

About the chimney sweeper



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Sublime in literature is something that sets everything away from the rest. It makes you really think about something and paints a picture in your mind. A sublime moment is something that puts you in complete awe when you read or see it. My sublime poem I read was "The Chimney Sweeper" by William Blake. The Chimney Sweeper portrays the harsh unimaginable living and working conditions for young children using descriptive language and imagery.

This sublime experience starts off with the narrator who is a chimney sweeper who states "And my father sold me while yet my tongue, could scarcely cry 'weep! 'weep! 'weep! 'weep!" (Lines 2-3, 131). Right off the bat it screams innocence to me. How could someone sell their child off before they could even talk? This paints a mental picture most parents in today's day and age couldn't even imagine doing.

There is a shift change in the second stanza where the speaker begins to talk about his friend Tom Dacre rather than himself. Blake uses a simile to describe Tom's appearance and innocence by saying "There's little Tom Dacre, who cried when his head, That curl'd like a lamb's back, was shav'd so I said" (Lines 5-6, 131). Blake is saying Tom has curly hair like a lamb. Lambs are innocent young animals, which help describe Tom's innocence. Blake's diction paints the picture deeper than it really is; just how young these children working to clean these chimneys really are.

Moving on in the poem, the narrator talks about a dream that Tom had where he saw other children "lock'd up in coffins of black;" (Line 12, 131). The names that Blake used seem to be super generic names of the time

maybe trying to show the fact that many children are chimney sweepers at such a young age. The “ black coffins” paint a picture in your head of the children sleeping in their beds covered in soot, or the fact that this chimney sweeping job is so hard on these children that the coffins represent the children dying.

Blake uses imagery in stanza 4, still talking about the dream by saying “ And by came an Angel who had a bright key, And he open’d the coffins & set them all free: Then down on a green plain, leaping, laughing they run, ” (Lines 13-15, 131). The poem starts to seem like it is getting bright and cheerful because an angel appeared and set all the chimney sweepers free to green grass that they never see. It’s painting a picture for the children to see what life is like after a life of chimney sweeping.

“ Then naked & white, all their bags left behind,” (Line 17, 131), these bags Blake speaks of may just be the children’s bags of things such as their brooms from sweeping. Blake also mentions how their naked and white, meaning they are no longer covered in soot anymore they are clean and soot free. “ And the angel told Tom, if he’d be a good boy, He’d have God for his father & never want joy” (lines 19-20, 131). The angel is telling Tom that god can be his new father and he can experience joy for the rest of his life. Coming from an angel this seems to me like she is talking about heaven.

The poem ends with “ And so Tom awoke; and we rose in the dark And got with our bags & our brushes to work, Tho’ the morning was cold, Tom was happy & warm; So if all do their duty, they need not fear harm” (lines 21-41, 131). This line to me broke my heart. These children believe that they should

have to waste their entire lives as chimney sweepers, and if they continue with their duties they will have somewhere warm and great to go just like Tom did. They basically work, work, work just to die at such a young age. Their lives are gone before they even have started.

Working with children, this poem was the most sublime for me. It sets this apart from the rest of the poems by William Blake because it is the most heartbreaking way for kids so young to have to live life this way. Seeing the innocence in children day after day working in a daycare and then reading this poem and seeing the way that the children are living and working in bad working conditions just kills me. Blake portrays the harsh unimaginable living and working conditions for young children all while using descriptive language and imagery to help paint the picture of how gruesome their lives really were.