

“Happiness is the art of being broken”

This poem was written by Bruce Dawe during the early 1960's. The poem is about the transition of life from old to young, and the different way we look at the world when we're old compared to when we're young. Bruce uses the metaphor of the ocean smoothing out a glass bottle as the way that time makes us lose our edge that we once had when we were young as we get older. He also infers that the first time we notice that we are getting older, it comes as a shock to us; “Always the first fragmentation stirs us to fear” and that we grow to accept it “Beyond that point we learn where we belong”.

Bruce goes as far to say that there is in fact a divide between old and young; a definitive gap between generations, and that once we cross the gap – signified by when we first notice ageing, we can't go back and we are now on the fringe of society. Therefore this poem fits in to the theme of “Identity and Belonging”.

The poem itself doesn't have an apparent rhyming scheme, and uses a complex rhythmic pattern and a moderate-paced metre. The poem is set out in two stanzas; the first being about what older people are like from the perspective of a younger person and the second being about that transitional period between old and young- passing on the flame to the young.

What Bruce Dawe is trying to say in this poem is that our world is obsessed with staying young. Once we become notably old, we are cast out of society and forced on the outside; the periphery of society.