

## Worksheet 1. Questions for Discussion

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Teacher: \_\_\_\_\_

Class: \_\_\_\_\_

Follow your teacher's direction for answering the questions for discussion below. Be sure to provide evidence from the poem in your answers.

### 1. The Title

Consider the **title** of the poem. What does it tell you about the subject, tone, and genre? What does it promise? Does it live up to that promise? Would your experience of the poem be different if Yeats's original title, "A Mad Song," had been retained?

### 2. The Story

This poem tells a story. Work through the following series of questions to uncover the actions as well as the characters described in the poem.

- What is the quest that the speaker has set himself? What spurs this search?
- How is this a quest? How does the reader know it is not just a search to gather wood? What are the clues to the supernatural here?
- What does the speaker do? Describe his actions. What effects does that behavior cause?
- What was the speaker going to do with the fish that he caught?
- What happens when the speaker goes to stoke the fire?
- How does the magical transformation of trout to girl come about?
- What does she look like? What does she do?
- How do you know this girl is important to the old man? Why do you think that is?
- What will he do now that he has aged? Where will he go?
- What is his fantasy? What obstacles are in his way? What objects does he turn to for help in his quest? When will his quest be finished?

### 3. Comparing Quests

The speaker in the poem (Aengus) has embarked upon a quest that is not of the natural world. Have students consider other stories that deal with hero figures who take on supernatural quests (i.e., characters in the *Chronicles of Narnia* or the *Harry Potter* series).

Identify three ways Aengus's quest is different and three ways it is similar to the quest of the character you selected.

### 4. Identifying Forms

Identify the different *forms of nature* in the poem: energy, animal life, and plant life. Discuss how the poet uses them symbolically and how his inclusion of them impacts the reader.

## 5. Literary Devices

Give examples of the following devices in the poem.

Assonance:

Repetition:

Alliteration:

Consonance:

Meter:

How do these devices act together to move the poem along? How do they influence the reader/listener’s experience?

## 6. The Tone

How does this poem simultaneously reflect both a hopeful and melancholy tone? Discuss this unusual pairing and how Yeats makes it work.

## 7. Comparing Two W. B. Yeats Poems: “The Song of Wandering Aengus” and “Aedh Wishes for the Cloths of Heaven”

Dreams are a recurrent theme throughout Yeats’s poetry. Consider another poem about dreams also published in *The Wind Among the Reeds*, “[Aedh Wishes for the Cloths of Heaven](#).”

“Aedh Wishes for the Cloths of Heaven”

Had I the heavens’ embroidered cloths,  
Enwrought with golden and silver light,  
The blue and the dim and the dark cloths  
Of night and light and the half light,  
I would spread the cloths under your feet:  
But I, being poor, have only my dreams;  
I have spread my dream under your feet;  
Tread softly because you tread on my dreams.

Compare the imagery and message of the two poems. What are the similarities? Differences?