

# “Where I’m From” Annotation Task

1. Number each stanza
2. Read the poem again, 1 stanza at a time.
3. Highlight & define terms you don’t know.
4. In the right margin, summarize the stanza’s **literal meaning**. Try to do this in 10 words or less.
5. To the right of each summary, dig deeper.
  - Note **literary devices that the author is using (especially symbolism, metaphor, imagery)**. Then, *analyze* the impact of these choices. How do they deepen the meaning of the author’s piece?
  - **Ask questions** about the author’s choices or about points that you find confusing. Attempt to answer these questions by referring to other parts of the poem or by discussing them with your partner.

# Sample Annotated Poem

**Brooklyn Cop**  
by Norman MacCaig

NY borough  
 • most populous borough of NY  
 • poorer area

u.s. slang for police man

simile — Built like a gorilla but less timid, suggests he is brave, but brutal

tells us he is big and strong — a stereotypical image of a NY cop.  
 thick-fleshed, steak-coloured, with two hieroglyphs in his face that mean — he is seeking out violence.  
 trouble, he walks the sidewalk and the thin tissue over violence. This morning, Hieroglyphs = ancient carvings, suggest face like stone, hard. could also suggest hard to read.  
 when he said, "See you, babe" to his wife, the divide between civilization + violence is only ever paper thin.  
 he hoped it, he truly hoped it. tender associations

metaphor — He is a gorilla  
 to whom "Hiya, honey" is no cliché. — something that has been overused so much that it loses its effect.  
 Should the tissue tear, should he plunge through — suggest falling quickly, uncontrollably, into violence  
 into violence, what clubbings, what gunshots between Phoebe's Whamburger and Louie's Place. — sound like they could be mafia hangouts

Who would be him, gorilla with a nightstick, — (truncheon) stereotypical police would carry a gun, as you can keep your distance. The nightstick suggests he may enjoy being able to use it against criminals, enjoys the violence.  
whose home is a place  
he might, this time, never get back to?

And who would be who have to be his victims?  
 Ambiguous rhetorical question.

Stanza One — build up an almost cartoon-like image of a stereotypical cop. Brutish, strong, stony faced, etc. However, it hints at a more tender side when he is at home.

Stanza Two — Shows how quickly the cop could be thrust from safety into chaos, suggest that violence is always present.

Stanza Three — Tone changes and moves from descriptive → reflective.