

## The Puritan Tradition

# To My Dear and Loving Husband *and* Upon the Burning of Our House, July 10th, 1666

Poetry by Anne Bradstreet

## Huswifery

Poetry by Edward Taylor



**READING 3** Understand the structure and elements of poetry. Analyze the effects of metrics, rhyme schemes, and other conventions in American poetry. **7** Understand how sensory language

VIDEO TRAILER



KEYWORD: HML11-114A

creates imagery. Analyze the meaning of biblical allusions in words, phrases, passages, and literary works. **RC-11(A)** Reflect on understanding to monitor comprehension.

### Meet the Authors

#### Anne Bradstreet

c. 1612-1672



Anne Bradstreet was essentially the first notable American poet, man or woman. Considering that Puritan women were not encouraged to improve their minds—let alone express their ideas—this achievement is remarkable.

**Coming to America** Anne Dudley Bradstreet was born in England and raised on an estate, which her father managed for the Earl of Lincoln. With access to the earl's library, she received a good education. In 1628, 16-year-old Anne married Simon Bradstreet. Two years later, the young couple sailed for Massachusetts.

After her privileged upbringing, Anne Bradstreet was not prepared for the harsh living conditions of colonial America. Her religious faith helped her endure these hardships—as did writing poetry.

**Personal Poetry** Bradstreet focused primarily on the realities of her life—her husband, her eight children, and her house. In 1650, without her knowledge, Bradstreet's brother-in-law had some of her verses published in London in a volume titled *The Tenth Muse Lately Sprung Up in America*. It was the first book of poetry ever published by an American colonist.

#### Edward Taylor

1642?-1729

For over 200 years, the work of Edward Taylor, one of colonial America's most inventive poets, remained unread. His poetry did not come to light until the 1930s when his long-forgotten manuscripts were discovered in the Yale University Library.

**Frontier Parson and Poet** Born in England, Taylor came to America in 1668 to escape religious persecution in his homeland. In 1671, after graduating from Harvard University, Taylor became the minister of a church in Westfield, Massachusetts. He held that position until his death 58 years later.

The wilderness town of Westfield presented many challenges to the highly intellectual Taylor. But he undertook his roles as farmer, physician, and minister with energy. He even called his flock to worship by beating a drum.

Like Anne Bradstreet—a volume of whose work he owned—Taylor wrote his poetry to glorify God. He found his subjects in human life, nature, and everyday activities. His poems on these topics served as a form of worship.

Author Online



Go to [thinkcentral.com](http://thinkcentral.com). KEYWORD: HML11-114B

## LITERARY ANALYSIS: FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE

Like all poets, Puritan poets used **figurative language** to create imagery and communicate ideas beyond the literal meaning of words. Figurative language helped the Puritan poets convey ideas about their religious faith and their personal lives. As you read the poems by Anne Bradstreet and Edward Taylor, look for the types of figures of speech listed below.

- A **metaphor** is a figure of speech that directly compares two unlike things without using *like* or *as*. (*Our house is our nest.*)
- An **extended metaphor** is one that draws the comparison out and compares the two things at length and in many ways. (*Our house is our nest; we fly away only to return to its snug protection.*)
- **Personification** is a figure of speech in which an object, animal, or idea is given human characteristics. (*Our house wraps our family in a warm embrace.*)
- **Hyperbole** is a figure of speech in which the truth is exaggerated for emphasis. (*Our house means more to us than all the money in the world.*)
- Also note the effect of any biblical **allusions**, or references, and how they enhance the meaning of the poem.

## READING STRATEGY: CLARIFY MEANING IN OLDER POETRY

When reading works from the Puritan era, it is important to stop and **clarify meaning** by rereading and restating difficult passages as needed in order to fully appreciate the literature. Be aware of the following as you read the Puritan poets:

- **Archaic language**—words that were once in common use but that are now considered old-fashioned or out-of-date
- **Inverted syntax**—sentence structure in which the expected order of words is reversed

As you read each poem, use a chart like the one shown to record and restate examples of archaic language and inverted syntax.

"Upon the Burning of Our House"	
Archaic Language	Inverted Syntax
"blest" (blessed)	"when rest I took" (when I took rest)

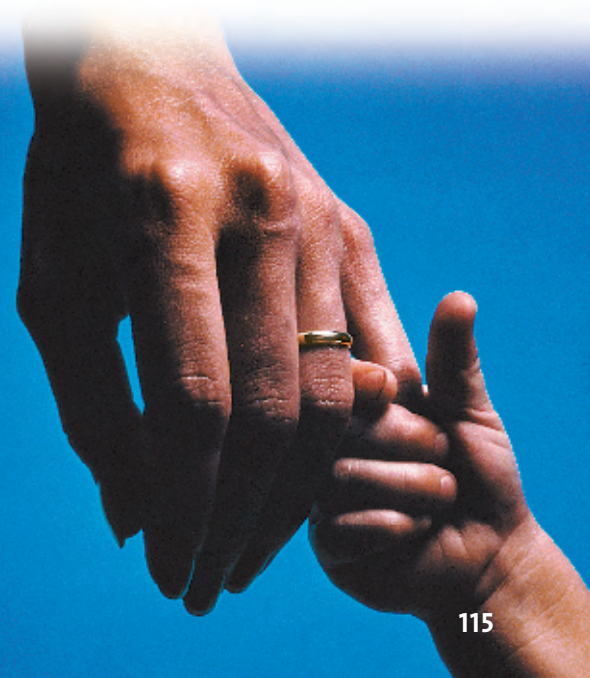


Complete the activities in your **Reader/Writer Notebook**.

## What do you VALUE most?

The things that we value in life may be actual objects or they may be less tangible. For instance, a person might prize a favorite CD or jacket. On the other hand, the gift of family may outweigh more material possessions. The Puritan poets you are about to read valued family life and their religious faith above all things. What do you prize most in your life?

**QUICKWRITE** Imagine that a reality show has offered you the chance to win a million dollars. The catch is that you will have to give up an object, a person, or a belief that you truly value. Assume that you are not willing to make the sacrifice. Write a brief letter to explain why you must turn down the money.



# To My Dear and Loving Husband

Anne Bradstreet

If ever two were one, then surely we.  
If ever man were loved by wife, then thee;  
If ever wife was happy in a man,  
Compare with me, ye women, if you can.  
5 I prize thy love more than whole mines of gold  
Or all the riches that the East doth hold.  
My love is such that rivers cannot quench, **A**  
Nor ought but love from thee, give recompense.<sup>1</sup>  
Thy love is such I can no way repay,  
10 The heavens reward thee manifold, I pray.  
Then while we live, in love let's so persevere<sup>2</sup>  
That when we live no more, we may live ever. **B**



TEKS 2B

## THEME AND GENRE: TEXT STRUCTURE

Bradstreet's classic love poem provides us with her view of her marriage. Poems usually show only one side of a concept like love. Plays, such as Thornton Wilder's *Our Town* (1938), usually show both sides of a conversation. Read the dialogue on page 1163 to see differing opinions about men, women, and love. How might the structure of a play provide a different picture of a marriage?

## **A** FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE

Reread lines 5–7. How does the poet use **hyperbole** in these lines to emphasize her feelings for her husband?

## **B** CLARIFY MEANING

Use conventional word order to restate the **inverted syntax** in lines 11–12. What relationship do the lines suggest between earthly love and eternal life?

## Analyze Visuals ►

Many Puritan women stitched samplers like the one shown here. The samplers often depicted nature scenes or stories from the Bible. What values are suggested by the subject matter of the sampler?

1. **recompense** (rĕk'əm-pĕns'): payment in return for something, such as a service.
2. **persevere**: In Bradstreet's time, *persevere* would have been pronounced pŭr-sev'er, which rhymes with *ever*.









# *Upon the Burning of Our House, July 10th, 1666*

Anne Bradstreet

In silent night when rest I took  
For sorrow near I did not look  
I wakened was with thund'ring noise  
And piteous shrieks of dreadful voice.  
5 That fearful sound of "Fire!" and "Fire!"  
Let no man know is my desire. **C**

I, starting up, the light did spy,  
And to my God my heart did cry  
To strengthen me in my distress  
10 And not to leave me succorless.<sup>1</sup>  
Then, coming out, beheld a space  
The flame consume my dwelling place.

And when I could no longer look,  
I blest His name that gave and took,<sup>2</sup>  
15 That laid my goods now in the dust:  
Yea, so it was, and so 'twas just.  
It was His own, it was not mine,  
Far be it that I should repine;<sup>3</sup>

## **C CLARIFY MEANING**

**Paraphrase** lines 1–6 to clarify their meaning. How does the poet use contrast to convey a sense of fear?

## **Language Coach**

**Meanings of Idioms** The phrase "Far be it" in line 18 is an **idiom**, an expression whose overall meaning is different from that of the individual words. "Far be it" means "I wouldn't dare to..." How does the speaker view herself in relation to God?

1. **succorless** (sŭk'ər-lŭs): without help or relief.

2. **I...took**: an allusion to Job 1:21 in the Bible—"The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord."

3. **repine**: to complain or fret; to long for something.

He might of all justly bereft,  
 20 But yet sufficient for us left.  
 When by the ruins oft I past,  
 My sorrowing eyes aside did cast,  
 And here and there the places spy  
 Where oft I sat and long did lie:

25 Here stood that trunk and there that chest,  
 There lay that store I counted best.  
 My pleasant things in ashes lie,  
 And them behold no more shall I.  
 Under thy roof no guest shall sit,  
 30 Nor at thy table eat a bit.

No pleasant tale shall e'er be told,  
 Nor things recounted done of old.  
 No candle e'er shall shine in thee,  
 Nor bridegroom's voice e'er heard shall be.  
 35 In silence ever shalt thou lie;  
 Adieu, Adieu, all's vanity.<sup>4</sup>

Then straight I 'gin my heart to chide,<sup>5</sup>  
 And did thy wealth on earth abide?  
 Didst fix thy hope on mold'ring dust? **D**  
 40 The arm of flesh didst make thy trust?  
 Raise up thy thoughts above the sky  
 That dunghill mists away may fly.

Thou hast an house on high erect,  
 Framed by that mighty Architect,  
 45 With glory richly furnishéd,  
 Stands permanent though this be fled.  
 It's purchaséd and paid for too  
 By Him who hath enough to do. **E**

A price so vast as is unknown  
 50 Yet by His gift is made thine own;  
 There's wealth enough, I need no more,  
 Farewell, my pelf,<sup>6</sup> farewell my store.  
 The world no longer let me love,  
 My hope and treasure lies above.

4. **all's vanity**: an allusion to Ecclesiastes 1:2 in the Bible—"All is vanity," meaning that all is temporary and meaningless.

5. **chide**: to scold mildly so as to correct or improve.

6. **pelf**: wealth or riches, especially when dishonestly acquired.



#### TEKS 7

#### **D ALLUSION**

Bradstreet's Puritan readers were well acquainted with the language of the King James translation of the Bible, the authoritative English translation of their time. As daily readers of the Bible, they would have recognized numerous **biblical allusions** in the language of her poems. In the word *dust* (lines 15 and 39), they would have heard a reference to the Book of Genesis: "Dust thou art and unto dust shalt thou return." Reread lines 13–39. Then, check the footnote for the biblical allusion in line 36. How does this allusion work with the allusion in the word *dust* to express Bradstreet's theme in this poem? Explain your response.

#### **E FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE**

Reread lines 43–48. What two things does Bradstreet compare in the **metaphor** in these lines?



# Huswifery

Edward Taylor



Make me, O Lord, Thy spinning wheel complete.  
Thy holy word my distaff<sup>1</sup> make for me.  
Make mine affections Thy swift flyers<sup>2</sup> neat,  
And make my soul Thy holy spool to be.  
5 My conversation make to be Thy reel,  
And reel the yarn thereon spun of Thy wheel. **F**

Make me Thy loom then, knit therein this twine:  
And make Thy holy spirit, Lord, wind quills:<sup>3</sup>  
Then weave the web Thyself. The yarn is fine.  
10 Thine ordinances make my fulling mills.<sup>4</sup>  
Then dye the same in heavenly colors choice,  
All pinked<sup>5</sup> with varnished flowers of paradise.

Then clothe therewith mine understanding, will,  
Affections, judgment, conscience, memory;  
15 My words and actions, that their shine may fill  
My ways with glory and Thee glorify.  
Then mine apparel shall display before Ye  
That I am clothed in holy robes for glory. **G**

## **F CLARIFY MEANING**

*Huswifery* means “housekeeping.” What housekeeping activity is being described in lines 1–6?

## **G FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE**

What **extended metaphor** does Taylor use throughout the poem to express his relationship to God?

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1. **distaff**: staff on a spinning wheel for holding the wool or flax to be spun.
  2. **flyers**: parts of spinning wheels that twist fibers into yarn.
  3. **quills**: rods or spindles used to wind and hold yarn.
  4. **fulling mills**: machines that beat and process woven cloth to make it denser and more compact.
  5. **pinked**: decorated.

## Comprehension

1. **Recall** In “To My Dear and Loving Husband,” what does the speaker value more than gold?
2. **Recall** When the speaker in “Upon the Burning of Our House” wakes up to find her house on fire, what is her initial reaction?
3. **Clarify** The speaker in Taylor’s “Huswifery” compares himself to a loom. Who or what is compared to the weaver?



**READING 3** Understand the structure and elements of poetry. Analyze the effects of metrics, rhyme schemes, and other conventions in American poetry. **7** Understand how sensory language creates imagery. Analyze the meaning of biblical allusions in words, phrases, passages, and literary works. **RC-11(A)** Reflect on understanding to monitor comprehension.

## Literary Analysis

4. **Clarify Meaning** Review the examples of **archaic language** and **inverted syntax** you recorded as you read the poems. How would you restate lines 19–20 of “Upon the Burning of Our House”: “He might of all justly bereft, / But yet sufficient for us left”?
5. **Draw Conclusions** Use details from the two poems by Anne Bradstreet to explain what she reveals about her
  - marriage
  - religious beliefs
  - daily life
6. **Make Inferences** What did Bradstreet **value** more than her house? How did this help her accept the loss of her house by fire?
7. **Analyze Figurative Language** How do the “holy robes for glory” mentioned in line 18 of “Huswifery” complete the poem’s **extended metaphor**?
8. **Compare Literary Works** What do the poems by Bradstreet and Taylor have in common? What distinguishes one poet’s work from the other’s? In a chart like the one shown, compare and contrast the poets’ work, noting the religious views expressed, the formality of each poet’s **style**, and the personality revealed. Use specific details from the poems to complete the chart.

	<i>Bradstreet</i>	<i>Taylor</i>
<i>Religious Views</i>		
<i>Style</i>		
<i>Personality</i>		

## Literary Criticism

9. **Examine Social Context** The Puritans strongly disapproved of women writers. A Puritan minister even wrote a letter to his sister in England saying, “Your printing of a book, beyond the custom of your sex, doth rankly smell.” In spite of this disapproval, do you think the Puritan community would have considered any aspects of Anne Bradstreet’s poetry praiseworthy? Explain your answer.

*What do you **VALUE** most?*

Consider the various things that people value in modern society. What might the Puritans think of some modern values? What do you think of modern values?