

Originally

Discuss the following questions with a partner and prepare notes to present your ideas to the rest of the group

1. What sort of scene do the first three lines evoke? How does Duffy do this? Think about language, content and rhythm.
2. Why does Duffy use a list of four, '... the city / the street, the house, the vacant rooms'?
3. What does the speaker mean by, 'I stared / at the eyes of a blind toy'? In what way is this ironic? Do you think the toy might represent something?
4. What do you think the first stanza is about? Can you summarise it in one word?
5. In the second stanza, Duffy contrasts two experiences of growing up; apart from the language, how does she emphasise the differences?
6. Why do you think the speaker uses the simile of a loose tooth to describe her parents' anxiety? What effect does it have? What is your response to the image?
7. What do you think the speaker means by, '*I want our own country*'? Explain your ideas.
8. Why has Duffy used so much sibilance in the first four lines of the third stanza?
9. Who do you think is being referred to when the speaker says, 'But then you forget'?
10. Why is there a list of three, 'you forget, or don't recall, or change'?
11. What does the speaker mean when she says, '... my voice / in the classroom sounding just like the rest'?
12. What is the purpose of the caesura and subsequent enjambement in the lines, '... sounding just like the rest. Do I only / think / I lost ...' Why is 'think' given a line of its own?
13. Why are there so many questions at the end of the poem? Look back through and reflect on the apparent change from certainty to uncertainty.
14. What do you think the last two lines mean, 'Now, *Where do you come from?* / strangers ask. *Originally?* And I hesitate'? What is this referring to?
15. Looking back through the poem, think of one word which summarises what it is about.
16. How fitting do you find the title? Explain your ideas.