

You can have it

[Literature](#), [Poetry](#)



Philip Levine writes as though he is from a hard working middle class family geared toward the more highly educated class. Levine directs his poetry towards the higher class, through personal relationships and by showing pride and respectability in manual labor. Levine wants the more educated to know that even though the lower class may not have the most respectable jobs, they still take pride in their work because it supports their family. By using personal relationships, Levine emphasizes the how much pride the working class takes in their jobs.

Levine writes as though he is from a hard working middle class family, who works day after day just to make it through life and support the family. Although he is writing from this perspective, his work is actually geared more toward a more highly educated group. Levine wants the higher class to know just how lucky they are. Most people of high stature have never really had a hard manual-laboring job. Its true that most people of this class do not know what hard work is or how it feels to have to struggle to find a job and care for themselves and a family.

In the poem, *What Work Is*, Levine writes, " if you're/ old enough to read this you know what/ work is, although you may not do it. / Forget you. " In these lines, Levine is saying that the more educated group may know the definition of the word work but they have never really experienced it. This is even further shown in the last line when the man says, " you don't know what work is. " The man in the poem *You Can Have It*, is relating to us college students and remembering for himself what it was like to be twenty.

We were twenty/ for such a short time and always in/ the wrong clothes, crusted with dirt/ and sweat. I think now we were never twenty. " Twenty year-olds are living the life that this man never had but wishes that he could have had it. He wants the higher class to realize what other people go through and just how easy life really is. In the last line, he says " You can have it. " Here he wishes to give back everything from the past thirty years just to be twenty one more time, not work and just have his youth back. In all of Levine's poems, the narrator is proud of his work no matter what job he has.

In Starlight, a four year-old boy is watching his father relax on the porch and smoke a cigarette after a long rigorous day of work. The father after seeing the child and the beautiful things that he works for, he can proudly answer that he is happy with a head nod, " Yes! oh yes! oh yes! " He is proud to work hard to support his family. Every child looks up to its parents. In the beginning of this poem the son seems to be timid about bothering his father while he is relaxing but by the end, the son feels right at his fathers level " among the stars.

He is proud to have his father and know that he is an honest hard working man and looks up to him as if he were a the brightest of all stars. The poem You Can Have It also describes the pride that another man takes in his job even if it is only in a factory. In the third stanza of the poem Levine talks about a man and his brother saying that " they are only one man/ sharing a heart that always labors, hands/ yellowed and cracked. " Their heart is in their work, even if it is not the most respectable job.

Although they talk about the hands being yellowed and cracked, I think it is in a good way. They are proud to have these marks of their hard work to support themselves. This is what they have to do to make it through life and they are proud to do it. In many of his poems, Levine uses many personal relationships to highlight the themes in each poem. In Levine's poem, *What Work Is*, the man is waiting in line trying to get a job.

He is very upset refusing to give in but " waiting, / to the knowledge that somewhere ahead/ a man is waiting who will say, " No, / we're not hiring today. He has been in this place before and although he is annoyed at the fact that he cannot get a job, he is also proud to be standing there waiting to get a job. He would be proud to have a job working in a factory or anywhere. Whereas this man would be proud to have a job in a factory, his brother is working at the Cadillac factory but is trying to gain a higher status and have what he would consider a respectable job. The brother is not proud to be working in a factory and is therefore studying German to be an opera singer, in which he would be highly regarded.

Levine brings out the father and son relationship in *Starlight* to show a sense of not only pride in his work but also happiness and an escape from the daily struggles that the father faces. After a long day of hard work, the father finds an escape in returning to his family and being away from his job. Just holding his son up there with him for that one minute gives him a sense of happiness and helps him to forget all the troubles of that day. Seeing his son happy and admiring him so much makes the father feel a sense of worth and pride in his job.

Philip Levine writes as though he is from a hard working middle class family who works very hard just to make it through life and support the family. He wants the higher class to know how lucky they are and what struggles the less educated go through. In all of the poems, the narrator is proud of his work no matter what job he has, even if it is only in a factory. By using personal relationships throughout his poems, Levine highlights the fact that all the people take pride in their work.