

In the poem “Ghost,” poet Peter McDonald takes on the persona of Icarus. Look for words that express the poet’s feelings.

Ghost by Peter McDonald

Held like a gull in the blue air,
outflying summer, I shall leave
the true gods of this world

for the emptiness of sky, its seasons,
a blossom of quiet clouds, the cold
store of love, fear, dreams coming true. ✦

✦ The poet imagines that he is Icarus in this poem.

- To whom do you think Icarus is speaking? _____
- What else might Icarus say? Write three or more additional lines for the poem.

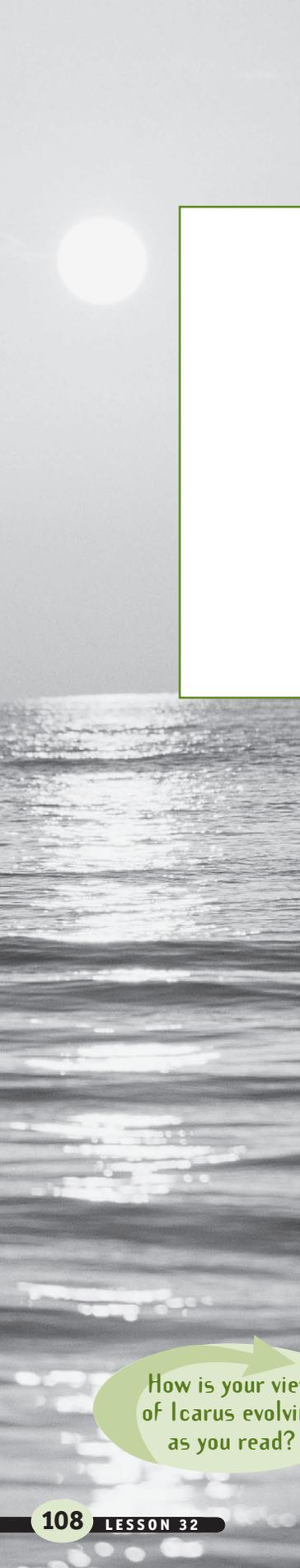
In the next poem, the poet takes the position of onlooker to Icarus’s story, as first Icarus is fitted with the wings and then flies off into the sky. Notice where his fear changes to exultation.

Icarus by Lyman Andrews

Icarus, his hair
crackling like thunder,
stood first on one leg
then on the other,
trembling
at his father’s touch
as the great wings were fitted
with strong bands of leather

Response
Notes

across his narrow breast.
His feet quivered
and his heart jerked
with that young excitement
that leaves the bowels hollow,
until at last the wings
were on, and Daedalus stood
and said: these wings are made
for our escape; and frowned
a warning at his son
who couldn't hear a word.
Icarus plunged head down
into the shining air
and soaring, rising, diving,
he rinsed himself of those
old terrors of earth, clay
and metallic deaths:
but the sea glittered
with the strewn fragments
of the sun, and
the heat, white-hot
as new hammer-leavings,
stirred the wax to liquid
in the wings, until
the boy Icarus,
seeing feathers break-
ing free, struggled harder
and found he was not frightened
but just feeling godlike
and in that blinding moment
he made his last, noble
effort, ignored the shout
of Daedalus, and sprang
still higher, until his sweat sizzled
gashes broke red (bright coals)
through the charred crust
of his ribcage
and then
 only
 ashes
falling like blackbirds
to the waiting sea ❖

- 
- ✦ Make a sketch of Icarus as you imagine Lyman Andrews sees him. Around the sketch, write words from the poem that reflect your drawing.



- ✦ Write a short response to these questions:
 - So far, what do the poets' views of Icarus have in common? How are they different?

- How do the poets' views of Icarus echo or counter your own emerging view of Icarus?

How is your view of Icarus evolving as you read?