

Lesson in Literature

What Are Images?

The Shore

1. The foam on the waves is white. The sand on the shore is white.
2. Use the sense of touch for the wet breezes; the sense of taste for the salty ocean spray; the sense of hearing for the crashing waves (or the sense of sight for the dark waves).
3. The seagulls screech; the bay sky is red and orange; the Portuguese bakery smells of baking bread.

Selection Summary

Heartland is a song of praise to America's Heartland, the American Midwest. The poem has a strong beat and a pronounced rhyme scheme. It is a perfect vehicle for teaching the basics of both rhythm and rhyme to children. The rhymes are not simple, yet they are not forced; the rhythm does not falter, yet it is natural.

The poem's theme is that the Midwest, and its farmland in particular, is deserving of our gratitude for serving as America's breadbasket. The Heartland produces not only the plain, basic, fundamental food needed for the country's sustenance, but also produces in its population the plain, basic, fundamental character traits necessary to the nurturing of this country's spirit.

The poem opens with the Heartland itself speaking. Through the use of personification and a multitude of visual and sensory images, the poet portrays the farmland of the Midwest as beautiful in every season. The farmer, too, is praised as being a strong, hardworking, no-nonsense personality, the very backbone of the American nation. The poet does not neglect to mention the great cities of the Midwest, but gives only a brief space to the place "Where giant mills and stockyards sprawl, and neon-lighted shadows fall." The poet also alludes to the fact that, skilled and hardworking as the farmers are, all their efforts are as nothing if drought or flood or frost strike. The poem concludes by describing the farmers as people who devote their lives to uncovering "the secrets of a living earth" that keeps America alive.

Lesson in Literature ...

THE SHORE

WHAT ARE IMAGES?

- An **image** is created by a word or phrase that describes something you can see, hear, smell, taste, or touch.
- A red apple (see), a crunchy apple (hear), a fragrant apple (smell), a sweet apple (taste), and a smooth apple (touch) are all images.
- For visual images, we must *picture* what is being described.
- For other sensory images, we must *remember* and *imagine* the sound, smell, taste, or feel of what is being described.

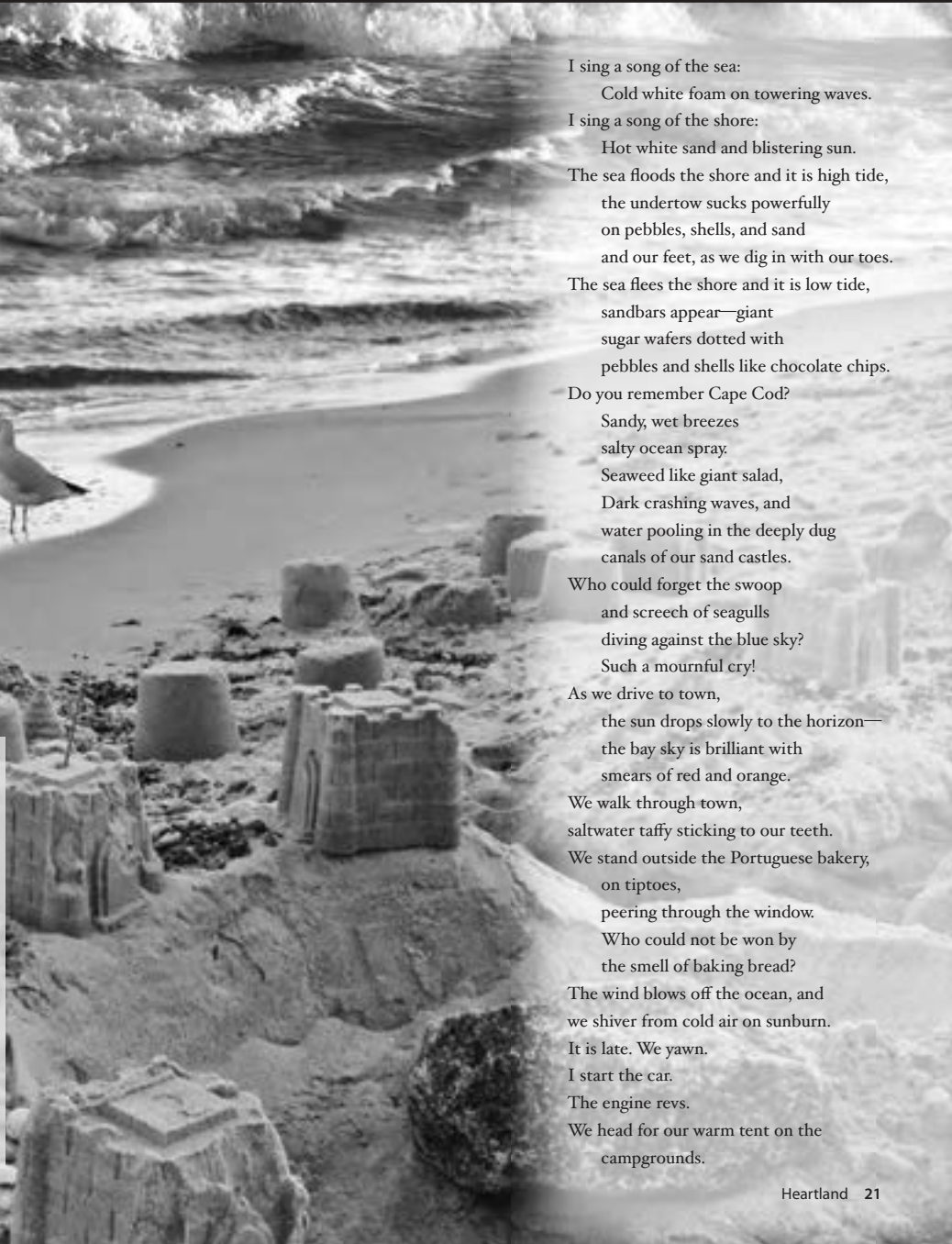
THINK ABOUT IT!

1. In the description of the sea and the shore, what two images are white?
2. In the description of Cape Cod, which sense would you use to feel each of the following:
 - a. the breezes
 - b. the ocean spray
 - c. the waves
3.
 - a. What sound do the seagulls make?
 - b. What color is the bay sky?
 - c. What smell comes from the Portuguese bakery?

Getting Started

The American Midwest is called its heartland because it produces so much of our food. Grain, corn, meat, poultry, and various fruits and vegetables are the staples of the American diet. Much of the country looks to the Midwestern farmland for these products. How much do children know about where their food comes from?

It will be fun to list various foods and ask your students where they originate. Start out with the easy ones like milk, meat, apples, wheat (all in the Midwest) and go on to others. Most kids know that orange juice comes from Florida or California and that quite a lot of cheese comes from Wisconsin. See what other information the students have. Find out what is grown locally and share that information with your students. Explain the difference between relatively small farms that sell their produce in their own neighborhoods and the huge farms that provide entire regions of the country with food.



I sing a song of the sea:
Cold white foam on towering waves.
I sing a song of the shore:
Hot white sand and blistering sun.
The sea floods the shore and it is high tide,
the undertow sucks powerfully
on pebbles, shells, and sand
and our feet, as we dig in with our toes.
The sea flees the shore and it is low tide,
sandbars appear—giant
sugar wafers dotted with
pebbles and shells like chocolate chips.
Do you remember Cape Cod?
Sandy, wet breezes
salty ocean spray.
Seaweed like giant salad,
Dark crashing waves, and
water pooling in the deeply dug
canals of our sand castles.
Who could forget the swoop
and screech of seagulls
diving against the blue sky?
Such a mournful cry!
As we drive to town,
the sun drops slowly to the horizon—
the bay sky is brilliant with
smears of red and orange.
We walk through town,
saltwater taffy sticking to our teeth.
We stand outside the Portuguese bakery,
on tiptoes,
peering through the window.
Who could not be won by
the smell of baking bread?
The wind blows off the ocean, and
we shiver from cold air on sunburn.
It is late. We yawn.
I start the car.
The engine revs.
We head for our warm tent on the
campgrounds.

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Do your students know that several decades ago people ate only the fruits and vegetables that were “in season”? Tell them that before long-distance transportation became economically viable, watermelon was eaten only in the summer, and crunchy apples were available only in the fall. Rhubarb was available for a short time in the spring, and peaches were eaten for a few delicious weeks in the summer. Nowadays, fruits and vegetables are transported from places where they are in season. For example, since South America’s summer occurs during our winter, we can import summer fruit from South America during the winter. In the old days, this was not done for a variety of reasons. Transportation was either too difficult or too costly to import items as fragile as tomatoes or peaches. Today, it is fast enough to keep the fruit from spoiling and cheap enough to make it profitable. Also, many fruits and vegetables have been genetically modified to stand up to rough handling.

Heartland is a poem that celebrates the abundance of food and of beauty with which the American Heartland has been blessed.

Target Skill: Recognizing the images in a narrative poem

Learning Strategy: Visualizing

Common Core Curriculum: RL.3.4; RL.3.5; RL.3.7

Genre: Narrative Poem

Vocabulary

fertile (FUR tuhl) *adj.*: the type of soil or land in which plants grow easily

hues (HYUZE) *n.*: colors

etched (ETCHD) *v.*: sharply outlined

livestock (LIVE stock) *n.*: the horses, cattle, sheep, and other useful animals kept on a farm

toil (TOYL) *n.*: hard work

weathered (WEH thurd) *adj.*: roughened by the weather

define (dee FINE) *v.*: explain

stockyards (STOCK yards) *n.*: a yard for livestock

converge (kuhn VURJ) *v.*: meet

merge (MURJ) *v.*: come together

vital (VIE tul) *adj.*: extremely important

descends (dih SENDS) *v.*: comes down

drought (DROWT) *n.*: a lack of rain

Workbook

Related Pages: 8-13

Answer Key Page: 11

Heartland

Into . . . *Heartland*

Heartland is an expression of joy and praise to the American Midwest. It blends a deep appreciation of the sheer beauty of the countryside with admiration for the spirit of its inhabitants. The natural beauty and strength of the land, the cultivated beauty of the farms and fields, and the man-made beauty of the buildings and tools are all celebrated. Although a nod is given to the humming metropolises of the Midwest, the poet primarily sings of the farmland and countryside.

Ask your students if they have ever driven in the country and passed fields and farmhouses. Chances are that most of them have. Ask them why a person might want to write a poem or song about the farms and fields. Then ask them, if they were writing a poem about the countryside, what topics they would include in it. Make a list on the board of the topics they identify. With some hints from you, make sure they mention the blue sky, the green fields, the powerful tractors, the devoted farmers, the delicious smell of the crops, the beautiful horses, the cute lambs, and so on. Make sure they mention the gratitude they feel for the abundant crops that these farms and the hardworking farmers provide. As you read the poem with them, you can check off the topics in the poem that match the ones you have written on the board.

Eyes On: Images

In this selection, we shall introduce the literary skill of *identifying images*. Start out by writing the word “image” on the board and tell the class that an image is a picture. Since people can’t hold up pictures all the time, we use *words* to describe things. Phrases like, “a red fire engine,” “a blue sky,” and “a white lamb” use images. But an image isn’t only visual. As we said in the Student Edition, any words that describe something experienced through one of the five senses are images. Lines like

“With blizzards howling as they sweep”

or

“A newborn calf, so damp and warm”

contain sensory images, the first appealing to the sense of hearing, and the second, to the sense of touch.

You may choose to concentrate on visual images, which is an easy way to start and which are the type of image that mostly appear in this poem. Notice that we are not *interpreting* images at this early stage. As it happens, the poem uses

Blueprint for Reading

INTO . . . *Heartland*

America is beautiful! The country has been blessed with snow-capped mountains and sandy deserts, with lush fields, and deep canyons. Songs and poems have been written about many cities and every state in the U.S.A. Do you know any?

Heartland is a poem about America’s Midwest, where so much of our grain and corn are grown. The poet loves the heartland for its beauty, for its changing seasons, and for its fields that supply the entire country with food. As you read *Heartland*, perhaps you will look at where you live with the same loving appreciation that the poet has for America’s Heartland.



Imagine walking outside on a perfect summer day. The sky is blue, the birds are singing, the sun is warm, the clover has a delicious fragrance, and, when you pick a peach off of the tree, it is sweet and juicy. If you wanted to describe this perfect moment to your friend, you would have to use words to describe what you saw, heard, felt, smelled, and tasted. The words you would use create **images**.

Writers like to get their readers to see, hear, feel, smell, and taste things in their imaginations. The poet who wrote *Heartland* wanted her readers to know just how beautiful the farms of the American Midwest are at different times of the year. As you read the poem, you will pass from one image to the next. Try hard to picture the beautiful scenes in your mind.

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very few metaphors and similes. It depends largely on simple word pictures to convey its message. This works out perfectly, as it is much better for the young student to first learn to identify images and only then advance to metaphors and similes.

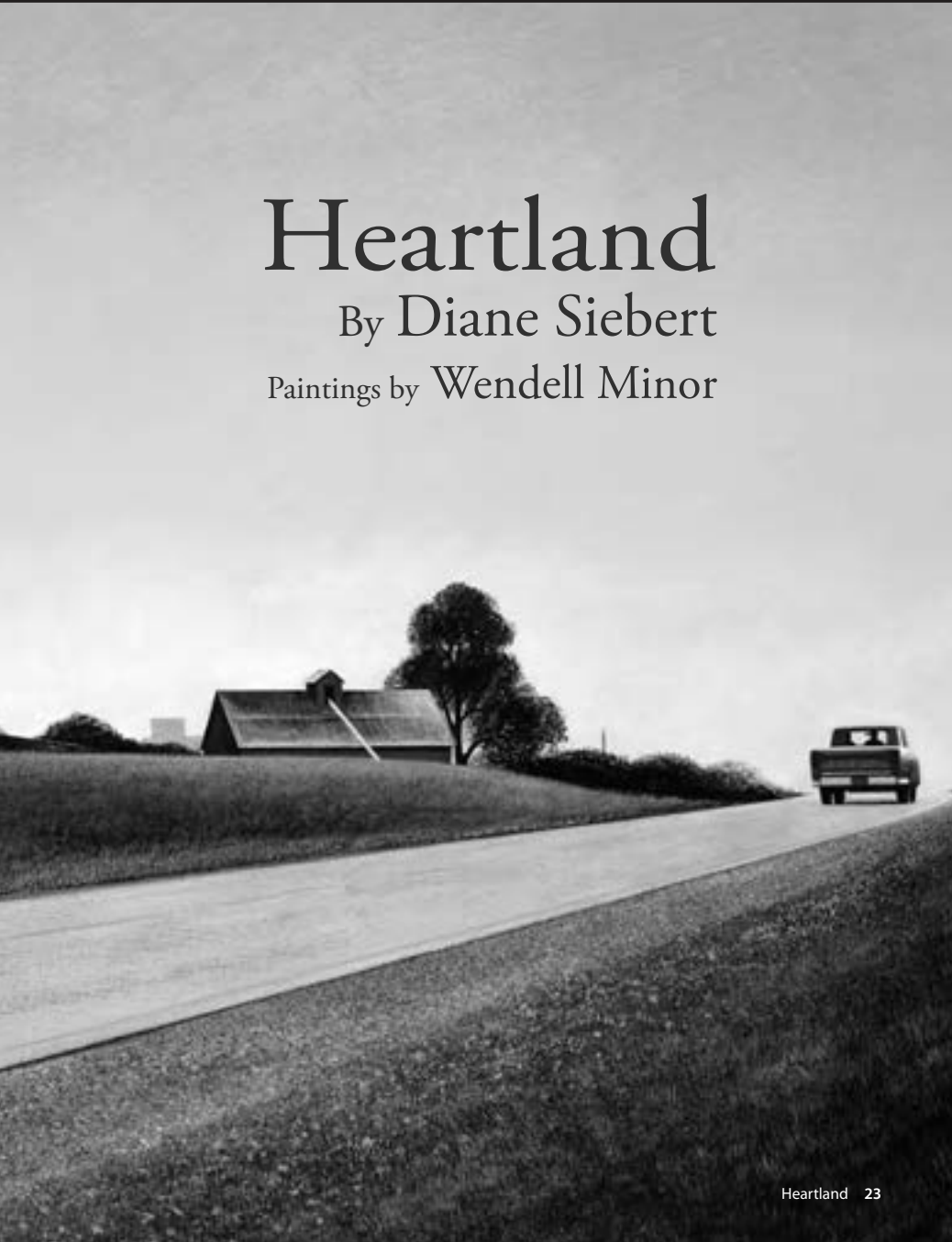
The strategy for identifying and understanding images is *visualizing*. You might wish to pause at various points in the poem and tell your students to close their eyes and picture in their minds what the poem describes. Ask them to try and feel the hot sun on their face or the cold snow under their feet. Can they smell the rain clouds? Can they feel the hard concrete through their shoes? Do they hear the train rumbling on the tracks? If they can, the poet has succeeded, and the images have done their job.



Heartland

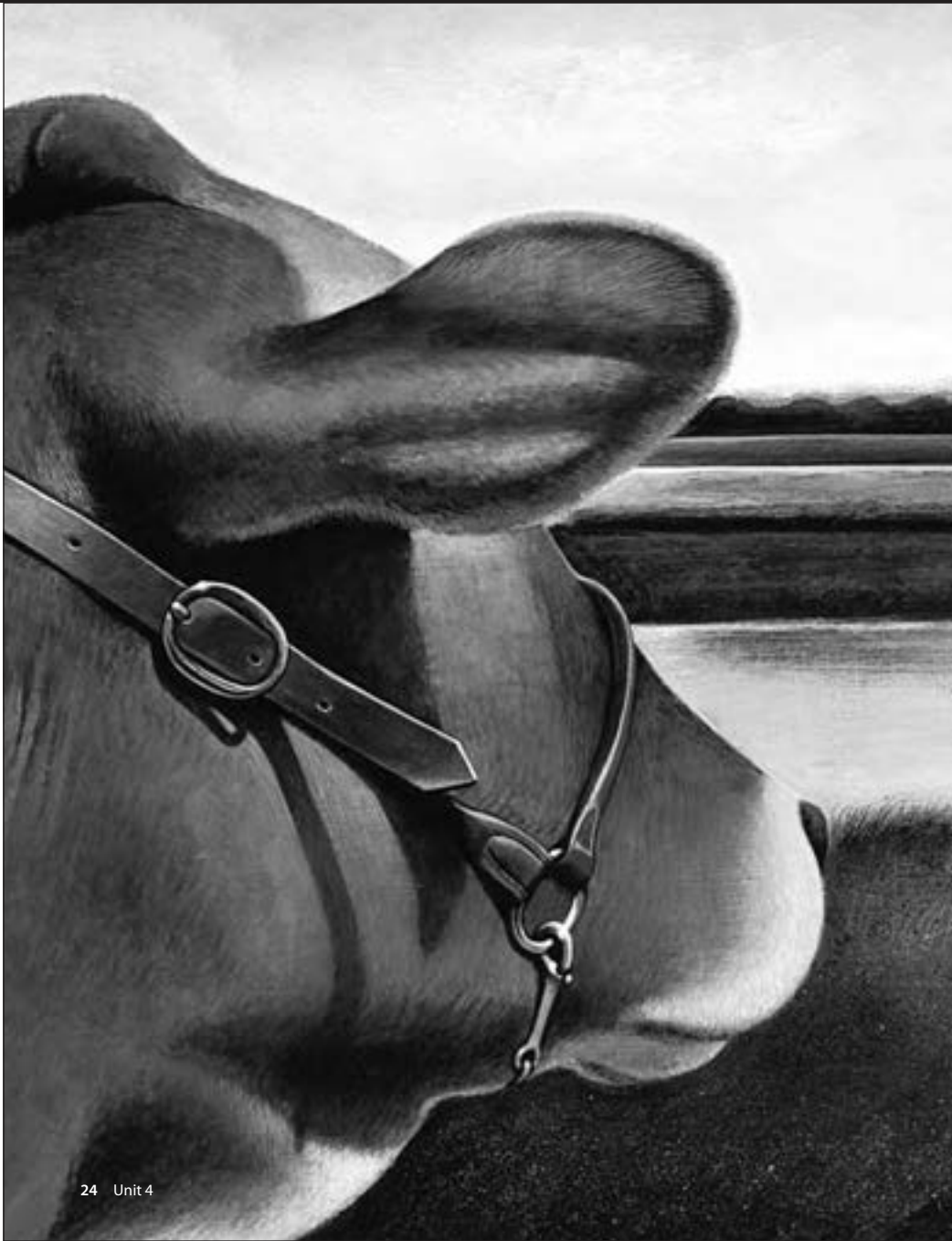
By Diane Siebert

Paintings by Wendell Minor



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Heartland



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I am the Heartland,
Great and wide.
I sing of hope.
I sing of pride.

I am the land where wheat fields grow
In golden waves that ebb and flow; **1**
Where cornfields stretched across the plains
Lie green between the country lanes.

I am the Heartland,
Shaped and lined
By rivers, great and small, that wind
Past farms, whose barns and silos stand **2**
Like treasures in my fertile hand. **3**

I am the Heartland.
I can feel
Machines of iron, tools of steel,
Creating farmlands, square by square—
A quilt of life I proudly wear: **4**

WORD BANK

fertile (FUR tuhl) *adj.*: the type of soil or land in which plants grow easily

Heartland 25

Literary Components

1 Imagery: The fields of wheat waving in the breeze look like waves of an ocean that ebb and flow.

2 Imagery: The barns and silos are called “treasures.”

3 Personification: The Heartland is speaking as though it is a person, and here, it claims to have a “hand” that holds the treasures—the barns and silos.

4 Personification; Imagery: The Heartland now wears a quilt. The quilt is a quilt of life because the quilt (the fields) provides the food that allows people to live.

Q: The poem says:

“I am the land where wheat fields grow
In golden waves that ebb and flow;”
What do the words “waves” and “ebb and flow” remind you of?

A: They remind me of an ocean. The waves of an ocean ebb—move away from the shore, then flow—move back towards the shore.

Q: What image is the poet using to help us imagine entire fields of wheat swaying in the wind?

A: The poet is using the image of the waves of the ocean.

Q: If you had to create an image to describe blue rivers winding around farms, what image would you use?

A: Answers will vary, but one that comes to mind is that of a blue ribbon.

Q: What image is used to describe the barns and silos?

A: The barns and silos are called “treasures.”

Q: The poem speaks of machines and iron and tools of steel. Can you name some farm tools that are made of iron or steel?

A: Tractors, plows, hoes, spades, and lots of other implements are made of iron and steel.

Guiding the Reading

Literal

Q: Who is the speaker in the poem?

A: The Heartland is the speaker.

Q: What very important crops grow in the Heartland?

A: Wheat and corn grow in the Heartland.

Q: What winds among the farms and fields?

A: Rivers wind through the Heartland.

Analytical

Q: What is the Heartland?

A: The Heartland is the Midwestern farmland of America.

Q: What is an image?

A: An image is a picture that is drawn with words. The picture helps you to imagine what the writer is describing.

Heartland

Literary Components

5 Imagery: The picture is that of a yellow, green, and brown patchwork quilt that is actually the fields of the Midwest.

6 Theme: The Heartland grows crops for the entire country.

7 Imagery: The metaphor (although we will not be teaching that term to students for some time) continues as the wood and wire fences are compared to the seams of a quilt.

8 Sensory Image: Here, the image appeals to the sense of smell.

Guiding the Reading

Literal

Q: What image does the poem use to describe the look of a farm with fields of different crops?

A: The poem calls the fields “a patchwork quilt.”

Q: What important job is the Heartland doing?

A: The Heartland’s fields grow the crops that feed the entire nation.

Q: What image does the poem continue with?

A: It continues using the image of the patchwork quilt.

Q: What farm animals does the poem mention?

A: The poem lists hogs, chicks, cows, horses, and sheep.

- 5** A patchwork quilt laid gently down
In hues of yellow, green, and brown
As tractors, plows, and planters go
Across my fields and, row by row,
Prepare the earth and plant the seeds
- 6** That grow to meet a nation’s needs.

WORD BANK

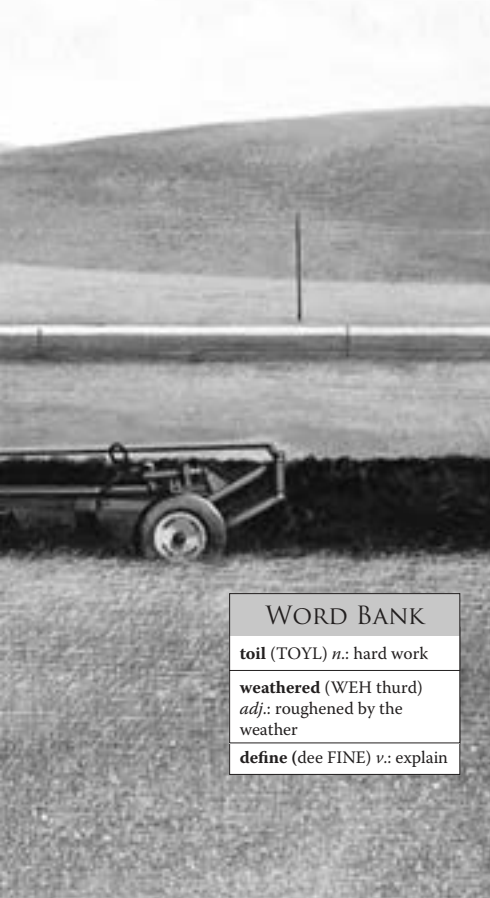
etched (ETCHD) *v.*: sharply outlined

hues (HYUZE) *n.*: colors

livestock (LIVE stock) *n.*: the horses, cattle, sheep, and other useful animals kept on a farm

- A patchwork quilt whose seams are etched **7**
By miles of wood and wire stretched
Around the barns and pastures where
The smell of livestock fills the air. **8**
These are the farms where hogs are bred,
The farms where chicks are hatched and fed;
The farms where dairy cows are raised,
The farms where cattle herds are grazed;
The farms with horses, farms with sheep—
Upon myself, all these I keep.





WORD BANK	
toil (TOYL) <i>n.</i> :	hard work
weathered (WEH thurd) <i>adj.</i> :	roughened by the weather
define (dee FINE) <i>v.</i> :	explain

I am the Heartland.
On this soil
Live those who through the seasons toil:

The farmer, with his spirit strong;
The farmer, working hard and long,
A feed-and-seed-store cap in place,
Pulled down to shield a weathered face—
A face whose every crease and line
Can tell a tale, and help define
A lifetime spent beneath the sun,
A life of work that's never done.

9

I am the Heartland.
On these plains
Rise elevators filled with grains.
They mark the towns where people walk
To see their neighbors, just to talk;
Where farmers go to get supplies
And sit a spell to analyze
The going price of corn and beans,
The rising cost of new machines;
Where steps are meant for shelling peas,
And kids build houses in the trees.

10

11

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Literary Components

9 Theme: The Heartland not only produces crops, it produces strong-spirited people who are the backbone of the country.

10 Theme; Imagery: The strong, hardworking farmer is both the producer and a product of the fields that he works. He is the spirit of the country and his face mirrors this: it is strong and weather-beaten; it is unabashedly lined.

11 Colloquial Language: The poet uses the language of the farmer to describe what he does.

Guiding the Reading

Literal

Q: What are some of the things the farmers like to talk about among themselves?

A: They talk about how much they can sell their crops for and how expensive the new machines are.

Analytical

Q: What is a weathered face?

A: A weathered face is a face that has been out in cold and heat and is tan and rough and lined from the sun and wind and cold.

Heartland

Literary Components

12 Sensory Image: This image appeals to the sense of hearing and asks us to imagine the hum of traffic.

13 Visual Imagery: The shadows created by neon lights evoke a fast-paced, brassy town, where the city never sleeps.

14 Imagery: The juxtaposition of windowed walls of brick with clouds and skies is the poet's idealization of the concrete jungle.

15 Theme: The town and country are mutually dependent; each supports the other in its own unique way—but the poet's heart is clearly in the country!

16 Change of Topic: The changing seasons are a new topic; they provide a kaleidoscopic view of the beautiful Heartland.

Guiding the Reading

Literal

Q: Does the Heartland have only farmland?

A: No. It includes big cities, too.

Q: What sounds can be heard in the cities?

A: The sounds of footsteps and of traffic can be heard.

Q: What happens to the crops in the autumn?

A: "The growing ends"; they are harvested.

Analytical

Q: When the rails and highways meet, what two places are they linking?

A: The rails and highways are linking the farms and the cities. The crops from the farms are transported to the cities and the goods from the cities are transported to the farms.

Q: In the line, "The concrete and the fields of green," what is "the concrete"?

A: "The concrete" refers to the cities, because a city has concrete sidewalks everywhere.

Q: What are "the fields of green"?

A: "The fields of green" refers to the farmland which, of course, has fields of green.

I am the Heartland.

In my song

Are cities beating, steady, strong,
With footsteps from a million feet

12 And sounds of traffic in the street;

Where giant mills and stockyards sprawl,

13 And neon-lighted shadows fall

14 From windowed walls of brick that rise

Toward the clouds, to scrape the skies;

Where highways meet and rails converge;

Where farm and city rhythms merge

15 To form a vital bond between

The concrete and the fields of green.

I am the Heartland:

Earth and sky

16 And changing seasons passing by.

I feel the touch of autumn's chill,

And as its colors brightly spill

Across the land, the growing ends,

And winter, white and cold, descends

With blizzards howling as they sweep

Across me, piling snowdrifts deep.

Then days grow longer, skies turn clear,

And all the gifts of spring appear—

The young are born, the seedlings sprout;

WORD BANK

stockyards (STOCK yards)
n.: a yard for livestock

converge (kuhn VURJ) *v.*:
meet

merge (MURJ) *v.*: come
together

vital (VIE tul) *adj.*: extremely
important

descends (dih SENDS) *v.*:
comes down

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Heartland

Literary Components

17 Alliteration: “Floods and frosts” add to the beauty of the rhythm.

18 Theme: Great as Man’s achievement is in cultivating the land, he is still at the mercy of the forces of Nature.

Guiding the Reading

Literal

Q: What are some of the harsh weather conditions the poem tells us about?

A: The poem mentions floods and frosts and tornadoes.

Before me, summer stretches out
With pastures draped in lush, green grass,
And as the days of growing pass,
I feel the joy when fields of grain
Are blessed by sunlight, warmth, and rain;

For I have learned of drought and hail,
Of floods and frosts and crops that fail, **17**
And of tornadoes as they move
In frightening paths, again to prove
That in the Heartland, on these plains,
Despite Man’s power, Nature reigns. **18**



WORD BANK

drought (DROWT) *n.*:
a lack of rain



I am the Heartland.

Smell the fields,

The rich, dark earth, and all it yields;

The air before a coming storm,

A newborn calf, so damp and warm;

The dusty grain in barns that hold

The bales of hay, all green and gold.

19

I am the Heartland.

Hear me speak

In voices raised by those who seek

To live their lives upon the land,

To know and love and understand

The secrets of a living earth—

Its strengths, its weaknesses, its worth;

Who, Heartland born and Heartland bred,

Possess the will to move ahead.

20

I am the Heartland.

I survive

To keep America, my home, alive.

Heartland 31

Literary Components

19 Imagery: The poem is rich in images that make us use our imaginations: the smell of the fields, the look of the earth, the feel of the air, the touch of a newborn calf, the dull color of grain next to the green and gold of hay.

20 Theme: The Heartland can be heard and seen through the people who live in it and work it. They, and the land that they live on, share secrets about life, about growth, and about the spirit of America.

Guiding the Reading

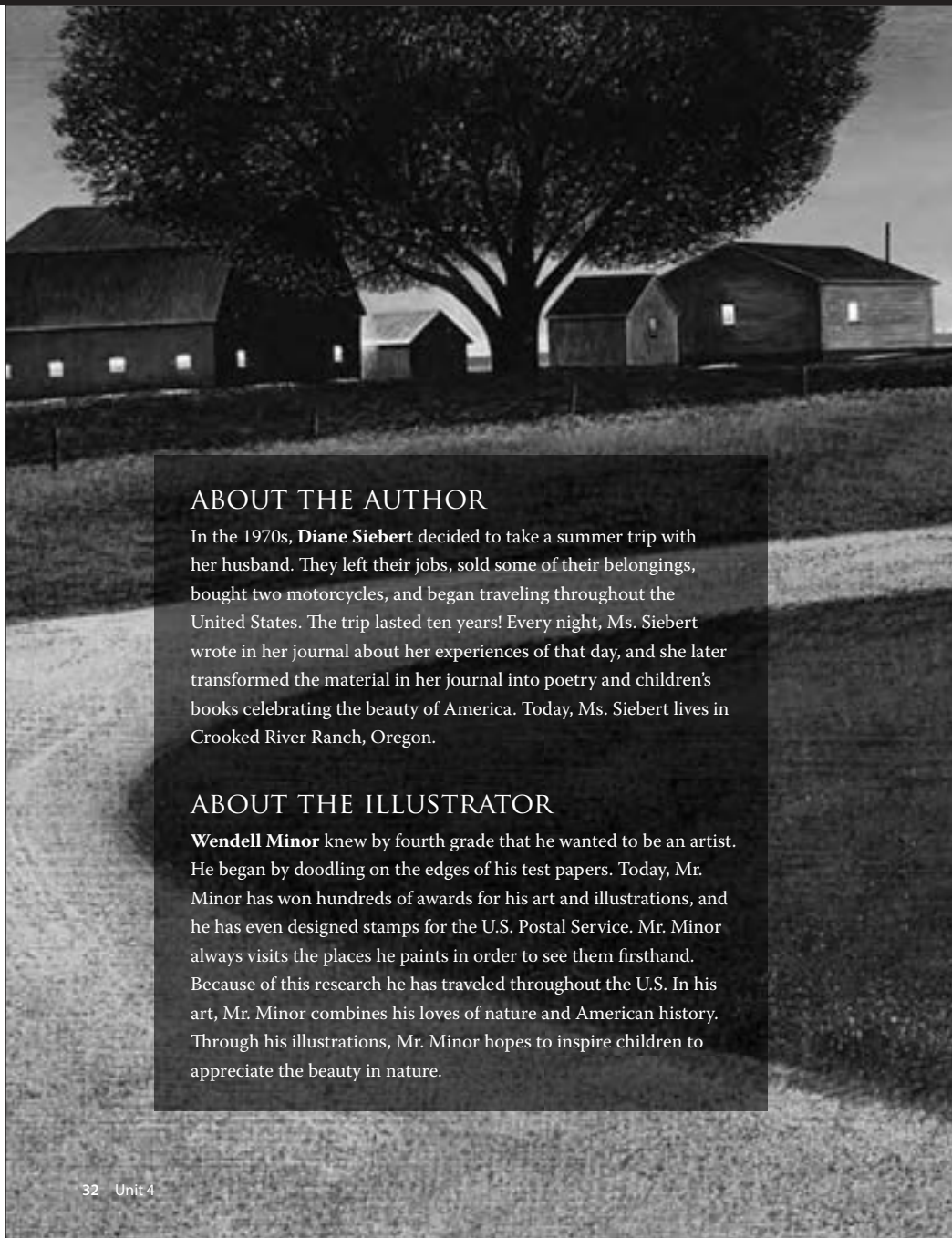
Analytical

Q: How does “the air before a coming storm” feel?

A: Answers will vary. Some will say it smells different or feels heavy or damp.

Q: To sum up, the poet tells us about both the city and the country of the Heartland. Which, though, does the poet seem to love the most?

A: The poet clearly loves the country with its rich and varied farmland the most.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

In the 1970s, **Diane Siebert** decided to take a summer trip with her husband. They left their jobs, sold some of their belongings, bought two motorcycles, and began traveling throughout the United States. The trip lasted ten years! Every night, Ms. Siebert wrote in her journal about her experiences of that day, and she later transformed the material in her journal into poetry and children's books celebrating the beauty of America. Today, Ms. Siebert lives in Crooked River Ranch, Oregon.

ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR

Wendell Minor knew by fourth grade that he wanted to be an artist. He began by doodling on the edges of his test papers. Today, Mr. Minor has won hundreds of awards for his art and illustrations, and he has even designed stamps for the U.S. Postal Service. Mr. Minor always visits the places he paints in order to see them firsthand. Because of this research he has traveled throughout the U.S. In his art, Mr. Minor combines his loves of nature and American history. Through his illustrations, Mr. Minor hopes to inspire children to appreciate the beauty in nature.

Studying the Selection

FIRST IMPRESSIONS

America is beautiful from sea to shining sea, but everyone has their own favorite part of the United States. Which region do you think is the most beautiful?

QUICK REVIEW

1. Who (or what) is the narrator of the poem?
2. Explain how farmland can look like a patchwork quilt.
3. What are three sights one could see in a city that are described in the poem?
4. The Heartland says that it keeps America alive. How does the Heartland keep America alive?

FOCUS

5. The poem says that the people in the Heartland seek
"To know and love and understand
The secrets of a living earth"

What secrets does the earth have? One secret might be how to make the corn grow big and tall. Can you think of another secret the farmers would like to learn?

6. The poet wanted the reader to imagine how the fields and livestock look and feel and even smell. Below are four lines taken from the poem. Which ones help you imagine how things look? Which ones help you imagine how things feel?
"In golden waves that ebb and flow"
"I feel the touch of autumn's chill"
"Where cornfields stretched across the plains"
"A newborn calf, so damp and warm"

CREATING AND WRITING

7. Choose one area that you know well. You may choose your block, your town, a park that you visit, or any other familiar spot. Write a 4–6 line poem about it. (The lines do not have to rhyme.) Use at least three images in your poem.
8. Your teacher will distribute the materials necessary to create a display with three sections. Choose three images from the poem and draw a picture of each one of them for each part of your display. You can paste objects on your drawings.

Heartland 33

Quick Review

1. The Heartland is the imaginary speaker.
2. Farmland is divided into fields which are square or rectangular. Each field has a different crop, so they may have different colors and textures. A patchwork quilt is made up of square and rectangular pieces of a variety of fabrics, so it, too, has squares of different color and texture.
3. A person could see:
 - traffic in the street
 - giant mills and stockyards
 - neon-lighted shadows
 - windowed walls of brick
 - highways
 - rails
4. The Heartland keeps America alive by producing grain and corn for the people and livestock. The poet also implies that the strong spirit of the Heartland gives strength and direction to the country.

Focus

5. The secrets of the earth are what the earth can grow, how to make the earth fertile, when to plant and harvest, and how to sustain the earth.
6. How something looks:
 - "In golden waves that ebb and flow"
 - "Where cornfields stretched across the plains"
 How something feels:
 - "A newborn calf, so damp and warm"
 - "I feel the touch of autumn's chill"

Creating and Writing

7. This is a written version of what you did orally in *First Impressions*. Once again, if your class is not very good with description, you can give them words that will help them write their poems.
8. Give the students wide, rectangular pieces of poster board and ask them to make two folds in them to create three sections. Then, either have them draw their three pictures directly onto the poster board, or have them draw three pictures on construction paper and glue them onto the display. If you like, they may glue small things onto their pictures to make them three-dimensional.

Studying the Selection

First Impressions

Allow your students to wax poetic about their favorite places. Remember that a concrete jungle may be more beautiful than a field of daisies to some of your students; it's all in the eye of the beholder. Encourage them to describe, describe, describe. It's not enough to say that the woods are beautiful. Ask them to tell you what makes the place beautiful. What colors are there to see? What smells to smell? What sounds to hear? If your class is very inarticulate, write a list of helping words on the board that they can use in their descriptions.