

Name:

Period:



Poem Analysis: "A Red Palm"

I. Prediction

Before reading the poem take a look at the poem's title and based on the title make a prediction of what this poem will be about.

II. Comprehension Questions

1. What is a typical work day like for the speaker?
2. What motivates the speaker to do this back breaking work?
3. Why are his hands "shaped like binoculars"?
4. Why does the speaker keep sighing? What does this show about how the speaker is feeling?

III. Analysis:

<p>Tone: What is the speaker's tone? How do you know?</p>	
<p>Mood: What kind of mood does this poem create? How do you feel after reading it?</p>	
<p>Theme: What is the theme of message of this poem?</p>	
<p>Identify as many examples of figurative language as you can in your poem (3 examples <i>minimum</i>).</p>	
<p>What do you visualize when you read this poem? Write down any images that come to mind.</p>	
<p>What questions do you have about the poem? What is still unclear?</p>	

A Red Palm

You're in this dream of cotton plants.
You raise a hoe, swing, and the first weeds
Fall with a sigh. You take another step,
Chop, and the sigh comes again,
Until you yourself are breathing that way
With each step, a sigh that will follow you into town.

That's hours later. The sun is a red blister
Coming up in your palm. Your back is strong,
Young, not yet the broken chair
In an abandoned school of dry spiders.
Dust settles on your forehead, dirt
Smiles under each fingernail.
You chop, step, and by the end of the first row,
You can buy one splendid fish for wife
And three sons. Another row, another fish,
Until you have enough and move on to milk,
Bread, meat. Ten hours and the cupboards creak.
You can rest in the back yard under a tree.
Your hands twitch on your lap,
Not unlike the fish on a pier or the bottom
Of a boat. You drink iced tea. The minutes jerk
Like flies.

It's dusk, now night,
And the lights in your home are on.
That costs money, yellow light
In the kitchen. That's thirty steps,
You say to your hands,
Now shaped into binoculars.
You could raise them to your eyes:
You were a fool in school, now look at you.
You're a giant among cotton plants.
Now you see your oldest boy, also running.
Papa, he says, it's time to come in.
You pull him into your lap
And ask, What's forty times nine?
He knows as well as you, and you smile.
The wind makes peace with the trees,
The stars strike themselves in the dark.
You get up and walk with the sigh of cotton plants.
You go to sleep with a red sun on your palm,
The sore light you see when you first stir in bed.

Gary Soto