

Two scavengers in a
truck, two beautiful
people in a mercedes



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“ Two Scavengers in a Truck, Two beautiful people in a Mercedes” is a poem written by Lawrence Ferlinghetti. Lawrence Ferlinghetti is a poet born in New York City in 1919 and spent most of his life living in San Francisco, so some would call him a ‘ city boy’. This poem shows the contrast between two lifestyles – rich and poor. The poor being the ones who are deformed or ugly and working in low class jobs that do not pay much but are hard labour and the rich being the beautiful ones driving in a Mercedes to their upper class high paying job of being architects. This seems to be the stereotypical way in which things work in the world today.

The poor, who have most likely come from hard backgrounds of poverty and hunger, are the ones who are given the least chances and therefore don’t look as good as others and are left with the worst jobs. Whereas the rich people, who have come from more than comfortable backgrounds with money, get the best jobs and look good as they are able to preen themselves with the money that they have. Due to their family inheritance and the extra money that they earn in their jobs where they do not have to do a lot of physical labour at all. In this poem, Lawrence Ferlinghetti has used alliteration of the letters g and h, and a simile to accentuate the ugliness of the oldest scavenger: ‘..

. grungy from their route on the way home The older of the two with grey iron hair and hunched back looking down like some gargoyle Quasimodo...

‘ The alliteration of the g and h puts emphasis on certain parts of the scavengers’ appearance, which show the reader how hard he must have worked in his life to become the way he looked. Lawrence Ferlinghetti uses

the simile to show that he is more deformed as the well-known fictional hunchbacked bell-ringer from Notre Dame as he looks like both a gargoyle, an ugly stone carving carved on the sides of churches to scare evil spirits away, and Quasimodo at the same time. I do not think that Lawrence Ferlinghetti has put so much stress on the ugliness of the oldest scavenger to be unkind but to show that he must have had to work hard for years to look the way he did. In this quote, there is also the only regular rhythmic pattern within the whole poem. It is a trochaic.

The 'gar' from gargoyle and the 'Quas' and 'modo' are all stressed. This is also to accentuate the ugliness of the oldest garbageman. Throughout the rest of the poem there is no set rhythm, which again conveys that as Lawrence Ferlinghetti was writing the poem he was thinking as he wrote, and watching what he wrote as it happened. From reading the poem it is possible to tell that Lawrence Ferlinghetti has written the poem from experience, may be not his own experience but something that he may have seen on a regular basis living in two major cities.

It is possible to tell this from the way he has written the poem – in free verse. The poem has no punctuation whatsoever, therefore this shows that he could have been writing the poem as he saw it happen or he could have been writing as he thought. In some poems, using free verse can make the poem hard to read but due to the short lines that Lawrence Ferlinghetti has used in the poem, it is not hard to read the poem as pauses can be taken at the end of each line. I believe that through this poem, Lawrence Ferlinghetti is trying to show that all people should be treated equally and that no one should be demoralised because of the job that they do. He is trying to show the 'poor'

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people that they should not be jealous of people who have high paying upper class jobs, as for where they started they have come from nothing to something which is a big achievement. In addition, he is telling the ' rich' people not to look down on the people with less high paying jobs than them, as although they have a better job they might not have achieved as much as the ' poor' person.

This is because the ' poor' person normally comes from nothing to something whereas the ' rich' person comes from something to something, which is not as much of an achievement. A quote that demonstrates this is: '... with two garbagemen in red plastic blazers standing on the back stoop one on each side hanging on and looking down into an elegant open Mercedes with an elegant couple in it.

.. ' I think that this is a good quote to demonstrate what Lawrence Ferlinghetti is trying to say in the poem as he has made it so the two garbagemen are looking down into the Mercedes whereas normally it is people like in the Mercedes looking down on the scavengers. He has swapped the roles around. Another quote that demonstrates that Lawrence Ferlinghetti wants to change things to be fairer is: '.

.. And the red light for an instant holding all four close together as if anything at all were possible between them across that small gulf in the high seas of this democracy' In this quote, he is showing that although he and many others would like to make the world a fairer and equal place, this may not be easy to do, as the only thing that brings the two different lifestyles together is the red light, which is compulsory to stop at. Therefore, they are not being

close together because they want to, but because they are made to by something that cannot be overruled. He uses a mixed metaphor in this quote as a gulf is always situated on land and he is saying that it is situated in high seas, which is impossible.

He does this to put his point across so that people reading the poem will remember the most important part of the poem. The small gulf is a metaphor for the large gap between the two different types of people that cannot be crossed and the high seas is describing how big the ' democracy' is and how it can be turbulent and disastrous. He also ends the poem with the word ' democracy'. This is ironic as throughout the poem Lawrence Ferlinghetti is trying to put the point across that we do not live in a democracy and that we need to as it is an unfair world.