

## Answers to questions on 'Morning Song'

**1. In your own words, outline what two aspects of motherhood are depicted in the poem.**

The two aspects of motherhood depicted in 'Morning Song' include the arrival of the newborn, and the impact of the arrival. Plath outlines the impact that the introduction to motherhood has on her. The poem is split into describing her intellectual reaction in stanza's one – three, with a clear sense of detachment, and her instinctual and physical reaction in stanza's four – six.

**2. The title of the poem is 'Morning Song'. What figurative expression does Plath use to suggest 'morning'? What figurative expression does she use to suggest 'song'?**

The figurative expression used by Plath to suggest 'morning' is 'The window square / whitens and swallows its dull stars.' 'Song' is given meaning through the figurative 'Your handful of notes; the clear vowels rise like balloons.'

**3. What is the 'morning song' referred to in the title?**

The 'morning song' referred to in the title is the cooing of the baby as dawn approaches. As the sun rises at dawn, so too does the sound from the new-born baby.

**4. The opening and closing lines of the poem clearly establish the mother's affection for her new born child. What language devices does Plath use to do this? Provide examples and explain their effect.**

Plath uses a simile to both begin and conclude her poem. The opening simile, 'Love set you going like a fat gold watch' reveals the affection and tenderness that Plath feels for her child, and the value that it is bringing to her life. However, there is a definite sense of detachment with the comparison of an intense emotion with the mechanics of a 'fat, gold watch.'

The closing simile, 'The clear vowels rise like balloons.' Is effective as it positively reveals the language that has so quickly been acquired by the baby, and that the baby brings great wonder and change to a mother's life. The wonder of development and the instinctual love that a mother feels is aptly portrayed in the closing simile of the poem.

**5. Explain in your own words, what you understand the following similes and metaphors to mean:**

**a) We stand round blankly as walls (line 6)**

This line presents the idea that a life-changing event has occurred – as mere observers in a room are now occupied by new-life and the wonder of it. The image of blank walls suggests both security and strength, yet is also a way of distancing themselves from their creation.

**b) A far sea moves in my ear. (line 12)**

The use of this natural imagery in this metaphor is used to connect the sounds of the sleeping baby with the writer's own childhood by the sea. There is a sense of distance created, and it is a direct allusion to Plath's own childhood experiences.

**c) I stumble from my bed, cow-heavy (line 13)**

The metaphor reflects the immediate response by the new mother, heavy with milk in readiness to feed the newborn baby. It suggests the instinctiveness of motherhood, and the link with the animal world.

**d) Your mouth opens clean as a cat's (line 15)**

This simile suggests the baby's individuality, and the sense of 'otherness' as it opens in readiness for its feed. It also creates a strong connection between mother and child, mouth open and ready to attach to the breast. It further adds to the links to the animal world as a part of motherhood.

- 6. Despite the genuine warmth and affection Plath feels for her child, she does not present motherhood as a condition of possession. Rather, the poem is in some ways a 'confession' to a sense of isolation and detachment a mother can feel after giving birth. Explain how the poem suggests this sense of isolation or detachment between mother and child.**

The poem suggest, to an extent, a sense of isolation and detachment between a mother and her child ('New statue'). The opening line begins with the simile, 'Love set you going like a fat gold watch.' The impersonal 'you' and 'its' in the first stanza is effective in establishing a sense of detachment. The image of the baby's 'nakedness shadows our safety', although representing the precious nature of the baby, conveys that a dramatic and life-changing event has occurred. 'Moth-breath' and 'stumble' continue the sense of detachment felt by the new mother as she contemplates the impact the arrival of her first-born has had. The 'dull-stars' in the final stanza is somewhat indicative of a possible sense of depression felt by the new mother while feeling the baby and gazing at the outside world.