To My Mother

Dearly I yearn for my mother's bread,
My mother's coffee,
Mother's brushing touch.
Childhood is raised in me,
Day upon day in me.
And I so cherish life
Because if I died
My mother's tears would shame me.
Set me, if I return one day,
As a shawl on your eyelashes, let your hand
Spread grass out over my bones,
Christened by your immaculate footsteps
As on holy land.
Fasten us with a lock of hair,
With thread strung from the back of your dress.
I could grow into godhood
Commend my spirit into godhood
If I but touch your heart's deep breadth.

Set me, if ever I return,
In your oven as fuel to help you cook,
On your roof as a clothesline stretched in your hands.
Weak without your daily prayers,
I can no longer stand.

I am old
Give me back the stars of childhood
That I may chart the homeward quest
Back with the migrant birds,
Back to your awaiting nest.

Mahmoud Darwish

Translated. by A.Z. Forman.

Guided Questions: *To My Mother* by Mahmoud Darwish

I – Information

- Who is the author of this poem? Where is he from, and why might that be important?
- When and why might this poem have been written?
- What do you already know about the theme of exile or displacement in relation to Palestine?

T – Tone

- What emotions does the speaker express towards his mother?
- Does the tone shift during the poem? Where and why?
- How would you describe the speaker's voice — nostalgic, mournful, hopeful, something else?

I – Imagery

- Which images appeal to your senses (e.g., taste, smell, touch)?
- Why do you think Darwish uses such specific and domestic imagery (bread, coffee, grass)?
- How do these images make you feel? How might they connect to ideas of comfort or home?

S – Structure

- Is the poem written in full sentences, or is it more fragmented?\
- How does the structure support the emotion or ideas of the poem?
- Does repetition play a role in the way the message is delivered?

P – Poetic Devices

- Can you identify metaphors or symbols in the poem? What might they represent?
- What is the effect of repetition in the first stanza?
- Are there any contrasts or juxtapositions? What do they add?

C – Conclusion

- What message or feeling stays with you after reading this poem?
- How successful is the poem in conveying a sense of longing, love, or loss?
- Why might this poem be significant for people who have experienced migration or exile?

إلى أمي – محمود درويش

أحنّ إلى خبز أمي
و قهوة أمي
و لمسة أمي
و تكبر في الطفولة
يوما على صدر يوم
و أعشق عمري لأني
إذا متّ ،
أخجل من دمع أمي!
خذيني ، إذا عدت يوما
وشاحا لهدبك
و غطّي عظامي بعشب
تعمّد من طهر كعبك
و شدّي وثاقي ..
بخصلة شعر
بخيط يلوّح في ذيل ثوبك ..
عساي أصير إلها
إلها أصير ..
إذا ما لمست قرارة قلبك !
ضعيني ، إذا ما رجعت
وقودا بتنور نارك ..
وحبل غسيل على سطح دارك
لأني فقدت الوقوف
بدون صلاة نهارك .
هرمت ، فردّي نجوم الطفولة
حتى أشارك
صغار العصافير
درب الرجوع ..
لعشّ انتظارك!

Mahmoud Darwish – Selected Poems on Identity and Home

Identity Card

Write down!
I am an Arab
And my identity card number is fifty thousand
I have eight children
And the ninth will come after a summer
Will you be angry?

Write down!
I am an Arab
Employed with fellow workers at a quarry
I have eight children
I get them bread
Garments and books from the rocks...
I do not supplicate charity at your doors
Nor do I belittle myself at the footsteps of your chamber
So will you be angry?

Write down!
I am an Arab
I have a name without a title
Patient in a country
Where people are enraged
My roots
Were entrenched before the birth of time
And before the opening of the eras
Before the pines, and the olive trees
And before the grass grew

My father ... descends from the family of the plough
Not from a privileged class
And my grandfather ... was a farmer
Neither well-bred, nor well-born!
Teaches me the pride of the sun
Before teaching me how to read
And my house is like a watchman's hut
Made of branches and cane
Are you satisfied with my status?
I have a name without a title!

Write down!
I am an Arab

You have stolen the orchards of my ancestors
And the land which I cultivated
Along with my children
And you left nothing for us
Except for these rocks ...
So will the State take them
As it has been said?!

Therefore!
Write down on the top of the first page:
I do not hate people
Nor do I encroach
But if I become hungry
The usurper's flesh will be my food
Beware ...
Beware ...
Of my hunger
And my anger!

Guiding Questions:

- - Ideas – What are the central themes or messages of the poem?
- - Tone – What mood or attitude does the speaker convey?
- - Imagery – What images are used? What senses do they appeal to?
- - Structure – How is the poem organised? Consider line breaks, repetition, and stanzas.
- - Poetic Devices – What literary devices are used (e.g., metaphor, alliteration, repetition)?
- - Context – What do you know about the poet or the political/historical background that helps you understand the poem?

I Come From There

I come from there and I have memories
Born as mortals are, I have a mother
And a house with many windows,
I have brothers, friends,
And a prison cell with a cold window.
Mine is the wave, snatched by sea-gulls,
I have my own view,
And an extra blade of grass.
Mine is the moon at the far edge of the words,
And the bounty of birds,
And the immortal olive tree.
I walked this land before the swords
Turned its living body into a laden table.
I come from there. I render the sky unto her mother
When the sky weeps for her mother.
And I weep to make myself known
To a returning cloud.
I learnt all the words worthy of the court of blood
So that I could break the rule.
I learnt all the words and broke them up
To make a single word: Homeland.....

Guiding Questions:

- - Ideas – What are the central themes or messages of the poem?
- - Tone – What mood or attitude does the speaker convey?
- - Imagery – What images are used? What senses do they appeal to?
- - Structure – How is the poem organised? Consider line breaks, repetition, and stanzas.
- - Poetic Devices – What literary devices are used (e.g., metaphor, alliteration, repetition)?
- - Context – What do you know about the poet or the political/historical background that helps you understand the poem?

Passport

They did not recognize me in the shadows
That suck away my colour in this Passport
And to them my wound was an exhibit
For a tourist who loves to collect photographs
They did not recognize me,
Ah... Don't leave
The palm of my hand without the sun
Because the trees recognize me
All the songs of the rain recognize me
Don't leave me pale like the moon!

All the birds that followed my palm
To the door of the distant airport
All the wheat fields
All the prisons
All the white tombstones
All the barbed boundaries
All the waving handkerchiefs
All the eyes
were with me,
But they dropped them from my passport

Stripped of my name and identity?
On a soil I nourished with my own hands?
Today Jacob cried out
Filling the sky:
Don't make an example of me again!
Oh, gentlemen, Prophets,
Don't ask the trees for their names
Don't ask the valleys who their mother is
From my forehead bursts the sword of light
And from my hand springs the water of the river
All the hearts of the people are my identity
So take away my passport!

Guiding Questions:

- - Ideas – What are the central themes or messages of the poem?
- - Tone – What mood or attitude does the speaker convey?
- - Imagery – What images are used? What senses do they appeal to?

- - Structure – How is the poem organised? Consider line breaks, repetition, and stanzas.
- - Poetic Devices – What literary devices are used (e.g., metaphor, alliteration, repetition)?
- - Context – What do you know about the poet or the political/historical background that helps you understand the poem?