

NOTES

WARNING: This selection contains mature subject matter. Jeffrey Dahmer was one of America’s most notorious serial killers. Written as a poetic letter, Celeste LeBeaux introduces us to a young woman who remembers the infamous man *before* he became a household name. She remembers Jeffrey as the boy who sat next to her in biology class—the boy with whom she secretly had a crush. This fictitious selection is best performed by a female and may be entered in Poetry Interpretation; however, the free-verse nature of this literature could allow an actor to consider performing this selection as a haunting monologue for Dramatic Interpretation. Pacing is important in this selection. The female narrator is writing a personal letter to a former classmate. While she is revealing secrets from her past, she also has many questions. Let the audience see her thought process throughout the performance. The confessional style of the writing allows a performer to methodically take her time, as she ponders her questions and slowly reveals her secret crush; however, be careful to vary the pace throughout the selection. Keeping the character honest and likeable will also add to the overall success of the performance. As with all real-life tragedies, there is often a numbness that follows a shocking news story. We ask ourselves, why? We contemplate and try to wrap our minds around what we could have done to prevent the tragic event from ever occurring in the first place. Playing those softer, contemplative moments should only add to the realism and honesty of the overall performance. If the performer trusts the literature to do its job, the reactions from the audience could be quite chilling. If this selection is used in Poetry Interpretation, the drama mask icons are simply visible to show the performer when to turn the pages in her manuscript.

Dear Jeffrey,

What were you thinking?
What went through your mind,
As we sat next to each other in biology class?
When the teacher would call roll—
When she called out your name—
You never really responded to her call.
You never really acknowledged her need—
Her need to hear you say you were there.
What were you thinking?

Dear Jeffrey (An Unsigned Note to a Serial Killer From a Former Classmate)

By Celeste LeBeaux

What were you thinking,
As the teacher called out your name?
Your name—which at the time—went unnoticed
Your name—that went unacknowledged
Your name—that is now—feared.

What were you thinking,
As you stared out that classroom window?
Were you searching for Neverland?
Did you pretend you were Peter Pan?
Did you accept the fact that you were the boy who simply wouldn't—
Couldn't—
Grow up?



Were you thinking of it then?
Were you thinking of the unimaginable even then?
If so, were you thinking of *us*?
Were you thinking of all of us—like that?
Were you thinking of every single *one* of us—like that—?
Was *that* what you were thinking?
Or were there just a *few* of us that caught your eye?
Maybe it was just one—or two.
Who were *your* eyes drawn to?
Who stood out?
Who held your gaze just a few seconds longer?
Whose eyes caught yours?

Was it the beefy football players?
Did you look at them—as an all-you-can-eat buffet?
Or were they too *much* for your delicate appetite?
Perhaps such a small man looks for smaller prey.
Perhaps your tastes ran more towards the saltier types:
The thuggish guys—the outsiders—
Or was it the Goth boy who sat in the corner—by the door?
Did *he* catch your eye?
I wish you could tell me.
I wish you could somehow let me know
To whom your eyes were drawn?

I'm curious.
That question—it haunts me.

I'm curious—because *my* eyes were drawn to *you*.
You were the one to whom I gave my attention.
You were the one who caught *my* eye.

Did you *know* any of our names?
Did you know *my* name?



There were seventeen of us.
There were seventeen of us in that biology class.
It's ironic when you think about it—
Because that's how many the newspapers said you killed.
Seventeen—
Did you know all of those boys'—names?
Did you know *any* of their names?
Their *full* names—

I'm curious.
Did you—?
Did you know or remember any of *our* names?
I knew *your* name.
Did you know *mine*?
Were your eyes ever drawn—to *me*?
Did you know my name?



The day your story broke, I heard talk of it in the grocery store.
I was standing in line waiting to get checked out,
And a woman was talking about this gruesome story—
This gruesome story she had just heard on the radio.
I didn't catch many details,
But I caught enough to know that it was gruesome.
It *had* to be gruesome.
She kept using that word over and over again.
“*Gruesome.*”
“*Oh, it's all just so gruesome.*”



When I watched the news that night,
I listened to the handsome anchor tell the story