

Discussion Questions for “Eating Poetry”

Normally we say that we read poetry. What is Strand emphasizing by saying that the speaker is eating poetry? How is reading poetry the same as eating?

The librarian plays a key role in the poem, appearing several times even though the poem is short. We know also nothing about the librarian except that she’s a librarian. Why could that be important? Do you associate certain things with librarians versus say comedians? How would this poem read if the librarian was a comedian instead? Do you think the speaker of the poem (the “I”) and the librarian are similar? Do they both expect the same thing from poetry?

What happens to the speaker when he eats poetry? Do you have any experiences that bring out your animal-side? Do you become more like an animal when you are shopping? driving? dancing? What does it say about an activity that it brings out your animal side?

For Mark Strand, what should poetry do? What is his aesthetic criteria for a good poem? How is it the same or different from what you think of when you think of reading poetry?