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English 9A

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Poetry Analysis

Initial Reaction:

The first time I read this poem, I was confused because there were some words I didn't understand, like divested and contrition. Additionally, I didn't understand the meaning of the poem. After reading it multiple times, I began to understand what the author is trying to say. I also started putting the pieces together of what the lines were symbolizing.

Speaker:

- The speaker has no specified gender.
- The speaker is the person that died and is telling their side of the story and what they experienced after death.
- The speaker appreciates the afterlife better than the real world since it doesn't include the hardships that the physical world has.
- They also share their opinion of how they believe their funeral played out.
- The speaker believes that their funeral was very mellow and not expressed dramatically.

Audience:

This poem's intended audience is written for the author herself, Jane Kenyon. The poem states specific things that aren't in the afterlife anymore. For example, "No bad books, no

plastic,/ no insurance premiums” (lines 5-6). The specific mention of bad books, plastic, and insurance premiums are everyday problems that most people don’t think deeply about. By mentioning these specific things, Kenyon could be showing her personal thoughts on modern life or things she would get frustrated about.

Situation:

Throughout the poem, Kenyon compares the problems that people can face in the physical world to the tranquility people experience in the after life. It shows that when you pass away and go to the afterlife, you have forever to experience peace and no hardships. Kenyon also states “and God, as promised, proves/ to be mercy clothed in light” (lines 13 and 14). This shows how God stayed true to his promise of freedom from agony once entering heaven, and how being in God’s presence has the power to completely heal and resolve all of your conflicts.

Setting:

There are two settings in this poem, a burial site and the afterlife. It shows how the setting is at a burial site by mentioning a “clod of earth hits the casket” (line 10). The word “casket” shows how this poem takes place at a burial site. A “clod” is a large piece of dirt, in this case, the clod is being placed on the casket during the burial. From the other perspective, the setting is the afterlife. The person that passed away at the funeral is describing the afterlife, showing how part of the poem takes place in heaven and at the funeral.

Structure:

The structure of this poem is description. The speaker describes how the afterlife consists of, “no illness. Contrition/ does not exist” (lines 7-8). This describes the speaker's views of the afterlife, and how it lacks sickness and regret. The speaker also describes their perspective on their own funeral. For example, “No one howls as the first/ clod of earth hits the casket” (lines 9-10). This quote shows how nobody is showing their emotion dramatically during the burial.

Paraphrase:

- In the beginning of poem the speaker is getting rid of all the bad emotions, like fear and despair, once they arrive to the other side
- As the poem goes on, they are explaining all the hardships that this place lacks and appreciating it greatly
- Towards the end, the speaker mentions God and how God kept his promise of being merciful

Language:

- Repetition:

In the poem, the word “no” was repeated multiple times to emphasize all the hardships that the afterlife lacks compared to the physical world. For example, “No bad books, no plastic,/ no insurance premiums, and of course/ no illness” (lines 5-7). These are a few examples of daily problems that people can experience when alive. The repetition of the word “no” shows how these hardships don’t occur in the afterlife.

- Metaphor:

The author wrote multiple metaphors in this poem to describe their point of view on the afterlife. For example, “Our calm hearts strike only the hour” (line 12). When it says a “calm heart” it means a person that is mourning quietly and not expressing their emotions dramatically. When it says “strike only the hour” it means a clock striking when it hits an hour. The author compares a calm heart to a clock striking when it hits an hour. This metaphor is used to show how emotions that are being suppressed can burst at any moment. When a clock strikes, it is surprising and can be unexpected. Just like when emotions burst after keeping them down, it is also surprising and unexpected.

- Symbolism:

The author uses symbolism many times throughout the poem. An example of this is “Now there is no more catching/ one's own eye in the mirror” (lines 3 and 4). The speaker mentions a person's eye and a mirror, which means when somebody is looking at themselves in the mirror. People look at themselves in the mirror when they believe they look good or when they believe they don't look good. The speaker says that there is “no more” of looking at yourself. This proves how the author refers to being self conscious. The speaker is now saying that she isn't self conscious anymore because she passed on to the afterlife.

Tone:

Throughout the poem there is a change in tone. The poem starts off as fond, with the speaker referring back to their past life, “No bad books, no plastic,/ no insurance premiums, and of course/ no illness” (lines 5-7). The speaker is mentioning all the hardships that are now gone and are appreciative of them. Then the tone shifts to uplifting, mentioning God and Him being

merciful towards the dead people passing through to the afterlife. The poem states, “And God, as promises, proves/ to be mercy clothed in light” (lines 13 and 14). This is uplifting because God is keeping his promise in taking away our hardships when passing on.

Meaning:

In the poem, “Notes from the Other Side” by Jane Kenyon, there is a lot of meaning to it.

The meaning is to always be optimistic even though living through life can come with heartache and agony, it's crucial to not give up your devotion to life. Throughout the poem, the speaker describes the afterlife to be more peaceful and harmonious than the real world. The speaker observes all of their past struggles and is glad that they can avoid these hardships in the afterlife. Even though life can be difficult sometimes, we have to look to the bright side of things and get through it.