



If you have ever heard a jet breaking the sound barrier, you know that the sound is like a deep

BOOM. In “Sonic Boom” notice the poet’s use of words that make you hear more than you see.

Sonic Boom

John Updike

I’m sitting in the living room,
When, up above, the Thump of Doom
Resounds. Relax. It’s sonic boom.

5 The ceiling shudders at the clap,
The mirrors tilt, the rafters snap,
And Baby wakens from his nap.

“Hush, babe. Some pilot we equip,
Giving the speed of sound the slip,
Has cracked the air like a penny whip.”

10 Our world is far from frightening; I
No longer strain to read the sky
Where moving fingers (jet planes) fly,
Our world seems much too tame to die.

15 And if it does, with one more pop,
I shan’t look up to see it drop.

We usually think of saints as perfect people. We often forget, however, that saints lived in the real world. This poem takes a lighthearted look at Saint Bridget, who lived in Ireland some 1500

years ago and who became famous for her gifts to the poor. Read the poem aloud. Do you think some of the rhymes are humorous?

The Giveaway

Phyllis McGinley

Saint Bridget was
A problem child.
Although a lass
Demure and mild,
5 And one who strove
To please her dad,
Saint Bridget drove
The family mad.
For here's the fault in Bridget lay:
10 She *would* give everything away.

To any soul
Whose luck was out
She'd give her bowl
Of stirabout;
15 She'd give her shawl,
Divide her purse
With one or all.
And what was worse,
When she ran out of things to give
20 She'd borrow them from a relative.

Her father's gold,
Her grandsire's dinner,
She'd hand to cold
And hungry sinner;
25 Give wine, give meat,
No matter whose;
Take from her feet
The very shoes,
And when her shoes had gone to others,
30 Fetch forth her sister's and her mother's.



She could not quit,
She had to share;
Gave bit by bit
The silverware,
35 The barnyard geese,
The parlor rug,
Her little niece-
'S christening mug,
Even her bed to those in want,
40 And then the mattress of her aunt.

An easy touch
For poor and lowly,
She gave so much
And grew so holy
45 That when she died
Of years and fame,
The countryside

Put on her name,
And still the Isles of Erin° fidget
With generous girls named Bride or
50 Bridget.

Well, one must love her.
Nonetheless,
In thinking of her
Givingness,
55 There's no denial
She must have been
A sort of trial
To her kin.
The moral, too, seems rather quaint.
60 *Who* had the patience of a saint,
From evidence presented here?
Saint Bridget? Or her near and dear?

49. Isles of Erin: Ireland.

Responding to the Poem

Analyzing the Poem

Identifying Details

1. Explain what made Saint Bridget "a problem child." According to stanza 2, what did she do when she ran out of things of her own to give?
2. Who received Saint Bridget's charity? Name three categories of things she gave away, and list examples for each category.
3. How do the people of Ireland feel toward Saint Bridget, according to the poem? How do they show their feelings?

Interpreting Meanings

4. **Tone** is the attitude or feeling that a writer has toward a subject. What attitude does Phyllis McGinley have toward Saint Bridget? Do you think she is being disrespectful? Explain.
5. How would you answer the question that ends the poem? What, then, do you think is the "rather quaint" moral of the poem?

6. The pattern of end rhymes is called a **rhyme scheme**. Determine this poem's rhyme scheme by looking at the first stanza and assigning a letter of the alphabet (beginning with *a*) to each new rhyme. Does the last stanza fit the pattern of the other stanzas?
7. Consider the **rhythm** of the poem. How many beats are there in the first eight lines of each stanza? What effect does this rhythm have on the way you read the poem?
8. Find an example of an **approximate rhyme**—a rhyme that is not exact. Why do you think the poet used this kind of rhyme?
9. Find two examples of **multisyllable rhyme**—a rhyme involving more than one syllable. Do they add to the humor of the poem?

Applying Meanings

10. Explain who would be more of a problem to live with—someone who gives everything away or someone who hoards possessions.

Name: _____

Period: _____

“The Giveaway” Questions

Please answer the following questions **in complete sentences** in the space provided.

1. Explain what made Saint Bridget “a problem child.” According to Stanza 2, what did she do when she ran out of things of her own to give? Who received Saint Bridget’s charity?

2. How do the people of Ireland feel toward Saint Bridget, according to the poem? How do they show their feelings?

3. **Tone** is the attitude or feeling that a writer has toward a subject. What attitude does Phyllis McGinley have toward Saint Bridget? Do you think she is disrespectful? Explain.

4. The pattern of end rhymes is called a rhyme scheme. Determine this poem’s rhyme scheme by labeling the end of each line with the correct letter from the alphabet. Does the last stanza fit the pattern of the other stanzas?

Irony

Irony is a literary device which presents a conflict between appearance and reality. This may be intentional or unintentional on the part of the character, but always intentional on the part of the author.

For example:

A cat chasing a dog.

You expect it to be the other way around, so it is ironic.

Romeo and Juliet

The audience knows that Juliet only drank a sleeping potion and is not dead. This knowledge makes Romeo's suicide over the sleeping Juliet all the more bitter.

Messy Room
by Shel Silverstein

Whoever room this is should be ashamed!
His underwear is hanging on the lamp.
His raincoat is there in the overstuffed chair,
And the chair is becoming quite mucky and damp.
His workbook is wedged in the window,
His sweater's been thrown on the floor.
His scarf and one ski are beneath the TV,
And his pants have been carelessly hung on the door.
His books are all jammed in the closet,
His vest has been left in the hall.
A lizard named Ed is asleep in his bed,
And his smelly old sock has been stuck to the wall.
Whoever room this is should be ashamed!
Donald or Robert or Willie or—
Huh? You say it's mine? Oh, dear,
I knew it looked familiar!

Explain the irony in this poem:

Hyperbole

Hyperbole is a figure of speech which is an exaggeration. Persons often use expressions such as "I nearly died laughing," "I was hopping mad," and "I tried a thousand times." Such statements are not literally true, but people make them to sound impressive or to emphasize something, such as feeling, effort, or reaction.

For example:

"He runs a mile in nothing flat.

He can run right out from under his hat."

-John Ciardi, "Speed Adjustments"

"If I read a book and it makes my whole body so cold no fire can warm me, I know that is poetry."

-Emily Dickenson, Letter to Colonel Thomas Higginson

Exercise:

Write your own hyperbole on

1. loud –

2. cold –

3. late –

Father William

by Lewis Carroll

"You are old, Father William," the young man said,
"And your hair has become very white;
And yet you incessantly stand on your head -
Do you think, at your age, it is right?"

"In my youth," Father William replied to his son,
"I feared it might injure the brain;
But, now that I'm perfectly sure I have none,
Why, I do it again and again."

"You are old," said the youth, "as I mentioned before,
And have grown most uncommonly fat;
Yet you turned a back-somersault in at the door -
Pray, what is the reason of that?"

"In my youth," said the sage, as he shook his grey locks,
"I kept all my limbs very supple
By the use of this ointment -one shilling the box -
Allow me to sell you a couple?"

"You are old," said the youth, "and your jaws are too weak
For anything tougher than suet;
Yet you finished the goose, with the bones and the beak -
Pray, how did you manage to do it?"

"In my youth," said his father, "I took to the law,
And argued each case with my wife;
And the muscular strength which it gave to my jaw
Has lasted the rest of my life."

"You are old," said the youth, "one would hardly suppose
That your eye was as steady as ever;
Yet you balanced an eel on the end of your nose -
What made you so awfully clever?"

"I have answered three questions, and that is enough,"
Said his father. "Don't give yourself airs!
Do you think I can listen all day to such stuff?
Be off, or I'll kick you downstairs!"

Name: _____

Period: _____

“Father William”

Questions

Please answer the following questions **in complete sentences** in the space provided.

1. What are examples of hyperbole in the poem? What makes them examples of hyperbole?

2. What effect does the use of hyperbole have on the overall poem?

3. What is the author's purpose in using each hyperbole?

4. Can hyperbole be used in nonfiction works? Why or why not?