories to please him but he will not want them. This is clearly symbolic of the fact that he is already losing his son because he cannot please him momentarily. As the poem continues, it eventually works into its final stage of reflection where the equation that "a boy's supplications/ and a father's love add up to silence." is stated. Here, the narrator shares how while the boy is displeased and unsatisfied, the father thinks of his love for his son and how he fears the day he will no longer have to worry about satisfying him. Overall, the man's love for the boy and his inability to tell him a satisfying story mix to create unending thoughts. The author does an excellent job of including the reader in these tormenting issues through his use of structure and point of view.

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N<sub>1</sub>

Parents are worried to disappoint their children, and when they do, even on small terms, that worry grows into a monster, hungry for happiness. In "A Story," by Li-Young Lee, a son asks his father for a new story. When the father can't think of any stories, he becomes worried and is overcome with emotion. The author's use of omniscient point-of-view shows ~~that~~ that the father <sup>is worried</sup> ~~worries~~ to disappoint his constantly expecting son.

As the pair sit together, the son asks for a new story from his father, however the father can't think of any. "In a room full of books in a world of stories, he can recall not one, and soon, he thinks, the boy will give up on his father." The irony ~~that~~ of their location is bothersome enough to the father, but he starts to create thoughts to make him feel even more unworthy. The thought of his son giving up on him is devastating, and ~~through~~ the author's use of omniscient point-of-view lets the father's thoughts and feelings be known.

The father creates even more worry



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1 N<sub>2</sub>

for himself as he begins to ~~think~~ ~~realize~~ premonitions about his relationship with his son in the future. "Already the man lives far ahead, he sees the day this boy will go. Don't go! Hear the Alligator story! ... You love the Spider story. You laugh at the spider." The father's worry grows even stronger. He pictures himself bargaining with his son as he leaves, begging him to remember how ~~great~~ ~~much~~ much he used to appreciate his repeated stories. His worry to disappoint his son makes him envision a stressful relationship with his son, a vision seen through the omniscient narrator.

As the father continues his vision, his pleading turns into anger. "But the boy is packing his shirts ... Are you a god, the man screams that I sit mute before you? Am I a god that I should never disappoint?" The father believes the son has unreasonable expectations of him, however the truth is that the father has the same expectations of himself. Using the metaphor of himself being a god, the father angrily questions his son's expectations. The vision doesn't continue to allow his son to answer. The father is

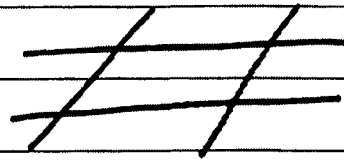
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N<sub>3</sub>

creating his worry by assuming his son expects to never be disappointed. Through the omniscient views of the narrator, the father's need to not disappoint his son creates an unhappy relationship, as seen by the father, ~~through~~ in their future.

The omniscient point-of-view ~~states~~ reveals that the father's ~~is~~ constant worry to disappoint his expecting son is causing stress on their relationship.



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Question 1 R<sub>1</sub>

There is no greater fear than that of a father losing his son and being forgotten.

In "A Story" by Li-Young Lee, diction plays a major role in conveying the father's fear of ~~disappoint~~ disappointing and consequently losing his son. Using words such as "give up" and "disappoint," the author enables the reader to empathize with the father who wants nothing more ~~than~~ than to ~~make~~ make his son happy. Trying to be the best dad possible, the young boy's father is worried that even the slightest let down will cause his son to leave him. This idea is also shown in the poem's syntax. Through the father's use of repetitive interjections, "Don't go! Hear... tell it!" (lines 11-14), readers get a sense of how frantic the boy's simple request makes the father and the anxiety he's feeling because of it. This is again shown in lines 16-18 where the man yells at his son for leaving because he couldn't come up with a story and be the dad he thinks his son wants him to be.

The poem's structure is also crucial in showing the complex relationship between the father and his son. By writing the ~~the~~ poem in free verse, Lee ~~is~~ juxtaposes the ~~the~~ care-free and light-hearted <sup>nature</sup> ~~nature~~ of the young boy, with the worrisome and regretful attitude of the father. Due to the poem's lack of a set rhyme scheme, ~~the poem~~ <sup>it</sup> is symbolic not only of the father's seeming lack of control ~~and~~ over the <sup>imaginative</sup> ~~imaginative~~ future scenarios ~~that~~ he has created inside of his mind, but also of the boy's <sup>actual</sup> ~~care-free~~ care-free

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## Question 1

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R<sub>2</sub>

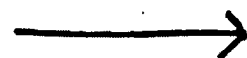
take in the long run as to whether or not his father can come up with another story.

Through the use of various literary devices, Li-Young Lee has successfully conveyed to the readers the complex relationship of the father and son, where in the father's biggest fear is to be forgotten by the one he loves the most.



In Li-Young Lee's poem, A Story, he develops the complex relationship of the father and the son primarily through the use of concrete diction and tone.

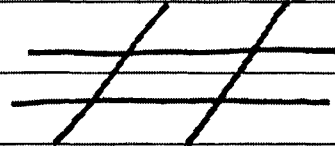
The poet creates the melancholy tone of the poem by use of imagery and diction in order to convey a father's everlasting love for his son and his desire for his boy to need his father forever. By using words such as "sad", "silence", "disappoint", and "don't go" the poet creates a feeling of helplessness that relates to the father's inability to maintain his son's dependence on him. Li-Young Lee creates images of a young boy in his father's lap while the father struggles to please his son and fears the day when his boy "will give up on his father." The father's fear of his son leaving is portrayed through the dialogue in the poem as he begs his son to let him tell him another story <sup>while</sup> ~~as~~ the boy prepares for his future and shows no interest in the ~~childish~~ <sup>juvenile</sup> activity. <sup>P</sup> The way Lee concludes the poem by returning to the reality of the present conveys the message that the father and son still have time for one another and ~~should cherish~~ their relationship will remain strong, and even grow over the years. The father has nothing to fear because the love between him and his



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K<sub>2</sub>

son will survive, ~~even if he can~~  
~~not think of a~~ and any story that  
he creates will be appreciated and  
treasured in the boy's heart.





In raising their children, many parents fear that one day, when as they grow older, their children will leave them. They fear that they won't be able to keep up with their children's interests and consequently become irrelevant. In Li-Young Lee's ~~poem~~ poem entitled "A Story," Lee uses point-of-view and symbolism to illustrate the irrational concerns of a father.

The poem is narrated in third-person, but the ~~father's~~ poem is told through the father's point of view. The poem focuses on the father's thoughts, while the 5-year-old boy's thoughts are not represented in the poem. The ~~father~~ boy sits on his father's lap, waiting to hear a new story, but the father cannot come up with one, causing him to ~~assume that his~~ make the assumption that his boy will leave. Lee reveals that the father is already thinking years in advance, when his son will be old enough to "look for his keys" (16) and leave.



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1 J 1

The father and son seem to  
have a relationship where the father  
fears disappointing his son and thus  
by disappointing him making him leave  
his father. While the son looks up to his  
father as a man of infinite knowledge.  
The father and son's relationship is  
never as complex as we seem to make it.  
Between a father and son all that they need  
to make their relationship work is that they  
need to understand each other.

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