

“What is a Home?” by Mosab Abu Toha

Author Bio:

Mosab Abu Toha is a Palestinian poet, short story writer, and essayist from Gaza, Palestine. His works reflect the experience of living in a besieged country and he writes to record what his community has been facing for decades. He states, “I don’t care how many people read my poetry. I only care about the many stories, screams and tears my eyes and ears manage to keep alive and put into words so others never forget.”¹ His debut collection of poetry, *Things You May Find Hidden in My Ear: Poems from Gaza*, was published in 2022 by City Lights Books, a San Francisco-based bookstore-publisher combination.



Background and Historical Context:

The Gaza Strip of Palestine has been under blockade by Israel since 2007, severely restricting access to essential resources and hindering economic prosperity. Life in Gaza is marked by significant hardship, with 70 percent of residents classified as refugees and over 80 percent living below the national poverty line.²

These conditions, characterized by the denial of many basic human rights, culminated in an attack by Hamas on Israel on October 7, resulting in the deaths of over 1200 civilians and the abduction of over 200 people. In response, Israel launched a military campaign on Gaza, leading to the direct deaths of over 37,000 Palestinians (32 percent of which were children), the internal displacement of 1.7 million people, and over 1.1 million people facing “catastrophic levels of food insecurity.” The conflict also resulted in the destruction of more than 70,000 housing units.³



On October 29, 2023, Abu Toha used Instagram to shed light on what has become of his own family’s home which an Israeli rocket has reduced to rubble. He later shares the poem we are about to read with a simple request written in the caption: “Please save this poem, recite to the people around you and tell them what happened to my home, and the homes of so many other people? Tell them some families were buried under the rubble.”⁴

Literary Terms:

Metaphor: a figure of speech that makes a direct comparison between two unlike things without using “like” or “as.”

Imagery: the author’s use of **descriptive language** to **create vivid sensory experiences** for the reader. It appeals to the five senses—**sight, sound, smell, taste, and touch**—helping to paint a picture in the reader’s mind and evoke emotions.

¹ Abdellmahmoud, Elamin, and Mosab Abo Toha. “A Palestinian Poet on the Role of Art in the Israel-Hamas War.” *CBC News*, 10 Apr. 2024, Accessed 24 June 2024.

² “Gaza_15 Years of Blockade.” *United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East*, www.unrwa.org/gaza15-years-blockade. Accessed 24 June 2024.

³ “Reported Impact Snapshot | Gaza Strip (19 June 2024).” United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, 19 June 2024, www.ochaopt.org/content/reported-impact-snapshot-gaza-strip-19-june-2024.

⁴ Abu Toha, Mosab. “What is a Home?” Instagram, 29 Oct. 2024, https://www.instagram.com/p/Cy_aZElovmY/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link&igsh=MzRIODBiNWFIZA==.

Part I: TPCASTT Analysis

Directions: As you read the poem with your partner, use the [TPCASTT](#) method and the highlighting key to guide your analysis of the poem. Divide up the work evenly and let me know who did what.

Listen, Speak, and Learn.

Highlighting Key:
Metaphors: Blue
Imagery: Underline

“What is a home?”

TPCASTT

1. What is home:
2. It is the shade of trees on my way to school before
3. they were uprooted.
4. It is my grandparents’ black-and-white wedding photo before
5. the walls crumbled.
6. It is my uncle’s prayer rug, where dozens of ants slept
7. on wintry nights, before it was looted and
8. put in a museum.
9. It is the oven my mother used to bake bread and roast chicken
10. before a bomb reduced our house to
11. ashes.
12. It is the café where I watched football matches and
13. played –
14. My child stops me: Can a four-letter word hold all of
15. these?

Recorder: _____

Title:

Recorder: _____

Paraphrase (at least 5 Sentences):

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

Recorder: _____

Connotation:

- **Metaphor:** The speaker compares their home to many things like _____.
- **Imagery:** Many of the images presented are of _____. Together, they communicate _____.

Recorder: _____

Attitude (go [here](#) for words describing attitude):

Recorder: _____

Shifts:

Recorder: _____

Title Revisited:

Recorder: _____

Theme (1 Sentence):

Part II: Answer Post Reading Questions

Directions: Answer the following questions thoughtfully and in complete sentences.

1. How does the speaker define home in the poem?

Answer:
2. What role do sentimental objects play in shaping the speaker’s identity?

Answer:
3. What has become of these object, the trees, homes, and community spaces? How is the speaker’s identity impacted by their destruction?

Answer:
4. What is the significance of the speaker sharing these memories with their son?

Answer:
5. What central theme or message does the poem convey through its imagery and metaphors?

Answer:

Part III: Paragraph Practice

Directions: Answer the following prompt by making a strong **claim and so what**. Then **color code** it to make sure you have all the components of a strong claim.

Prompt: What message is Abo Toha trying to convey through his use of metaphors in the poem?	
<u>Claim</u> Recorder:	Abu Toha uses metaphors to compare _____ to _____ because _____, demonstrating how _____.
<u>Integrated Quote 1</u> & <u>Analysis</u> Recorder:	
<u>Integrated Quote 2</u> & <u>Analysis</u> Recorder:	
<u>Restated Claim</u> Recorder:	

