

The to not be afraid
to grow



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

The poem "Forgetfulness," written by Billy Collins, has a deeper meaning which connects himself to his father and their relationship while his father is suffering from dementia. Dementia is a general term for a decline in mental ability severe enough to interfere with daily life. Dementia results in memory loss which is the main topic of this poem. Collins uses his father's dementia as an inspiration to talk about forgetfulness in a gentle manner. The poem "Forgetfulness," written by Billy Collins, has a general message that everyone will grow old one day and will forget everything from little to significant things.

Collins' general message shows how exquisite all the memories of one's life are, but to not be discouraged because forgetfulness is a part of life and it happens to everyone. Memories can range from a brief reminiscence to a recollection of a significant memory. Unknowingly thoughts vacate from one's memory with no way of being able to recover them. The tone of this poem seems to be cheerful except for the times when Collins turns to a more sincere mood to get his point across that even those memories that seem more sincere eventually dwindle away. The audience of this poem is directed towards anyone, but specifically to prepare young people to not be afraid to grow old and help old people understand that forgetfulness is a normal process.

The poem goes on to use many poetic devices. An allusion is used when the author states, "It has floated away down a dark mythological river whose name begins with an L as far as you can recall." This line of the poem shows how memory loss is explained as a dark mythological river with its name beginning with an L. This is an allusion because the narrator of the poem cannot remember the name of the river that is the river that makes you

forget. In Greek Mythology, this river is the Lethe River and in one myth when a person drank from the river he suffered from memory loss for the rest of his life. Another poetic device used in this poem is personification in the line " As if, one by one, the memories you used to harbor decided to retire to the southern hemisphere of the brain to a little fishing village where there are no phones." This line brings memories to life in a more human way of resting to the back of your memory folder in you brain where it cannot be found. This line gives memories human qualities. Another line using a poetic device is when the author wrote " Long ago you kissed the names of the nine muses goodbye." This line exemplifies irony because as stated in Greek mythology, the nine muses were known as the daughters of the goddess of memory who was Mnemosyne.

Throughout the poem, Collins is discussing the forgetfulness of memories we acquire over the years as we grow older. Every time we learn something new that we add to our memories there is memory that is lost from the back of our head. To expand on that topic, what may seem important to a person now will later on be forgotten because of the added information the person learned which took precedence. This lead into a rather depressed tone in the poem as the audience instantly thinks of a memory that was once important to them, but they cannot seem to remember that memory now. Collins common tone to all human beings allows the audience to better relate to the message of his poem. This connection occurs because Collins is writing the poem based off of his own personal experience.

For the audience, this poem has a theme that can be seen from the beginning of the first stanza that it doesn't matter how old you are, every human needs to be able to understand that the mind only retains a fraction

of all the information a human absorbs everyday. Not everyone has fully accepted the fact that " I will remember this moment forever" is not a memory forever, but only as long as the brain retains it for. We acquire satisfaction in those memories we have remembered, but the harsh reality is that it will be forgotten one day. After reading the first stanza, your mind instantly fills with doleful questions that will remain unanswered. Everyday memories that we once thought we would cherish for the rest of our lives fall from the back of our head into the desolate open air, never to be thought of again. Further, it is your choice as to retain only what you know or to gather new information that may cause you to forget what it is that you already know. Forgetfulness can be seen as either bad or good. Most just let their forgetfulness be and don't try to make sense of it.

The poem opens up with in the first stanza " The name of the author is the first to go" which is followed by the title of the poem, then the plot, then the conclusion and the next thing one knows is that he is left with nothing. This broad statement makes the reader reconsider what they have forgotten, but they soon realize that it all results in a whole lot of nothing that doesn't make any sense. In the second stanza, Collins turns the memories into a more relatable way by saying that memories retire just as people do when they become too old to completely fulfill the job anymore. When those memories decide that they are too old to continue doing their job, they retire " to a little fishing village where there are no phones." By this line he means that once the memory retires you will never be able to recollect it ever again. The third stanza mentions how Collins has forgotten the quadratic equation and the order of the planets which he had learned at such a young age and it was deep-rooted in his brain, but now he has nothing. The fourth

stanza explain how at one time something in one's life seemed so necessary to know, but at some point down the road it became irrelevant to that person so he didn't bother as to keep it fresh in his head. The fifth stanza explains the goal of Collin's poem which was to get the audience into a train of thoughts about all the things they had once known so well, but now had forgotten. This could be described as a realization of what once one knew is now just another forgotten memory. The sixth stanza has the reader imagining all their forgotten memories flowing down some sort of dark river of which one can't remember the name of because it is amongst all of those forgotten memories floating away. At the end of the river, however, is "those who have even forgotten how to swim and how to ride a bicycle." Two things one learns as a kid and is able to continue doing for the rest of his life because it is known as a skill that once mastered at a young age it is never forgotten. Collins now has the reader imaging if these two life-long skills were within those memories that might have not been as relevant to and everyday life. In the seventh and last stanza, Collins challenges the reader to look within themselves with the phrase "No wonder" repeating over and over in their head. It is explained as though you are still aware of those forgotten past memories because they still follow one into one's present life without him realizing those are his own memories because he had already accepted forgetfulness.

Billy Collins's poem "Forgetfulness" communicates to his audience that in the end everyone will grow old one day and not be able to remember certain details of their life that at one time were so significant to them. He reminds readers that it happens to the best of everyone and to not get dispirited. The poem uses literary devices which allowed the author to get his readers to

understand his points on dementia and the affects it has on the human body. For the audience, the universal theme of this poem was that no matter one's age, he needs to be able to understand forgetfulness and how it happens to everyone someday.