Originally

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Plural pronouns suggest shared experience

past tense

assonance
highlights sense of ownership / belonging

alliteration / metaphor
childlike impression of car
connotations of anger / danger

We came from our own country in a red room which fell through the fields, our mother singing our father's name to the turn of the wheels. My brothers cried, one of them bawling *Home*, *Home*, as the miles rushed back to the city, the street, the house, the vacant rooms where we didn't live any more. I stared at the eyes of a blind toy, holding its paw.

enjambment /
italics used for
emphasis

sense of speed / things happening out-with control
conveyed by personification

use of a list to convey how
much has been left behind

ambiguous - is she praying
or is the children's father missing?
Or is he there in the car with them?

effective word choice to convey
strength of feeling

symbolic of the situation they are in -
heading into the unknown

First few lines create an upbeat atmosphere / mood which is contrasted later on when the children's reactions are described.

Poet's reaction contrasts with her brothers' - they are vocal and obviously upset, while she is quiet / withdrawn.

metaphor - idea of journey / different changes and stages of life

sentence structure relates to idea of slow change

All childhood is an emigration. Some are slow, leaving you standing, resigned, up an avenue where no one you know stays. Others are sudden. Your accent wrong. Corners, which seem familiar, leading to unimagined, pebble-dashed estates, big boys eating worms and shouting words you don't understand. My parents' anxiety stirred like a loose tooth in my head. *I want our own country*, I said.

short abrupt sentences relate to this type of change

sense of confusion / uncertainty / not knowing and fitting in is conveyed through word choice

aggressive impression of the strange boys

Simile conveys idea of something irritating - always there and you can't ignore it. The whole family affected by the move.

repeats idea from the opening line, emphasising the idea of belonging / origins
Italics again used to indicate direct speech

conjunction starts the stanza and indicates a change

lists same idea for emphasis of change being difficult to pinpoint / define

echoes idea of 'big boys" actions in previous stanza, showing the brothers now fit in well

But then you forget, or don't recall, or change,
and, seeing your brother swallow a slug, feel only
a skelf of shame. I remember my tongue
shedding its skin like a snake, my voice
in the classroom sounding just like the rest. Do I only think
I lost a river, culture, speech, sense of first space
and the right place? Now, *Where do you come from?*
strangers ask. *Originally?* And I hesitate.

use of old Scottish dialect
It is still with her - just like a skelf - something small but it sticks under your skin

simile to convey idea of change again - leaving the old behind and adapting to suit the new

sense of uncertainty emphasised by enjambment

lists all the things she thinks she may have lost - but poses it as a question again highlighting uncertainty

two very different questions - is where you come from the same as your original home?

final abrupt sentence again emphasises the poet's uncertainty about her identity and where she belongs.