

Poetry Analysis & Guided Questions

“The American Spinning Wheel” by Elizabeth Graeme Fergusson

Who is the author of the poem?

What year was the poem written?

What was Elizabeth Fergusson’s opinion on the war?

How are women portrayed in society according to this poem?

Are there any gender restrictions Fergusson points out? Did men have the same restrictions as women?

What kind of imagery does Fergusson use?

Why does Fergusson use the “spinning wheel” as a symbol of independence for women?

Spinning cloth was a job many women had during this period. How did this job impact social and economic contributions to the American Revolution?

What is the main idea? What is she saying about the role of women in the war effort?

How does Fergusson capture the culture and lifestyle of women in the Revolutionary Era?

An “Elegy” by Anna Young Smith

Who is the author of the poem?

What year was the poem written?

What is an elegy?

What historical event of the American Revolution is Anna Young describing?

What was Anna Young’s opinion on the war?

Where in the poem does Young affirm her political stances? Is she a loyalist or patriot?

Why do you think Young did not use her real name and instead uses “Sylvia” as her pen name? Is it a sign of empowerment? Why or why not?

What kind of imagery does Young use? Does Young’s poem have a sense of national pride?

How can we connect Young’s poem to any social changes women were undergoing at the time?

Follow-up Questions

Do you believe women writers, such as Young and Fergusson, shaped the voice of the Revolutionary Era? Why or why not?

Why is it important to read first-hand historical accounts?