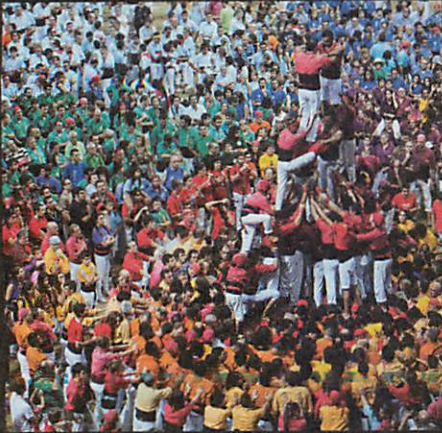




The Bonds Between Us

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The Bonds Between Us



“The welfare of each of us is dependent fundamentally upon the welfare of all of us.”

—Theodore Roosevelt

SHORT STORY

And of Clay Are We Created

Isabel Allende

SCIENCE WRITING

from Animals in Translation

Temple Grandin *and*
Catherine Johnson

Poems About Family

POEM

My Ceremony For Taking

Lara Mann

POEM

The Stayer

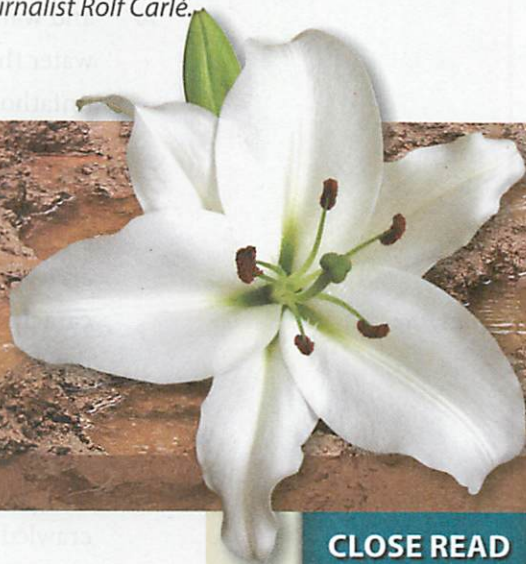
Virgil Suárez



Background On November 13, 1985, the long-dormant Nevado del Ruiz volcano erupted in Colombia, South America. Molten rock and hot gases melted the volcano's thick ice cap and sent deadly mudslides down its slopes. More than 23,000 people died in the disaster—most of them in the town of Armero. The media focused a lot of attention on one thirteen-year-old girl named Omayra Sánchez who was trapped in the mud. Isabel Allende uses these facts as the basis for this work of fiction. In her story, the trapped girl is named Azucena, and the man who attempts to rescue her is journalist Rolf Carlé.

And of Clay Are We Created

Short Story by Isabel Allende



CLOSE READ
Notes

1. **READ** ▶ As you read lines 1–30, begin to collect and cite evidence from the text.
 - Circle the image that opens the story.
 - In the margin, explain what the author foreshadows will happen to Carlé (lines 1–11).
 - Underline text describing the consequences of the eruption.

They discovered the girl's head protruding from the mud pit, eyes wide open, calling soundlessly. She had a First Communion name, Azucena Lily. In that vast cemetery where the odor of death was already attracting vultures from far away, and where the weeping of orphans and wails of the injured filled the air, the little girl obstinately clinging to life became the symbol of the tragedy. The television cameras transmitted so often the unbearable image of the head budding like a black squash from the clay that there was no one who did not recognize her and know her name. And every time we saw her on the screen, right behind her was Rolf Carlé, who had gone there on assignment, never suspecting that he would find a fragment of his past, lost thirty years before.

First a **subterranean** sob rocked the cotton fields, curling them like waves of foam. Geologists had set up their seismographs weeks before and knew that the mountain had awakened again. For some time they had

subterranean:

predicted that the heat of the eruption could detach the eternal ice from the slopes of the volcano, but no one heeded their warnings; they sounded like the tales of frightened old women. The towns in the valley went about their daily life, deaf to the moaning of the earth, until that fateful Wednesday night in November when a prolonged roar announced the end of the world, and walls of snow broke loose, rolling in an avalanche of clay, stones, and water that descended on the villages and buried them beneath unfathomable meters of telluric¹ vomit. As soon as the survivors emerged from the paralysis of that first awful terror, they could see that houses, plazas, churches, white cotton plantations, dark coffee forests, cattle pastures—all had disappeared. Much later, after soldiers and volunteers had arrived to rescue the living and try to assess the magnitude of the **cataclysm**, it was calculated that beneath the mud lay more than twenty thousand human beings and an indefinite number of animals putrefying in a viscous soup. Forests and rivers had also been swept away, and there was nothing to be seen but an immense desert of mire.

When the station called before dawn, Rolf Carlé and I were together. I crawled out of bed, dazed with sleep, and went to prepare coffee while he hurriedly dressed. He stuffed his gear in the green canvas backpack he always carried, and we said goodbye, as we had so many times before. I had no **presentiments**. I sat in the kitchen, sipping my coffee and planning the long hours without him, sure that he would be back the next day.

He was one of the first to reach the scene, because while other reporters were fighting their way to the edges of that morass in jeeps, bicycles, or on foot, each getting there however he could, Rolf Carlé had the advantage of

¹ **telluric**: of or relating to the earth.

cataclysm:

presentiment:

2. **◀ REREAD** Reread lines 1–11. How does the narrator describe Carlé? Make an inference about his character based on this and the description of the devastation in lines 20–30. Cite text evidence in your response.

3. **▶ READ** As you read lines 31–65, continue to cite textual evidence.
- Underline text that describes Carlé’s job.
 - Circle the narrator’s comments about how using a camera affects Carlé.



Armero, Colombia after the eruption of the Nevado del Ruiz volcano.

- 40 the television helicopter, which flew him over the avalanche. We watched on our screens the footage captured by his assistant's camera, in which he was up to his knees in muck, a microphone in his hand, in the midst of a bedlam of lost children, wounded survivors, corpses, and devastation. The story came to us in his calm voice. For years he had been a familiar figure in newscasts, reporting live at the scene of battles and catastrophes with awesome tenacity. Nothing could stop him, and I was always amazed at his **equanimity** in the face of danger and suffering; it seemed as if nothing could shake his fortitude or deter his curiosity. Fear seemed never to touch him, although he had confessed to me that he was not a courageous man,
- 50 far from it. I believe that the lens of a camera had a strange effect on him; it was as if it transported him to a different time from which he could watch events without actually participating in them. When I knew him better, I came to realize that this **fictive** distance seemed to protect him from his own emotions.

equanimity:

fictive:

4. ◀ **REREAD** Reread lines 31–54. Summarize what you know about the narrator and her relationship with Carlé. What can you infer about their emotional connection? Support your answer with textual evidence.

Rolf Carlé was in on the story of Azucena from the beginning. He filmed the volunteers who discovered her, and the first persons who tried to reach her; his camera zoomed in on the girl, her dark face, her large desolate eyes, the plastered-down tangle of her hair. The mud was like quicksand around her, and anyone attempting to reach her was in danger of sinking.

60 They threw a rope to her that she made no effort to grasp until they shouted to her to catch it; then she pulled a hand from the mire and tried to move but immediately sank a little deeper. Rolf threw down his knapsack and the rest of his equipment and waded into the quagmire, commenting for his assistant's microphone that it was cold and that one could begin to smell the stench of corpses.

"What's your name?" he asked the girl, and she told him her flower name. "Don't move, Azucena," Rolf Carlé directed, and kept talking to her, without a thought for what he was saying, just to distract her, while slowly he worked his way forward in mud up to his waist. The air around him

70 seemed as murky as the mud.

It was impossible to reach her from the approach he was attempting, so he retreated and circled around where there seemed to be firmer footing. When finally he was close enough, he took the rope and tied it beneath her arms, so they could pull her out. He smiled at her with that smile that crinkles his eyes and makes him look like a little boy; he told her that everything was fine, that he was here with her now, that soon they would have her out. He signaled the others to pull, but as soon as the cord tensed, the girl screamed. They tried again, and her shoulders and arms appeared, but they could move her no farther; she was trapped. Someone suggested

80 that her legs might be caught in the collapsed walls of her house, but she said it was not just rubble, that she was also held by the bodies of her brothers and sisters clinging to her legs.

5. **READ** ▶ As you read lines 66–129, continue to cite textual evidence.
- Underline the actions Carlé undertakes to help Azucena.
 - Circle text describing Carlé's attempt to get the pump and what he envisions will happen once it arrives.
 - In the margin, make an inference about how Carlé feels as he tries to rescue Azucena (lines 71–82).

“Don’t worry, we’ll get you out of here,” Rolf promised. Despite the quality of the transmission, I could hear his voice break, and I loved him more than ever. Azucena looked at him but said nothing.

During those first hours Rolf Carlé exhausted all the resources of his **ingenuity** to rescue her. He struggled with poles and ropes, but every tug was an intolerable torture for the imprisoned girl. It occurred to him to use one of the poles as a lever but got no result and had to abandon the idea. He talked a couple of soldiers into working with him for a while, but they had to leave because so many other victims were calling for help. The girl could not move, she barely could breathe, but she did not seem desperate, as if an ancestral resignation allowed her to accept her fate. The reporter, on the other hand, was determined to snatch her from death. Someone brought him a tire, which he placed beneath her arms like a life buoy, and then laid a plank near the hole to hold his weight and allow him to stay closer to her. As it was impossible to remove the rubble blindly, he tried once or twice to dive toward her feet but emerged frustrated, covered with mud, and spitting gravel. He concluded that he would have to have a pump to drain the water, and radioed a request for one but received in return a message that there was no available transport and it could not be sent until the next morning.

“We can’t wait that long!” Rolf Carlé shouted, but in the pandemonium no one stopped to **commiserate**. Many more hours would go by before he accepted that time had stagnated and reality had been irreparably distorted.

A military doctor came to examine the girl and observed that her heart was functioning well and that if she did not get too cold she could survive the night.

“Hang on, Azucena, we’ll have the pump tomorrow,” Rolf Carlé tried to console her.

“Don’t leave me alone,” she begged.

“No, of course I won’t leave you.”

Someone brought him coffee, and he helped the girl drink it, sip by sip. The warm liquid revived her, and she began telling him about her small life, about her family and her school, about how things were in that little bit of world before the volcano erupted. She was thirteen, and she had never been outside her village. Rolf Carlé, buoyed by a premature optimism, was convinced that everything would end well: the pump would arrive, they would drain the water, move the rubble, and Azucena would be transported by helicopter to a hospital where she would recover rapidly and where he could visit her and bring her gifts. He thought, She’s already too old for dolls, and I don’t know what would please her; maybe a dress. I don’t know

ingenuity:

commiserate:

much about women, he concluded, amused, reflecting that although he had known many women in his lifetime, none had taught him these details. To pass the hours he began to tell Azucena about his travels and adventures as a news hound, and when he exhausted his memory, he called upon imagination, inventing things he thought might entertain her. From time to time she dozed, but he kept talking in the darkness, to assure her that he was still there and to overcome the menace of uncertainty.

That was a long night.

130 Many miles away, I watched Rolf Carlé and the girl on a television screen. I could not bear the wait at home, so I went to National Television, where I often spent entire nights with Rolf editing programs. There, I was near his world, and I could at least get a feeling of what he lived through during those three decisive days. I called all the important people in the city, senators, commanders of the armed forces, the North American ambassador, and the president of National Petroleum, begging them for a pump to remove the silt, but obtained only vague promises. I began to ask for urgent help on radio and television, to see if there wasn't *someone* who could help us. Between calls I would run to the newsroom to monitor the

140 satellite transmissions that periodically brought new details of the catastrophe. While reporters selected scenes with most impact for the news report, I searched for footage that featured Azucena's mud pit. The screen reduced the disaster to a single plane and accentuated the tremendous distance that separated me from Rolf Carlé; nonetheless, I was there with

6. **REREAD** Reread lines 86–129. What do you learn about Rolf and Azucena in these lines? What do the last two sentences suggest about Rolf's character?

7. **READ** As you read lines 130–207, continue to cite textual evidence.
- Underline text explaining how the narrator tries to feel close to Carlé.
 - Circle text describing how Carlé tried to help Azucena.
 - In the margin, explain what the narrator means when she says Carlé "had completely forgotten the camera" (lines 174–175).

The child's every suffering hurt me as it did him; I felt his frustration, his impotence.

him. The child's every suffering hurt me as it did him; I felt his frustration, his impotence. Faced with the impossibility of communicating with him, the fantastic idea came to me that if I tried, I could reach him by force of mind and in that way give him encouragement. I concentrated until I was dizzy—a frenzied and futile activity. At times I would be overcome with compassion and burst out crying; at other times, I was so drained I felt as if I were staring through a telescope at the light of a star dead for a million years.

I watched that hell on the first morning broadcast, cadavers of people and animals awash in the current of new rivers formed overnight from the melted snow. Above the mud rose the tops of trees and the bell towers of a church where several people had taken refuge and were patiently awaiting rescue teams. Hundreds of soldiers and volunteers from the civil defense were clawing through rubble searching for survivors, while long rows of ragged specters awaited their turn for a cup of hot broth. Radio networks announced that their phones were jammed with calls from families offering shelter to orphaned children. Drinking water was in scarce supply, along with gasoline and food. Doctors, resigned to amputating arms and legs without anesthesia, pled that at least they be sent serum and painkillers and antibiotics; most of the roads, however, were impassable, and worse were the **bureaucratic** obstacles that stood in the way. To top it all, the clay contaminated by decomposing bodies threatened the living with an outbreak of epidemics.

Azucena was shivering inside the tire that held her above the surface. Immobility and tension had greatly weakened her, but she was conscious and could still be heard when a microphone was held out to her. Her tone was humble, as if apologizing for all the fuss. Rolf Carlé had a growth of beard, and dark circles beneath his eyes; he looked near exhaustion. Even from that enormous distance I could sense the quality of his weariness, so different from the fatigue of other adventures. He had completely forgotten

bureaucratic:



The search for victims and survivors continues in Guayabal, Colombia after the eruption of the Nevado del Ruiz volcano (November 16, 1985).

the camera; he could not look at the girl through a lens any longer. The pictures we were receiving were not his assistant's but those of other reporters who had appropriated Azucena, bestowing on her the pathetic responsibility of embodying the horror of what had happened in that place. With the first light Rolf tried again to dislodge the obstacles that held the
180 girl in her tomb, but he had only his hands to work with; he did not dare use a tool for fear of injuring her. He fed Azucena a cup of the cornmeal mush and bananas the army was distributing, but she immediately vomited it up. A doctor stated that she had a fever but added that there was little he could do: antibiotics were being reserved for cases of gangrene. A priest also passed by and blessed her, hanging a medal of the Virgin around her neck. By evening a gentle, persistent drizzle began to fall.

"The sky is weeping," Azucena murmured, and she, too, began to cry.

"Don't be afraid," Rolf begged. "You have to keep your strength up and be calm. Everything will be fine. I'm with you, and I'll get you out
190 somehow."

Reporters returned to photograph Azucena and ask her the same questions, which she no longer tried to answer. In the meanwhile, more television and movie teams arrived with spools of cable, tapes, film, videos, precision lenses, recorders, sound consoles, lights, reflecting screens,

auxiliary motors, cartons of supplies, electricians, sound technicians, and cameramen: Azucena's face was beamed to millions of screens around the world. And all the while Rolf Carlé kept pleading for a pump. The improved technical facilities bore results, and National Television began receiving sharper pictures and clearer sound, the distance seemed suddenly
200 compressed, and I had the horrible sensation that Azucena and Rolf were by my side, separated from me by impenetrable glass. I was able to follow events hour by hour; I knew everything my love did to wrest the girl from her prison and help her endure her suffering; I overheard fragments of what they said to one another and could guess the rest; I was present when she taught Rolf to pray and when he distracted her with the stories I had told him in a thousand and one nights beneath the white mosquito netting of our bed.

210 When darkness came on the second day, Rolf tried to sing Azucena to sleep with old Austrian folk songs he had learned from his mother, but she was far beyond sleep. They spent most of the night talking, each in a stupor of exhaustion and hunger and shaking with cold. That night, imperceptibly, the unyielding floodgates that had contained Rolf Carlé's past for so many years began to open, and the torrent of all that had lain hidden in the deepest and most secret layers of memory poured out, leveling before it the obstacles that had blocked his consciousness for so long. He could not tell it all to Azucena; she perhaps did not know there was a world beyond the sea or time previous to her own; she was not capable of imagining Europe in

8. **REREAD** Reread lines 191–207. In the margin, explain what the narrator says about television and intimacy. In what way is it ironic that the improved transmission equipment makes it to the scene while the pump remains unobtainable?

9. **READ** As you read lines 208–268, continue to cite textual evidence.
- In the margin, explain what you learn about Carlé's past (lines 217–224 and lines 232–248).
 - Circle text explaining why Carlé feels he must confront his own fears.
 - Underline what Rolf learns about why he takes risks.

visceral:

the years of the war. So he could not tell her of defeat, nor of the afternoon the Russians had led them to the concentration camp to bury prisoners
220 dead from starvation. Why should he describe to her how the naked bodies piled like a mountain of firewood resembled fragile china? How could he tell this dying child about ovens and gallows? Nor did he mention the night that he had seen his mother naked, shod in stiletto-heeled red boots, sobbing with humiliation. There was much he did not tell, but in those hours he relived for the first time all the things his mind had tried to erase. Azucena had surrendered her fear to him and so, without wishing it, had obliged Rolf to confront his own. There, beside that hellhole of mud, it was impossible for Rolf to flee from himself any longer, and the visceral terror he had lived as a boy suddenly invaded him. He reverted to the years when
230 he was the age of Azucena and younger, and, like her, found himself trapped in a pit without escape, buried in life, his head barely above ground; he saw before his eyes the boots and legs of his father, who had removed his belt and was whipping it in the air with the never-forgotten hiss of a viper coiled to strike. Sorrow flooded through him, intact and precise, as if it had lain always in his mind, waiting. He was once again in the armoire where his father locked him to punish him for imagined misbehavior, there where for eternal hours he had crouched with his eyes closed, not to see the darkness, with his hands over his ears to shut out the beating of his heart, trembling, huddled like a cornered animal. Wandering in the mist of his memories he
240 found his sister, Katharina, a sweet, retarded child who spent her life hiding, with the hope that her father would forget the disgrace of her having been born. With Katharina, Rolf crawled beneath the dining room table, and with her hid there under the long white tablecloth, two children forever embraced, alert to footsteps and voices. Katharina's scent melded with his own sweat, with aromas of cooking, garlic, soup, freshly baked bread, and the unexpected odor of putrescent clay. His sister's hand in his, her frightened breathing, her silk hair against his cheek, the candid gaze of her eyes. Katharina . . . Katharina materialized before him, floating on the air like a flag, clothed in the white tablecloth, now a winding sheet, and at last
250 he could weep for her death and for the guilt of having abandoned her. He understood then that all his exploits as a reporter, the feats that had won him such recognition and fame, were merely an attempt to keep his most ancient fears at bay, a stratagem for taking refuge behind a lens to test whether reality was more tolerable from that perspective. He took excessive risks as an exercise of courage, training by day to conquer the monsters that tormented him by night. But he had to come face to face with the moment of truth; he could not continue to escape his past. He was Azucena; he was buried in the clayey mud; his terror was not the distant emotion of an almost forgotten childhood, it was a claw sunk in his throat. In the flush of

260 his tears he saw his mother, dressed in black and clutching her imitation-crocodile pocketbook to her bosom, just as he had last seen her on the dock when she had come to put him on the boat to South America. She had not come to dry his tears, but to tell him to pick up a shovel: the war was over and now they must bury the dead.

“Don’t cry. I don’t hurt anymore. I’m fine,” Azucena said when dawn came.

“I’m not crying for you,” Rolf Carlé smiled. “I’m crying for myself. I hurt all over.”

270 The third day in the valley of the cataclysm began with a pale light filtering through storm clouds. The president of the republic visited the area in his tailored safari jacket to confirm that this was the worst catastrophe of the century; the country was in mourning; sister nations had offered aid; he had ordered a state of siege; the armed forces would be merciless; anyone caught stealing or committing other offenses would be shot on sight. He added that it was impossible to remove all the corpses or count the thousands who had disappeared; the entire valley would be declared holy ground, and bishops would come to celebrate a solemn mass for the souls of the victims. He went to the army field tents to offer relief in the form of vague promises to crowds of the rescued, then to the improvised hospital to

10. **◀ REREAD** Reread lines 208–268. In what way is Carlé’s interaction with Azucena changing him?

11. **▶ READ** As you read lines 269–310, continue to cite textual evidence.

- Circle adjectives the narrator uses that indicate her feelings about the president and his actions.
- Underline text that describes the interactions between Carlé and Azucena.



The town of Armero, Colombia, submerged by floods after the Nevado del Ruiz volcano erupted (November, 18, 1985).

280 offer a word of encouragement to doctors and nurses worn down from so many hours of tribulations. Then he asked to be taken to see Azucena, the little girl the whole world had seen. He waved to her with a limp statesman's hand, and microphones recorded his emotional voice and paternal tone as he told her that her courage had served as an example to the nation. Rolf Carlé interrupted to ask for a pump, and the president assured him that he personally would attend to the matter. I caught a glimpse of Rolf for a few seconds kneeling beside the mud pit. On the evening news broadcast, he was still in the same position; and I, glued to the screen like a fortune teller to her crystal ball, could tell that something fundamental had changed in

290 him. I knew somehow that during the night his defenses had crumbled and he had given in to grief; finally he was vulnerable. The girl had touched a part of him that he himself had no access to, a part he had never shared with me. Rolf had wanted to console her, but it was Azucena who had given him consolation.

I recognized the precise moment at which Rolf gave up the fight and surrendered to the torture of watching the girl die. I was with them, three days and two nights, spying on them from the other side of life. I was there when she told him that in all her thirteen years no boy had ever loved her and that it was a pity to leave this world without knowing love. Rolf assured

12. **REREAD** Reread lines 269–286. In the margin, make an inference about how the narrator feels about the president's visit. Support your answer with explicit textual evidence.



300 her that he loved her more than he could ever love anyone, more than he loved his mother, more than his sister, more than all the women who had slept in his arms, more than he loved me, his life companion, who would have given anything to be trapped in that well in her place, who would have exchanged her life for Azucena's, and I watched as he leaned down to kiss her poor forehead, consumed by a sweet, sad emotion he could not name. I felt how in that instant both were saved from despair, how they were freed from the clay, how they rose above the vultures and helicopters, how together they flew above the vast swamp of corruption and laments. How, finally, they were able to accept death. Rolf Carlé prayed in silence that she
310 would die quickly, because such pain cannot be borne.

By then I had obtained a pump and was in touch with a general who had agreed to ship it the next morning on a military cargo plane. But on the night of that third day, beneath the unblinking focus of quartz lamps and the lens of a hundred cameras, Azucena gave up, her eyes locked with those of the friend who had sustained her to the end. Rolf Carlé removed the life buoy, closed her eyelids, held her to his chest for a few moments, and then let her go. She sank slowly, a flower in the mud.

You are back with me, but you are not the same man. I often accompany you to the station, and we watch the videos of Azucena again;

13. **READ** ▶ As you read lines 311–326, continue to cite textual evidence.

- Underline text that describes what happens between Carlé and Azucena.
- Circle text describing how Carlé is no longer the person he used to be.

Background One of the world's most accomplished adults with autism, Temple Grandin is a professor at Colorado State University. She is also the author of several best-selling books, including *Animals In Translation* from which this excerpt is taken. Drawing upon her long career as an animal scientist and her own experiences with autism, *Animals in Translation* provides a unique message about the way animals act, think, and feel. Catherine Johnson, Grandin's coauthor, specializes in writing about the brain. She is also no stranger to autism—two of her sons are autistic.



from
Animals in Translation



Science Writing by Temple Grandin and Catherine Johnson

1. **READ** ▶ As you read lines 1–8, begin to collect and cite text evidence.
 - Underline the claim Grandin makes about animal perception in the first paragraph, and restate it in the margin.
 - Circle the sentence that explains what most people think about animals.
 - Underline Grandin's claim in the second paragraph.

CLOSE READ
Notes

Extreme Perception: The Mystery of Jane's Cat

Compared to humans, animals have astonishing abilities to perceive things in the world. They have *extreme perception*. Their sensory¹ worlds are so much richer than ours it's almost as if we're deaf and blind.

That's probably why a lot of people think animals have ESP.² Animals have such incredible abilities to perceive things we can't that the only explanation we can come up with is extrasensory perception. There's even a scientist in England who's written books about animals having ESP. But they don't have ESP, they just have a supersensitive sensory apparatus.

¹ **sensory:** of or related to any of the five senses.

² **ESP:** an abbreviation for extrasensory perception, the act of perceiving or communicating by means other than the five senses.

Take the cat who knows when its owner is coming home. My friend
10 Jane, who lives in a city apartment, has a cat who always knows when she's
on her way home. Jane's husband works at home, and five minutes before
Jane comes home he'll see the cat go to the door, sit down, and wait. Since
Jane doesn't come home at the same time every day, the cat isn't going by its
sense of time, although animals also have an incredible sense of time.
Sigmund Freud³ used to have his dog with him every time he saw a patient,
and he never had to look at his watch to tell when the session was over. The
dog always let him know. Parents tell me autistic kids do the same thing.
The only explanation Jane and her husband could come up with was ESP.
The cat must have been picking up Jane's I'm-coming-home-now thoughts.
20 Jane asked me to figure out how her cat could predict her arrival. Since
I've never seen Jane's apartment I used my mother's New York City
apartment as a model for solving the mystery. In my imagination I watched
my mother's gray Persian cat walk around the apartment and look out the

³ **Sigmund Freud:** Austrian founder of psychoanalysis whose theories significantly influenced modern thought.

2. **REREAD** Reread lines 1–8. In your own words, explain the claim that Grandin makes about animals and ESP. What analogy does she make to get across her point about animals' "abilities to perceive the world"? Support your answer with explicit textual evidence.

3. **READ** As you read lines 9–28, continue to cite textual evidence.
- Underline text describing the perceptive behavior of Jane's cat.
 - Restate the claim that Jane and her husband make about her cat in the margin (lines 9–19).
 - Circle the claim that Grandin gives to account for the cat's behavior, and restate it in the margin (lines 24–28).

“Jane finally gave me the crucial piece of information that solved the cat mystery...”

window. Possibly the cat could see Jane walking down the street. Even though he would not be able to see Jane’s face from the twelfth floor he would probably be able to recognize her body language. Animals are very sensitive to body language. The cat would probably be able to recognize Jane’s walk.

Next I thought about sound cues. Since I am a visual thinker I used “videos” in my imagination to move the cat around in the apartment to determine how it could be getting sound cues that Jane would be arriving a few minutes later. In my mind’s eye I positioned the cat with its ear next to the crack between the door and the door frame. I thought maybe he could hear Jane’s voice on the elevator. But as I played a tape of my mother getting onto the elevator in the lobby, I realized that there would be many days when Mother would ride the elevator alone and silent. She would speak on the elevator for only some of the trips—when there were other people in the elevator car with her—but not all of them.

So I asked Jane, “Is the cat always at the door, or is he at the door only sometimes?”

She said the cat is always at the door.

That meant the cat had to be hearing Jane’s voice on the elevator every day. After I questioned her some more, Jane finally gave me the crucial piece of information that solved the cat mystery: her building does not have a push-button elevator. The elevator is operated by a person. So when Jane got on the elevator she probably said “Hi” to the operator.

4. **◀ REREAD AND DISCUSS** With a small group, discuss whether you believe Grandin’s explanation for the cat’s behavior in lines 24–28. Why or why not?
5. **▶ READ** As you read lines 29–58, underline places in the text where Grandin refers to her experiences with autism.

Background Poems about family often give us insights not only into the author's life and upbringing, but also into our own. As you read the two poems selected here, think of these lines written by the poet Dylan Thomas: "You can tear a poem apart to see what makes it tick . . . You're back with the mystery of having been moved by words. The best craftsmanship always leaves holes and gaps . . . so that something that is not in the poem can creep, crawl, flash or thunder in."

Poems About Family

My Ceremony For Taking Lara Mann

The Stayer Virgil Suárez

Lara Mann was born in Kansas, and is a member of the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma. She is of English, Irish, Choctaw, French, German, Scottish, Spanish, Cherokee, Welsh, and Mohawk descent. Common themes in her work include the integration of both Native American and American culture and exposing the inaccurate stereotypes that many Americans assign to Native Americans.



Virgil Suárez By the time Virgil Suárez was twelve years old, his family had moved across the ocean twice—first from Cuba to Spain and then from Spain to the United States. These childhood experiences continue to influence the predominant themes of Suárez's works— family ties, immigration, and exile. He draws upon his own memories of people and places for his work, and credits his family for providing him with such an interesting array of characters. He notes, "I write about my life, and my life informs my writing."



1. **READ** ▶ As you read lines 1–24, begin to collect and cite text evidence.
 - Underline words and phrases that have similar meanings.
 - Circle examples of figurative language.
 - In the margin, write your interpretation of lines 1–5.

My Ceremony For Taking

Lara Mann

No one told me how it should be, these steps
for taking. Some things I know without being told.
The words told to me ended my family,
the words I told burned my family's death scaffold;
5 those things we say when we are hurt, to hurt.

I wanted to take pieces of my ancestor's
homes with me, the way some homelands are sacred.
The way some carry their birth dirt for protection.
But these locations are revered, and for me,
10 the taking was blasphemous.

My parents split, and I felt
absolutely halved, though what was left of me
was unclear. I needed a ceremony.
It had to require pain,
15 a sacrifice. It had to be missed.

That summer, when we went, my dad and I,
back to Alabama and Mississippi
to try to fix our **fissured** selves.
I pulled out hair many times.

20 Choctaws were known for hair: long, thick, honor-
banner. I gave of myself. My hair was my thanks:
parts of me pulled out, white-root waving; a lock,
not just a strand, pressed into the dirt I took
for payment, to leave part of myself.

fissure:

2. **REREAD** ◀ Reread lines 11–24 of "My Ceremony For Taking." In the margin, explain why the speaker feels "split."

3. **READ** ▶ As you read lines 1–34 of “The Stayer,” collect and cite text evidence.

- Circle reasons for Chicho staying in Cuba.
- In the margin, explain why Chicho is called “crazy.”
- Underline figurative language, or descriptive words, that create tone.

The Stayer

Virgil Suárez

Simply, my uncle Chicho stayed
back in Cuba, against the family’s
advice, because everyone left

and he chose to stay, and this act
5 of staying marked him as “crazy”
with most of the men, and he stayed

there in a shack behind my aunt’s
clapboard house, sat in the dark
of most days in the middle

10 of the packed-dirt floor and nodded
at the insistence of light, the way
it darted through holes in the tin

roof where the rain drummed
like the gallop of spooked horses.

15 This is where he was born, he chanted

under his breath to no one, why should
he leave, live in perpetual longing
within exile? He learned long ago

to count the passing of time
20 in how **motes** danced in the shaft
of white light, the *chicharras*¹ echoed

their trill against the emptiness
of life, against the wake of resistance
in this place he knew as a child,

notes:

¹ *chicharras*: cicadas, insects that produce a loud buzzing noise.

penumbra:

25 as a man, *un hombre*, bend against the idea
of leaving his country, call him loco.²
What nobody counted on was that answers

come on to those who sit in the
quiet of their own countries, tranquil

30 in the **penumbra**, intent on hearing the song

of a *tomegüín*³ as it calls for a mate
to come nest in the shrubs out there,
while in here, he witnesses how light

fills the emptiness with the meaning of stay.

² *loco*: crazy.

³ *tomegüín*: a small bird native to Cuba.

4. ◀ **REREAD** Reread "The Stayer." How does the phrase "live in perpetual longing within exile" reflect the overall meaning of the poem?

SHORT RESPONSE

Cite Text Evidence In what ways does each poet use figurative language to communicate a large or complex idea? Cite evidence from the text.
