

originally

The poem 'Originally' written by Carol Anne Duffy is about the personality change the speaker goes through after shifting to a new place and about how she matures. The poem begins with a confused tone to one of reflection.

The poem lacks a regular rhythm which reflects the lack of order in her own life at that time.

Themes: identity, loss and isolation

Global issues: identity, culture and community

Structure and form: 3 stanza poem divided into sets of eight lines to help give a straightforward chronology.

We came from our own country in a red room  
which fell through the fields, our mother singing  
our father's name to the turn of the wheels  
My brothers cried, one of them bawling, Home,  
Home, as the miles rushed back to the city,  
the street, the house, the vacant rooms  
where we didn't live any more. I stared  
at the eyes of a blind toy, holding its paw.

Duffy emphasizes the fact that the  
decision to shift had affected her entire  
family. "our own" stresses her sense of  
belonging.

The use of alliteration  
emphasizes her lack of control  
in making the decision to shift.  
The colour red can also have  
many negative connotations  
which may reflect her feelings  
towards this decision.

Auditory  
imagery

The repetition and  
capitalisation again  
emphasizes the  
misery and sense  
of loss she felt due  
to this big change.

Her brothers  
share her  
feelings and  
auditory  
imagery is  
used to  
emphasize  
this sense of  
loss and  
belonging.

the sense of  
optimism in  
this  
sentence  
contrasts to  
the anger  
the speaker  
feels- gives  
a sense of  
uncertainty  
which  
reflects what  
the speaker  
feels.

Reflects her feelings towards  
shifting towards a new place-  
she doesn't know what her  
new home looks like or how  
to fit in.

Seeking comfort- childlike  
innocence.

In this stanza,  
She recalls the  
journey from  
Glasgow to her  
new home.

Indicates that she is  
silent- contrasts to  
the noise made by  
her mother and  
brothers- shows the  
impact the shift on  
her.

The personification of  
miles and the details of  
her last memory of her  
house emphasizes her  
desire to go back to home  
and it also brings out a  
sense of loss of comfort  
and familiarity.

The use of first person, "we"  
indicates that she is considering  
the impact on the rest of her  
family as well even though it's  
written in her perspective.

All childhood is an emigration. Some are slow, leaving you standing, resigned, up an avenue where no one you know stays. Others are sudden. Your accent wrong. Corners, which seem familiar, a leading to unimagined pebble-dashed estates, big boys eating worms and shouting words you don't understand. My parents' anxiety stirred like a loose tooth in my head. I want our own country, I said.

This simile is used to emphasize on the fact that her parents are also affected by this shift and it's something that can't be ignored or resisted but its not visible on their faces.

She hasn't adjusted to her surroundings and doesn't want to either.

Reflects her initial sense of not fitting into the new place

Behaviour and language that is alien to her. The use of the words "Big boys" indicates her fear of not being accepted and that she feels threatened.

The shift in tone (calm to chaos and confusion) indicates her fear of not being accepted and her discomfort with the new setting.

Metaphor- changes that are beyond your control

The word 'sudden' and the pace of the sentences are both associated. The quick pace is contrasted to the slow pace of the previous sentence to reflect a big change. There is also a change to second person to involve the reader and makes the reader reflect on their own life.

This again reflects her lack of belonging and fear of not fitting in.

Describes the pace of the rest of the sentence and also reflects the pace of the stages of growth/childhood

She picks out simple things that aren't too foreign to her to try and comfort herself

But then you forget, or don't recall, or change, and, seeing your brother swallow a slug, feel only a skelf of shame. I remember my tongue shedding its skin like a snake, my voice in the classroom sounding just like the rest. Do I only think I lost a river, culture, speech, sense of first space and the right place? Now, Where do you come from? strangers ask. Originally? And I hesitate.

She has adapted to the new place in terms of communication as well. This can also be a reference to her fear of not fitting in in the second stanza ("your accent wrong")

About what it's like to be accustomed to a new place and about all the changes to her identity that was caused due to this transition. The speaker is more older and reflective in this stanza.

"Skelf" is a scottish jargon. This implies that she is still somewhat attached to her previous home.

Reveals her mixed feelings about her true origin.

Second person- to involve the reader and lets the reader reflect on their own lives and how we forgot certain aspects of our childhood and culture.

Starting with "but" informs the reader that this stanza is about the change in the speakers perspective and that theres a change in the speakers mind set.

Rhetorical question- she questions what has formed her identity when she's experienced so many changes.

This could be a reference to "big boys eating worms" and this indicates how long its been since the shift as her brother is considered a "big boy" now and it also signifies that they have been accepted and that they fit in.