



"Blackberry Picking"

by Sarah Smith Ducksworth

I walked deliberately and cautiously
Into that wild terrain
A mile beyond my uncle's barn and berth
To a place uncultivated and untamed
Nourished and cradled by Mother Earth.

Beyond the brush and the bramble
I tread and I ambled
Avoiding thorns and other hazards
Not knowing exactly where to turn
To find dark, sweet, succulent treasures,
Dew drenched in the early morn.

By luck and by savvy,
I found the mother lode: a bevy
Of berries sitting in a surprising clearing--
Wonderful perfection, huge and sweet
Delicious for snacking and cobbler inspiring.
An awesome treat, impossible to beat.

Into my gallon bucket of tin
I dropped firm, sweet berries in.
For nearly an hour, I did not quit.
When the fruit crested at the bucket's top
And a single new berry could not be fit
I knew it was time to stop.

As I ceased berry picking
I heard behind me something swishing.

I did not know if it were friend or rake,
So I made a turn to see
What the cause could possibly be.
That's when I saw this big old snake

Slithering in a narrow path
And heading straight for me.

I quickly grabbed my blackberry bucket
And with great force I launched it.
With the perfection of a magical trick,
It landed on the snake's flat head;
And, I finished the job with a handy stick.

Though I was very saddened to see
The agile reptile lying dead,
I did not regret the dirty deed.
Sir Snake was certainly a sneaky foe,
And it was him or me that had to go.

Berries, berries were strewn here and there,
Scattered practically everywhere.
But spilling berries was not my worry.
I left God's country in a hurry.
I was finished picking for the day,
Stomping on berries along the way

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Describe the setting of the poem. How important is the setting?

How does the poet help the reader predict what happens in the poem?

What age(s) reader do you think would be interested in reading this poem?

About how old is the speaker when the poem begins?

Is the language the poet uses appropriate? Does the poet carefully choose to create an effect?
What is the effect?