

Leaving school and dear mr lee essay sample



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Both the poems, “ Leaving School” by Hugo Williams and “ Dear Mr Lee” by U A Fanthorpe, present school in different ways. Both poets have showed their different views and opinions on school and also mentioned other issues and themes such as the relationship between adults and children. “ Leaving School” portrays bad points and views about someone’s school life and “ Dear Mr Lee” shows quite the opposite of this. It is about a child who likes school and has a closer relationship with one of the teachers. Hugo Williams’ view of school is quite negative.

In “ Leaving School” he has written about an adult reflecting back on his life as a child and portrays school as very strict. His life as a student at a boarding school involved taking on a lot of major adult responsibilities and everyone was controlled to do whatever you were told. U A Fanthorpe, however, has quite an opposite view on school to this. Her poem has quite a positive attitude towards school. The child (narrator), who has written the letter, enjoys studying literature and also mentions his teacher quite a lot, which shows that Mr Smart seems to be his role model by whom he is inspired.

From reading the two poems, I have come to realise that adults and children have very different outlooks on the world and life. In “ Leaving School”, the narrator of the poem is an adult. Being an adult, the person has experienced a lot of things in his life compared to the child in “ Dear Mr Lee”. This is because the child hasn’t really lived his life properly, to understand the world and life in the same way that an adult has. Therefore both the adult and child are bound to have different views.

As I have already mentioned, “ Leaving School” is an adult who is reflecting and looking back on his life as a child at school and remembering a specific time in his life when he is leaving school. However, it is not really made clear if the child is actually leaving school or if he is just thinking or imagining about leaving school. This is made clear in line 30 when the poet has written, “ I was miles away”. This can either be taken poetically or literally. If it is taken poetically, we can say that the child is just miles away in his imagination or thoughts rather than being literally miles away from school.

The child dislikes the school a lot as he has made clear that it was not like he had expected and hoped. We know this because in line 4 he says, “ I thought it was going to be fun”. This is a very different outlook on school compared to “ Dear Mr Lee”, when the child seems quite happy about school life and actually enjoys learning. Perhaps this has something to do with the fact that he actually gets on with his teacher who has become an inspiration to him. This close relationship between him and his teacher perhaps made him have this positive learning attitude of his.

From this, we can say that U A Fanthorpe is intending that having a good relationship and co operation with the teacher can actually influence the child to enjoy learning at school and also create a better relationship between adults and children as a whole. On the other hand, Hugo Williams’ intensions are that school is damaging to children and influences a negative relationship between adults and children. Because of the different views on school life in both poems, the tone is also different. In “ Leaving School”, the adult seems like he has had a hard childhood and we can tell this from how confused he seems to be.

This confusion can be pointed out, as some of the subjects in the lines don't seem to connect. One minute the man is talking about one thing and then without finishing he changes the subject matter totally. An example of this in the poem is in lines 6 and 7, " when everything was explained in the library, so the first night I didn't have any sheets. " As you can see this is a very odd connection, as not listening to what was said in the library doesn't have anything to do with not having any sheets. This technique confuses the reader but also shows the confusion of the man.

Responsibility and order has also been shown in the poem when he talks about " wearing a grey flannel suit" in line 2 and " I had my own suitcase". These lines show how adult responsibilities have been forced upon him. The same technique of odd connection is also used in " Dr Mr Lee". However in this poem, it is not used to portray the child's confusion, but instead to show the childlike speech. The title of the poem " Leaving School" relates to the picture at the bottom of the page, of the happy, smiling student which is either on the way to school or on the way home from school.

Immediately we expect the poem to be about a child who is excited and happy about leaving school. Although when we read on, we find that this is not the case. To remind us that the poem is actually written about a child, excitement is another theme, which has been put in to the poem. " I had my own suitcase. I thought it was going to be fun" is two of the very few lines in the poem where the poet has reminded us that the child is unhappy and that he was excited when he started school but soon that excitement died down. The punctuation in the two poems also varies.

In “ Dr Mr Lee” there is only one full stop in the whole of the poem. The punctuation in the poem consists of many commas and then one full stop at the end. This portrays very colloquial and informal language. Using colloquial language reminds the reader that the poem is written by an enthusiastic child, in the form of a letter. An example of this colloquial language is, “ pretty gloomy really” used in line 14. However, the child still does try to make the letter as formal as possible as he still puts his own opinions in brackets. This shows us that these opinions of his are important to him.

The same technique of outlining importance has been used in “ Leaving School” but in a different way. Hugo Williams has personified the word “ Inspection” in line 26 to show that this was obviously an important time for the child. In “ Leaving School” the language is more formal and less colloquial as this shows us that the child has had adult responsibilities forced upon him and that he has been disciplined well to do whatever he was told. During the course of the poem there are many references made to support this view of adult life.

Some examples of this are, “ I set out into the world”, “ wearing a grey flannel suit”, “ I had my own suitcase”. Even though all of these references are made, we are still reminded that the child is only eight years old when the odd connection comes in. This makes us very confused when the child mixes up different subject matters. This technique shows us that the narrator is illogical, therefore a child. In the second stanza, the child’s consciousness is shown in the form of a stream of thoughts. Here, the child talks about himself and what he liked and disliked about school.

This shows us that the child had to follow the crowd and had to do whatever he was told, even if he didn't like it. In "Dear Mr Lee" the child refers to his teacher, Mr Smart, several times throughout the poem. Here, U A Fanthorpe has used school to explore the theme of relationship between adults and children. The repetition of "Mr Smart says" shows us that he is quite influenced by his teacher. However, in "Leaving School" the narrator has made the adults seem like quite a regimented, valuable and orderly group of people.