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Li-Young Lee’s poem, “A Story”, depicts the complex relationship between father and son through the retelling of a story. The differing perspectives of the father and son are depicted through the shifting points of view, structure, and diction of the poem. Doing so allows the speaker to connect with the readers by adding depth and emotion while describing their father-son relationship. Lee shows the love shared by both family members and the boy’s innocence by depicting how their relationship changed over time.

The persona contrasts the point of view of the father with that of the boy. Alternating the points of view cements the division that exists between them. The father faces an internal conflict fighting between two realities: one where he longs for and chases after his son, and another where he disparages him. Throughout the poem, the boy materializes as a five-year-old with “a boy’s supplication” for a story. The boy uses the endearing term “Baba”, to describe his father’s affection as a story-teller and a source of entertainment. The father soon loses the ability to supply his son with amusement as he is “unable to come up with one” story. Lee depicts a “man rub[bing] his chin, scratch[ing] his ear...soon he thinks, the boy / will give up on his father”, evoking emotions of lost opportunity and unfulfilled aspirations. This further accentuates the divide between the boy’s innocent optimism and the father’s response.

The speaker’s diction allows for the development of both characters and their shared relationship. Descriptions of the boy’s childhood “Baba” juxtaposes later images of the boy “packing his shirts...looking for his keys”, leaving the father to long for the days the boy’s childhood days in nostalgia.