nan reflects on a changing friendship. The third selection, "The ning Houses," presents conflicting perspectives within a community. ally, "War" takes us into a train compartment where several sengers explore their grief and worry over their soldier sons.

/hen reading a story from this unit or any story—whether it's one ten chiefly to entertain or one written chiefly to illuminate an aspect fe—we can enrich our experience by taking time to develop our sonal and critical responses. Among readers' first, personal onses to a story, we can expect differences simply because h reader is a unique individual and brings to the story different ectations, associations, experiences, and feelings. For example, might enjoy a story and find it profound, while a friend might find same story dull and unappealing. By exploring and sharing sonal responses, we learn more about how we read and what es the story meaningful.

o develop critical responses to a story, we consider, share, and e our responses, all the while returning to the story to ensure our s or the views of others are indeed confirmed by the story's details. n critical responses are developed with emphasis on a specific ure and how that feature contributes to the story's meaning and act. For example, we might examine one of the following:

ntent (e.g., the central character's motivation or response to conflict);

ucture (e.g., development of the conflict or theme in the story's ginning, middle, and end);

hnique (e.g., how the point of view contributes to the story's act);

guage (e.g., how the imagery contributes to the story's meaning);

nificance (e.g., the story's value as a comment on life).

we read, then respond personally and critically to the stories in nit, we can deepen our enjoyment and understanding of stories, ultimately grow as readers.

W.D. Valgardson

Identities

... it has been a reckless, haphazard path.
Retracing it is impossible.

Normally, he goes clean-shaven into the world, but the promise of a Saturday liquid with sunshine draws him first from his study to the back yard, from there to his front lawn. The smell of burning leaves stirs the memories of childhood car rides, narrow lanes adrift with yellow leaves, girls on plodding horses, unattended stands piled high with pumpkins, onions, beets, so that each one was, in its own way, a still life. Always, there were salmon tins glinting with silver, set above hand-painted signs instructing purchasers to deposit twenty-five or fifty cents. This act of faith, containing all the stories he has read in childhood about the North—cabins left unlocked, filled with supplies for hapless wayfarers—wakes in him a desire to temporarily abandon the twice-cut yards and hundred-year-old oaks.

He does not hurry, for he has no destination. He meanders, instead, through the suburban labyrinth of cul-de-sacs, bays and circles, losing and finding himself endlessly. Becoming lost is made all the easier because the houses repeat themselves with superficial variations. There grows within him, however, a vague unease with symmetry, with nothing left to chance, no ragged edges, no unkempt vacant lots, no houses rendered unique by necessity and indifference.

The houses all face the sun. They have no artificial divisions. There is room enough for everyone. Now, as he passes grey stone gates, the yards are all proscribed by stiff picket fences, and quickly, a certain untidiness creeps in: a fragment of glass, a chocolate bar wrapper, a plastic horse, cracked sidewalks with ridges of stiff grass.

Although he has on blue jeans—matching pants and jacket made in Paris—he is driving a grey Mercedes Benz. Gangs of young men follow the car with their unblinking eyes. The young men stand and lean in tired, watchful knots close to phone booths and seedy-looking grocery stores.

Their hair glistens as though shellacked. Their jackets gleam with studs. Eagles, tigers, wolves and serpents ride their backs.

He passes a ten-foot wire fence enclosing a playground bare of equipment and pounded flat. The gate is double locked, the fence cut and rolled into a cone. Three boys throw stones at pigeons. Paper clogs the fence like drifted snow. The school is sheathed in heavy screens. Its yellow brick is pockmarked, chipped.

The houses are squat, as though they were once taller and have, slowly, sunk into the ground. Each has a band of dirt around the bottom. The blue glow of television sets lights the windows. On the front steps of a red-roofed house, a man sits. He wears black pants, a tartan vest, a brown snap-brimmed hat. Beside him is a suitcase.

Fences here are little more than fragments. Cars jam the narrow streets, and he worries that he might strike the unkempt children who dart back and forth like startled fish. Street lights come on. He takes them as a signal to return the way he came, but it has been a reckless, haphazard path. Retracing it is impossible. He is overtaken by sudden guilt. He has left no message for his wife.

There have been no trees or drifting leaves, no stands covered in produce, no salmon tins, but time has run away with him. His wife, he realizes, will have returned from bridge, his children gathered for supper. He also knows that, at first, they have blamed his absence on a neighbour's hospitality and gin. However, by the time he can return, annoyance will have blossomed into alarm. His safe return will, he knows from childhood and years of being locked in domestic grief, degenerate to recriminations and apology.

Faced with this, he decides to call the next time he sees a store or phone booth. So intent is he upon the future that he dangerously ignores the present and does not notice the police car, concealed in the shadows of a side street, nose out and follow him.

Ahead, there is a small store with windows covered in hand-painted signs and vertical metal bars. On the edge of the light,

three young men and a girl slouch. One of the men has a beard and, in spite of the advancing darkness, wears sunglasses. He has on a fringed leather vest. His companions wear leather jackets. Their peaked caps make their heads seem flat, their foreheads nonexistent. The girl is better looking than she should be for such companions. She is long-legged and wears a white turtleneck sweater that accentuates her breasts.

In spite of his car, he hopes his day-old beard, which he strokes upward with the heel of his hand, will, when combined with his clothes, provide immunity. He slips his wallet into his shirt pocket, does up the metal buttons on his jacket and slips a ten-dollar bill into his back pocket. Recalling a television show, he decides that if he is accosted, he will say that the ten is all he's got, that he stole the car and ask them if they know a buyer.

He eases out of the car, edges nervously along the fender and past the grille. The store window illuminates the sidewalk like a stage. Beyond the light, everything is obscured by darkness. He is so intent upon the three men and the girl that he does not notice the police car drift against the curb, nor the officer who advances with a pistol in his hand.

When the officer, who is inexperienced, who is nervous because of the neighbourhood, who is suspicious because of the car and because he has been trained to see an unshaven man in blue jeans as a potential thief and not as a probable owner, orders him to halt, he is surprised. When he turns part way around and recognizes the uniform, he does not feel fear but relief. Instinctively relaxing, certain of his safety, in the last voluntary movement of his life, he reaches his hand toward his wallet for his identity.