

Brody Annotated Poetry Analysis—"Times Square"

Before you read the poem, read the poet's biography. List three details that might influence the poem.

1. (he was 8 years old when he left Russia and came to America)
2. (he wrote about Jewish issues)
3. (his poems are autobiographical)

As you read the poem:     Underline words/phrases that relate to historical facts  
                                   Circle words/phrases that stir up emotions  
                                   Place a question mark next to ideas that you don't recognize and may need to research

After you read the poem, answer the following questions:

1. What historical background does a reader need to better understand this poem?

(Whitman was well respected among Jewish migrants)

Settlement- Times Square - Times (*New York Times*) Tower completed in 1904 (second tallest skyscraper)  
Long Acre Square became Times Square), First large electric sign in 1909, Strand movie theater  
opens in 1914 (3,300 seats)

Pull Factor- Merchandizing- Macy's builds new department store on 34th St. on Herald Square in 1902,  
Gimbels Brothers Department Store built in 1910 in direct competition with Macy's

2. How does this poem relate to migration? Refer to the historical context and text of the poem.

(Brody's journey to America—"in a town of faraway Russia")

(Assimilation--his language)

(Adjustment--he idealized his homeland and childhood—he did not adjust well to his new city—"assaulting the senses")

3. Look at the words you circled as stirring up emotions. What emotions do those words make you feel? Are those emotions more negative, or more positive? Both?

(roar of the square, assaulting the senses, automobile's toot jars him—negative emotions)

(booths laden with fruit, newly-washed jacket, little darling, deliciously sour—positive emotions)

4. Think about your responses to questions 2 and 3. What might the poet be persuading you to think about migration and migrants? Write your responses in a sentence.

(The poet reminds the readers of the lovely places they have left—the booths "laden with fruit)

(The poet remembers the kindness of the people in his homeland—the woman giving him fruit—  
compared to the roar of "crowds" and the "toot of an automobile,/Insistent, shrill)

5. Based on your analysis, write a sentence expressing the poet's message.

(The poet wants to share a beautiful memory from his childhood in his homeland, and contrast it to the harsh present, to reveal the sense of loss and sadness experienced by so many migrants)

6. What did you learn by analyzing this poem?

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