

## **\*Town of the Little Mouthful**

**(Allison)**

Okay, this poem. Wow. I tried to come up with any kind of pop culture (or any culture) references to "little mouthful" that I could think of, and couldn't think of a one. I tried Googling the term and all I found was an essay by someone named Tom Regaan whose thesis was to have children kill animals so they won't want to eat meat anymore. The only thing I could think of when reading this poem was that the lines are broken up in this piece work as lines that stand on their own. However, when read together, for the most part not only is this a coherent sentence, but it's a little bit of a mouthful. The whole thing seems to make sense until the last two lines of the poem, where the meaning becomes (for me at least) pretty unclear. The thing would be grammatically correct, but it wouldn't actually form a sentence. I guess going back to the pro-vegetarianism thing as well, "cut" is a pretty strong word to use. Bows and arrows are obviously weapons, which could kill an animal if you were hunting I suppose. To go further off on this tangent, the essay (which I only skimmed) seemed to think if children went hunting for their own food and had to kill these animals, they wouldn't want to eat meat anymore. And read as one complete sentence, "To cut through" could be like skinning, cutting the fat of meat or any other preparation of the food that could all be pointing toward a pro-vegetarianism statement. If it is about meat and not eating it, I never would have figured that out on my own. I would have stuck to, hey, if you said this real fast, it's a mouthful!

Amendments

Town of the Little Mouthful (tom)

I'm not so sure I get the pro vegetarian read as Allison. Though I'm not entirely sure that I get this poem either. It does make sense as three separate sentences arranged in different order than they way in which Carson has confined them with her periods. I get the image of a child playing with a bow and no arrows. Also a smile can look like a bow when a bow is held to look like a smile.

Town of the Little Mouthful (tiffany)

I don't really get a cultural tie with this one, so you are not alone there, Allison. The most that I got out of this specific poem was a firm idea of the character present in the poem. As Allison states, bows and arrows are used for hunting purposes; there's an intent behind using a bow and arrow. The question the character in the poem asks is slightly maniacal in that he is asking a question of uncertainty while smiling. This would denote a clever, cunning character. If he didn't know the answer to the question (Without arrows how do I know if I hit the target?), he would be frowning. Instead, the question comes across as kinda scary because he seems to harbor violent intentions or perhaps an inside joke that is funny in context. The ending of this one baffles me, too. There's the beginning of a cliché statement that is cut (no pun intended) by the following line - "he said smiling from ear. / To cut. / Through by the bowstring." Usually, it would be "smiling from ear to ear", but it's not. The last two lines give me a visual image if anything. I get this picture of someone grinning and that image being cut by the lines of a bowstring being held level with the

shoulders or head. What this does for the poem is beyond me.

Town of the Little Mouthful (monte)

Interesting, because usually the children who hunt their meat are the ones that don't become vegetarians. The people who read about how terrible it is to kill animals are the one who do it. But im not analyzing Tom's essay. I don't get this stuff, so I don't get any more than what you get.

Town of Little Mouthful (mike)

I have no idea how the title correlates to the rest of the poem. As Allison said, the meaning is greatly affected by the punctuation and line breads. Possibly the title refers to taking small steps, shooting without arrows, then with, at a target, maybe someday at an animal. He said smiling form ear to cut through bow string. As the bow string cuts past his grin, is it with or without arrows?

Town of the Little Mouthful Amendment: (matt)

I think that the essay you stumbled across may have affected your reading of this poem. Carson uses her line breaks and strange punctuation to make the actual idea unclear, but if one gets creative it can look something like this: "Without arrows how do I know if I hit the target?" he said, smiling from ear to—cut through by the bowstring." I end up seeing that cut as quite literal, as an archery accident: perhaps his fingers slipped and the string snapped forward, cutting through his ear. It grows all the more ironic when one realizes that he was probably not using arrows for safety reasons. As for the connection to the title, it is his lack of attention to his equipment as he speaks that causes him to end up with a mouthful of bowstring (figuratively).

Town of the Little Mouthful (martin)

I like the way this poem is read in one full sentence, and that being a little bit of a mouthful. Very creative of you to find that! I see a little brat of a kid taking archery lessons. Instead of a handful, this kid's a mouthful because he talks talks talks. He's violent, like any little male child, and wants to practice archery with real arrows. He's already cut himself since instead of smiling ear to ear he's smiling from ear to cut. Carson likes to play with these common sayings of our culture. The kid was cut through by the bowstring, so he may not have even been using a real arrow, yet he still wants to take a step up in how dangerous it could be. This kid could be a metaphor for anyone like this. This poem is a good example of a well-done poem on something that's not very dramatic or "important."

Town of the Little Mouthful (marina)

At first I couldn't really figure out what this poem was supposed to really mean, but I then thought of a dialogue poem type thing... and then as I was saying the poem out loud, while almost studying for Greek Tragedy,I realized that the word "Arrows" in its utterance is very similar to the ancient Greek divinity Eros, the son of Aphrodite and the god of love and erotic passion, which then relates us to vaerious cupid-esque and putti characters who we all know and love as little fat kids with bows and arrows...

Town of the Little Mouthful (craig)

This poem confused me a bit, especially as I refuse to Google it simply because I fear I will come up with the same vegetarian references, and I am not even sure if this is the reference made in this poem as I do not know if that essay was popular enough to be quoted by a poet like Carson in such a way that people would recognize it, though I admit I could very well be wrong. How does one even shoot at a target without arrows, unless they are not using a bow and arrow at all? The last two lines also threw me off as I cannot help but expect the line to read "...smiling from ear to eat" but it actually reads "ear./ To cut" as if he had a cut on his face that served as a substitute for the ear as the opposite end of the smile. Also, what can be "cut through by the bowstring"? The only answer I can suggest is paired with the presence of an arrow, cutting through flesh, delivered by a bowstring. Also, I believe a person can be cut by a bowstring if they do not properly know how to handle a bow. This to me suggests some level of incompetence in the matter of hunting, or at least of bow and arrow shooting, which seems a very feminine connotation for what appears to be two males participating in the same masculine past time. This poem, I think, was the most difficult for me to grasp up to this point.

Town of the Little Mouthful: (courtney)

Arrows have something to do with hunting. You can't hunt if you don't have arrows. Since there is a target, the person without arrows is practicing—but can't tell if he/she hit the target since there is nothing to mark his/her aim. "Smiling from ear. / To cut" could mean that, since there were no arrows to weight the bowstring when the archer took aim, the string could have hit the archer's face and cut it, either taking the ear or cutting the flesh close to the ear (things like this really do happen). This relates to the title because you either have a mouthful of pain from being cut (because it's so close to the mouth), or that's a mouthful of words to speak when you've just been injured on the face.

Town of Little Mouthful (casey)

I have no idea how the title correlates to the rest of the poem. As Allison said, the meaning is greatly affected by the punctuation and line breaks. Possibly the title refers to taking small steps, shooting without arrows, then with, at a target, maybe someday at an animal. He said smiling from ear to cut through bow string. As the bow string cuts past his grin, is it with or without arrows?

Town of the Little Mouthful (abby)

Wow. Let's NOT trust google on this one. That pro-vegetarian thing made me want to shoot Tom Regan twice in the head. Maybe three. No, that might be gratuitous. Anyway. This is a mouthful, and screams insecurity. The fact that someone here is obviously the teacher and someone the student gives support to the impression of insecurity here. The "teacher" is the kind that would make anyone insecure, if he is "smiling from ear." The "little" mouthful is sort of a counterimage, a pose that someone timid would take up to ask even the most important "mouthful" of a question.

