

The observer and london snow



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

This is a comparative commentary between two different pieces of written productions. The first one, Text A, is an adaptation of an article from a New York's newspaper called "The Observer" written in 1996 by Duane Jones. The second one, Text B, is an extract from a book called "London Snow" written in 1979 by Paul Theroux. The common factor of both texts is the snow. They both contrast on how people respond in different ways towards experiencing the same situation.

Also the main difference between these two texts is that Text A is fact while Text B is fiction. Text A's purpose is to inform the reader what has happened in New York and with a ridiculing almost insulting tone Jones' criticises in an extremely informal way all the people in New York; including journalist from the New York's press and the New Yorkers themselves. This article is aimed at an educated audience because of the use of puns and metaphors to describe the big problem that snow has created in the city.

However, Text B is totally different. It has the same subject, but it is described in a completely opposite point of view. In this case, Theroux purpose is to entertain the reader by describing how snow affects a small city in London. Text B is written in a descriptive and formal language where Theroux uses a gentle tone to compare snow with pleasant things, which suggest a calm atmosphere in the city. Text A starts with a whimsical tone introducing the reader into the dreadful problem snow has created in New York.

Jones personifies New York City by calling it "The City That Never Sleeps" because he says it was "struggling to wake up". Right from the start, Jones'

purpose of mocking people that exaggerates the main problem is given when referring to “ a storm of epic proportions”. The use of the word “ blizzard” has been used for different ideas because it can have more than one connotation: when referring to the actual recreation of the snow storm and when describing the amount of rubbish that TV programmes tend to spread out of a common and natural fact.

The writer talks directly to the reader in an extremely informal way when saying “ What happened was... “. Jones uses a pun informing that “ some snow fell and all other news was whited out” when referring that snow has cover each and all other news by its importance and magnitude. Calling this change in the weather “ The Blizzard of 96” is ridiculous because the informal low-level journalists, called hacks, make big problems out of insignificant facts by talking about rubbish: “ gassing about the weather”.

In a tongue in cheek tone, the author recreates with the phrase “ flakes upon flakes upon flakes” the repetition of how much it has been spoken on TV about this blizzard where he alludes to show people the lack of importance this event has. Mayor Guiliani suitably dressed to go for action and to overcome the problem suggests leaving the city because of the ‘ critical purpose’. However, there is not a real critical purpose so therefore it is written in inverted comas and said in a sarcastic tone.

However, Text B starts in a different way; using a short, concise and direct sentence “ It was snow” that after reading Text A’s article, the reader knows Theroux is talking about real snow. In the first paragraph, Theroux uses a descriptive and comparative language to illustrate the snow effects in the

small city. He uses two similes to describe snow that look “ like white eyebrows” and also as if the snow appeared to be “ beards that hang from the sills”. These comparisons give the reader the impression of a pleasant and calm situation as it is described in a light and tranquil tone that suggest peace.

As the whole city has been all covered with snow, the only thing that the author saw “ were the milkman’s footprints” which suggest that it is a traditional society in a small city where the only prove of movement is one pair of footprints. Theroux makes a reflective point when saying “ what a beautiful street it seemed! ” at the middle of an idea. This seems as if when he was trying to decipher something, he realized it was a gorgeous place and was astonished by it.

By just analysing the first paragraph of both texts, it is very easy to contrast between the reaction of people living in different places and in different years towards the same situation: themselves surrounded by snow. The authors have used either optimistic or pessimistic points of view in order to make the reader feel what it was really happening in the two cities and how did people react to it. As Jones says in Text A, New Yorkers are superficial people because when some snow falls, “ they dress for it and they talk about it” as if anything else was important.

Also they “ feel strangely blessed, overjoyed” because they think that now “ weather has given them a place in history” so it would be the first time, in a ridiculous way, that they have some history. People make fun of the United States because of not having history. Another fact that proves the extremely

informal use of language by Jones is “ how ordinary people coped became meat and drink to the snow-hacks” when he refers to the journalists that get paid by what people say about snow. People become essential for hacks in order to survive.

The tone becomes a bit harsher when Jones compares the “ snow-plough workers” with fighters in the war that are most exposed to danger are the ones in “ the front line”. The author with a mocking tone imitates a New Yorker’s accent by saying “ Mudder Nature, we got her licked” and also criticise North Americans because they feel so superior that they think they can control and dominate nature. Jones’ ridicule tone makes the reader think that New Yorkers are stupid people because they want to catch others’ attention by pretending to be suffering describing themselves as “ this isn’t Bosnia but it sure looks like it”.

Comparing and contrasting Text B with Text A, the reader notices that a lot more movement is going on in Text A and, on the other hand, Text B expresses tranquillity and peacefulness among the people in this small city. In the second paragraph of Text B, Theroux introduces the characters and how they react upon the snow in a positive and mature way, as it is nothing new for them. As the author says, they are “ marvelled” with the snow and this is the extreme opposite of reacting towards the same thing between people living in the small city in London and living in New York.

Theroux continues describing what he sees using metaphors and the city all covered with snow, now seems to be “ an empty countryside of simple hills”. In the third paragraph of Text A, Jones explains that the snow has now

finished by using the pun “ the sky seem to be snow out”. He then quotes Guiliani’s words where he described the Sanitary Commissioner as someone who “ understands snow removal the way a general understands how to fight a war.

It is said in a sarcastic tone because it is impossible to compare a simple and irrelevant problem with snow and a big and complex war. The author criticises almost insults New Yorkers that can’t stand staying a whole day at home with their own kids; so now that the snow is over, he refers to people as if they were relieved from this major problem. Although the snow and blizzard is over, Jones argues that the informal journalists won’t stay quiet and will continue searching for more words to describe the snow.

Americans make sure that their show time is not over so therefore they are still searching for another ‘ catastrophe’ to be dependent at. Jones ends this article by saying “ stay warm, as they say around here” and this suggests that he is talking directly to the reader and it contrasts all the snow problem by the word ‘ warm’ that is opposite to what is felt by the snow. However, Text B has a different ending. The main idea of the final part of Text B is that snow has made the city “ lay frozen and very still” and that there is no movement at all.

Instead of people waking up because of all the noise produced by the chaos the snow has made in Text A, in Text B happens the opposite: people wake up because everything is extremely quiet and this has been caused by “ the covering of snow that had shut out every sound”. Theroux describes the same thing he sees in two levels. First, in an imagery level, he uses a

metaphor to compare snow figures with real things and makes the reader to realise why he had those illusions by the explanation given in a literal level.

This happens when he says “ the meadow was the frozen river on which the snow settled, and some icy wavelets had produced the illusion of lambs” (line 17). Theroux refers to the city as if the snow has made it look nicer and the reader knows this because he says: “ from every eave and drainpipe hung icicle daggers and the loveliest swords of ice. ” Text B ends when one of the characters says that “ the snow just came down and snuffled everything” and this represents the most innocent, nice and pacific people that make a calm and gentle city.

After analysing and comparing both texts it can be concluded that there is one main similarity, which is the reaction of people towards snow, although the reactions are not the same. Both texts contrast a lot because of the differences that can be found in them. The main difference is how people react to snow. In Text A people react in a negative way because they see snow as a problem and therefore exaggerate this insignificant change in weather and make a total chaos out of it. While on the other hand, in Text B people do like snow and they contemplate the beauty of the city all covered in white.