Reach Out and Touch
by Maxine Tynes

baby girl, baby boy behind me on the bus
reach out
and touch the curly electric of my hair
your fingers dipped in the
brown skin magic of my neck
to see if it comes off
your mama
slapping hands away
hush-up of your questions
and wondering out loud
why it doesn't come off.
I turn and smile for you
but you're already lost
in the silence and fear that motherlove wraps you in.
I should have sat beside you
snuggled my big warm self up close
held you while your mama juggled parcels.
then you would know it's o.k.

1. Annotate the poem.

2. How does each woman on the bus react to the young child’s actions? Why?

3. Write a theme statement expressing your interpretation of the main idea in this poem. Support your statement with specific references to the text.

4. Describe the tone and mood of this poem. Provide examples of specific techniques Maxine Tynes uses to convey this mood and tone.

5. Explain the irony that surrounds the “motherlove” in this poem.