

The School In August

By Philip Larkin

The cloakroom pegs are empty now,
And locked the classroom door,
The hollow desks are lined with dust,
And slow across the floor
A sunbeam creeps between the chairs
Till the sun shines no more.

Who did their hair before this glass?
Who scratched 'Elaine loves Jill'
One drowsy summer sewing-class
With scissors on the sill?
Who practised this piano
Whose notes are now so still?

Ah, notices are taken down,
And scorebooks stowed away,
And seniors grow tomorrow
From the juniors today,
And even swimming groups can fade,
Games mistresses turn grey.

Questions:

A. Visualization. Draw a visual representation of the poem above.



B. Literal Questions

1. How many stanzas does this poem have?

2. What is the rhyming scheme for the poem?

3. What does the following phrases mean?

a. "lined with dust"

b. "mistresses turn grey"

4. Why does the poet ask “Who...” questions?

5. How does the author use personification in the poem to describe the sunbeams?

6. How does the use of imagery help you imagine the scene in the poem more vividly?

7. How does the poet use symbolism to represent a larger idea or theme in the poem?

8. What is the message in the third stanza?

9. Why do you think the poet chose to use figurative language in this poem instead of just stating things plainly?

10. Can you think of a different way to express the same idea or feeling using your own figurative language?

C. Literal Questions

1. What is described as being empty in the cloakroom?

2. What is the state of the classroom door?

3. What is lined with dust in the classroom?

4. How does the sunbeam move in the classroom?

5. What instrument was practiced that is now silent?

6. What musical activity is referenced in the poem?

7. What happens to notices and scorebooks at the end of the term?

8. What transition occurs between seniors and juniors?

9. How do swimming groups and games mistresses change as time passes?

10. What natural element is depicted as moving across the floor?

11. What does the speaker wonder about the hair before the glass?

12. What message was scratched on the sill, and by whom?

Discussion Question

1. Do you miss school when you are on holidays? Why? What do you miss or not miss?
