My Parents

SUMMARY

The speaker recalls how his parents tried to separate him from working-class kids. Those kids used to insult him, and they wore ragged clothes that revealed their upper legs. They ran loose in the streets, shinnied up cliffs, and skinny-dipped in countryside creeks.

The speaker was more scared of them than he was of vicious jungle cats; they seemed as strong as iron. They would pull at the speaker and pin down his arms with their hands and knees. He dreaded the way they'd point him out harshly and mockingly, and mimic his lisp as they followed him down the street.

Those kids were skinny and agile, ambushing the speaker from behind bushes, seeming to attack his whole identity like yapping dogs. They used to hurl mud at him while he turned away, faking a grin as if he felt fine. He wanted to reconcile with them, but they never opened up that possibility by smiling back at him.

THEMES

CHILDHOOD AND CLASS DIVISIONS

Stephen Spender's "My Parents" is an autobiographical poem that examines the poet's difficult upbringing. Born to middle- or upper-class parents, the speaker, like any child, just wants to be happy and have friends. But this is 20th-century England, a society deeply divided along class lines that separate the speaker from the working-class kids his age. These other kids continually taunt and attack him, and while he'd like to bridge the divide between them, he can't: it's as if both sides are following a set social script. In recounting these tough times, the poem illustrates not only the pain of being bullied but the wider trauma of class tribalism.

The speaker's parents keep him away from the "rough" children where he lives. He grows up affluent, but sheltered in many ways. Meanwhile, the working-class boys, though poor, seem strong, free, and happy. The parents separate the speaker from his working-class peers, as though someone of his class couldn't possibly mix with them. Their approach seems to isolate him in general, however. The other boys, meanwhile, have a whale of a time: they run around in "torn" clothing, "climb[ing] cliffs and stripp[ing] by the country streams." They grow as strong as "iron," making them more fearsome than "tigers" to the speaker.

These class divisions don't originate with the parents, even if the parents perpetuate them; they're the cruel result of how society is structured. The other boys pick on the speaker as though to make their group stronger, preying on weakness to build their own power. These boys throw "words like stones"; they point at the speaker and "cop[y] my lisp behind me on the road." They may be mocking his "lisp" as a mark of his pampered life (i.e., as a posh style of speaking), or just as a mark of difference or perceived weakness. The other boys also ambush him, jumping out from "behind hedges / Like dogs to bark at my world." Again, it's the speaker's "world," his more affluent lifestyle, that attracts their hostility and scorn. Both the parents' decision and the children's behavior, then, reinforce the class divide.

The young speaker desperately wants his life to be different, but this seems impossible; all he can do is grin and bear the humiliation. Class divisions enact a harsh punishment and leave lasting trauma. The speaker has to "look[] the other way, pretending to smile," while the boys "thr[ow] mud" at him. He "long[s] to forgive them"—perhaps even be *one* of them—but "they never smile[]" back. The speaker's inability or unwillingness to smile directly *at* them may represent some missed opportunity for direct engagement or connection. The poem implicitly wonders whether there could be a better way, some path to mutual respect and friendship, but leaves the reader with no sense of false hope. The speaker has "my world," and the other kids have theirs. In short, some people live on one side of the class divide, and some on the other—and that remains true today in many respects.

Where this theme appears in the poem:

- Lines 1-12

BULLYING AND PARENTING

In "My Parents," the speaker recalls being bullied when he was young. His parents, understandably, wished to protect him, keeping him away from "children who were rough." Without offering any easy answers, the poem considers whether theirs was the right approach, given that the "rough" kids ended up tormenting him anyway. The speaker hints that, in trying to shelter him, his parents may have ironically left him more vulnerable to pain and hardship.

Bullies pick on the weak, and though the speaker was from a more affluent background than his "rough[er]" peers, they sensed his vulnerability. The speaker had a lisp, which the other boys used to mimic. They were also much stronger than him, both individually and collectively. He was helpless against "their knees tight on [his] arms," pinning him down, "their muscles like iron." The parents tried to separate the speaker from the

others, but clearly, that wasn't fully possible. It's implied that this separation may have further entrenched the conflict between the speaker and the bullies. The speaker only mentions his parents once, but it's their decision that hangs over the whole poem. Indeed, the poem is titled after them, suggesting that their parenting approach had a huge impact on the speaker's life.

The parents may have meant well, but it's hard to make the case that their approach *worked* well. In fact, the poem ironically undermines the claim that "My parents kept me from children who were rough": they kept the speaker from *socializing* with these children but did not shield him from their abuse. Whether or not the refusal to socialize worsened the problem, it clearly didn't help. The bullies treated the speaker inhumanely, but he seems to have been encouraged to dehumanize them, too, at least in his mind. He compares them to animals ("tigers," "dogs") and regards them as part of a separate "world."

The poem thus dramatizes the difficulty of coping with bullying. Even the best intentions can further isolate the person being bullied, rather than establishing common ground between bullies and victim (or helping the victim stand up for themselves). That's why the boys seem like an intrusion on the speaker's "world," as opposed to a *part* of his world he must learn to confront. There's no solution on offer here, just an acknowledgment of the trauma, including its after-effects years later.

Where this theme appears in the poem:

- Lines 1-12

LINE-BY-LINE ANALYSIS

LINES 1-4

My parents kept ...
... the country streams.

In "My Parents," the speaker recalls the difficulties of his upbringing. He was a middle- or upper-class child, though life frequently put him into contact with "children who were rough"—that is, working-class kids who lived in the same area. His parents, mentioned only in this first line, tried to keep him away from these other kids.

Already, this opening detail tells the reader a lot about the speaker's childhood. His parents believed he was vulnerable and needed their protection. They were also suspicious of, and likely condescending toward, people of lower economic classes. Placing "My parents" right at the start of the poem—even though the speaker never mentions them again—suggests how central their attitudes were to the speaker's childhood. Their distaste for "rough" children had a lasting impact on him; hence the need for this retrospective (and introspective) poem.

"Rough" is a euphemism here. It's a seemingly harmless word, but it does a lot of work. It's a way of saying "violent" or "brutish," while also suggesting a perceived lack of refinement (in accent, mannerisms, clothing, etc.). It's a typically middle- or upper-class way to describe someone of lower social status, particularly in the early 20th century.

The parents' attempts to shield the speaker from the "rough" kids didn't work. The rest of the poem focuses entirely on the speaker's interactions with these kids. As a way of capturing their "rough[ness]," the poem rejects conventional punctuation and sentence structure. Notice, for example, how the first line leads into the second:

> My parents kept me from children who were rough
> Who threw words like stones and wore torn clothes

Because the speaker omits the expected comma after "rough," the repetition of "Who" in line 2 is abrupt and surprising. The asyndeton between "rough" and "Who" (i.e., the lack of a conjunction such as "and") makes this shift from line to line especially startling. The language here sounds jerky and jagged, as "rough" as the kids it's describing.

The "rough" kids, according to the speaker, "threw words like stones." This simile alludes to an old nursery rhyme: "Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words may never hurt me." The speaker flips this idea on its head—the bullies' words *did* hurt, and they hurt so much that they *felt* like stones. They might not have broken his bones, but they did break his spirit.

The bullies' "torn clothes" and "rags" signal their poverty. In line 3, the speaker recalls how "their thighs showed through" their garments. The speaker often notes the physicality of these other children, conveying an appreciation of their strength and vigor. While he avoided them, they had a grand old time running around the street, "climb[ing] cliffs," and stripping "by the country streams." Though poor, they led active, exciting lives with a degree of freedom (though they probably had to work, too). The speaker's life, by contrast, was far more restrained. On some level, then, the speaker may have longed to be one of the "rough" children, even while internalizing his parents' message to keep away from them.

This first stanza captures the "rough[ness]" of those children not only through asyndeton but through sound patterning. Dense assonance ("Who threw," "stones and wore torn clothes," "cliffs"/"stripped") and alliteration ("words"/"wore," "thighs"/"through," "climbed cliffs [...] stripped by country streams") make the language sound robust and a little tough to say. The poem thus creates its own "rough" music to evoke the speaker's childhood fears.

LINES 5-8

I feared more ...

... on the road.

The second quatrain recalls more details about the "rough" children, focusing on their physical strength and the various ways in which they bullied the speaker.

The speaker "feared" them "more than tigers." This is a telling reference: there are no tigers in England, outside of zoos. To an English boy, they are far-off, exotic, fearsome animals. So the speaker learned at a young age to imagine the "rough" kids as remote, separate creatures. This detail subtly reflects the way class divisions cause people to dehumanize the less fortunate, if only in their imaginations.

What frightened the speaker most was the "rough" kids' physicality. The simile "their muscles like iron" portrays their strength as almost superhuman, especially compared to the speaker's. Along with fear, the speaker seems to feel a quiet admiration for the physical power of his foes.

And in a way, the speaker's fears came true: he was the prey to their predator. He views them in animalistic terms, but, ironically, they treat him like an animal, too. He recalls them dragging him down and pinning him to the ground: "Their jerking hands and their knees tight on my arms" (line 6). Arbitrary social divisions, the poem suggests, end up dehumanizing people on *both* sides. The repetition of "their" across lines 5 and 6 further highlights the schism between the sheltered, affluent speaker and the "rough[er]," poorer children.

Line 7 starts with anaphora, repeating the first two words of line 5:

> I feared the salt coarse pointing of those boys

The passage would still make perfect sense if those two words were omitted. By repeating them, the poem doubles down on its atmosphere of fear and isolation.

"Coarse" refers to a rough texture (like that of salt or sand), and "salt" makes wounds sting. Describing the boys' pointing as "salt coarse," then, makes it sound almost like a physical sensation; these two metaphorical adjectives convey how irritating and painful the mockery was. "Coarse" can also mean vulgar or unrefined, just like "rough" in line 1.

The speaker recalls that the bullies mimicked his lisp, a speech impediment that affects the pronunciation of sibilant sounds (like /s/ or /z/). His lisp further marked him as different from the other kids, giving them more ammunition for their attacks. (At the time, it may have been seen as less of an impediment than a feature of a "posh" English accent.) The bullies used to follow him as they mocked him, walking "behind [him] on the road." Again, there's something predatory about this behavior. But did the parents' attempt to keep the speaker away from them make him more or less of a target? That's the unanswered question at the heart of the poem.

LINES 9-12

They were lithe, ...
... they never smiled.

The third stanza continues to describe the bullying the speaker suffered. Once again, the speaker fixates on the bullies' physicality: "They were lithe, they sprang out behind hedges."

"Lithe" means thin, supple, and strong. To the speaker, the bullies' strength highlights his relative weakness. The asyndeton between "lithe" and "they" makes the second phrase ("they sprang out behind hedges") jump out at the reader suddenly, like its own little surprise attack. (A conjunction like "and" would make the sentence sound smooth and predictable—the opposite of these rough, unpredictable bullies.)

According to the speaker, the bullies jumped out "like dogs to bark at my world." This simile again compares the boys to fierce animals, illustrating the predatory way in which they ambushed the speaker. But it also suggests that the speaker, and others of his class, viewed these working-class kids as something less than human. He considered them a kind of untamed threat to his more civilized way of life. Tellingly, he calls his social world "my world," as distinguished from *their* world. Even at a young age, he was keenly aware of class divisions.

The next sentence, which begins after the caesura in line 10, also starts with "They." The repetition (specifically, anaphora) helps emphasize the divide between the speaker and the bullies: "They threw mud / While I looked the other way, pretending to smile." This sad moment perfectly captures the breakdown in humanity on both sides. While the bullies treat the speaker with contempt, he pretends to treat them with cheerful indifference. "Pretending to smile"—that is, to grin and bear hardship—is an almost stereotypical trait of the English middle and upper classes. Perhaps the speaker also learned this attitude from his parents.

Finally, the speaker remembers that he "longed to forgive" his enemies, "but they never smiled." There's no sense of resolution here: things were bad, and they never improved. The speaker, of course, still thinks about this terrible situation. His longing to forgive was also a kind of longing to belong, but his parents' attitude only further marked him out as different from the "rough" boys. Neither he nor the other boys ever made the kind of overture that might have resolved the conflict ("they never smiled" at him, but he "looked the other way" from them). All that's left are the lingering effects of those traumatic experiences, as well as unanswered—even unarticulated—questions about whether or how things could have been better.

POETIC DEVICES

ASYNDETON

Asyndeton adds dramatic intensity to the poem's language, abruptly mashing together phrases that would otherwise use an intervening conjunction (like "and"). Here it is at work in lines 1-2:

> My parents kept me from children **who were rough**
> **Who threw words like stones** and wore torn clothes

Asyndeton adds a kind of grammatical "rough[ness]" to these lines, as a new clause begins without any warning (either a comma or an "and"). It propels the language powerfully forward and helps capture the strength and energy of the "rough" kids.

Lines 5-6 use asyndeton to similar effect, again combining it with a line break:

> I feared more than tigers **their muscles like iron**
> **Their jerking hands** and their knees tight on my arms

That quick shift from "iron" to "Their" is jerky and erratic, evoking the physical movements the speaker is describing.

Line 9 features asyndeton too, though this time without the added line break:

> **They were lithe, they sprang out behind hedges**
> Like dogs to bark at my world.

Notice how placing an "and" between "lithe" and "they" would ruin the effect. The compression of asyndeton makes the language more abrupt and dynamic; the second clause seems to leap out at the reader, much as the bullies would pounce on the speaker.

Where Asyndeton appears in the poem:

- **Lines 1-2:** "who were rough / Who threw words like stones"
- **Lines 5-6:** "their muscles like iron / Their jerking hands"
- **Line 9:** "They were lithe, they sprang out behind hedges"

ENJAMBMENT

"My Parents" uses enjambment to evoke both the freedom of the bullies and the startling nature of their attacks. In the first example, enjambment carries a long, unpunctuated phrase over the line break, conveying freedom and play:

> Their thighs showed through rags. They ran in the
> **street**
> **And** climbed cliffs and stripped by the country
> streams. (lines 3-4)

The "rough" kids, though poor, had an outdoorsy lifestyle and were often left to their own devices. The enjambment helps capture their physical energy, which seems to spill over from line to line.

Part of what frightened the speaker about those boys was how they'd suddenly appear as if from nowhere. Their attacks—both verbal and physical—came with an element of surprise. Enjambment captures this effect subtly in lines 7-8 ("those boys / Who copied my lisp"), but more obviously in lines 9-11:

> They were lithe, they sprang out behind **hedges**
> **Like** dogs to bark at my world. They threw **mud**
> **While** I looked the other way, pretending to smile.

Thanks to enjambment, that phrase "Like dogs" jumps out at the reader like—well, a pack of dogs! Notice, too, how the following enjambment ("They threw mud / While I [...]") emphasizes the division between the speaker and his foes. *They* throw mud in line 10, while *he* turns aside with a fake smile in line 11.

Where Enjambment appears in the poem:

- **Lines 3-4:** "street / And"
- **Lines 7-8:** "boys / Who"
- **Lines 9-10:** "hedges / Like"
- **Lines 10-11:** "mud / While"

REPETITION

The poem uses repetition to highlight the speaker's childhood fears and the "rough[ness]" of the boys who bullied him. Lines 1 and 2, for example, use diacope:

> My parents kept me from children **who** were rough
> **Who** threw words like stones and wore torn clothes

This repetition, together with the abrupt line break and *lack* of punctuation, creates surprise—that second "who" jumps out at the reader to mimic the aggression of the "rough" children.

Lines 5-6 use parallelism/diacope to similar effect: "**their** muscles [...] **Their** jerking hands [...] **their** knees." Repetition here builds intensity, evoking the trauma of the speaker's childhood experiences and the sheer physical power of the other boys.

In the same stanza, both lines 5 and 7 begin with "I feared[.]" This is an example of anaphora:

> **I feared** more than tigers their muscles like iron [...]
> **I feared** the salt coarse pointing of those boys

Grammatically, the second line would still work without the

repeated phrase. But the repetition stresses the speaker's fear, suggesting that a kind of perpetual unease filled his younger days.

Repetition also accentuates the divide between the speaker (or his social class) and the "rough" working-class boys who bullied him. The third stanza repeats "they" at the beginning of three successive phrases:

> They were lithe, they sprang out behind hedges
> Like dogs to bark at my world. They threw mud [...]

This anaphora casts the "rough kids" as remorseless and relentless in their attempts to hurt the speaker. The repetition creates a kind of pummeling effect, imposing the bullies' presence on the language of the poem.

Finally, the last two lines end with nearly identical words: "smile"/"smiled." This near-repetition highlights the contrasting expressions of the speaker and the bullies—he faked a smile, they "never smiled"—while drawing attention to an ironic *similarity* between them. Neither bullies nor victim ever took real pleasure in their encounters; they acted out a kind of routine that left both sides unhappy.

Where Repetition appears in the poem:

- **Line 1:** "who"
- **Line 2:** "Who"
- **Line 5:** "I feared," "their"
- **Line 6:** "Their," "their"
- **Line 7:** "I feared"
- **Line 9:** "They," "they"
- **Line 10:** "They"
- **Line 11:** "smile"
- **Line 12:** "smiled"

SIMILE

The speaker's similes help dramatize his childhood trauma, making his bullies seem all the more frightening and powerful.

In line 2, for example, the speaker recalls how those "rough" kids "threw words like stones." This simile adapts an old nursery rhyme or idiom: "Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words may never hurt me." Of course, words can and do hurt. Getting called nasty names caused the speaker an almost physical pain.

The similes in line 5 highlight the working-class boys' powerful physiques:

> I feared more than tigers their muscles like iron

To the speaker, these kids seemed not quite human. Their muscles felt metal-like—cold, strong, and resilient. Meanwhile, "I feared more than tigers" portrays the "rough" children as almost exotic—and, of course, fearsome—creatures. He's impressed by and afraid of these kids, but he doesn't see quite them as *people* like himself; nor do they seem to see him that way.

Later, the speaker again compares them to animals:

> They were lithe, they sprang out behind hedges
> Like dogs to bark at my world.

In his imagination, at least, the speaker dehumanized the boys who dehumanized and bullied him. His parents' decision to separate from those boys made them seem fundamentally alien, deepening the class divide between them. At the same time, the speaker couldn't escape them. He felt hunted by them, as though he were prey to a pack of wild dogs.

Where Simile appears in the poem:

- **Lines 1-2:** "My parents kept me from children who were rough / Who threw words like stones"
- **Line 5:** "I feared more than tigers their muscles like iron"
- **Lines 9-10:** "they sprang out behind hedges / Like dogs to bark at my world."

VOCABULARY

Rough (Line 1) - A euphemism for "working-class" or "unrefined."

Rags (Line 3) - Torn/worn clothes.

Salt coarse (Line 7) - Rough and mean. (Spender runs these two adjectives together into one phrase.)

Lisp (Line 8) - A speech impediment affecting sibilant sounds (e.g., /s/ and /z/).

Lithe (Line 9) - Thin, supple, and strong.

FORM, METER, & RHYME

FORM

"My Parents" has three quatrains (four-line stanzas), each one concluding with an end stop. This gives the poem a subtly boxed-in, claustrophobic atmosphere that helps capture the speaker's sheltered childhood. At the same time, the poem uses free verse, which helps reflect the unpredictable elements of that childhood: the way the speaker's bullies could "spr[ing] out behind hedges" at any time. The shifting rhythm of the language, combined with frequent enjambment and omission of standard punctuation at the ends of lines, gives the poem an unsettled, fast-paced, nervous quality.

METER

"My Parents" doesn't have a strict meter, though its lines tend to be of a similar length (9 to 11 syllables). Instead, the rhythms are unpredictable and muscular, evoking the physical strength of the "rough" working-class children who bullied the speaker.

Take line 2, for example. It practically pelts the reader with tough monosyllabic words, much as the boys pelted the speaker with stones:

> Who threw words like stones and wore torn clothes

The poem's densely packed lines thus reflect some of the threat and danger of those childhood days. If the poem flowed smoothly and beautifully, it wouldn't as effectively capture the speaker's fear at the time.

RHYME SCHEME

"My Parents" doesn't use rhyme (though Spender's poems often do). The lack of rhyme keeps the poem unpredictable and rough around the edges, much like the "rough" children it describes. Part of what scared the speaker about these other kids was how they would ambush him seemingly out of nowhere. Together with muscular rhythms, abrupt caesuras, and other effects, the poem's unrhymed language has a similar way of keeping the reader guessing.

SPEAKER

"My Parents" is an autobiographical poem that reflects on the poet's own childhood. Spender grew up in London, where working-class and middle-/upper-class neighborhoods often exist in close proximity. The speaker's parents tried to keep him away from the "rough" (working-class) kids, a decision that, ironically, may have hurt him rather than protected him. That is, his aloof separation may have made him a target for bullying—and he, in turn, grew more scared of his bullies.

The speaker talks in the past tense, suggesting that the poem looks back on childhood from the vantage point of adulthood. Though the speaker evidently suffered greatly at the hands of the "rough" children, he also admired their physicality: their "muscles like iron" (line 5) and their "lithe" physiques (line 9). He "longed to forgive them," suggesting, too, perhaps, that he secretly wanted to be one of them.

In the authorized biography of Spender, the poet's sister confirms that "[w]e were never allowed to play with poor children because my mother regarded them as not only rough, but also as perpetual carriers of diseases."

SETTING

"My Parents" is a retrospective poem that delves into the speaker's traumatic childhood. It's firmly set in the past, specifically in early 20th-century London. As the poem suggests, this society was sharply divided along class lines: the working class rarely mixed with the middle-/upper-classes, other than to perform labor for them. Though the "rough" children who tormented the speaker were poor, they seemed to have more freedom than he did; they "ran in the street," "climbed cliffs," and "stripped by the country streams" (lines 3-4).

The atmosphere of potential danger—perhaps worsened by his parents' attempt to shield him—made the speaker's daily environment frightening. Bullies stalked him down the street or hid "behind hedges," waiting like hungry "dogs to bark at my world" (lines 9-10). This last phrase suggests that the speaker's social class seemed to place him in a separate "world" from his bullies—but that the two worlds weren't as separate as he and his parents might have liked.

CONTEXT

LITERARY CONTEXT

Stephen Spender was a 20th-century poet, novelist, and critic who was born in London in 1909. His mother and father worked as a painter and journalist respectively, carving out a relatively comfortable upper-middle-class existence for Spender and his siblings.

Spender was part of a circle of poets, known as the "Oxford Poets" or the "Auden Group," who found fame in the 1930s. W. H. Auden was by far the most prominent member, but the group also included Louis MacNeice, Christopher Isherwood, and Cecil Day-Lewis. Spender and Auden became known as "pylon poets," because they weren't afraid to write about the grittier, more industrial side of early 20th-century England (e.g., pylons and factories). Spender was also, broadly speaking, part of the modernist literary movement, during which writers like T. S. Eliot attempted to wrench literature into the 20th century through formal experimentation and innovative subject matter. However, Spender and Auden also frequently used traditional poetic techniques (meter, rhyme, regular stanza shapes, and so on).

"My Parents" appears in Spender's first collection, *Poems*, which was published by Faber & Faber in 1933. Spender's sister, Christine, confirms that their mother really did try to keep them apart from "rough" working-class children: "[w]e were never allowed to play with poor children because my mother regarded them as not only rough, but also as perpetual carriers of diseases." Many of Spender's other poems also deal with autobiographical subjects; examples include "My parents quarrel in the neighbour room," "At the end of two months' holiday," "Farewell to My Student, and "Auden's Funeral."

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

The early 20th century was a time of immense change. Inventions such as the airplane and telephone altered daily life tremendously in a short space of time, while cities grew denser as people flocked in large numbers from the countryside to urban centers. New technologies and industries improved the quality of life for many people, while also contributing to widespread pollution, poverty, and unsafe working conditions.

English society at the time was deeply divided along class lines. Class mobility was minimal, and people tended to associate only with their own socioeconomic group, be it upper, middle, or working class. In "My Parents," the parents' attitude toward the "children who were rough" hints at a wider view (among the upper classes) that the working class was inferior, unrefined, and untrustworthy. In reality, severe income inequality left many working-class people without adequate access to food, clothing, housing, and education (hence the "rags" worn by the "rough" children). Rich and poor seemed to occupy separate "world[s]," even when they lived in close proximity in cities like London.

The rise of collective action, as in the national coal miners' strike of 1912, gradually gave the working class a stronger voice. Indeed, Spender himself became a member of the Communist Party of Britain not long after the publication of this poem—though he later renounced left-wing politics.

MORE RESOURCES

EXTERNAL RESOURCES

- More on Stephen Spender — Dive into a valuable resource on Spender's life and work. (https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poets/stephen-spender)
- The Poem Out Loud — Listen to Stephen Spender read "My Parents" and other poems. (https://archive.org/details/lp_reading-his-poems_stephen-spender)
- Spender Remembered — Listen to Spender's son Matthew reflect on his father's life. (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IJBDicYQ7JU)
- Spender and the "Auden Group" — Background on the group of poets with whom Spender was closely associated. (https://www.oxforddnb.com/display/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-96403;jsessionid=7548AB4571D02
- Spender's Desert Island Discs — Check out the poet's selection of his favorite pieces of music, and explanations of what they meant to him. (https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p009mf0q)

HOW TO CITE

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