

Before making us
more aware of the



Before reading this poem one doesn't completely realize the details and stories behind an object as basic as a shirt. I had no idea that so much detail could be found in such a simple object, much less an entire poem. This poem presents a very good example of how we can easily overlook terrible things which happen, but choose to ignore. Even though we know bad working conditions exist in small countries which produce products we need, we choose to buy these products and support the inhumane working conditions.

The poem does a good job of making us more aware of the world around us, and that there are more to things than meets the eye. The poem *Shirt* by Robert Pinsky is written in a free verse form. The poem tells the story behind a shirt. It starts by describing the shirt and its physical characteristics, but then goes into the story of the workers which produce it. The shirt is not one particular shirt, but all shirts in general. The first story which is described in the poem tells us about a factory which has poor working conditions. These conditions led to a fire which kills one hundred and forty-six people.

A specific example of a man who tosses three girls out the window and then plunges to his own death serves to show us the horror of the situation. The poem then continues on to tell us of in humane conditions in Scotland. It ends by telling us about the slaves who picked and planted the cotton. The speaker seems to be telling us a story in order to inform us of what's going on in the shirt industry. Robert Pinsky doesn't have many obvious examples of diction in his work, although hints of it can be found. There is a simile in the first line of the tenth stanza.

The line goes " corners of both pockets, like a strict rhyme"(line 28). When reading the poem many images present themselves. One of the first images I see continues to present its self through out the poem. This image is one of the shirt with its " invisible stitches along the collar "(2), " twin bar-tacked corners "(27), and " Buttons of simulated stone ".(45) The strongest image in the poem which really stuck with me was one of the man dropping girls out of the window, and then jumping himself.

This image really demonstrates the horror of the factory conditions. There is a definite negative feeling in this poem. The author seems very much against the working conditions of the shirt making industry. The major theme through out the poem seems to be that there are bad things going on which we don't know much about but, end up supporting. We tend to over look the process which goes into making something as simple as a shirt. The working conditions are poor and it supports slavery. The average person doesn't know of these things and ends up buying the shirt and supporting the whole process. The poem really opened up mind to that fact the things aren't as simple as they seem.

When I first glanced at the title of the poem I had no idea that the poem would be as powerful as it actually was. It really changed my perspective of things as whole, when I now see something I wonder about the whole story behind it.