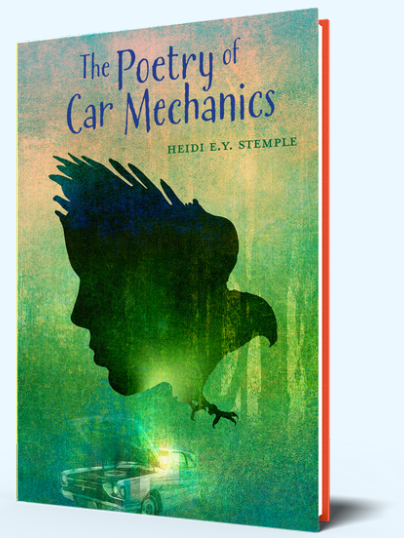


The Poetry of Car Mechanics

Written by Heidi E. Y. Stemple
Ages 9–12 • Grades 4–7
Guide written by Heidi E. Y. Stemple

Discussion Guide



Discussion Questions

Dylan's life has never been completely carefree. However, his circumstances changed drastically when his mother left for good. While the stability he gained after her departure brought some relief, it also came with losses that he continues to mourn. How does Dylan cope with these losses?

Dylan feels that he is living with someone who does not share his worldview in any way. How has this contributed to his turning inward to poetry and birds?

Dylan uses the metaphor of a storm in many ways throughout the book. What are some of the things, people, or situations that Dylan compares to a storm?

Dylan's story is not told in a straightforward manner. In fact, much of it is conveyed through flashbacks. How does this affect the way you experience his story?

Three prevalent themes in *The Poetry of Car Mechanics* are mental health, birds, and car mechanics. In what order of importance would Dylan assign to these aspects of his life? Do these themes hold significance in your life? What other themes can you identify as you read the book?

In one poem, Dylan asks, "Am I the unreliable narrator of my own story?" What do you think he means by this?

Poetry Activity

Great blue herons are solitary birds. You rarely see them in groups. They stand very still and move through life trying to remain unnoticed. Patient, they wait as they hunt. In his poetry, Dylan calls himself a great blue heron. This is a metaphor. He also compares himself to a great blue heron, which is a simile.

How would you describe yourself? Use a bird, an animal, or even something else in nature—such as a tree, a rock, or a blade of grass. Then, write a poem using that image as a metaphor or simile. If you're stuck, start with: "I am a..."