

Sea Fever

John Masefield

I must go down to the seas again, to the lonely sea and the sky,
And all I ask is a tall ship and a star to steer her by;
And the wheel's kick and the wind's song and the white sail's shaking,
And a gray mist on the sea's face and a gray dawn breaking.
5 I must go down to the seas again, for the call of the running tide
Is a wild call and a clear call that may not be denied;
And all I ask is a windy day with the white clouds flying,
And the flung spray and the blown spume, and the sea gulls crying.
I must go down to the seas again, to the vagrant gypsy life,
To the gull's way and the whale's way where the wind's like a whetted
10 knife;
And all I ask is a merry yarn from a laughing fellow-rover.
And quiet sleep and a sweet dream when the long trick's over.

Ex-Basketball Player

John Updike

Pearl Avenue runs past the high-school lot,
Bends with the trolley tracks, and stops, cut off
Before it has a chance to go two blocks,
At Colonel McComsky Plaza. Berth's Garage
5 Is on the corner facing west, and there,
Most days, you'll find Flick Webb, who helps Berth out.
Flick stands tall among the idiot pumps—
Five on a side, the old bubble-head style,
Their rubber elbows hanging loose and low.
10 One's nostrils are two S's, and his eyes
An E and O. And one is squat, without
A head at all—more of a football type.
Once Flick played for the high-school team, the Wizards.
He was good: in fact, the best. In '46
15 He bucketed three hundred ninety points,
A county record still. The ball loved Flick.
I saw him rack up thirty-eight or forty
In one home game. His hands were like wild birds.
He never learned a trade, he just sells gas,
20 Checks oil, and changes flats. Once in a while,
As a gag, he dribbles an inner tube,
But most of us remember anyway.
His hands are fine and nervous on the lug wrench.

- It makes no difference to the lug wrench, though.
- 25 Off work, he hangs around Mae’s luncheonette.
Grease-gray and kind of coiled, he plays pinball,
Smokes thin cigars, and nurses lemon phosphates.
Flick seldom says a word to Mae, just nods
Beyond her face toward bright applauding tiers
- 30 Of Necco Wafers, Nibs, and Juju Beads.
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Making Meanings

Sea Fever/Ex-Basketball Player

First Thoughts

1. What picture did you see as you read each poem?

Shaping Interpretations

2. In what ways is the speaker of Masfield’s poem in the grip of a “fever”? (Check your Quickwrite interpretation of the title.) Can you think of other “fevers”—like mountain fever or spring fever?
3. Given the intensity of his feelings, what do you think the life of the speaker of “Sea Fever” is like?
4. In the final line of “Sea Fever,” what metaphor describes life in terms of a sea voyage? What sort of afterlife does this speaker dream of?
5. In “Ex-Basketball Player,” look back at the opening description of Pearl Avenue. How can this street be seen as a metaphor for Flick’s life?
6. In stanza 2 of Updike’s poem, find words that personify the gas pumps. Do you think Flick is similar to the pumps—why or why not?
7. In the last stanza of “Ex-Basketball Player,” what is the candy compared to, and who sees it that way? What do you think this suggests about Flick’s fantasies—or dreams?

Connecting with the Text

8. If Flick Webb were a friend of yours, what advice would you give him? Be sure to check your Quickwrite notes.

Extending the Text

9. How does Flick compare with the speaker in “I Want to Be Somebody” on page 595 in your textbook?
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Choices

1. Collecting Ideas for an Interpretation

Using details. Make an **inference**, or informed guess, about why Flick lives the way he does. Jot down details from the poem that give clues to Flick’s character and motives, and then list the inferences you can draw from these details.

2. What Makes It Tick?

Write a brief essay in which you discuss the **sound effects** of one of these poems. First, on a separate piece of paper, type the poem you are examining (be sure to leave extra space between the lines). Then, scan the poem to see if you can

determine its meter. (Reading aloud will help.) Next circle all the rhymes and examples of alliteration. Is there a refrain? In your essay, describe how the poem's sound effects "work" and what they contribute to the poem as a whole.

Vocabulary

1. Context Clues

When you come across unfamiliar **technical words**, look for clues in the words' context that will help you make an educated guess about meaning. For example, suppose you know nothing about basketball. What clues in Updike's poem would help you figure out what his basketball jargon means? Remember: always check your guesses in a dictionary. Sometimes context delivers no clues at all.

2. Jargon: Technical Vocabulary on the Job

Jargon is the specialized words, or **technical vocabulary**, used by people in particular jobs or groups. Doctors have jargon, as do athletes, actors, computer users, and sailors. Jargon often uses language in playful, imaginative ways - for example, "dunking" a basketball (as you might a doughnut), or, better yet, "slam-dunking" it.

Look at the sample chart below for the word *dunk*. Set up a chart similar to the one for *dunk* to study each of the basketball terms Updike uses in his poem. If you're hooked on sports jargon, do the same for other sports terms.

word <i>dunk</i>		
Context clues <i>Poised under the <u>rim</u>, she <u>leaped</u> and dunked the <u>ball</u> for the <u>winning</u> <u>points</u>.</i>	Technical meaning <i>To thrust a ball into the net while leaping above the basket.</i>	Other meanings <i>To plunge into. To dip a doughnut in coffee.</i>

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