

SYLVIA PLATH (1932–1963)

Mirror

1963

I am silver and exact. I have no
preconceptions.
Whatever I see I swallow immediately
Just as it is, unmisted by love or dislike.
I am not cruel, only truthful –
The eye of a little god, four-cornered. 5
Most of the time I meditate on the
opposite wall.
It is pink, with speckles. I have looked at it
so long
I think it is a part of my heart. But it flickers.
Faces and darkness separate us over and over.
Now I am a lake. A woman bends over me,
Searching my reaches for what she really is.
Then she turns to those liars, the candles or the moon.
I see her back, and reflect it faithfully.
She rewards me with tears and an agitation of hands.
I am important to her. She comes and goes.
Each morning it is her face that replaces the darkness.
In me she has drowned a young girl, and in me an old woman
Rises toward her day after day, like a terrible fish.



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CONSIDERATIONS FOR CRITICAL THINKING AND WRITING

1. **FIRST RESPONSE.** What is the effect of the personification in this poem? How would our view of the aging woman be different if she, rather than the mirror, told her story?
2. What is the mythical allusion in “Now I am a lake” (line 10)?
3. In what sense can “candles or the moon” be regarded as “liars”? Explain this metaphor.
4. Discuss the effectiveness of the simile in the poem’s final line.