

JANUARY

John Updike



The Magpie, 1869, Claude Monet, Musée d'Orsay, Paris, France

▲ **Critical Viewing** Compare and contrast the artist's concept of winter with Updike's. [**Compare and Contrast**]

The days are short,
The sun a spark
Hung thin between
The dark and dark.

5 Fat snowy footsteps
Track the floor,
And parkas pile up
Near the door.

10 The river is
A frozen place
Held still beneath
The trees' black lace.

The sky is low.
The wind is gray.
15 The radiator
Purrs all day.

Literary Analysis

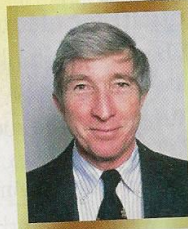
Lyric Poetry In what ways is this poem musical?

Review and Assess

Thinking About the Selection

1. **Respond:** Which image in "January" best conveys to you the essence of that month? Why?
2. (a) **Recall:** What is the sun compared to in the first stanza of the poem? (b) **Interpret:** Explain the image "dark and dark" in line 4.
3. (a) **Interpret:** Why do the trees appear to be made of black lace? (b) **Compare and Contrast:** How does this image contrast visually with other parts of the poem?
4. (a) **Infer:** What sense besides sight does the poem appeal to? (b) **Draw Conclusions:** Would you describe the speaker's attitude toward winter as positive or negative? Explain.

John Updike



(b.1932)

Best known as a Pulitzer Prize-winning novelist, John Updike is also an essayist, poet, and editor. Updike's quartet of novels, including *Rabbit, Run*; *Rabbit Redux*; *Rabbit Is Rich*; and *Rabbit at Rest*, is considered to be one of the great chronicles of modern life.