

A FATHER TAKES HIS DAUGHTER FISHING

Janet N. Gold

Only once,
but it was enough.
He rowed out onto the blue-gray lake.
It was good to push off from the dock.
His arms were strong
that Saturday morning
but tired from the night shift
at the mill.
He rowed to the spot
where the fish were biting.
She sat in the bow
and told him stories.
Because he was listening,
she unraveled *Anne of Green Gables*
from the knotted skeins of her heart
and stretched out the swashbuckling
sword-brandishing of *The Three Musketeers*,
filling the small boat
till there was hardly room for the fish
that weren't biting after all.
He listened to his daughter
and wondered where the fish had gone.
The sun is too high in the sky, he thought,
the fish are resting in the cool water
at the bottom of the lake.
You have quite an imagination, he said.
I worry about her, he was thinking.

How will she ever learn to catch a fish?
. . . just as she hooked a trout
and jerked the pole
and the obliging fish
flew through the summer air
and flopped at their feet in the skiff.
And she never forgot
that he smiled,
held the slippery prize,
gently drew the hook from its lip
. . . and threw it back in the water.
So small, he told her.
We should let it live.