

Adams curse by william butler yeats essay

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“Adam’s Curse”? William Butler Yeats ? William Yeats’ “Adam’s Curse” is a poem that addresses a profound truth of time. Any human accomplishment such as poetry, music, or physical beauty requires much labor and is appreciated by few. He says this through an emotional recollection of a conversation between himself, his lover and her friend. I believe the meaning of the work lays waiting like a net, waiting to catch the reader at surface level.

The poem is simplistic in nature, which is quite atypical of Yeats’ poems, yet is considered easily one of the greatest poems he has ever written by critics and scholars. ? The title itself is an explanation of the poem’s meaning. “Adam’s Curse” is from the Bible, a story when God cursed Adam and Eve for disobeying Him in the garden of Eden. This curse caused Adam to have to labour hard over his work to get any results. For Eve the curse was to give labour when bearing children, so her curse was pain. The title of the poem is the only reference to the Bible story we read. One reason this poem is considered great is Yeats speaks on the artistic elements of a poem and the challenges it takes to create these elements “For to articulate sweet sounds together is to work harder than all these”. Not only does he speak on this briefly, but he goes on to write two other stanzas which indeed contain sweet sounds of articulation. ? He also makes a point to bring to attention the lack of appreciation by “bankers schoolmasters and clergymen” show towards writing poetry. He even says writing poetry is harder than all these.

The speaker is revealing an emotion which not only the speaker holds, but the writer of the poem as well. I believe poetry is a link, or a bridge between the reader and the mind of Yeats. Perhaps Yeats felt underappreciated, or

perhaps he was mocked for devoting so much life into his poetry. ? We know by reading the first stanza that Yeats holds poetry to a high level of expectation. He said if a line of poetry, which might take hours to write, has not seemed a thought of a moment, than it has been useless. The reader can feel the speakers love for poetry here.

His love for poetry is one element of this poem which draws you in, and catches you in its warm enveloping glove. In some poems, one has to dig and pry to understand the meaning. This is not a poem of such nature. The interpretation begins when you sit back and enjoy the imagery. The poem begins and ends with a tranquil image of a conversation as the sun sets one summer evening. Later he paints a wonderful image with the moon rising, and sun setting, casting a “ blue-green” hue across the quite reflecting sky. ? In the first stanza, the speaker makes it clear that he cares deeply for poetry.

In my minds theater I see a seasoned married couple with a long time friend pondering an always present life challenge. What is this life challenge? First the speaker points it out by talking about poetry and its challenges and lack of appreciation. Then the friend of his lover continues his point by speaking about physical beauty and the challenges thereof “ we must labour to be beautiful”. Yeats continues to build on his meaning of the poem with a reference from a story in Genesis, the story of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. It’s certain there is no fine thing since Adam’s fall but needs much laboring”. The point the speaker is making is true still today, one hundred years after this poem was written. ? It is obvious to the reader that the speaker loves who he is addressing. The way he articulates the poem is an

expression of not only the love he has for his lover, but also the love he has for poetry. In the beginning stanza he speaks of pondering poetry with his lover, even writing poetry with her. In the ending to the poem he speaks very compassionately for his lover.

To me this is telling the reader that the speaker, who is an obvious poet, has lived a long happy life with a woman whom he finds beautiful. He knows and appreciates what most do not. He says “ I strove to love you in the old high way of love”. For the last stanza, the group hushes as he speaks on love. Perhaps he is pointing out that there is nothing as great as love, mans greatest element. His analogy of the moon being “ worn as if it had been a shell washed by time’s waters” is an analogy between the moon and our hearts.

Although it is obvious he loves his lover and has been happy with her, because of Adam’s fall even the relationship of love will grow weary. ? In the ending phrase he speaks of their love as “ weary-hearted as that hallow moon”. The meaning of this poem is that we are all tied to the curse of Adam. It is a deep philosophical concept that Yeats’ breaches, in a beautiful fashion. Perhaps Yeats’ wanted the reader to simply be aware of the troubles he spoke of, attempting to probe the mind with a new perspective. I believe the poem was a tool for Yeats’ himself to express his own weary heart.