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“Fifteen” by William Stafford



Underline the words and phrases which show the SETTING of this poem.

In the box, write what each underlined word or phrase could SYMBOLIZE.

South of the bridge on Seventeenth   
I found back of the willows one summer   
day a motorcycle with engine running   
as it lay on its side, ticking over   
slowly in the high grass. I was fifteen.



I admired all that pulsing gleam, the   
shiny flanks, the demure headlights   
fringed where it lay; I led it gently   
to the road and stood with that   
companion, ready and friendly. I was fifteen.



We could find the end of a road, meet   
the sky on out Seventeenth. I thought about   
hills, and patting the handle got back a   
confident opinion. On the bridge we indulged   
a forward feeling, a tremble. I was fifteen.



Thinking, back farther in the grass I found   
the owner, just coming to, where he had flipped   
over the rail. He had blood on his hand, was pale—   
I helped him walk to his machine. He ran his hand   
over it, called me good man, roared away.



I stood there, fifteen.