

Questions on The Changeling by Judith Ortiz Cofer:

1. Keeping in mind that *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary* defines a changeling as "a child secretly exchanged for another in infancy," what are the various implications of the title of this poem?
2. Like Elizabeth Bishop's "Exchanging Hats," Cofer's poem describes an "experiment" in trying on the roles and clothing of the other sex. What does the young girl's "game" suggest about her concept of men's roles? About her attraction to transforming herself into "boy shape" (line 8)? What answers to these questions are suggested by the description of her "brother's closet" as a "dark cubicle / that smelled of adventure" (6, 24-25)? How is your sense of the meaning of the game and your concept of the roles it embodies affected by the speaker's describing it as an attempt to vie "for [her] father's attention" (2)?
3. What is the significance of the fact that the speaker's father "would listen with a smile" (18)? That her mother "was not amused" (21)? What does the poem suggest about why the mother might be more upset by the girl's antics than her father is?
4. What do the description of the game and the final stanza suggest about women's roles? What are the implications of the speaker's reference to the kitchen as "the real world" (29)?