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# Responding to a short story

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Read Frances Simmons's short story, 'The Space Between', and analyse how she used language to create meaning by completing the following questions:

## 1 WHAT

- In one sentence, state the subject of the story, what happens and who is involved. Identify the context.
- What do you regard as the main justice issue raised by this story?
- Describe the central image used to unify it.
- What is the composer's underlying message or lesson about life in this story?
- Trace the way the main message is developed by outlining the story's narrative structure. At each stage of this structure, comment on what you think the composer is saying to you. Comment on tone. Does it change?
- During your reading of the story did you detect any gaps, silences or contradictions?
- What relationship do you think the composer wants with the responder?

## 2 How

Discuss the following questions in pairs, a group or with your teacher in a class discussion:

- In the opening sentence, the composer engages the reader's interest by using a simple image of a naked body wearing socks, and comments on it. In your reading of paragraph 1, what is suggested to you about the composer's values and beliefs regarding the legal system, journalists and gossips?
- At the end of paragraph 2, the narrator tells us that her feet are "sandalled" and "sockless". How are these words used to convey her emotional state and to reinforce the story's message? Which other language devices in this paragraph help to intensify this impact? How?
- In paragraph 3, the crime is represented by constructing a metaphor of a plucked and stuffed chicken. What perception does this metaphor convey to you about the death of her sister?
- The composer alludes to Paul Simon's song, 'Sounds of Silence'. This is an example of intertextuality. Read a copy of the song and comment on why you think Frances Simmons chose to refer to these lyrics in the process of communicating her feelings to her reader.
- What does the language in paragraph 6 tell you about the nature of inner conflict and the barriers between lovers? Refer to the values and beliefs of males and females that are conveyed here.
- How does the language in paragraph 7 convey her feelings about her sister's murderer?
- "Wide-eyed against the dark" – What ideas, values and beliefs associated with the experience of grief are conveyed here?
- What meaning did you create about human experience from the final image of the story?
- How does the visual text reinforce the meaning of the written text?

## 3 WHO FOR

Who do you think might find this story appealing and meaningful?