

## Wilderness House Literary Review 17/3

*Faye Holt*  
**Shiners**

When I was younger, my family spent a summer at Swan Lake. Our stay only lasted two weeks, but it stretched on and on until in my memory's back pocket it became a whole summer. One day we were down by the lake, right where the water met the grass. I was playing with my brothers in the murky edges of the bank. My father stood on the dock, patiently waiting for fish that rarely came. His presence was a comfort; he was warm and gray and strong, in every sense of the word. My older brother, a carefree boy who never lost his childish optimism, bent down and pointed at small silver fish glinting in the water's light.

"They're called shiners. If you're fast enough, Sissy, you could catch 'em."

"Can you catch them?"

"Only sometimes," he said.

I watched him dart in and out of the water, reaching and reaching, laughing and laughing. Always barely catching, but unphased. I studied his every move and prepared to imitate.

I plunged my hands into the cool water. They mocked me... I wasn't quick enough. I pulled my hands, dripping with defeat, out of the lake. All I had caught was mud. I waded further in stubbornly, determined to catch a fish. Again and again they swept around and passed my fingers, moving in and out. My eyes were strained from looking through the muddy lake and my fingers were wrinkled with water. My exhausted determination was only broken by the call of my father, "Sissy, why don't you come up here? I'll let you use the shiny tackles."

I moved through the murkiness and scrambled up to join him. I felt the waves and wind rocking the dock back and forth. I planted my feet firmly on the wood, tensing each muscle. My father laughed and put his hand on my shoulder, "Just cast your line."

I whipped the line back and let it slice into the water. The wind moved me less and less. No fish came, but we cast and recast. We kept through all the waves and wind. We cast and recast.