

At Dusk

by Natasha Trethewey

At first I think she is calling a child,
my neighbor, leaning through her doorway
at dusk, street lamps just starting to hum
the backdrop of evening. Then I hear
5 the high-pitched wheedling¹ we send out
to animals who know only sound, not
the meanings of our words—*here here*—
nor how they sometimes fall short.
In another yard, beyond my neighbor’s
10 sight, the cat lifts her ears, turns first
toward the voice, then back
to the constellation of fireflies flickering
near her head. It’s as if she can’t decide
whether to leap over the low hedge,
15 the neat row of flowers, and bound
onto the porch, into the steady circle
of light, or stay where she is: luminous
possibility—all that would keep her
away from home—flitting before her.
20 I listen as my neighbor’s voice trails off.
She’s given up calling for now, left me
to imagine her inside the house waiting,
perhaps in a chair in front of the TV,
or walking around, doing small tasks;
25 left me to wonder that I too might lift
my voice, sure of someone out there,
send it over the lines stitching here
to there, certain the sounds I make
are enough to call someone home.

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¹**wheedling:** speaking in a flattering manner

19. Which lines from the poem **best** support the idea that the neighbor’s efforts to call the cat home directly affect the speaker?
- A. “At first I think she is calling a child, / my neighbor” (lines 1–2)
 - B. “the high-pitched wheedling we send out / to animals who know only sound” (lines 5–6)
 - C. “I listen as my neighbor’s voice trails off. / She’s given up calling for now” (lines 20–21)
 - D. “left me to wonder that I too might lift / my voice, sure of someone out there” (lines 25–26)
20. The isolation of the words “—*here here*—” in line 7 contributes to the meaning of the poem **mainly** by
- E. demonstrating how people try to communicate in familiar ways but are still sometimes misunderstood.
 - F. showing how people can feel desperate to connect with others but give up quickly when their first attempts are ignored.
 - G. using the unspoken bond between the neighbor and her cat to highlight the understanding people have with their pets.
 - H. illustrating the use of a simple expression to call home those who are loved and missed.
21. The details in lines 10–17 about the cat convey a central idea of the poem by
- A. showing that returning home after experiencing independence is challenging.
 - B. suggesting that caring for others means allowing them to grow and to roam freely.
 - C. implying that expecting to feel at home in the natural world leads to disappointment.
 - D. emphasizing the conflicting desires to return to the familiar and to explore the unknown.
22. The phrases “luminous possibility” and “all that would keep her / away from home” (lines 17–19) affect the poem by
- E. highlighting the cat’s lack of concern for the neighbor.
 - F. implying that the speaker finds the cat’s current situation interesting.
 - G. suggesting that the cat is compelled by its sense of wonder to remain outdoors.
 - H. indicating that the speaker supports the cat’s decision to ignore the neighbor.

23. Read lines 11–13 from the poem.

**toward the voice, then back
to the constellation of fireflies flickering
near her head**

Which idea from the poem does the imagery in these lines help convey?

- A. The cat lacks a preference for going in or staying out.
- B. The cat is eager to see what will happen next.
- C. The cat wants to understand the unpredictable behavior of the fireflies.
- D. The cat is fascinated by the natural world and finds the indoors unremarkable.

24. How does the setting affect the events of the poem?

- E. It enables the speaker to regularly overhear the neighbor calling for her cat at dusk.
- F. It allows the speaker to observe the neighbor quietly without interacting with her.
- G. It shows how living in close proximity helps the speaker feel connected to the neighbor.
- H. It shows how feeling isolated causes the speaker to imagine interactions with the neighbor.

25. The poet develops a theme about making connections with others **mainly** through the

- A. exploration of the desires of the speaker and the neighbor.
- B. speaker’s observations of the sights and sounds in the neighborhood.
- C. speculations the speaker makes about what the neighbor does inside her house.
- D. speaker’s explanation of the cat’s thoughts and actions.