**Bored**  by Margaret Atwood

All those times I was bored  
out of my mind. Holding the log  
while he sawed it. Holding  
the string while he measured, boards,  
distances between things, or pounded  
stakes into the ground for rows and rows  
of lettuces and beets, which I then (bored)  
weeded. Or sat in the back  
of the car, or sat still in boats,  
sat, sat, while at the prow, stern, wheel  
he drove, steered, paddled. It  
wasn't even boredom, it was looking,  
looking hard and up close at the small  
details. Myopia. The worn gunwales,  
the intricate twill of the seat  
cover. The acid crumbs of loam, the granular  
pink rock, its igneous veins, the sea-fans  
of dry moss, the blackish and then the graying  
bristles on the back of his neck.  
Sometimes he would whistle, sometimes  
I would. The boring rhythm of doing  
things over and over, carrying  
the wood, drying  
the dishes. Such minutiae. It's what  
the animals spend most of their time at,  
ferrying the sand, grain by grain, from their tunnels,  
shuffling the leaves in their burrows. He pointed  
such things out, and I would look  
at the whorled texture of his square finger, earth under  
the nail. Why do I remember it as sunnier  
all the time then, although it more often  
rained, and more birdsong?  
I could hardly wait to get  
the hell out of there to  
anywhere else. Perhaps though  
boredom is happier. It is for dogs or  
groundhogs. Now I wouldn't be bored.  
Now I would know too much.  
Now I would know.

**About Margaret Atwood**

[Margaret Atwood](https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poets/margaret-atwood) is regarded as one of Canada’s greatest living writers. She was born in 1939 in Ottawa, Ontario, Canada. She grew up reading fairy tales, as well as comic books and mysteries. Her first poems and plays were written at age six. She did her graduate work at Harvard’s Radcliffe College on a fellowship, graduating in 1962. She has won awards including the Booker Prize, the Arthur C. Clarke Award, and the Governor General’s Award. Her poetry first became popular in the 60’s with her collection *Double Persephone.*Atwood is well-known in her poetry for understanding social relationships, alienation, and ways of communicating between opposites. Her most famous work, the novel, *The Handmaid’s Tale,* has become a classic, recently made into a popular television series.

**Analysis of the poem**

**Biggest regret is not living life to its fullest, that’s what this poem is about.** The poem “Bored” illustrates the poetess’ childhood when she would be bored with nothing significant to do, and **linger** in the shadow of her father. The verse “bored out of my mind” may imply that she is bored beyond words. It may also **signify** that she is simply out of her mind. The second interpretation is more in keeping with the theme of the poem. She was bored holding the log while her father sawed it. Her job was **confined** to the weeding of the lettuces and beets for which her father “ pounded/stakes into the ground for rows and rows.” She would have to be **content** staying at the backseat of the car. The poetess here **laments** from the point of view of the child, for not being given any ‘real’ work or being entrusted with responsibility. The poetess now, loaded with responsibilities and obligations, feels how foolish she was at that time to feel that way. She longs to **transcend** to that care-free world  again.

The act of sawing was much tougher**,** the pounding of stakes more **tedious**. Sitting at the back of the car looked like ‘**taking a backseat**.’ Nevertheless, it also meant sitting without tension or  **merely** being a witness to the destination. Like when the speaker sat ‘still’ in the boat at ease, “or sat still in boats, sat, sat, while at the prow, stern, wheel he drove, **steer**ed, paddled. “

At that point of time it seemed as if he showed her the direction in the boat. Nevertheless, now it feels as if she did not have to **fret** about finding the direction. The poetess says that it was not even boredom. But looking hard up and close at the slightest details, she terms it as “myopia.” It was rather her “short-sightedness.” She could not **envisage** things from a broader point of view.

The worn gunwales,the **intricate** twill of the seat cover. The acid crumbs of loam, the granular

pink rock, its igneous veins, the sea-fans of dry moss, the blackish and then the graying bristles on the back of his neck.

Sometimes the poetess’ father would whistle ,and sometimes she would. This alternate whistling signified the rhythm of doing things again and again in a mechanical routine. However, this mechanized routine was far from **superfluous** tensions. They were limited to **domestic** chores like drying the wood, and doing the dishes. Animals wandered in a similar manner ,ferrying the sand, **grain** by grain, from their tunnels, shuffling the leaves in their burrows. The poetess seems to indicate that being irrational is better than being **rational**. Though the climate was rainy(gloomy) and filled with bird-song( a symbol of melancholy, the speaker looks back now as she comprehends that it was sunnier(“ happier”).

I could hardly wait to get the hell out of there to anywhere else

Margaret Atwood would currently like someone to open a door into the freedom of the past. However, the poetess **asserts** that though boredom is happier, it is for dogs or groundhogs. For one must not find boredom in the small things of life. True happiness consists in finding joy in the little things of life, and making it worthwhile as it lasts.

Now I would know too much.

Now I would know.

**A The following lexical items have been taken from the analysis of the poem above. Use them to fill in the gaps of the sentences that follow.**

**linger - signify - confine - content - lament - transcend - tedious - take a back seat - merely - steer - fret - envisage - intricate - superfluous - grain - rational - assert**

1 The smell from the fire still \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ days later.

2 Police officers uncovered an \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_web of deceit.

3 The underlying message of the film is that love \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_everything else.

4 You have to [learn](https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/learn) to [speak](https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/speak) up and \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_yourself at [meetings](https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/meeting), or you’ll never get [anywhere](https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/anywhere).

5 He wasn’t what I had expected; I’d \_\_\_\_\_\_\_someone much taller

6 My grandmother, as usual, always \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_the decline in moral standards in today’s society.

7 “\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_clear from trouble” used to be my mum’s advice every time I’d go out as a teenager.

8 The report was marred by a mass of \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ details.

9” Let’s \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ our discussion to the matter in question ,please!”

10 “I wasn’t complaining, I \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ said that I was tired.”

11 There must be some \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ explanation for what happened.

12 He seems fairly \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_with his life.

13 There wasn’t a \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ of truth in anything she said.

14 The problem is I find most forms of exercise so \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

15 The number 30 on a road sign \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ that the speed limit is 30 miles an hour.

16 “Don’t \_\_\_\_\_\_ I’m sure we will find the kitten!”

17 Unfortunately I had the flu last week, so everything else around the house had to \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**B Answer the following questions.**

1 The main purpose of this poem is to display the mundane life of childhood and the naivety children have . Explain in your own words how come someone like Margaret Atwood would find her childhood mundane and why she feels differently now that she is older.

2 We tend to use boredom to get away from certain activities which in the long run prove invaluable for our lives. Can you think of some such examples ?

3 *Life is more enjoyable if only you focus on the few things at hand,people should be more appreciative of the boring life they have just like animals, or should they strive for more (?) on the other hand.*

Name some of the few simple minutiae things in our life that we take from granted and are too “myopic” to see and only when we grow old we are able to appreciate their worth.

3 Now I would know too much

Now I would know

Explain the last two lines of the poem. What kind of knowledge might Margaret refer to?

