# The Swimmer's Moment

**Margaret Avison**  
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For everyone  
The swimmer's moment at the whirlpool comes,  
But many at that moment will not say  
"This is the whirlpool, then."  
By their refusal they are saved  
From the black pit, and also from contesting  
The deadly rapids, and emerging in  
The mysterious, and more ample, further waters.  
And so their bland-blank faces turn and turn  
Pale and forever on the rim of suction  
They will not recognize.  
Of those who dare the knowledge  
Many are whirled into the ominous centre  
That, gaping vertical, seals up  
For them an eternal boon of privacy,  
So that we turn away from their defeat  
With a despair, not for their deaths, but for  
Ourselves, who cannot penetrate their secret  
Nor even guess at the anonymous breadth  
Where one or two have won:  
(The silver reaches of the estuary).

1. Explicate the poem. Rewrite the poem line by line in prose. (Do not interpret the poem for this exercise)
2. What is the tone of the poem? Discuss which words convey the tone.
3. Make a list of the imagery and explain the metaphorical meaning of the image.
4. What is the purpose of the poem? Theme? Why is it significant?