

# ELA 20-1 Graphic Poetry Analysis

<b>P</b>	<b>O</b>
<b>E</b>	<b>T</b>
<b>R</b>	<b>Y</b>

# “Those Winter Sundays”, By Robert Hayden

## Poem:

Sundays too my father got up early  
And put his clothes on in the blue black cold,  
Then with cracked hands that ached  
from labor in the weekday weather made  
banked fires blaze. No one ever thanked him.

I'd wake and hear the cold splintering, breking.  
when the rooms were warm, he'd call,  
and slowly I would rise and dress,  
fearing the chronic angers of that house,

Speaking indifferently to him,  
who had driven out the cold  
and polished my good shoes as well.  
What did I know, what did I know  
of love's austere and lonely offices?

# TF-TASTI

Snowflakes represent memory of the “winter days” mentioned by the poet.



T-

By briefly looking at the title, I can infer that this poem is an anecdote, reciting a specific winter experience. Since the title of the poem does not use any descriptive words such as ‘harsh’ or ‘lovely’, I can’t specifically target the poet’s perspective or feelings towards “winter sundays”. The poet could be referring to “winter sundays” as a memory filled with cozy nights in front of the fireplace or a painful memory of shoveling snow during the icy-cold weather. It may even be a combination of both! However, what’s clear, is that the setting will take place in a cold environment as part of the past since the poet uses the word “those” to describe the “winter sundays”.



This picture illustrates a person who is looking back into their memory which represents the anecdote.

F-

**Stanza #1:**

The speaker starts off by reminiscing about how his father would wake up early on sundays to begin his daily routine of starting the fire to heat the house. The poet uses the phrase “sundays too”, which means that preparing the fire is something the father does on a daily basis. When the father wakes up, he must tolerate “the blue black cold” as he sets the fire with his “cracked hands that ached” from working in the cold on weekdays. By describing the environment as “blue black cold”, the poet indicates how harsh the weather is and that the father worked lonely (a symbol of blue) in the dark (black) morning. In addition, the poet highlights the dedication and sacrifice offered by the father as he ignores the pain of his “cracked hands” to heat the house for the rest of the family to effortlessly enjoy.

The next morning, the cold stings the father’s cracked hands (from starting the fire).



The father uses his cracked hands to create a new fire to warm the house.



Fire heats the house.

**The SACRIFICE**

## Stanza #2:

When the speaker (the son) wakes up the cold is “splintering” and “breking” which means that the fire set up by the father has already heated up the rooms, ridding them of cold. The father calls his son when the place is warm, but the son dresses slowly, trying to avoid the “chronic angers” of the house. This alludes to certain disputes or tensions between the members of the family, specifically the son and his father because the son is reacting to his father’s calls. The son may be a teenager since it is common for people of adolescence to be sensitive and difficult to parent. It also shows that the son is ungrateful of his father’s effort since he does not compliment it, instead he is worrying about the family tensions.

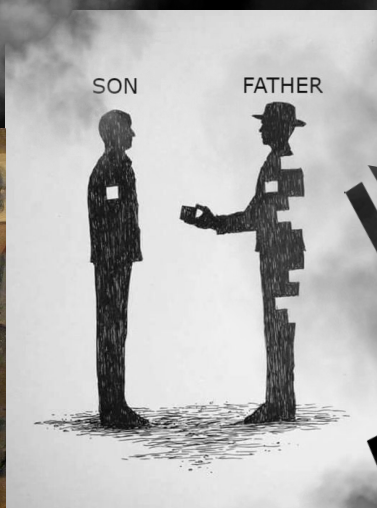


The father’s son does not realize his father’s hard work to keep the house warm because he can only see the flames of anger and chaos.

The father has worked so hard to start a fire to maintain the warmth of the house. However, the hot flames of benevolence soon turn into the flames of anger and tension, once the rest of the family awakes.

### Stanza #3:

The son speaks “indifferently” to his father which means that his attitude towards his father lacks emotion and appreciation. As an adult, the speaker realizes that he mistreated the man who “driven out the cold” and “polished” his shoes. The speaker emphasises that he was ignorant of “love’s austere and lonely offices”. The poet may have overlooked his father’s affection due to the tensions between them. While, his father’s way of expressing love was austere (strict) and lonely (meaning that he didn’t have much time with his son), there’s no doubt that he greatly loved his son.



The tensions between the father and the son have blurred all of the father's kindness and effort.

**T-** Poetic device, Text, Explanation

Repetition and Rhetorical question:

“What did I know, what did I know  
of love’s austere and lonely offices?”

The poet asks a rhetorical question and uses repetition to dwell on his regret.

Assonance (o) and (a):

“And put his clothes on in the blue black cold”

“Then with cracked hands that ached”

The poet uses this assonance to highlight the father’s sacrifice and resilience.

Alliteration (bl), (w), (b):

“in the blue black cold”

“from labor in the weekday weather made”

“banked fires blaze”

The poet uses alliteration in “blue black” to quickly identify the setting.

The poet writes “weekday weather” to explain the father’s daily routine.

The poet uses the phrase “banked fires blaze” to indicate the intensity of the flames.

### Personification:

“I’d wake and hear the cold splintering, breking”

The cold does not have the ability to break or splinter, however the poet uses personification to show how skillfully the father is able to eliminate the cold.

### Imagery:

“And put his clothes on in the blue black cold”

“Then with cracked hands that ached”

“polished my good shoes as well”

The poet uses imagery to allow the reader to picture a cold dark (blue black) room where a diligent father works for his family (polishing shoes setting the fire). The poet is also able to effectively illustrate the poor state of the father’s hands which he is ignoring.

### Oxymoron:

“love’s austere and lonely offices”

Putting the words ‘love’ and ‘austere’ side by side, contrasts the two words. A deeper meaning is obtained by doing so. The father’s love represents his efforts to discipline and raise his son while offering support and care.

### Consonance:

the cold splintering, breking.

This consonance emphasises the retreat of the cold in a catchy and efficient way.

### Rhyming:

.....cracked hands that ached

.....the weekday weather made

This rhyming attracts the reader’s attention to the fact that the father is the one who “made” the fire even though his hands “ached”.



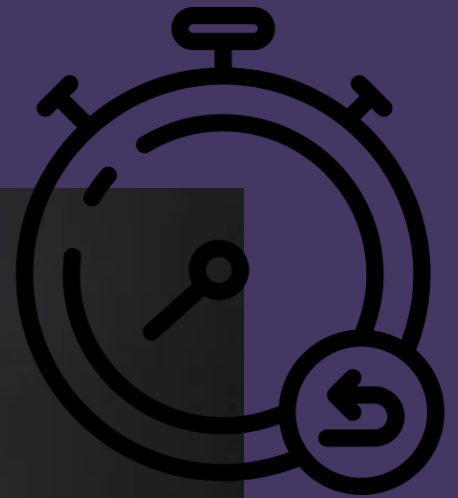
## A-

The speaker's (poet) attitude is painfully regretful. In the poem, it's almost as if the speaker wants to rewind time in order to thank his father for all the love that he has overlooked as a child. The poet explains all the effort his father would do, yet "no one ever thanked him". In frustration, the poet asks the rhetorical question: "What did I know, what did I know of love's austere and lonely offices?" As an adult, the poet deeply appreciates the man who "had driven out the cold" and "polished" his shoes, but as a child, he would speak "indifferently to him". Since the poet is referring to all the events in past tense, it can be said that the poet no longer has the company of his dear father, which makes matters even more remorseful.

## S-

The poem shifts in the last two lines of the poem (lines 13-14). Up until this point of the poem, the speaker is describing how the typical Sunday morning begins and all of his father's unacknowledged favours. In the last two lines, the poet directs a question to himself which points out how inconsiderate he was for his father's "austere" love.

The poet is drunk with regret.  
Unfortunately, time cannot be  
rewinded.



T-

After thoroughly reading the poem and conducting an analysis of the literal meanings, the significance of the title becomes obvious. The title of the story is referring to the poet's memories of his late father. "Those Winter Sundays" describe the father's morning commitments to the family. The use of the word "those" is past tense, meaning that the poet no longer benefits from his father's care (his father passed away or they don't live together). Overall, the title reflects the comfort a hardworking father provides for his family on the cold days of winter.

I-

The primary message of the poem is that sometimes we do not realize the people who love us most because they are the ones who work tirelessly without complaining or asking for acknowledgment.



The father and his son may have been distant, but the father was always there to support his son.

