

English commentary- snowy morning, by henry shukman.

[Life](#), [Death](#)



English Commentary- Snowy Morning, by Henry Shukman. " Snowy Morning" is a melancholy piece about the difficulty and inevitability of saying goodbye to a lifetime of images, sensations and the beauty of the world around us. Shukman uses images from childhood to create a sense of nostalgia as well as establishing a paradox between the fear of death and dealing with death in a facetious manner. In addition to this Shukman uses semantic fields dealing with the senses in order to create a more involved mental image of the scene which heightens the impact of the haunting rhetorical question at the close of the poem. Shukman begins the poem with a childhood reference that refers to the idea of death melodramatically, which contrasts sharply with the underlying fear of dying. Shukman states that he used to, " play" at dying which implies that it was viewed as a light subject, something to be mocked in a variety of dramatic ways. However, this is followed by a mention of them fake dying with, " hands clasped to the chest". This alludes the physicality of the fear felt upon contemplation of death and creates a paradox between the implied fear in, " hands clasped to the chest" and the jocular tone of the preceding lines. The effect of this is to highlight the discrepancy between how we perceive death when amongst others and internally. From this we can infer that Shukman's message is that although we may show bravado when dealing with death we all feel regret towards our eventual demise. " Snowy Morning" also sets out to convey a sense of incredulity that we must leave behind the infinite entirety of the Universe and all our thoughts, memories and emotions as we die. Shukman poses the rhetorical question, " Say goodbye to everything? " This implies that he finds the notion of leaving the world behind so difficult that he needs to seek

confirmation. The effect of this is to highlight the overriding theme expressed in the poem, which is a feeling of melancholy and regret at the idea that at death we must leave everything behind. In the fourth stanza, Shukman has used juxtaposition of colours and their connotations in order to allude towards the interconnected nature of life and death. The, " white field" covered in snow implies, through whites connotations, sterility and lifelessness. However, immediately following there are, " green trails" poking through the snow, " where the horses wandered". " Green" has connotations to life and vitality, so by juxtaposing the ideas of sterility and vitality and linking them together through the horse, it is implied that life waits just below the surface death and can be brought forth by living beings. This is a beautiful allusion towards the cyclical nature of life and death and has the important effect of softening the poem, making the poem less about the fear of death and more about the sadness of leaving life. This bitter message is sweetened somewhat by the above inference that death is not overriding and is followed by more life. Furthermore, Shukman has widely employed the semantic field of words relating to the senses, in order to stress the inherent joy in every aspect of life. When he says goodbye to, " beautiful vinegar" this seemingly illogical statement of referring to something so disgusting tasting as beautiful creates a paradox. This paradox implies that vinegar is beautiful because it is disgusting. One can infer from this that the joy in, " beautiful vinegar" lies in simply being able to taste it and experience the shock at its flavour. Moreover, by expressing the idea that, " puddles crunch like caramel" Shukman is conjoining the sound of crunching with sweetness in the readers mind. This lexis implies that the sound itself is sweet and

enjoyable to hear. From this again can be derived the thought that Shukman is expressing the happiness inherent in all of life's experiences, hinting that, if you are alive, the simple joy of being alive will make a, " crunch" sound sweet and make vile vinegar, " beautiful". The effect of this is to add another counterweight against the gloominess and fear expressed towards death in previous stanzas. Finally, Shukman refers to the entire, beautiful winter field as a, " bride". This use of lexis implies that the field is as yet unspoiled and in its prime. This bridal connection is further strengthened by the fact that the field is white and covered in snow and white is the traditional colour of a bride. The connotations that come with bride are words such as beauty, excitement and happiness, which hints that these are the ideas that are to be associated with the field, fortifying the earlier assertion that life is beautiful and joyful. Moreover, that fact that the field is a, " bride" is significant in yet another sense. Because the narrator is by himself in the field it can be assumed that he (and therefore the reader) is the groom; we are married to the field. Since the field that has been described as beautiful and symbolizing the circle of life it is therefore implied that we are intrinsically bound up, married, to this cycle and its beauty and happiness. The effect of this is to make the last sentence all the more poignant. The reader has just been told that he is an integral part of the life cycle and its joy, yet is gently reminded that he has to let it go. " Snowy Morning" is all about the bittersweet nature of life and death. Through starting off the poem by awakening our fear of death, then reminding us of its joys and then asking, " How are we to say goodbye? " Shukman has inspired a feeling of regret in the reader, regret that he must leave the beauty and joy of the

world eventually. BY crafting a careful balance between creating a fear of death and an appreciation for life and its rebirth, Shukman has avoided creating a poem that is merely sad and has elevated it. Through his manipulation of juxtaposition and connotation he inspires hope in the reader that life goes on after death in a cycle that never ends, even if he must leave it