

Mirror and blackberrying essay sample



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

The author of both of the poems, Sylvia Plath, had a very difficult life with many hard times, experiences, and feelings, and she became both mentally and emotional after her ordeals. This life that she led, and the pain that she endured is reflected in her works and the poetry that she wrote. The result of this is that the majority of her work is based on very negative themes and feelings, and an example of this is clearly shown in Mirror. Plath writes about the truth about ourselves that we don't like to hear.

She writes the poem from the eyes of a mirror, something which is 'exact' and has 'no preconceptions', something which only shows the truth, and the real truth, unmisted by the feelings of human beings, by 'love or dislike'. She writes about how the mirror watches a woman, ageing over time, something that the majority of humans do not like to see. However the mirror sees this and reflects it back to the woman, who feels it in a negative way and who does not like the truth, and who eventually in the end is affected badly and sees herself as 'a terrible fish'.

This is different however, in the poem Blackberrying, which compared to Mirror and the majority of poems written by Plath is very positive. In this poem Plath indirectly writes about the walk of life as well, which is represented by the winding lane with different problems along it, however even though the lane does corner and bend life as a whole this time is viewed from a much more positive view as mentioned before. This is because 'the berries and bushes end' eventually, and the narrator in Blackberrying eventually reaches their aim, which is heaven, in this case represented by the sea.

She has taken life from a different perspective and looked at it in a different way and realised that there is something to look forward to after death, and so she can relate this to her life and the problems that she has had. Plath shows us in *Mirror* that the woman does not like what she is seeing due to it being an accurate and truthful reflection, and after a while as we reach the second stanza the woman is searching in vain for another source of reflection where she can start 'searching its reaches for what she really is' - and she finds the lake.

However she is told the same thing and she turns her back to the true reflection and turns to 'those liars, the candles or the moon' that can cover up the truth for her. She believes that Candlelight and moonlight can cover up what she doesn't want to see because they do not show everything through. In *Blackberrying* however, this is not present, due to the woman being her own narrator, and not having to listen to what other people are telling her. She can decide for herself what is the truth, and what she wants to see, however deceiving herself in the process. We can also see that the view towards the subject matter in each poem is different.

In *Mirror* the mirror is disliked and almost hated to a certain extent by the woman who is looking into it every day, however in *Blackberrying* the woman says that she has 'such a blood sisterhood' with them, and that the blackberries 'must love me' as well. Her entire world seems to be about blackberries, and her whole life (which is the path) is surrounded by bushes full of blackberries - emphasizing the importance of them to her. Another point that I noticed is when the two different circumstances are contrasted, it shows the similarities and yet differences between the two poems.

In both the poems Plath writes about the walk of life and the journey that we all go through, this is split into different parts in the different stanzas of the poems. However, although this makes the poems similar the walks of life that are described are different. In *Mirror* this is shown in the more physical literal sense, where the disadvantages and problems can be seen as the woman watches herself slowly age over time. The mirror reflects this to her and shows her what is happening, and how in it ' she has drowned a young girl' and how ' an old woman rises'.

However, in *Blackberrying*, although we get a clear picture that the person in the poem is walking down a path with bushes and blackberries on the sides this is only a physical walk down the path, and not a physical walk through life like in *Mirror*, where the woman is actually ageing and physically getting older. The actual walk of life described in *Blackberrying* is a spiritual walk for the person in the poem, as she admires the nature around her, compares it to life and then reflects on her life. The physical bends and bushes that are along the path make up the spiritual walk of life being made in her mind.

In *Mirror* we are shown by the narrator an actual reflection of what is happening around due to it being a mirror, the woman ageing and changing is the truth, even though the woman doesn't want to hear it and for her the ' truth hurts'. We can rest assured though that the mirror will always show everything ' just as it is', on the other hand, in *Blackberrying* the narrator is viewing the path she's walking along, and the world around her from her own eyes. She is thinking and believing what she wants to make out of the surroundings, and so she is making up the spiritual life in her head the way that she wants it to be.

For the woman in Mirror she cannot choose what she will get from the mirror, and this is why she gets a negative point of view from the poem. On the outside Blackberrying may seem to be on a more positive note, however this may not be so true and the poem could actually prove to be worse than Mirror, yet simply covered up by the narrator, because it is the narrator that determines and controls the way the poem is presented to the reader. We see natural imagery used to the full extent in both of the poems in order to make the poems more peaceful, tranquil, and calm.

However we see it used to a greater extent in Blackberrying due to the woman being outside walking along the path - however the meaning could refer to her life and it being peaceful and calm also. This can be seen a lot right the way through Blackberrying for this reason, however not so much in Mirror. This again may be due to the fact that the woman in Mirror is not peaceful, and not calm, and in fact very agitated and disturbed due to the truth and her image which she is seeing in the mirror hurting her. This same reason is why sensual imagery that appeals to the senses is also used, and to a greater extent in Blackberrying.

Plath writes the different poems in different styles using a different structure and different language in order to emphasize on the difference between the two poems, and the ideas that they are getting across. In Mirror she splits it into two verses, like a beginning and an end. The first of which consists of an introduction to what the mirror is and what it does, and then the second looking at the woman, and her reaction to what the mirror is showing her. Throughout both of them however is the journey of life and she gradually gets older until she is an old woman at the end.

She uses enjambment to make the poem flow more to become more like a storyline - in order for the reader to get into it more and relate to it more themselves. She has also used repetition in line nine where she says 'over and over' showing how many times the woman has come to the mirror. This also shows that the mirror has been with the woman since she was young due to it seeing her so many times. Blackberrying has been split into 3 separate stanzas, each indirectly showing a stage in the woman's life. Plath has again used enjambment to add affect to the poem and make it flow.

Repetition is used several times throughout the poem, on the first line the repetition of 'nothing' emphasizes just how many blackberries there are in the lane. Also on line twelve where 'protesting' is repeated, and lines twenty-five and twenty-seven where 'nothing' and 'beating' are repeated the same affect is achieved. She also uses alliteration alongside the already use of enjambment to emphasize on a certain point and make the poem flow even more, this is shown in line sixteen where she says 'bluegreen bellies' when referring to the bush of flies.