Understanding a Poem #2

1. Read the following poem:

“Cutting the Cake” by Virginia Hamilton Adair

Gowned and veiled for tribal ritual
in a maze of tulle and satin
with her eyes rimmed round in cat fur
and the stylish men about her
kissing kin and carefree suitors

long she looked unseeing past him
to her picture in the papers
print and photoflash embalming
the demise of the familiar
and he trembled as her fingers

took the dagger laid before them
for the ceremonial cutting
of the mounting tiers of sweetness
crowned with manikin and maiden
and her chop was so triumphant

that the groomlike figure
from his lover at the apex
toppled over in the frosting
where a flower girl retrieved him
sucked him dry and bit his head off.

2. Answer the following questions:

A. What is the poem’s situation?
B. What are some examples of violence in the poem? List at least five.
C. Why do you think the author uses such violent terms to describe this scene?
D. How many sentences are in the poem? Why does the author make this choice?
E. What is the rhyme scheme of the poem? Why does the author make this choice?
F. What is the bride looking at before she cuts the cake? Why is this important?
G. The poem mentions “tribal ritual” and “ceremonial cutting”. Why are these terms important to the meaning of the poem?