

Poem I:  
*This River Here*

Ex. I.1:

Consider these things as you read “This River Here:”

- What physical element does the poet use to connect the events of the poem?
- How does the contrast between “right here” and “a little farther down” affect what the poem wishes to say? What is the poet trying to express?
- In several places the poet uses subtle alliterations—or just sounds echoing each other—to draw our attention to a moment. Does this echo the sound of a river? Does it echo the rhythm of life?
- The poet uses literary exaggeration, or hyperbole, to create emphasis (the grandpa “scrubbing” souls, sweat and tears that mix with river water, fear that “drips”).

Think of a physical element—water, fire, sand, rock... something along those lines—and use it to connect several moments in a person’s life—yours or an imaginary one, if you prefer. You might recreate scenes, where the element appears, as the poet has done in this poem. Or you might do something different. Experiment with using hyperbole to emphasize an idea or image. At the end, do you think you have a poem? What makes it a poem?

—Exercise provided by Sofia Starnes, Poet Laureate of Virginia.  
Author of *Fully Into Ashes*.