

Name _____

Teacher Name _____

Class _____

Date _____

Poet Spotlight: Sharon Olds

“The Possessive”

My daughter –as if I
owned her –the girl with the
hair wispy as a frayed bellpull

has been to the barber, that knife grinder,
and had the edge of her hair sharpened.

Each strand now cuts
both ways. The blade of new bangs
hangs over her red-brown eyes
like carbon steel

All the little
spliced ropes are sliced. The curtain of
dark paper-cuts veils the face that
started from next to nothing in my body-

My body. My daughter. I’ll have to find
another word. In her bright helmet
she looks at me as if across a
great distance. Distant fires can be
glimpsed in the resin lights of her eyes:

the watch fires of an enemy, a while before
the war starts.



1. Read the following definition of stanza. Then, answer the question below in a full sentence.

◆ **Stanza**

an arrangement of a certain number of lines, usually four or more, sometimes having a fixed length, meter, or rhyme scheme, forming a division of a poem.

How many stanzas are in the poem?

2. The “possessive” is a grammatical term indicating ownership. How is the idea of ownership that is introduced in the title developed further in the poem?

3. By the final stanza, according to the speaker, the daughter has become an “enemy” who awaits a “war” (lines 19-20). In what way is the haircut part of the preparation for this war?
