

I CANNOT REMEMBER MY MOTHER

Feel, Connect and Reflect

Name:

Class:

Date:

PRE-READING

Memory Triggers

A smell, a sound, or a sight can suddenly bring back a strong memory. Think of one for yourself.

A smell that brings back a memory for me:

A sound that brings back a memory for me:

A sight that brings back a memory for me:

Keep these in mind — the poet uses exactly these three senses to remember his mother!

WHILE READING

Stanza 1: The Tune

*"I cannot remember my mother,
only sometimes in the midst of my play
a tune seems to hover over my playthings,
the tune of some song that she used to hum
while rocking my cradle."*

Senses & Symbols — Complete the table.

Sense used	Image in the poem	What it brings back
Hearing		

Stanza 2: The Scent

*"I cannot remember my mother,
but when in the early autumn morning
the smell of the shiuli flowers floats in the air,
the scent of the morning service in the temple
comes to me as the scent of my mother."*

Senses & Symbols — Complete the table.

Sense used	Image in the poem	What it brings back
Smell		

Stanza 3: The Gaze

"I cannot remember my mother,
only when from my bedroom window I send my eyes
into the blue of the distant sky,
I feel that the stillness of my mother's gaze on my face
has spread all over the sky."

Senses & Symbols — Complete the table.

Sense used	Image in the poem	What it brings back
Sight		

Spot the Refrain

A line repeated at the start of every stanza is called a refrain. Write it here, and tick why you think the poet repeats it.

Refrain:

- ☐ To create a musical, song-like rhythm
- ☐ To remind us that his memory of her face is incomplete
- ☐ Both of these

POST-READING

The Paradox

The poem is called "I Cannot Remember My Mother," yet it is full of vivid memories. How can both be true at once?

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Zoom Out

Step back from the details. What is the poem's big idea, in just one line?

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Check Your Own Triggers

Go back to your Pre-Reading answers. Which of your own memory triggers is closest to something in the poem?

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Exit Ticket

Even without a clear memory, love can still be felt through

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Well done! You've completed your Reading Companion for I Cannot Remember My Mother.

Keep this sheet safe — it's a great quick-revision tool before your exam.