

Name:

“Small Portions” by Julia Alvarez

1)

The earth is just too big, too beautiful:  
I like it small, through a window, catching  
the light at the day’s end. I prefer poems  
haiku-size; a pair of binoculars  
5 through which I see one bluebird at a time,  
the pink bib at its throat, the lacquered claws  
curled upon an apple bough with the fruit  
just setting on, a green minuscule globe  
in whose meat I can taste Adam and Eve,  
10 the whole sad history of our human grief.

See what I mean? Take one small thing in hand,  
open it up, and there’s another door,  
and another, long corridors of views  
into the heart of darkness or of light.  
15 There’s no such thing as a small portion  
once you bite in and savor the flavors.  
If truth is in the details, I’m the pope  
of the particular, imam of mites,  
a god in the minus numbers, a worm  
20 pearling the soil with the teensy bits  
I take in and deliver, laboring on  
my two-inch by two-inch ivory life.  
Friends worry I’m missing the big picture.  
But I can hear a chorus in one voice,  
25 and just this morning from my study chair  
I watched a master bluebird build Versailles  
in a maple’s cubby hole. By the compost bin  
I’ve got an ant hill of the pyramids.  
My lot’s to be a nibbler at life’s feast.  
30 Bit by bit, I’ll devour all of it.

2)

3)

4)

5)

1) A haiku is a very condensed form of Japanese poetry, consisting of only three lines with five, seven, and five syllables respectively. What does the speaker mean when she compares haiku-sized poems to binoculars (line 4)?

2) Restate in your own words what the speaker says in lines 17-20.

3) Versailles (line 26) is a fabulous place established as the fixed residence of the kings of France in 1682. What does the speaker mean when she says she watched “a master bluebird build Versailles”? What **image** does she see when she sees an ant hill?