

Name:

**Poem of the week #1:** Rite of Passage, Sharon Olds

Sophomore English Honors

**Due:** Monday, October 26th

### Directions

Overview: Read the poem first to enjoy it. Read it straight on through, preferably aloud. Then read it again (and again), looking for any of the following literary devices or features:

- Language: tone, style, diction (word choice)
- Conventions: punctuation, grammar
- Devices: imagery, metaphor, symbols, repetition, etc.
- Design: structure, organization (stanzas. Layout of stanzas)
- Themes: ideas that run throughout the poem
- Connections: Does the poem connect or allude to literature, history, popular culture, art, etc.?
- Purpose: Is the poet trying to explain? Define? Persuade? What, why, and how do they do this?

You must show evidence of close reading – for example, underlined words, comments, questions, connections, suspected patterns.

You must *word-process/type a response* to the poem and turn this response in with the poem. Your response must be one perfectly written response (not a loosely written journal-type response) with a clear assertion, supporting details, and examples or quotations from the poem.

Your paragraph must include quotations from the poem. These quotations must be embedded, not left to stand alone.

### **Rite of Passage** BY SHARON OLDS

As the guests arrive at our son's party  
they gather in the living room—  
short men, men in first grade  
with smooth jaws and chins.  
Hands in pockets, they stand around  
jostling, jockeying for place, small fights  
breaking out and calming. One says to another  
*How old are you? —Six. —I'm seven. —So?*  
They eye each other, seeing themselves  
tiny in the other's pupils. They clear their  
throats a lot, a room of small bankers,  
they fold their arms and frown. *I could beat you*  
*up*, a seven says to a six,  
the midnight cake, round and heavy as a  
turret behind them on the table. My son,  
freckles like specks of nutmeg on his cheeks,  
chest narrow as the balsa keel of a  
model boat, long hands  
cool and thin as the day they guided him  
out of me, speaks up as a host  
for the sake of the group.  
*We could easily kill a two-year-old*,  
he says in his clear voice. The other  
men agree, they clear their throats  
like Generals, they relax and get down to  
playing war, celebrating my son's life.

