

Name: _____ Date: _____

Analyzing Poetry

Below is Jennifer Dignan's poem "What My Name Means." Read the poem a few times. Then answer the questions on the next page. This activity is meant to be completed in partners, in groups, or as a class.

What My Name Means by Jennifer Dignan



Go to
Scope Online
to hear this
poem read
aloud.

- 1 My sister thinks my name means
"sharer of back seats and secrets."
My mom thinks my name means
"needs a lot of rides to gymnastics" and
5 "loves comic books, like me."
My dad thinks my name means
"weirdly obsessed with that band Imagine Dragons" and
"loves corny jokes, like me."
My cat thinks my name means "always good for a snuggle."
10 My best friend thinks my name means
"tells me the truth no matter what; best giggle in the world."
My art teacher thinks my name means "gifted."
My music teacher thinks my name means
"definitely tries hard."
15 My neighbor thinks my name means
"kid who cuts the grass."
My dentist thinks my name means
"kid who needs to floss."
I think
20 there's some stuff that they left out, like
"dreams of life in a big city" and
"lies awake at night sometimes,
worrying about the whales" and
"having doubts about gymnastics" and
25 "loves nothing more than to close her eyes
and listen to the rain."

Directions: Work with your partner or group to answer the following questions. There are no right or wrong answers!

1 Many first names have a meaning based on their origins. For example, Julia means "youthful," David means "beloved," and Margaret means "pearl." In this poem, the speaker says what different people in her life think her name "means." But the speaker doesn't mean that these people *literally* think her name means the things she says.

What does the speaker mean when she says that someone thinks her name means something?

2 What do you notice about the people the speaker mentions in the poem? For example, are they all people who know her? How well do they know her? What do you notice about the order in which these people are listed?

3 What do lines 1-2 reveal about the speaker and her sister? Explain.

4 Reread lines 3-8. What do the lines about the speaker's mom have in common with the lines about the speaker's dad? Why do you think the speaker might have chosen to do this?

5 Consider lines 6-7: "My dad thinks my name means/weirdly obsessed with that band Imagine Dragons." How do the lines tell you something about both the speaker and her dad?

6 The speaker says that her mom thinks her name means "needs a lot of rides to gymnastics." Why do you think the speaker's mom thinks this? Would it make sense for the speaker's neighbor or dentist to think this? Explain.

7 In your own words, explain what lines 12-14 reveal about the speaker.

8 Now consider lines 19-26, in which the speaker reveals what she thinks her name means. How are these meanings of the speaker's name different from all the other meanings listed in the poem?

9 Does the speaker seem to agree with the way other people see her? Explain