

# Not Yet My Mother

Owen Sheers

## Pre-reading



1. Look at this photograph and think about what it tells you.
  - Are the people in the photograph related? If so, how? If not, why are they together?
  - When was the picture taken?
  - In which country might it have been taken?
  - What time of the year was the picture taken?
  - Who might have taken the photo?
  - Where might this photograph be kept?
  - What colours would be seen if this picture wasn't in black and white?

2. The title of the poem you are going to read is 'Not Yet My Mother'.

- What do you think the title refers to?
- What might this have to do with a photograph?
- Who is the poem addressing?

3. In the poem, the poet has been looking at an old photo. Here are some individual lines from the poem. What does it tell you about what can be seen in the photo the poet is looking at?

of you at seventeen

.....

The tight riding hat hid your hair

.....

your hand a fist under its huge jaw

.....

and the sky grained by the old film stock

.....

And I thought, just for a second, that you were me.

.....

and smiling, not yet my mother,

.....

4. Vocabulary. Here is some specialised vocabulary that will help you understand the poem. Match the words to the correct parts of the pictures.

Jodhpurs

Riding hat

Shin

Jaw

Halter



# Not Yet My Mother

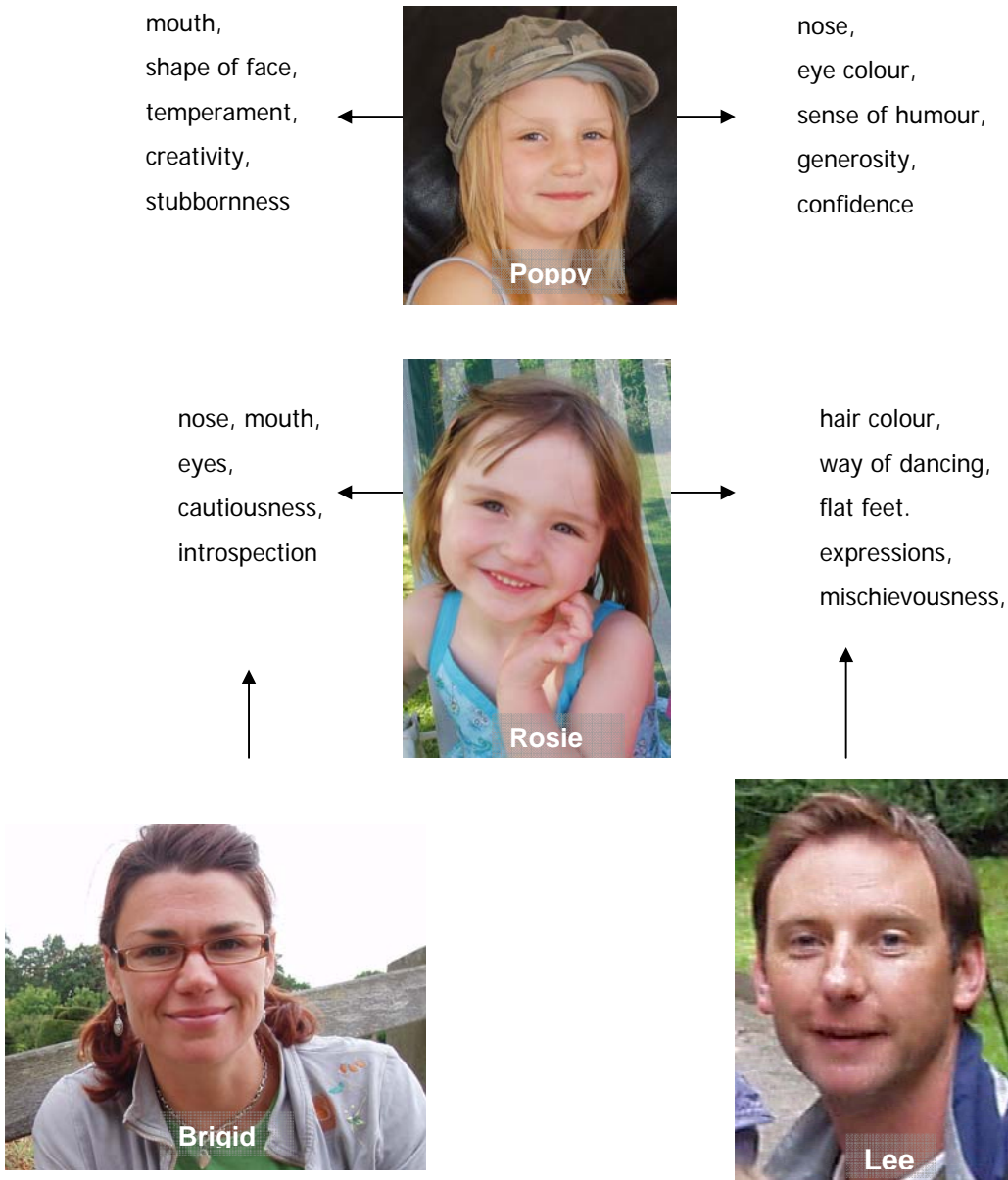
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## Context

but what caught me was your face,  
which was mine.  
And I thought, just for a second, that you were me.

The poet saw himself in the photograph of his mother. This is the key moment in the poem when he sees the connection between himself and the time captured by the photograph before he was born. He recognised his family.

1. Here is a diagram of a family, and the connections between the parents and their children, as seen by the parents.



2. Answer these questions.

1. What are the facial characteristics that Brigid and Poppy have in common?
2. What is the behavioural characteristic that Lee and Rosie have in common?
3. What are the facial characteristics that Lee and Poppy have in common?
4. What are the behavioural characteristics that Brigid and Rosie have in common?
5. What are the behavioural characteristics that Lee and Poppy have in common?
6. What are the facial characteristics that Brigid and Rosie have in common?

3. **A Project.** This is your opportunity to do the same for your family or a family you know. It doesn't matter how big the family is because one child is enough, and you can add as many as you can deal with.

You need to ask the parents about characteristics which they think they share with their children as well as make your own judgements. Get some photographs and assemble them on a large piece of paper or card (to put on the wall like a poster) and design a poster like that of Brigid and Lee and Poppy and Rosie.