

Analyse how  
meaning is presented  
in carol ann duffy's  
'bees'



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

Carol Ann Duffy's 'Bees'- through the extended metaphor of a swarm of bees used to represent the process of writing a poem- focuses on the capacity of words to excite and invigorate the reader and author alike. Indeed, poetry is presented as having an intrinsic richness throughout the poem that the speaker believes should be treasured and valued. This can be explained in terms of the personification of poetry as vibrant and dynamic throughout the poem- which, implies that the poem is in a certain sense 'alive' therefore deserves equal respect as a living thing.

Through the extended metaphor of a swarm of bees- Duffy hones into the element of surprise that is entailed by the writing process of a poem- as the words seem to come alive once written down. Such is demonstrated through Duffy's use of syndetic lists throughout the poem, creating a sense of steady pace mirroring the writer's desperation to formulate her stream of thought into sentences, one example of this being the catalogue of flowers in the opening stanza 'daffodil, thistle, rose'. Indeed, the idyllic natural image suggests that the speaker's poems seem to be blooming to life in front of her. Indeed, that the dangerous picture of a 'thistle' is framed by two flowers on the page is further evocative of poetry's capacity to crush and appease any negativity in the speaker's life. The form of enjambment is one frequently employed by the poet in order to convey the way in which poetry takes shape as the poet continues to write; and additionally might mirror the fluidity of the poem- with various readers distinguishing different meanings in its words. The alliterated plosive 'b' between lexis 'brazen', 'besotted' and 'blurs' in the opening stanza immediately characterizes the words as able to almost physically impact the reader, with use of dynamic verbs

ascribed to the bees such as 'dancing' and 'pervades' further detailing the ways in which words can warp and change a person's perspective on a certain topic. Such is demonstrated by the extended metaphor of a swarm of bees which continues throughout the poem- literally mirroring the process of words altering a reader's perspective through conveying the image of insects representing words; one clearly unusual and unfamiliar to a reader. Another metaphor used is one describing the bees' movements as 'flawless, airy maps.'- used to suggest that writing will figuratively lead the reader on a journey; with the end stop and caesura suggesting that this journey will be utterly dictated by the material they are reading. Indeed, the diction choice 'bees' is one repeated throughout the poem- including in the title- suggesting that words are able to have power over a reader when they are least expecting it. This is mirrored in the uneven number of stanzas (3) and uneven lengths of these stanzas (4 lines, 5 lines, 4 lines) used to convey the constant state of surprise and wonder the reader resides in whilst met with unexpected emotions when reading a poem. Such is reflected in the repeated gutturals and assonance of the syndetic list 'glide, gilded, glad, golden' which seem to create the effect of words blending into one another; perhaps conveying the poet's excitement in writing the poem, or the reader's thirst to discover the secrets and messages within a poem whilst reading it. The repeated use of conjunctions throughout the poem such as 'and' and 'so' create a colloquial conversational tone, reflecting the personal and intimate relationship between the speaker and the verse that she writes; whilst also evoking the capacity of poetry to gradually change a reader's life for the better.

Furthermore, Duffy is able to focus on the intrinsic value of poetry as something deserving of both respect and admiration. Such is demonstrated by the separation of lexis 'wise' by two hyphens; which is especially emphasized as it is the word that opens the third stanza, used to suggest that the knowledge and wisdom imparted by poetry should be preserved and considered extensively by the reader. Duffy's lack of fixed rhyme scheme and use of free verse throughout the poem is able to imply that the value of poetry is dissimilar and perhaps superior to the value we place on any other things- and cannot metaphorically be placed into a box. The slant rhyme between 'glide' and 'wise' therefore is particularly interesting through breaking from such free verse, suggesting that the wisdom offered by poetry should be able to expand and grow over time. The closing couplet ends on the phrase 'and honey is art.' and the use of emphatic end stop paired with the perfect rhyme between 'heart' and 'art' conveys the central message of the speaker that poetry should be valued due to its ability to enrich human experience. The simplicity of the revelation especially due to its important structural positioning in the final line further reminds a reader to appreciate the beauty of verse after reading the poem. This is an idea further developed through the possessive pronoun 'my' attached to the bees which moves to inclusive pronoun 'us' in the final stanza, suggesting that the poet and the poetry cannot be distinguished from one another and are able to constantly add value to each other. The lexis 'golden'- a word with connotations of wealth and treasure- is one repeated twice, reminding the reader that they should continue to treat poetry as if it had significant economic value, and to position these words in the central middle stanza further suggests that poetry has intrinsic central value despite what is actually written in it.

<https://assignbuster.com/analyse-how-meaning-is-presented-in-carol-ann-duffys-bees/>

Indeed, the meagre description attributed to the speaker is one overpowered by descriptions of the verse throughout the poem, which is further suggestive of verse's capacity to utterly consume the mindset of the individual whilst reading it in a positive and exhilarating manner.

Nonetheless, such value is not immediately offered to the reader, as demonstrated by the internal rhyme between 'been deep' and 'bees', paired with the asyndetic patterning of 'in' during the second stanza used to suggest that the value of the poetry is deeply hidden and must be sought out. Yet, we can understand the point being made that once such value is discovered in poetry; it remains irreplaceable; demonstrated through the antithesis created between the negative image of a 'shadowed, busy heart' and the vibrant natural imagery of the second stanza; implying that poetry can invigorate and repair damage and loss in human life with words' intrinsic joys. Furthermore, the poet's frequent use of punctuation paired with the logical use of three stanzas creates a reasoned and logical tone as the speaker refuses to be utterly swayed by the marvels at poetry due to her desire to teach and convey such beauty in rational terms to an audience.

To conclude, 'Bees', by Duffy, can be read as a testament to the irrefutable power of poetry to improve and enrich human experience through constantly providing new wonders and meaning that the poet encourages the reader to deeply cherish.