

# My Papa's Waltz

THEODORE ROETHKE

The whiskey on your breath  
Could make a small boy dizzy;  
But I hung on like death:  
Such waltzing was not easy.

5 We romped until the pans  
Slid from the kitchen shelf;  
My mother's countenance<sup>1</sup>  
Could not unfrown itself.

The hand that held my wrist  
10 Was battered on one knuckle;  
At every step you missed  
My right ear scraped a buckle.

You beat time on my head  
With a palm caked hard by dirt,  
15 Then waltzed me off to bed  
Still clinging to your shirt. **A**

## ANALYZE VISUALS

What are your impressions of the characters depicted in the painting? Cite the details that create this impression.

## **A** LYRIC POETRY

How does the **speaker** feel about his bedtime waltz with his father? Explain why you think as you do.

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1. **countenance**: face or facial expression.