

A literary review of
those winter Sundays,
a poem by robert
hayden



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Those Winter Sundays is a poem written by Robert Hayden. The poem involves a speaker who can be deduced to be regretting of not being grateful to a figure he refers as 'father' (Poetryfoundation. org). This 'father' forms the basis of the poem such that all the themes presented in the poem revolve around him. The speaker is clearly describing how his childhood view of his father has changed with his growing up. The current paper will analyze three major points that the poem 'Those Winter Sundays' explicitly communicates to its audience. Contextual evidence from the poem will be relied upon in order to ascertain the presence of the mentioned points in the poem.

The first point is a hardworking father full of fatherly love. All through the poem, the speaker paints his father as a loving family man who worked hard for his entire family. In the first line of the first stanza, the speaker states that, "Sundays too my father woke up early", and in the fourth line still of the first stanza the speaker states that, "From the labour in the weekday whether made," This indicates that, even when on Sundays hi father was not expected to wake up early, he could just wake up and perform some chores that he could otherwise avoid had he not been hard working. To demonstrate how loving he was as a father, the speaker argues that his father could "Polish my good shoes as well" in the third line of the third stanza.

The second point regards to family violence. There is a notion of family violence throughout the poem. The speaker in the second line of the first stanza talks about 'blueblack cold' a phrase that directly links to a violent setting and environment most probably of the family. The speaker states that "Fearing the chronic angers of that house" in the fourth line of the

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second stanza, which directly refers to how violent the home of the speaker was. It can be argued that it is this ' father' who propagates the violence that is experienced in the homestead of the speaker. The first line of the third stanza makes this argument evident as the speaker narrates that " Speaking indifferently to him" meaning that the speaker fears his father most likely because of his violent nature.

The third point as regards to the poem pertains to the realization that the speaker's father deserved better treatment from all the members of his family. The second line of the third stanza, " Who had driven out the cold" indicates the speaker's realization of the role his father played in the family. The context of the term cold in this line cannot be used in reference to the family's internal violence but rather the external challenges which his father worked hard to eliminate and which he deserved credit for. To further prove that the speaker indeed has realized that his father required more gratitude, in the fourth line of the third stanza, the speaker states that, " What did I know, what did I know" a statement which clearly explains that the speaker has finally realized what his father deserved.

Those Winter Sundays is clearly a poem that employs all the tools and elements of poetry to stress on some family themes that existed during the years of its author. Every word, line and stanza works to effectively bring out the meaning of family life in the years of the author who is considered to be one of the pioneer poets of African-American descent. As such, in the reading and explanation of the poem, it is important each word and line in the poem is extensively analyzed.