Sylvia Plath (1932-1963)

Mushrooms

Overnight, very

Whitely, discreetly,

Very quietly

Our toes, our noses

*5* Take hold on the loam,

Acquire the air.

Nobody sees us,

Stops us, betrays us;

The small grains make room.

*10* Soft fists insist on

Heaving the needles,

The leafy bedding,

Even the paving.

Our hammers, our rams,

*15* Earless and eyeless,

Perfectly voiceless,

Widen the crannies,

Shoulder through holes. We

Diet on water,

*20* On crumbs of shadow,

Bland-mannered, asking

Little or nothing.

So many of us!

So many of us!

*25* We are shelves, we are

Tables, we are meek,

We are edible,

Nudgers and shovers

In spite of ourselves.

*30* Our kind multiplies:

We shall by morning

Inherit the earth.

Our foot's in the door.

* Is the tone of this poem serious or comic? Explain.
* For what might the mushrooms be a metaphor? Do you think it reads better as metaphor or directly? Why?
* Choose three literary devices that are significant to the meaning of the poem and explain.