

COLLECTION 1

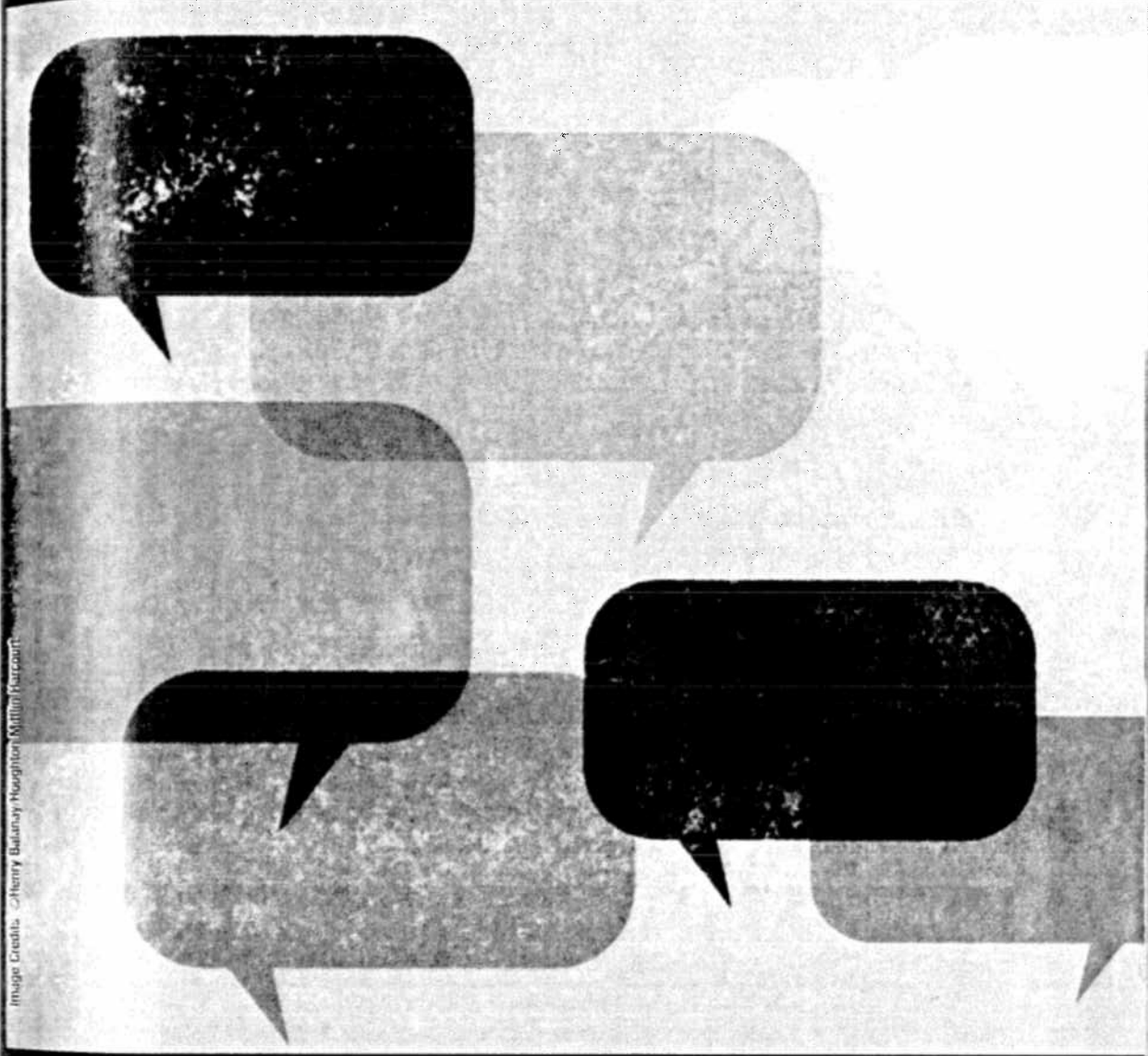


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# Ourselves and Others

We, as human beings, must be willing to accept  
people who are different from ourselves.

—Barbara Jordan

# Ourselves and Others



This collection explores how we interact with other people—family, enemies, neighbors, strangers, and those with whom we disagree.



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COLLECTION

## PERFORMANCE TASK Preview

At the end of this collection, you will have the opportunity to complete two tasks:

- Deliver a speech about how people's relationships with others shape who they are.
- Write an essay about how the texts in this collection do or do not support the idea that people must accept others who are different from themselves.

## ACADEMIC VOCABULARY

Study the words and their definitions in the chart below. You will use these words as you discuss and write about the texts in this collection.

Word	Definition	Related Forms
<b>discriminate</b> (dī-skrīm'ə-nāt') v.	to note clear differences; to separate into categories	discrimination, discriminatory
<b>diverse</b> (dī-vûrs') adj.	made up of elements that are different from each other	diversify, diversity
<b>inhibit</b> (in-hīb'it) v.	to hold back or prevent from acting	inhibition
<b>intervene</b> (in'tər-vēn') v.	to come between two things, persons, or events	intervention
<b>rational</b> (rāsh'ə-nəl) adj.	based on logic or sound reasoning	rationale, rationalize, irrational

## What, of This Gold Would You

Short Story by Etgar

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Folks would give their down and make clips of th every set of answers, you'c the entrance to his house. subject's name, family situ the party he'd voted for in the three wishes, and may social commentary, a test: dreams and the often corr

<sup>1</sup> superimpose: place one thin

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**Background** *The Jewish people were expelled from their homeland, Israel, in the first century. In the late 1800s, Jews from Europe, Asia, Africa, and the Americas began returning to the region; World War II and the Holocaust drastically increased this immigration. Israel became an independent nation in 1948, but tensions with its Arab neighbors and its Arab citizens have led to conflict. With the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, many Russian*

*Jews were finally able to move to Israel and make their own mark on the nation's culture. In this story, Israeli writer Etgar Keret (b. 1967) explores the hopes and dreams of people in this diverse society.*

## What, of This Goldfish, Would You Wish?

Short Story by Etgar Keret    Translated by Nathan Englander

**AS YOU READ** Think about the kinds of things people wish for to make their lives happier. In particular, look for clues to what Sergei Goralick wants from life. Note any questions you have as you read.

Yonatan had a brilliant idea for a documentary. He'd knock on doors. Just him. No camera crew, no nonsense. Just Yonatan, on his own, a small camera in hand, asking, "If you found a talking goldfish that granted you three wishes, what would you wish for?"

Folks would give their answers, and Yoni would edit them down and make clips of the more surprising responses. Before every set of answers, you'd see the person standing stock-still in the entrance to his house. Onto this shot he'd superimpose<sup>1</sup> the subject's name, family situation, monthly income, and maybe even the party he'd voted for in the last election. All that, combined with the three wishes, and maybe he'd end up with a poignant piece of social commentary, a testament to the massive rift between our dreams and the often compromised reality in which we live.

**poignant**  
(poin'yant) *adj.*  
emotionally moving  
or stimulating.

<sup>1</sup> **superimpose:** place one thing on top of another so that both remain visible.

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It was genius, Yoni was sure. And, if not, at least it was cheap. All he needed was a door to knock on and a heart beating on the other side. With a little decent footage, he was sure he'd be able to sell it to Channel 8 or Discovery in a flash, either as a film or as a bunch of vignettes,<sup>2</sup> little cinematic corners, each with that singular soul standing in a doorway, followed by three killer wishes, precious, every one.

Even better, maybe he'd cash out, package it with a slogan and sell it to a bank or cellular phone company. Maybe tag it with something like "Different dreams, different wishes, one bank." Or "The bank that makes dreams come true."

No prep, no plotting, natural as can be, Yoni grabbed his camera and went out knocking on doors. In the first neighborhood he went to, the kindly folk that took part generally requested the foreseeable things: health, money, bigger apartments, either to shave off a couple of years or a couple of pounds. But there were also powerful moments. One drawn, wizened old lady asked simply for a child. A Holocaust survivor with a number on his arm asked very slowly, in a quiet voice—as if he'd been waiting for Yoni to come, as if it wasn't an exercise at all—he'd been wondering (if this fish didn't mind), would it be possible for all the Nazis left living in the world to be held accountable for their crimes? A cocky, broad-shouldered lady-killer put out his cigarette and, as if the camera wasn't there, wished he were a girl. "Just for a night," he added, holding a single finger right up to the lens.

And these were wishes from just one short block in one small, sleepy suburb of Tel Aviv. Yonatan could hardly imagine what people were dreaming of in the development towns and the collectives<sup>3</sup> along the northern border, in the West Bank settlements and Arab villages, the immigrant absorption centers full of broken trailers and tired people left to broil out in the desert sun.

Yonatan knew that if the project was going to have any weight, he'd have to get to everyone, to the unemployed, to the ultrareligious, to the Arabs and Ethiopians and American expats.<sup>4</sup> He began to plan a shooting schedule for the coming days: Jaffa, Dimona, Ashdod, Sderot, Taibe, Talpiot. Maybe Hebron, even.

If he could sneak past the wall, Hebron would be great. Maybe somewhere in that city some beleaguered Arab man would stand in his doorway and, looking through Yonatan and his camera, looking out into nothingness, just pause for a minute, nod his head, and wish for peace—that would be something to see.

<sup>2</sup> **vignettes:** small scenes or images.

<sup>3</sup> **collectives:** cooperative businesses or enterprises.

<sup>4</sup> **expats:** expatriates, people living in a foreign country.



**wizened**  
(wīz'ənd) *adj.*  
shrunken and wrinkled.

**beleaguered**  
(bi-lē'gərd) *adj.*  
troubled with many problems.

Sergei Goralick does. Especially when those s when Sergei was young home knocking on his was pretty much an inv

When Sergei got to couldn't wrap their head looking to find in a place and Arabs and pensioners and Arabs and pensioners on Sergei's door. That it's still dark. He can't until he's done fishing. The way it was.

Until one day someone knocking. Hard like that doesn't like. And he says wants to put on the TV

Sergei tells the boy straightforward manner. Sergei gives the camera; earring boy is stubborn; it's hard for Sergei to find

The boy slows down face, and that he simply Sergei can also slow down to shove off. But the kid

<sup>5</sup> **Zionist:** supporter of a se

<sup>6</sup> **pensioners:** people living



Sergei Goralick doesn't much like strangers banging on his door. Especially when those strangers are asking him questions. In Russia, when Sergei was young, it happened plenty. The KGB felt right at home knocking on his door. His father had been a Zionist,<sup>5</sup> which was pretty much an invitation for them to drop by any old time.

60 When Sergei got to Israel and then moved to Jaffa, his family couldn't wrap their heads around it. They'd ask him, What are you looking to find in a place like that? There's no one there but addicts and Arabs and pensioners.<sup>6</sup> But what is most excellent about addicts and Arabs and pensioners is that they don't come around knocking on Sergei's door. That way Sergei can get his sleep, and get up when it's still dark. He can take his little boat out into the sea and fish until he's done fishing. By himself. In silence. The way it should be. The way it was.

70 Until one day some kid with a ring in his ear . . . comes knocking. Hard like that—rapping at his door. Just the way Sergei doesn't like. And he says, this kid, that he has some questions he wants to put on the TV.

Sergei tells the boy, tells him in what he thinks is a straightforward manner, that he doesn't want it. Not interested. Sergei gives the camera a shove, to help make it clear. But the earring boy is stubborn. He says all kinds of things, fast things. And it's hard for Sergei to follow; his Hebrew isn't so good.

80 The boy slows down, tells Sergei he has a strong face, a nice face, and that he simply has to have him for this movie picture. Sergei can also slow down, he can also make clear. He tells the kid to shove off. But the kid is slippery, and somehow between saying

<sup>5</sup> **Zionist:** supporter of a separate state for Jewish people.

<sup>6</sup> **pensioners:** people living on modest retirement payments.

no and pushing the door closed, Sergei finds that the kid is in his house. He's already making his movie, running his camera without any permission, and from behind the camera he's still telling Sergei about his face, that it's full of feeling, that it's tender. Suddenly the kid spots Sergei's goldfish flitting around in its big glass jar in his kitchen.

90 The kid with the earring starts screaming, "Goldfish, goldfish," he's so excited. And this, this really pressures Sergei, who tells the kid, it's nothing, just a regular goldfish, stop filming it. Just a goldfish, Sergei tells him, just something he found flapping around in the net, a deep-sea goldfish. But the boy isn't listening. He's still filming and getting closer and saying something about talking and fish and a magic wish.

100 Sergei doesn't like this, doesn't like that the boy is almost at it, already reaching for the jar. In this instant Sergei understands the boy didn't come for television, what he came for, specifically, is to snatch Sergei's fish, to steal it away. Before the mind of Sergei Goralick really understands what it is his body has done, he seems to have taken the burner off the stove and hit the boy in the head. The boy falls. The camera falls with him. The camera breaks open on the floor, along with the boy's skull. There's a lot of blood coming out of the head, and Sergei really doesn't know what to do.

That is, he knows exactly what to do, but it really would complicate things. Because if he takes this kid to the hospital, people are going to ask what happened, and it would take things in a direction Sergei doesn't want to go.

"No reason to take him to the hospital anyway," says the goldfish, in Russian. "That one's already dead."

110 "He can't be dead," Sergei says, with a moan. "I barely touched him. It's only a burner. Only a little thing." Sergei holds it up to the fish, taps it against his own skull to prove it. "It's not even that hard."

"Maybe not," says the fish. "But, apparently, it's harder than that kid's head."

"He wanted to take you from me," Sergei says, almost crying.

"Nonsense," the fish says. "He was only here to make a little something for TV."

"But he said . . ."

120 "He said," says the fish, interrupting, "exactly what he was doing. But you didn't get it. Honestly, your Hebrew, it's terrible."

"Yours is better?" Sergei says. "Yours is so great?"

"Yes. Mine's supergreat," the goldfish says, sounding impatient. "I'm a magic fish. I'm fluent in everything." All the while the puddle of blood from the earring kid's head is getting bigger

and bigger and Sergei desperate not to step in

130 "You do have one easy like that, as if Ser loses count.

"No," Sergei says. can't," he says. "I've be

"For what?" the fis But Sergei won't a

# You

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150 "I can restore him life."

**fluent**  
(flōō'ənt) *adj.*  
able to express oneself clearly and easily.

and bigger and Sergei is on his toes, up against the kitchen wall, desperate not to step in it, not to get blood on his feet.

"You do have one wish left," the fish reminds Sergei. He says it easy like that, as if Sergei doesn't know—as if either of them ever

130 loses count.

"No," Sergei says. He's shaking his head from side to side. "I can't," he says. "I've been saving it. Saving it for something."

"For what?" the fish says.

But Sergei won't answer.

You do have  
**one**  
wish left.

That first wish, Sergei used up when they discovered a cancer in his sister. A lung cancer, the kind you don't get better from. The fish undid it in an instant—the words barely out of Sergei's mouth. The second wish Sergei used up five years ago, on Sveta's boy. The kid was still small then, barely three, but the doctors already knew

140 something in her son's head wasn't right. He was going to grow big but not in the brain. Three was about as smart as he'd get.

Sveta cried to Sergei in bed all night. Sergei walked home along the beach when the sun came up, and he called to the fish, asked the goldfish to fix it as soon as he'd crossed through the door. He never told Sveta. And a few months later she left him for some cop, a Moroccan with a shiny Honda. In his heart, Sergei kept telling himself it wasn't for Sveta that he'd done it, that he'd wished his wish purely for the boy. In his mind, he was less sure, and all kinds

150 of thoughts about other things he could have done with that wish continued to gnaw at him, half driving him mad. The third wish, Sergei hadn't yet wished for.

"I can restore him," says the goldfish. "I can bring him back to life."

"No one's asking," Sergei says.

"I can bring him back to the moment before," the goldfish says. "To before he knocks on your door. I can put him back to right there. I can do it. All you need to do is ask."

"To wish my wish," Sergei says. "My last."

The fish swishes his fish tail back and forth in the water, the way he does, Sergei knows, when he's truly excited. The goldfish can already taste freedom. Sergei can see it on him.

After the last wish, Sergei won't have a choice. He'll have to let the goldfish go. His magic goldfish. His friend.

"Fixable," Sergei says. "I'll just mop up the blood. A good sponge and it'll be like it never was."

That tail just goes back and forth, the fish's head steady.

Sergei takes a deep breath. He steps out into the middle of the kitchen, out into the puddle. "When I'm fishing, while it's dark and the world's asleep," he says, half to himself and half to the fish, "I'll tie the kid to a rock and dump him in the sea. Not a chance, not in a million years, will anyone ever find him."

"You killed him, Sergei," the goldfish says. "You murdered someone—but you're not a murderer." The goldfish stops swishing his tail. "If, on this, you won't waste a wish, then tell me, Sergei, what is it good for?"

It was in Bethlehem, actually, that Yonatan found his Arab, a handsome man who used his first wish for peace. His name was Munir; he was fat with a big white mustache. Superphotogenic.<sup>7</sup> It was moving, the way he said it. Perfect, the way in which Munir wished his wish. Yoni knew even as he was filming that this guy would be his promo for sure.

Either him or that Russian. The one with the faded tattoos that Yoni had met in Jaffa. The one that looked straight into the camera and said, if he ever found a talking goldfish he wouldn't ask of it a single thing. He'd just stick it on a shelf in a big glass jar and talk to him all day, it didn't matter about what. Maybe sports, maybe politics, whatever a goldfish was interested in chatting about.

Anything, the Russian said, not to be alone.

**COLLABORATIVE DISCUSSION** Why does Sergei save his third wish for so long? With a partner, discuss the reasons for his behavior. Cite specific evidence from the text to support your answer.

<sup>7</sup> **superphotogenic:** looking extremely good in photos or on film.

## Analyze Character

A good fictional character evolves over the course of a story. To analyze the complex character, consider his **motivations**.

### Character

Authors provide numerous character traits:

- **What does the character's language reveal?** Words can reveal whether a character is kind or rude, shy or bold. A character's dialogue can also reveal a character's relationship with other characters.
- **How does the character's behavior move the plot forward?** Characters' actions and how they respond to events can reveal their motivations.
- **What does the character's thoughts reveal?** A character's thoughts can provide a deeper insight into their personality.
- **How does he or she relate to other characters?** Observe the character's relationships. Both personality and relationships can reveal a character's motivations.

## Analyze Point of View

This story is set in Tel Aviv, a society where Jewish and Arab backgrounds are diverse. The characters come from different countries in which they grew up, but they now make up a diverse community that settles in neighborhoods. The experiences of Israeli and Arab characters in this cultural context. Arabs and Jews have long had disputes over territory.



## Analyzing the Text

**Cite Text Evidence** Support your responses with evidence from the selection.

- Analyze** Consider how Sergei reacts when Yoni comes to his door. Does his response seem rational (reasonable) or not? How does Sergei's cultural experience help explain his reaction?
- Analyze** What does the dialogue between Sergei and the goldfish reveal about their relationship?
- Infer** When you **infer**, you use details in a text to draw a conclusion about something that the author does not state directly. What can you infer about Sergei's character based on the way he uses his first two wishes?
- Draw Conclusions** Sergei considers the goldfish to be his friend. What details in the story reveal their conflict with each other? Can their relationship truly be called a friendship? Explain.
- Analyze** When Sergei realizes that Yoni is dead, he must make a decision. What conflicting motivations must he sort out before he can decide whether or not to use his last wish?
- Evaluate** The last section of the story is a flash forward. Readers must infer what happens in the intervening time between Sergei's conversation with the fish and Yoni's final report on his video. Is this structure effective, or would it have been better to know the details about Sergei's decision? Explain.
- Analyze** A **theme** is an important idea about life or human nature expressed through a story's characters and events. What theme about happiness does this story convey through Sergei's situation and actions and the outcome of events?

### PERFORMANCE TASK



**Speaking Activity: Discussion** "What, of This Goldfish, Would You Wish?" provides a modern twist on the "three wishes" structure used in many folk tales. Explore this aspect of the story with a small group.

- Each group member should research one folk tale involving three wishes. Retell your folk tale to the rest of the group. Discuss similarities and differences between the tales. What happens to the characters, and why?
- Then, discuss how Etgar Keret's story fits in with the others. What elements are similar? What makes it unique?
- Write a summary of your group's conclusions about Keret's story and other tales of three wishes.

## Critical Vocabulary

**poignant**      **wizer**

**Practice and Apply** Answer each Critical Vocabulary question.

- You have just read a poem. Will you be **poignant** tomorrow, or will you be **wizer**?
- The flowers you received were **poignant**. Why?
- Maria feels **beleaguered**. How do her friends show confidence or support?
- Doug is **fluent** in French. How does he travel to France? Explain.

## Vocabulary Strategy

If you come across an unfamiliar word in the surrounding text, use the word *fluent* as a clue. For example, "I'm fluent in everything." The word *fluent* means "easy to understand." If you are *fluent* in Hebrew, it means you understand Hebrew easily.

**Practice and Apply** Find the words *poignant* (line 28), *accountable* (line 32), and *wizer* (line 36) in the text. Use the clues to determine each word's meaning.

- Determine the word's part of speech (adjective, verb, or adverb) and its meaning in the sentence.
- If the sentence does not provide a clear meaning, use the word's context. Which word fits with what you know about the word's meaning?
- Write down your definition for each word.