

Poet: amy gerstler

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Poet: Amy Gerstler Title: Advice from a Caterpillar Part 1> Your visceral/gut level/emotional response to the poem after one (or two) readings. After reading the poem, I felt that it was very sassy. I interpreted it as a life lesson, and to never dwell on your past mistakes. The poem was short, sweet, and easily understood. I really enjoyed this poem; it reminded me of how I want to live my life. Part 2> Everything you can tease out about the way the poem is made: include details of structure, form, language. The structure of the poem is one left justified stanza. There is enjambment on lines two, four, five, six, eight, nine, eleven, twelve, and fifteen. In the third the line the word " everything" is italicized, this is the only word that sticks out. The speaker uses hard punctuation using periods and commas. There is no formal rhyme scheme. The speaker is using an extended metaphor and is personifying a caterpillar. The poem is instructional. None of the pieces of advice the speaker suggests are repeated, implying they are of equal importance (except for the italicized " everything"). There is some use of alliteration throughout the poem, such as in line eight, with " crumpling" and " climbing, " and in lines 12-13, with " cryptically, " " confuse, " " change, " and " colors. " The structure of the poem mirrors the sentence structure: short and concise. Part 3> Do a close reading/interpretation of the poem, including both your initial reaction and how that has been modified/expanded by closer study. You should present the poem, both its literal meaning and any other interpretations that have arisen from your meeting with it. Initially, I thought the poem was simply about not dwelling on the past. After further readings, I realized that even though it has a short and sweet format the poem can be interpreted as much more. Literally, the poem is about a

caterpillar giving advice to the audience, but it is clearly a metaphor. Not only does the poem talk about forgetting your mistakes, it talks about growing as a person. The poem offers advice for dealing with future problems, it does so with humor. The humor is found when the speaker says, " When threatened, emit foul odors/ in self-defense, " (11-12) and again when the speaker says, " If all else fails, taste terrible" (14). By using humor, the speaker is implying that life should not be taken so seriously. Because the speaker is a caterpillar, the audience can imply that it will turn into a butterfly. From this, I see that no matter how bad life is something beautiful may come about.