

# *Unseen Poetry*

*'Fifteen' by William Stafford*



# Personification

- ▶ shiny flanks
- ▶ shy headlights
- ▶ grass-fringed
- ▶ led it gently
- ▶ companion
- ▶ friendly
- ▶ we
- ▶ patting the handle got a confident response
- ▶ tremble





- ▶ The poet describes the motorbike as if it were a horse or another living creature that would somehow be complicit in his bid for freedom.
- ▶ The word 'we' makes it seem as if he and the motorbike share the same dream.
- ▶ The bike is a 'companion' and is 'ready and friendly'.
- ▶ It gives him a 'confident response' when he pats the handle, much as a willing horse may do.



# Structure

- ▶ Think of 'Tich Miller'. What is the effect of the last line standing on its own?
- ▶ The last line of the poem stands alone, just as the boy does on the road when the motorbike owner has roared away.
- ▶ The comma before the word 'fifteen' focuses our attention on the word. It reminds us of the boy's keen awareness of his youth and his desire to be old enough to ride a bike.
- ▶ The last word echoes the title of the poem, stressing the importance of the boy's age. He is old enough to want to ride the motorbike, but too young to do so.



# Personal Response

- ▶ Could relate to the poem because it is about a boy my age and it focuses on his desire to be older than he is and to be able to do things he cannot yet do.
- ▶ Enjoyed the moral dilemma and was pleased that the boy made the right decision.
- ▶ Was interested in the fact that the moment of choice happened on a bridge: I think this symbolises the divide between youth and adulthood.
- ▶ Language was straightforward and easy to understand.

