

Poetry Questions: Crane, Robinson, and Masters

“War Is Kind” p. 478

1. In stanzas 1, 3, and 5, the speaker addresses the lovers, children, and mothers of soldiers killed in war. How is this image of war presented in stanzas 2 and 4 different from the image of war presented in the rest of the poem?
2. In what way is the refrain, “War is kind,” severely ironic?

“Richard Cory” p. 714

- 3a. What is meant by the statement, “he glittered when he walked”? b. What is meant in lines 13-14? c. How do these lines emphasize the difference between Cory and the other townspeople?
4. Why do you think Robinson used the pronoun *we* rather than the pronoun *I*? That is, why does he describe the reaction of a group of people to Richard Cory rather than the reaction of one sensitive individual?
5. What was your reaction to the last line of the poem? Do you think this is the reaction Robinson was striving towards? Explain.

“Richard Bone” and “Butch Weldy” pp. 789-799

6. Why do you think Richard Bone left so many things unsaid during his life?
- 7a. What does Richard come to realize about the people of Spoonriver? b. What does he realize about himself?
8. How are epitaphs like historical chronicles?
- 9a. What happened to Butch Weldy? b. What reason does the judge give for denying him compensation for his accident?
10. What does Butch mean when he says, “I didn't know him at all”?

“Lucinda Matlock” and “Fiddler Jones” WS

11. How would you characterize Lucinda Matlock's life? Was it ordinary or unusual? Happy or unhappy?
- 12a. Who are the “sons and daughters” Lucinda addressed at the end of the poem? b. Why does she call them “degenerate”? c. How do their attitudes towards life differ from hers?
- 13a. How is Fiddler Jones different from the other farmers in the community? b. He gives several examples of the way different people may view the same thing. What distinguishes his view of life?
14. Why do you think Fiddler Jones has “not a single regret”?

Fiddler Jones

The earth keeps some vibration going
There in your heart, and that is you.
And if the people find you can fiddle,
Why, fiddle you must, for all your life.
What do you see, a harvest of clover? 5
Or a meadow to walk through to the river?
The wind's in the corn; you rub your hands
For beeves hereafter ready for market;
Or else you hear the rustle of skirts
Like the girls when dancing at Little Grove. 10
To Cooney Potter a pillar of dust
Or whirling leaves meant ruinous drouth;
They looked to me like Red-Head Sammy
Stepping it off, to "Toor-a-Loor."
How could I till my forty acres 15
Not to speak of getting more,
With a medley of horns, bassoons and piccolos
Stirred in my brain by crows and robins
And the creak of a wind-mill--only these?
And I never started to plow in my life 20
That some one did not stop in the road
And take me away to a dance or picnic.
I ended up with forty acres;
I ended up with a broken fiddle—
And a broken laugh, and a thousand memories, 25
And not a single regret.

Lucinda Matlock

I went to the dances at Chandlerville,
And played snap-out at Winchester.
One time we changed partners,
Driving home in the moonlight of middle June,
And then I found Davis. 5
We were married and lived together for seventy years,
Enjoying, working, raising the twelve children,
Eight of whom we lost
Ere I had reached the age of sixty.
I spun, I wove, I kept the house, I nursed the sick, 10
I made the garden, and for holiday
Rambled over the fields where sang the larks,
And by Spoon River gathering many a shell,
And many a flower and medicinal weed—
Shouting to the wooded hills, singing to the green valleys. 15
At ninety-six I had lived enough, that is all,
And passed to a sweet repose.
What is this I hear of sorrow and weariness,
Anger, discontent and drooping hopes?
Degenerate sons and daughters, 20
Life is too strong for you—
It takes life to love Life.