Before Reading

Windshield Wiper
Poem by Eve Merriam

Night Journey
Poem by Theodore Roethke

How do you SEE the world?

When you stand on your head, the world looks very different, even unfamiliar. Turning upside down is one way of changing your perspective, or your way of seeing something. Perspective can also be a mental outlook, or a way of responding to things that happen. The poems you are about to read involve both physical and mental perspective. Both poems are written from the perspective of looking out a window, but they capture two very different responses.

LIST IT To get a sense of perspective, try looking a little differently at something you see every day. Roll a piece of paper to form a tube, and look through it at what’s around you. Make a list of everything you see. Did you notice anything that you hadn’t noticed before?
**LITERARY ANALYSIS: SOUND DEVICES**

You may have heard or read poems that sound almost like songs. Poetry gets many of its musical qualities from sound devices. Sound devices can reinforce meaning or add emphasis. Three commonly used sound devices are

- **refrain**, the repetition of a word, phrase, or line (*Example: It was a good song, a sad song, a sweet song.*)
- **onomatopoeia** (ōn′ə-mät′ə-pē′ə), the use of words that sound like their meanings (*Examples: buzz, zap*)
- **alliteration**, the repetition of the same consonant sound, usually at the beginning of words (*Example: magical mountain mist*)

A poet might use these devices to draw attention to a particular line or idea. As you read “Windshield Wiper” and “Night Journey,” record examples of these devices.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Repetition and Refrain</th>
<th>Onomatopoeia</th>
<th>Alliteration</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>fog smog / fog smog</td>
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</table>

**READING SKILL: MAKE INFERENCES**

You have to make inferences when you read almost any text. An inference is an educated guess about some detail in a text that is not clear, or that seems to suggest a meaning well beyond its surface meaning.

Poetry usually uses fewer words than a short story or a novel, so making inferences is one of the skills essential to understanding a poem. When you read a poem, ask yourself:

- Why has the poet chosen to structure the poem this way? How does the structure of the poem support its meaning?
- What do the images suggest about the way the writer feels about the subject?
- What do the metaphors mean? What is the significance of the comparisons the poet is making?
- How does the rhythm or meter of the poem support its meaning?

Complete the activities in your Reader/Writer Notebook.
Windshield Wiper
Eve Merriam

fog smog tissue paper clear the blear
fog smog tissue paper clear the smear

fog more splat splat
downpour

rubber scraper overshoes
tissue paper tissue paper

bumbershoot² muddle on
slosh through

slosh through drying up

sky lighter nearly clear

clearing clearing veer clear here clear

1. macintosh: raincoat.
2. bumasheoot: umbrella.
Now as the train bears west, its rhythm rocks the earth, and from my Pullman berth I stare into the night while others take their rest. Bridges of iron lace, a suddenness of trees, a lap of mountain mist all cross my line of sight, then a bleak wasted place, and a lake below my knees. Full on my neck I feel the straining at a curve; my muscles move with steel, I wake in every nerve. I watch a beacon swing from dark to blazing bright; we thunder through ravines and gullies washed with light. Beyond the mountain pass mist deepens on the pane; we rush into a rain that rattles double glass. Wheels shake the roadbed stone, the pistons jerk and shove, I stay up half the night to see the land I love.

SOUND DEVICES
One sound device poets use is rhythm, the repetition of stressed and unstressed syllables. Read this poem aloud to feel its rhythm. How do the short rhythmic lines remind you of the motion of the train?

MAKE INFERENCES
A metaphor is a comparison between two unlike things, which helps you see something in a new way. What is the metaphor in line 6? How does it help you visualize the bridge?

SOUND DEVICES
What sound device appears in lines 18, 23, and 25? Record your answer in your chart.

1. Pullman berth: A Pullman is a type of railroad car invented by George Pullman (1831–1897). The sleeping car featured private beds called berths.
Comprehension

1. Clarify  What kinds of weather are described in “Windshield Wiper”?  
2. Recall  Name three things that the speaker sees in “Night Journey.”

Literary Analysis

3. Understand Structure  Take another look at the unusual way in which “Windshield Wiper” is arranged on the page. What does it mean when that space in the center disappears in lines 13 and 14?

4. Make Inferences  Why does the poet arrange “Windshield Wiper” in an unusual way? How does the structure of the poem support its meaning?

5. Examine Word Choice  Skim “Night Journey” and list all the words you can find that convey movement. Compare lists with a partner.

6. Analyze Sound Devices  What sound devices did you find in each poem? Review your chart to see where each poet uses refrain, onomatopoeia, and alliteration. Which sound device is used most often in each poem?

7. Analyze Rhyme  Create a chart like the one shown, and list the rhyming words or phrases in each poem. In which poem does rhyme have a more important role? Explain.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rhyming Words and Phrases</th>
<th>“Windshield Wiper”</th>
<th>“Night Journey”</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>blear / smear</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Extension and Challenge

8. SOCIAL STUDIES CONNECTION  Read the excerpt from A Long Hard Journey that begins on page 623. What further information does the excerpt provide about the speaker’s trip in “Night Journey”?

How do you SEE the world?

Reread the list of observations you made for the activity on page 614. Now look at the same scene again, without the paper tube. Did your observations change when you changed your perspective?
Conventions in Writing

◆ **GRAMMAR IN CONTEXT: Maintain Subject-Verb Agreement**

You have already learned that a verb must agree with its subject in number. A **compound subject** is made up of two or more subjects joined by a **conjunction**, such as *and* or *or*. This conjunction is the clue that tells you whether to use a singular or plural verb in the sentence. A compound subject joined by *and* usually takes a plural verb. If a compound subject is joined by *or*, the verb should agree with the part of the subject closer to it.

*Original:* Bells or the train whistle mean the train is arriving.

*Revised:* Bells or the train whistle means the train is arriving.

**PRACTICE** Choose the verb form that agrees with each compound subject.

1. A dining car or comfortable seats (makes, make) the trip more enjoyable.
2. My mother and I (plays, play) board games to pass the time.
3. My uncle and my grandparents (was, were) there to meet the train.
4. The conductor or the engineer (rings, ring) the whistle as the train leaves.

For more help with subject-verb agreement with compound subjects, see page R65 in the *Grammar Handbook*.

**READING-WRITING CONNECTION**

Broaden your understanding of “The Windshield Wiper” and “Night Journey” by responding to the prompt. Then use the **revising tip** to improve your writing.

**WRITING PROMPT**

Extended Response: Analyze Two Poems

“The Windshield Wiper” and “Night Journey” differ greatly in their structure—even in the way they look on the page. The poems also differ in their messages—in what they say to you. In a **three-paragraph essay** analyze each poem, paying particular attention to the structure of each poem and to the message the poet is sending you. Use one paragraph to talk about “Windshield Wiper,” use another paragraph to talk about “Night Journey,” and use the final paragraph to tell how you responded to each poem and why.

**REVISING TIP**

Review your essay. Make sure each sentence has correct subject-verb agreement. If you find an error, correct it when you revise your essay.