

3 Identity – two perspectives

From “Bestiary”
by Sherman Alexie

My mother sends me a black-and-white
photograph of her and my father, circa
1968, posing with two Indian men.

“Who are those Indian guys?” I ask her
on the phone.

“I don’t know,” she says.

The next obvious question: “Then why
did you send me this photo?” But I don’t ask it.

One of those strange Indian men is
pointing up toward the sky.

Above them, a bird shaped like a
question mark.

Read the poems to yourself.

Then listen to a recording.

After listening, describe your initial reaction.

• like/don’t like/prefer ...

• appeals/doesn’t appeal to me because ...

Lochinver
by Hugh MacMillan

Lochinver. The end of the track.
Black swallows black
and the storm howls like a dog.

At the quay, in orange fog,
a ship spews out whiskey fish
and you, in Dumfries,
are cracking over the phone
picking at the bones
of my latest lunacy. I nod

but I am really wondering
if this phonebox on its outcrop of scree
can be seen from sea
by that schooner
crewed by dead sailors.

or by aliens circling,
hungry for pineal gland.

Yes I’m sorry, it won’t happen again,
and the rain sounds like drums
in this bubble of yellow light,

emptiness everywhere like the tide.

4 A poetry circle

- a) In groups of three, working in one of
these roles, examine the poems again.

Word expert

Choose a few words or phrases from the
poems which speak to you.

Artist

Draw a picture or make a diagram which
reflects the content of the poems.

Questioner

Write down questions for a discussion
about the content of the poems.

- b) Present your results to your group.
Then, using the ideas you have collected,
discuss how the poems explore the theme of
identity.

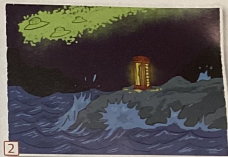
- c) Compare your initial reaction to the
poems with your understanding of it now.
Refer to any insights you gained from the
discussion with your partners.

- When I first read the poems, I thought ...
- Now that we’ve discussed the poems,
I think ...
- The discussion made me realize that ...

Early finisher → p. 88

identity Identität **perspective** Perspektive, Blickwinkel **bestiary** Bestiarium (mittelalterliches Tierbuch) **obvious** offensichtlich;
naheliegend **Lochinver** (lɒxˈɪvə) Hafenort in Schottland **howl** heulen, brüllen **spew** out ausspucken **Dumfries** (dʌmˈfɹɪs) Stadt
in Schottland **crackle** knistern; krächzen **pick at the bones** an den Knochen herumrängen **lunacy** Wahnsinn **outcrop** Felsvor-
sprung **scree** Geröll **schooner** Schoner (Segelschiff) **pineal gland** Zirbeldrüse (Organ im Zwischenhirn) **tide** Gezeiten

5 Painting with words



- a) Match each image to a line (or lines) in one of the poems on p. 14.
Then, in your own words, write down what you think each image means.
Compare your ideas.

TIP Imagery

To create images in their readers’ minds, writers use special language called imagery.
Common types of imagery are **similes** and **metaphors**, two devices for making comparisons.

- **Similes** compare things by using the words **as** or **like**.
He was **as** gentle **as** a dove. • She was **like** a dove among pigeons.

- **Metaphors** are often considered stronger than similes because they **do not** use **as** or **like**.
Instead they suggest that one thing is another, often by using a form of the verb **be**.
She **was** a dove that shone in the night. • **Be** a dove and not a hawk.
• Other verbs can also be used as metaphors, e.g. **fly** to mean go fast or hurry.
She came out of the building and **flew** down the street.
Metaphors are often combined with similes.
She **was** from the room **like** a dove from a storm.



- b) Read the tip above and then go back to the poems on p. 14.
Decide how often each poem uses imagery and what kind of imagery is used.
Think about the words and describe the images they create in your mind.

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6 Create your own images

You choose a) or b).

- a) Similes often describe character or appearance:
She was as wise as an owl / as white as a ghost / ...
- b) Find a photo of someone you find interesting,
and write a few lines describing how you think
they look, sound, smell, etc. Use imagery.

The man in this photo looks as kind as a lamb.
His smile lights up the room and his voice is
music in people’s ears.

Early finisher → p. 88

Using these or other adjectives, make similes
to describe people. Collect them in class.

angry blind brave clever fast hungry
large mad peaceful pretty proud tall