

Raul Mogena

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Leslie Carpenter

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Polished Reader Response Essay

“Wild Geese,” by Mary Oliver opens by speaking directly to the reader with a line that feels like comfort and support: “You do not have to be good” (Oliver 1). The speaker moves to addressing that we don't need to suffer and punish ourselves regretting all our life. “You do not have to walk on your knees / for a hundred miles through the desert repenting” (Oliver 2-3). Instead, you can pay attention to your heart and do whatever you want without worries, do those things that you truly love. “You only have to let the soft animal of your body / love what it loves” (Oliver 4-5). After this the author talks more about nature. The sun, rain, mountains, rivers and the wild geese heading home to demonstrate that life and the world continue alongside our pain. These simple choices make the poem feel emotionally safe and calm. The writer uses interesting choices of diction, organization, and rhythm. Mary Oliver's diction is simple and caring. The words used show love and care to make readers feel calm rather than confused or stressed. The organization of the poem of using clear words and moving from addressing personal things to connecting with nature makes a feeling of importance and being welcome to a home. The rhythm of the short lines and repeated words for example, “meanwhile”, makes the poem feel what really are the important things we should care about and that everything keeps moving no matter what is happening in the world. Also, rhetorically the use of the phrase “whoever you are” makes the reader feel included and the message of the poem more stronger. The tone that the writer conveys is gentle, calming, and supportive by the way it makes the reader think and feel. My

favorite lines are “you do not have to be good” and “You only have to let the soft animal of your body / love what it loves”, because it makes me feel relaxed and motivated for the things that i really want to do.

After reading “*Wild Geese*”, by Mary Oliver, it made me feel supported and motivated. The first line that the writer used reminds me of my grandmother's gentle voice that taught that I don't need to be perfect and that I am not alone. The line about not walking on your knees evokes memories of me trying to act sorry to please others, even when I was just tired. The phrase "soft animal of your body” makes me feel and think of things that make me calm like music, food, or a cold shower. The geese flying in the blue sky heading home makes me imagine a wonderful sky like heaven that feels peaceful. It creates an image of freedom and beauty where you can do whatever you want. Overall, I really liked the poem because it makes me feel strong and free. It gives reasons why humans should enjoy life and don't let bad days turn into a bad life.

The choices of Mary Oliver and peaceful imagery in the poem cause my reactions to it. Talking directly to you makes you feel supported in a way that can really change your way of view things in your life. The way the poem started talking about your personal self and then about nature shows that pain is part of a larger world, so this means it cannot consume everything. “Meanwhile the world goes on” (Oliver 7). The repeated word “meanwhile” means for me a way to ignore negative thoughts and think positively, which helps me to keep going. For me the meaning of the poem is to take everything calmly and step by step and to accept yourself for who you are. This work is about giving a clear and strong reminder to people to not give up. Accept yourself, follow what you love, and remember that you don't need to have everything

accomplished right away. The speaker's peaceful choices of words make me realize that I should not be worried a lot and enjoy the moments that really matter to me.

Work Cited Oliver, Mary. "*Wild Geese*" http://www.phys.unm.edu/~tw/fas/yits/archive/oliver_wildgeese.html. Accessed 30 Sept. 2025.